



Old Testament Survey II

A Christ-Centered Approach
to Studying Jesus' Bible



INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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Old Testament Survey II
*A Christ-Centered Approach
to Studying Jesus' Bible*

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Instructor's Introduction

It is our hope and prayer that God would be pleased to use this curriculum for his glory. Thus, the intention of this curriculum is to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ by equipping men, women, and young adults to serve as family, business and community leaders, full-time Christian workers, missionaries, pastors, and teachers. This curriculum is guided by the mission and vision of Bethlehem College & Seminary, which are more fully explained at bcsmn.edu. At the Bethlehem website, you will find the God-centered philosophy that undergirds and motivates everything we do. May God be glorified in us as we are satisfied in him alone!

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *Old Testament Survey II: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible* is intended to survey the message of the Old Testament, both at the individual book level and at the canonical level. That is, students will not only grasp the main message of each individual book of the Old Testament, but they will understand how that message contributes to the overall message of the Bible. Emphasis will be given to tracing the flow of redemptive history from the beginning of time until the inter-testamental period, showing how the entire Old Testament points to, prepares the way for, and is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah. This will be accomplished by reading *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* in its entirety and the majority of *Dominion and Dynasty*, as well as by first-hand study of some of the key biblical passages throughout the Old Testament.

Please note: This course assumes the completion of *Old Testament Survey I: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible*. It is *not* recommended for students to take this course without first completing Part 1 of the curriculum. Part 1 covers Genesis–2 Kings (Law and Former Prophets), while this curriculum covers Jeremiah–2 Chronicles (Latter Prophets and Writings).

🌀 OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able to:

- ▷ Articulate the flow of redemptive history from Genesis–2 Chronicles and understand how key biblical passages from the Old Testament fit into the storyline of redemptive history.
- ▷ Explain the central message of the books Jeremiah–2 Chronicles and understand how each book contributes to the overall message of the Bible.
- ▷ Understand how the entire Old Testament points to, prepares the way for, and is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah.
- ▷ Discuss and apply the biblical truth that is presented in the curriculum to his/her own life.
- ▷ Magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

🌀 IMPLEMENTATION

As the instructor of this course, it is imperative that you are completely familiar with the curriculum. We therefore recommend that you read this entire section carefully and then skim through the rest of what is contained in this binder.

This course is designed to be taught in 12 lessons, ideally in 2 hours of in-class instruction and with approximately 2.5 hours of homework each week. To achieve the kind of undistracted focus and academic rigor that maximizes learning, we recommend that this course be taught as a weeknight class. We anticipate, however, that this curriculum might be adapted for a Sunday school, small group, or discipleship setting. If this is necessary or most appropriate, we urge you to establish an expectation among your students that this course will require more concentration and commitment than a typical Sunday school class would. A tone of serious and earnest study should be set by the instructor before the course even begins.

Before the first class session, you will need to decide when and where this course will be offered. Record this information on the syllabus in the box labeled: “Course Information.” You may also want to include your contact information in this box. The schedule incorporated in the syllabus does not have assigned dates. Please write the intended dates for each lesson in the corresponding box. Once you have completed filling out the syllabus, photocopy it so that you may distribute one copy to each student enrolled in the course. The *Student’s Workbook* does not include a syllabus, so your students will not have a syllabus until you distribute one. Photocopying the syllabus is the only photocopying that is required of you by this curriculum.

During the first lesson, we recommend the following outline to structure your time:

- ▷ **Welcome / Prayer (5 min):** Greet the students as they arrive. Open the lesson by exalting God in prayer.
- ▷ **Personal Introductions (25 min):** Ask each student in the room to introduce themselves briefly by answering the following questions (and answer these questions yourself): What is your name? Can you tell the class a little about yourself? Why are you enrolled in this course and what are you hoping to gain from it?
- ▷ **Syllabus Review (10 min):** Distribute your customized course syllabus and then guide the class through it, reading each item and answering any questions that the students might have.
- ▷ **Break (5 min)**
- ▷ **Lesson 1—Review of Law and Former Prophets and Intro to Latter Prophets (60 min):** Guide the class through Lesson 1. When you come to a question in the lesson, allow a few minutes for the students to answer each question, and then pause to discuss their answers. Lesson 1 is the only lesson you will take your students through without their prior preparation. For all subsequent lessons, students will work through the lesson on their own before coming to class. To prepare yourself for this lesson, you should attempt to answer the questions yourself before consulting the suggested answers in the *Instructor’s Guide*. Because Lesson 1 reviews the material

from *Old Testament Survey I: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible*, it will be helpful to review that curriculum, especially Lesson 1–2. Reviewing *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* chapter 1, as well as *Dominion and Dynasty* pages 15–43 may also be helpful for preparation (*if you only have time to read one of these, read the first chapter of What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*). Be sure to engage your students during this lesson, especially since the information presented will be new to them!

- ▷ **Overview of the Next Lesson / Closing (5 min):** Encourage the students to purchase the required textbooks if they don't have them already. Ensure that they understand what is required of them in preparation for the next class session. Then thank them for coming to the class and dismiss in prayer.

Subsequent Lessons

As the instructor, you will be expected to do all the preparation for each lesson that is required of the students and more. We strongly recommend that you obtain a *Student's Workbook* and attempt to complete the homework on your own before consulting this *Instructor's Guide*. The *Instructor's Guide* provides our suggested answers. Some questions in this curriculum are open-ended and could be answered in different ways. You may find that the answers contained in this manual may not be the clearest or most accurate answers possible. Therefore, we encourage you to improve upon our answers if you can. It is essential to understand that **this *Instructor's Guide* is meant to be a resource; the real authority is God's Word.**

Furthermore, we have deliberately omitted lesson outlines for Lessons 2-12. Our recommendation is to open the class in prayer. After that feel free to structure the class however you think it will be most helpful. You may begin by reading (or having a student read) one of the significant passages found in that week's lesson, or a text that stuck out to you in preparation for the class. Each lesson includes a "Bible Study" section designed to dig a little deeper into one of the more significant texts of each book. You may utilize this passage to discuss in class and discuss how it fits into the larger story of redemptive history. Or you may simply proceed through each day's study. The Discussion Questions at the end of each lesson are also designed for class use. You may discuss these at any point throughout the lesson. As an integrative assignment, students will be required to write a summary of that week's book of the Bible. Leave time to discuss the integrative assignment at the end of class (see recommendations for this in "Lesson 2: Teaching Notes" at the end of Lesson 2). We consider

it unnecessary to lecture through the material the students will have read in the various textbooks—discussing student questions on the reading should adequately cover the material. You will notice that **the material in each lesson should provide you with much more material than you can cover in two hours of thoughtful interaction**. This is not a mistake in design and you should not feel obligated to provide the students with answers for every question. Rather, as the instructor, your responsibility should be to focus on areas where students have questions or interest.

You will also notice that the *Instructor's Guide* has material that is not included in the *Student's Workbook* in the form of Teaching Notes. Consult these notes after thoroughly reviewing the lesson.

It is our conviction that the best teachers foster an environment in the classroom which engages students. Adults learn by solving problems or by working through things that provoke curiosity or concern. Therefore, we discourage you from lecturing for the entire lesson. Although an instructor will constantly shape conversation, clarifying and correcting as needed, they will probably not talk for the majority of the lesson. This curriculum is meant to facilitate an investigation into biblical truth—an investigation that is shared by the instructor and the students. Therefore, we encourage you to adopt the posture of a “fellow-learner” who invites participation from everyone in the class.

Teaching Style

It might surprise you how eager adults can be to share what they have learned in preparing for each lesson. Therefore, you should invite participation by asking your students to share their discoveries. Here are some of our “tips” on facilitating discussion that is engaging and helpful:

- Don't be uncomfortable with silence initially. Once the first student shares their response, others will be likely to join in. If you cut the silence short by prompting the students, they are more likely to wait for you to prompt them every time.
- Affirm answers whenever possible and draw out the students by asking for clarification. Your aim is to make them feel comfortable sharing their ideas and learning, so be extremely hesitant to “shut down” a student's contribution or “trump” it with your own. This does not mean, however, that you shouldn't correct false ideas—just do it in a spirit of gentleness and love.
- Don't allow a single student or several students to dominate the discussion. Involve everyone and intentionally invite participation from those who are more reserved or hesitant.

- ▷ Labor to show the significance of their study. Emphasize the things that the students could not have learned without doing the homework.
- ▷ Avoid talking too much. The instructor should not monopolize the discussion, but rather guide and shape it. If the instructor does the majority of the talking, the students will be less likely to interact and engage, and will therefore not learn as much. Avoid constantly adding the “definitive last word.”
- ▷ The instructor should feel the freedom to linger on a topic or question if the group demonstrates interest. The instructor should also pursue digressions that are helpful and at least somewhat relevant. The instructor, however, *should* attempt to cover the material. So avoid the extreme of constantly wandering off topic, but also avoid the extreme of limiting the conversation in a way that squelches curiosity or learning.
- ▷ The instructor’s passion, or lack of it, is infectious. Therefore, if you demonstrate little enthusiasm for the material, it is almost inevitable that your students will likewise be bored. But if you have a genuine excitement for what you are studying, your class will be impacted positively. Therefore, it is our recommendation that, before you come to class, you spend adequate time working through the homework and praying so that you can overflow with genuine enthusiasm for the Bible and for God in class. This point cannot be stressed enough. Delight yourself in God and in his Word!

It may be necessary to again stress that **this curriculum is merely a resource**. As the instructor, you should feel the freedom to structure the class time and to discuss through the material in a way that promotes the maximum learning and enjoyment of your students. Lingering on certain questions, pursuing *helpful* digressions, examining relevant portions of Scripture, adding other supplemental material, and customizing the curriculum to fit your situation are all heartily approved.

Questions or Comments?

If you still have questions after reading this introduction and surveying the curriculum, you may contact Bethlehem College & Seminary at info@bcsmn.edu. We are also eager for your comments and suggestions! Thanks!



Old Testament Survey II

Essentials of Christian Doctrine

SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *Old Testament Survey II: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible* is intended to survey the message of the Old Testament, both at the individual book level and at the canonical level. That is, students will not only grasp the main message of each individual book of the Old Testament, but they will understand how that message contributes to the overall message of the Bible. Emphasis will be given to tracing the flow of redemptive history from the beginning of time until the inter-testamental period, showing how the entire Old Testament points to, prepares the way for, and is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah. This will be accomplished by reading *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* in its entirety and the majority of *Dominion and Dynasty*, as well as by first-hand study of some of the key biblical passages throughout the Old Testament.

Please note: This course assumes the completion of *Old Testament Survey I: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible*. It is *not* recommended for students to take this course without first completing Part 1 of the curriculum. Part 1 covers Genesis–2 Kings (Law and Former Prophets), while this curriculum covers Jeremiah–2 Chronicles (Latter Prophets and Writings).

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able to:

- Articulate the flow of redemptive history from Genesis–2 Chronicles.
- Explain the central message of the books Jeremiah–2 Chronicles.
- Explain how each book contributes to the overall message of the Bible.

- Understand how key biblical passages from the Old Testament fit into the storyline of redemptive history. Every lesson will compel the student to read and meditate on the Word. Our desire is to encourage students to be Bereans (cf. Acts 17:11).
- Understand how the entire Old Testament points to, prepares the way for, and is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah.
- Discuss and apply the biblical truth that is presented in the curriculum to his/her own life.
- Magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

🔗 REQUIRED BOOKS (TEXTBOOKS)

- An English version of the Bible (all quotes in this curriculum will come from the *English Standard Version* [ESV] unless otherwise noted).
- Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). (abbreviated: WOTARCA)
- Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003). (abbreviated: DD)

🔗 REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to prepare for Lessons 2-12 by completing the lesson pages in a sequential order. Therefore, for each lesson a student should read the Introduction and the Lesson Objectives. Then the student should read the remainder of the lesson, answer the 20 questions contained therein, and complete all the required reading and the integrative assignment. The student may then review the discussion questions and record their own discussion question(s). Each lesson's workload has been divided into five daily assignments for the convenience of the student.

Though not required, a student may choose to read the book of the Bible that corresponds to each week's lesson. Another option is to read only the "Key Chapters for Bible Reading" that correspond to each week's lesson (~1-2 Chs./day). These may be found in Appendix A.

Students will pass this course if they attend at least 10 class sessions and complete all the assignments. Please contact the instructor with any problems or concerns.

 SCHEDULE

Lesson	Date	Lesson Title
1		Review of Law and Former Prophets and Intro to Latter Prophets
2		Jeremiah
3		Ezekiel
4		Isaiah
5		The Twelve—Part 1
6		The Twelve—Part 2
7		Ruth, Psalms
8		Job, Proverbs
9		Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations
10		Daniel, Esther
11		Ezra-Nehemiah
12		1–2 Chronicles

Review of Law and Former Prophets and Intro to Latter Prophets

1

§ INTRODUCTION

In *Old Testament Survey 1: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible* the importance of the Old Testament for Christians today was demonstrated. What we now call the Old Testament was the only Bible Jesus and the apostles ever read or preached from, and it was this body of Scripture that Paul said is breathed out by God and profitable for believers living under the new covenant (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15–17). The primary reason the Old Testament is so important is because it speaks about Jesus and his kingdom. In fact, this message comprised the majority of Jesus' teaching after his resurrection (Luke 24:24–27, 44–47; Acts 1:1–3) and it was also the central message of Paul's preaching during the apostolic era (Acts 26:22–23; 28:23, 30–31).

The kingdom of God is one of the central themes in all of Scripture and this curriculum follows its progression through redemptive history. *Old Testament Survey 1: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible* followed its development from Genesis through 2 Kings; this curriculum, *Old Testament Survey 2: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible* continues surveying the kingdom of God through the rest of the Old Testament (Jeremiah–Chronicles).

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- summarize the redemptive storyline from Genesis–2 Kings.
- understand the context for the next section of the Hebrew Bible: the Latter Prophets.

The extra-wide margin is here to allow room for extra notes, questions, etc. We have occasionally included additional information or reminders that we hope will be a help to you as you teach.



Because this is the first lesson of the course, students will not have read from the required textbooks before coming to class. You, however, as the instructor should read *DD (Dominion and Dynasty)*, pages 159 (stop at “Jeremiah: Demolition and Reconstruction”) as well as *WOTARCA (What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About)*, pages 163–167 before the first class period. It might be a good idea to encourage students to read these pages before class as well, especially if most of the students took Part 1 (*Old Testament Survey I: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus’ Bible*) of this course and already have the textbooks.

Along the same lines, there is a summary section entitled “Genesis–2 Kings” in this lesson. If all of the students took the *Old Testament Survey 1: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus’ Bible*, it may not be necessary to spend much time on this material. However, it is always good to review and re-orient oneself to the context and place within the narrative storyline. The decision is left to you, the instructor.

These readings will provide some of the content for the first discussion in class. The rest of the content will be a review from Part 1 of this course. Review as much as you need to in order to be comfortable with the content of Lesson 1 in this curriculum.

It may also be helpful, sometime during Lesson 1, to point your students to Appendix A: Key Chapters for Bible Reading, so that they can focus their reading in the likely event that there is not enough time to read all of the books included in each lesson.



GENESIS–2 KINGS

Before launching into the latter half of the Tanakh (which, you'll remember from *Old Testament Survey 1*, is the Jewish ordering of the Old Testament books, comprised of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings), it is helpful to recall God's story of redemption that took place in the first half.

The Pattern of the Kingdom (Genesis 1–2):

In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it. As creator, God necessarily is King and therefore he sets the rules. The most significant part of his creation was mankind, whom he created in his image to rule over the world, reflecting God's glory for all to see and worship him as a result. When God's people dwelt in God's land under God's rule, then blessing abounded and God's kingdom flourished. This is what the Bible calls *shalom*, and it can only take place in the context of a covenant relationship in which all members (God, people, land) function the way God intends. In the beginning, shalom abounded and everything was exactly the way it was supposed to be.

Genesis 1:31

³¹ *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*

1. In your opinion, what is the most striking feature of The Pattern of the Kingdom? Does the church today reflect The Pattern of the Kingdom? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. The church reflects the pattern of the kingdom only partially. This is because sin is still present, even within God's people, and therefore, shalom is not fully manifest. However, God is sanctifying his bride, the Church, and one day God's people will dwell in God's land under his rule and experience blessing forever! This will happen in The Perfected Kingdom when Christ returns.*

The Perished Kingdom (Genesis 3–11):

Soon after God created this perfect kingdom, mankind rebelled against his rule and the kingdom was dismantled, demonstrating that human autonomy produces only anarchy. When this covenantal relationship was broken, everything in the world went wrong. Shalom, which once characterized the world, was no longer the dominant feature; sin, death, and curse was.

Genesis 6:6

⁶ *Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

2. If the rebellion of God's people against God's authority caused the kingdom to fall, what will cause the kingdom to be re-established? *Who* do you think is capable of this? What promise did God give in Genesis 3:15 that provided hope that the kingdom would one day be restored?

· **ANSWER.** *God's people must live in perfect submission to him. Only then will his kingdom be re-established and shalom be restored. Jesus Christ, God's perfect Son, is the only one who is capable of bringing this about. Jesus is the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head and restore the kingdom of God (Gen. 3:15).*

The Promised Kingdom (Genesis 12–50):

God set out to make things right. The primary way in which he did this was through a series of covenants that he established with his creation. He had made a covenant with Noah and all creation, promising never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Genesis 9:8–17). But this covenant failed to restore shalom.

Then he made promises to Abraham that his offspring would be the means by which blessing would replace the curse throughout the whole earth. These promises included land, offspring, and blessing (12:1–3) and they were later enshrined in a covenant (Ch. 15; 17). In many ways, the rest of the Bible is the out-working of the Abrahamic covenant, as it contains the gospel in seed form (cf. Galatians 3:8). These promises will result in a restored kingdom wherein God's people experience the blessing God intended for them.

Genesis 12:1–3

¹ Now Yahweh said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

3. Recall some of the obstacles God overcomes throughout the book of Genesis in order to keep his promises alive.

- **ANSWER.** God overcomes barrenness (Genesis 11:30 and 21:2; 25:21; 29:31–32 and 30:22–24), famine in the land (12:10; 26:1–5; 41:56–42:2; 50:20), false heirs (15:2; 17: 16–19; 25:23, 33–34; 27:28–29), Canaanites in the land (12:6), his people’s faithlessness (12:11–20), and Abraham’s foolish decision to allow Lot to choose where to dwell (13:8–12).

The Partial Kingdom (Exodus–2 Kings):

God preserves his promises and makes Abraham’s descendants into a great nation (Exodus 1:17). After redeeming them from slavery in Egypt, God made a covenant with Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai, where God instructed his people how they were to live in the Promised Land. As they obeyed his law, they would image him to the nations with the result that the nations would know that Yahweh alone is God. Israel’s experience of blessing or curse was dependent on whether or not they kept the Mosaic covenant and its stipulations.

Exodus 19:4–6

⁴ You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God used forty years of wandering in the wilderness to test his people to see if they would keep his covenant or not (Deuteronomy 8:2), and several telling accounts reveal that Israel would not be the faithful son God desired (see Exodus 32; Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 29:2–4).

After punishing an entire generation for their faithlessness, God continued to fulfill his promises by growing Israel into a mighty nation. They conquered the land and experienced unprecedented blessing as they submitted to God's rule. The climax of this period came under the rule of King David, who not only lived in submission to God's Torah (one of the three sections of the Tanakh, known as "the Law"), but led the people to do the same. God made a covenant with David that had (and still has) massive ramifications for his kingdom. The covenant with David promised a King who would live under the rule of Yahweh and exercise dominion over God's people in justice and righteousness. This King would model for the nation how God intended for them to live and would represent the people before God. Further, and most significantly, his kingdom would be eternal (2 Sam. 7:4–17)!

The reason the kingdom is only 'partial' is because David was *not* the promised seed to crush the serpent's head, nor were any of his immediate successors. He proved his own sinfulness which led the nation away from Yahweh once again. The people presumed that God would keep his promises while they disregarded his commandments. It was as if they believed they had a license to sin. This mentality led them on a downward spiral of sin and destruction during the period of the monarchy. The kingdom divided into two, and each nation was expelled from the Promised Land and taken into captivity (2 Kings 17, 25).

4. Explain the tension between God's promises to Eve, to Abraham, and to David and his promises to curse his people if they disobeyed his commandments. How do you think this tension will be resolved in the rest of the story?

· **ANSWER.** *God had made massive promises to his people that included a royal offspring who would crush the serpent's head and restore his kingdom. This would happen through the woman's seed, Abraham's offspring (specifically Judah), and a Davidic King. Yet he also promised to curse his people if they rebelled against his authority (Mosaic covenant). It seems like God worked himself into a corner—he had to be faithful to bless and to curse his people. As we will see, Messiah Jesus is the only 'Son of God' who is able to live in perfect submission to God's rule and image him perfectly. Yet he also takes the curse for the rest of God's people upon himself, so that they also might receive the blessing of the covenant promises.*

THE PROPHETS

Prophets played a crucial role in Israel's history. Prophets were spokesmen for God who confronted God's people for covenant unfaithfulness and who called them back to a right relationship with God. The basis for their role was the Mosaic covenant, which they used as the guiding rule of whether or not God's people were living the way God intended (Jer. 11:6–11; Hosea 6:7; 8:1). A second (though perhaps less prominent) role the prophets played was to announce coming events, such as divine judgment for the unrepentant and salvation for the humble and righteous. Thus, their ministry was that of both *forthtelling* and *foretelling*.

The core of their prophetic speech centered on a concept called the Day of Yahweh (i.e., Day of the LORD), a subject to which we shall return in a moment. While prophets existed throughout most of Israel's history, the prophets included in the Latter Prophets are commonly referred to as the Writing Prophets, since only their sermons and writings were recorded and included in the Tanakh.

5. Fill in the blanks as the instructor reads this quote:

"In [the Latter Prophets], Yahweh's heavenly ambassadors speak God's words, enforcing his covenant with Israel and declaring judgment against the nations. The prophets charged Israel with Mosaic (old) covenant violation (indictment) (Jer. 9:13–14; Ezek. 22:26; Isa. 5:24), called them back to covenant faithfulness (instruction) (Amos 5:14–15; Mal. 4:4), warned them of the covenant curses (Jer. 44:23; Mal. 2:2), and promised the covenant restoration blessings for those who would learn from the divine discipline (Jer. 31:31–34; Isa. 19:24–25). In a world of sin, the prophets were gifts of God's grace, urging all who would listen to return to the only true Savior, Sovereign, and Satisfier." (WOTARCA, 165).¹

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

¹ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

6. What is the lens through which we are to read the Latter Prophets? Select the correct answer and then explain your answer.

- a) God's promise of a serpent-crusher to Eve
- b) The Abrahamic Covenant
- c) The Mosaic Covenant
- d) The Davidic Covenant

· **ANSWER.** *The old (Mosaic) covenant (WOTARCA, 166). The prophets judged Israel based on their adherence to the Mosaic covenant. Thus, all blessings and curses had a direct relationship to the stipulations found in the Mosaic covenant.*

THE LATTER PROPHETS

The Prophesied Kingdom (Jeremiah–Malachi):

The Latter Prophets bring us to the second half of the Tanakh. This portion of Scripture (Jeremiah–Lamentations) is not technically part of the narrative storyline of the Bible, and thus functions as a “pause.” The book of Kings ends with the people of Israel in exile, and rather than narrating the subsequent events, the Latter Prophets provide us with commentary on *why* Israel was experiencing exile and curse, specifically through the preaching/writing of the prophets. The Latter Prophets are comprised mostly of addresses (sermons) from God’s prophets to his people calling them back to Yahweh. Thus, we do not find as much narrative in these books; rather, (sermonic) poetry is the dominant genre. The story picks up again in the Latter Writings with the book of Daniel.

The Latter Prophets are perhaps one of the least understood and most neglected sections of the entire Bible, and understandably so. Each prophet is writing in a unique context with different audiences, different oracles, and different visions, and they do not follow a single chronological timeline as much of the rest of the Old Testament does. Some of the prophets’ ministries overlapped while some were over a century apart. On top of this is what seems to be excessive “judgment language” that repeats itself over and over, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. In addition, there are interjections of hope that may even cause confusion as to what the Prophets are trying to communicate. All of this can get jumbled into an indiscernible body of text that lacks clarity and purpose for the modern reader. But when one takes the time to explore these dark unknown caverns, there are countless gems to be found.

7. What has been your experience reading the Latter Prophets? Record any thoughts or questions you may have as you begin to read this section of the Tanakh.

· ANSWER. *Answers will vary*

THE DAY OF YAHWEH

What is the overall message of the Latter Prophets? At the risk of being too simplistic, it can be summed up in one phrase that appears throughout the Prophets: “The Day of Yahweh.” This single term encapsulates the two dominant themes of judgment and hope communicated by the prophets. Sometimes the prophets refer to the Day of Yahweh as “that day,” “the day,” “those days,” or “latter days,” but they all refer to the same time. *When* this time would come was another question.

Multiple Manifestations:

Though it was unclear when that day would come, the original hearers would have known exactly what day the prophets were talking about. But as history unfolded, it became apparent that the Day of Yahweh had multiple manifestations.

For instance, if you were living in the eighth century B.C. and were to listen to Hosea or Isaiah’s preaching, you would hear about the Day of Yahweh and the destruction it would bring. Surely this day would have seemed to be fulfilled in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians invaded Israel, slaughtered men, women, and children, burned the capital city Samaria, and carried the survivors to Assyria.

Isaiah 13:6, 9, 13

⁶ Wail, for the day of Yahweh is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! ... ⁹ Behold, the day of Yahweh comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.... ¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of Yahweh of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

But then, a century or so later, one might hear Jeremiah preaching about the Day of Yahweh. This day of vengeance surely would have seemed to be fulfilled in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, slaughtered men, women, and children, burned the city, and carried the survivors to Babylon.

Jeremiah 46:10

¹⁰ *That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood. For the Lord GOD of hosts holds a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*

But then, *after* God's people returned from exile, prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi still spoke about the Day of Yahweh as a future event!

Malachi 4:1, 5

¹ *For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says Yahweh of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch...*

⁵ *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes.*

Clearly, there were multiple manifestations or fulfillments of the Day of Yahweh. In fact, New Testament authors also said that the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Yahweh has yet to come (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). God will judge the world because of sin once again. Yet it will also be a great day of salvation for those who are found righteous in Christ. This great Day is the day of Christ's second coming. But Christ's first coming also had implications concerning the end times.

Acts 2:16–17

¹⁶ *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

¹⁷ *“And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.”*

Hebrews 1:1–2

¹ *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

James 5:3

³ *Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.*

1 John 2:18

¹⁸ *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.*

8. According to these New Testament authors, when are the “last days?”

- ANSWER. *We are currently in the “last days.”*

Christ's first coming initiated this period of time; his second coming will consummate it.

Judgment:

Let us consider the first theme stressed in the Day of Yahweh: judgment.

Even a surface-level reading of the prophets is enough to convey the negative tone of this large section of the Old Testament. This is because Israel was headed towards destruction and it was the prophets' responsibility to call God's people to repentance. One of the motivations for repentance was the surety of doom and destruction for those who did not repent.

The book of Kings taught that the exiles of both Israel and Judah were no mere accidents; they were the fulfillment of God's word to judge his people if they broke his covenant with Moses. God's people did not heed the Torah so they should have expected his judgment, but the prophets' warnings inform us that they did not understand the immanence of their own destruction.

Jeremiah 11:6–11

⁶ *And Yahweh said to me, “...Hear the words of this covenant and do them.*

⁷ *For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. ⁸ Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.... ¹⁰ The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers.*

¹¹ *Therefore, thus says Yahweh, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them.”*

God uses both Assyria and Babylon to judge his people Israel. He even refers to these nations and their kings as his “servants” (cf. Jer. 25:9). Other times, Yahweh himself is said to be the one bringing judgment (cf. Ezek. 5:8).

Who were the recipients of Yahweh’s judgment? Obviously, both kingdoms of Israel and Judah experienced God’s judgment due to their faithlessness.

Amos 2:4–7

⁴ Thus says Yahweh: “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have rejected the law of Yahweh, and have not kept his statutes, ⁵ but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked. So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.” ⁶ Thus says Yahweh: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— ⁷ those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned.

What many people don’t realize, however, is that the Day of Yahweh promised severe judgment for the nations as well. The God of the Old Testament is not like the pagan gods of the ancient near East who ruled over one particular people in a particular place. His domain is the whole world. Because God created the whole world (Genesis 1–2), he has the authority to hold everyone in it accountable. Thus, all the nations are subject to God’s judgment, not merely his covenant people. Through the prophets, God pronounces oracles of doom on the foreign nations (see Isaiah 23–30; Jeremiah 46–51; Ezekiel 35–42; Nahum; Amos 1:3–2:3).

Isaiah 24:5–6

⁵ The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶ Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

Jeremiah 51:11

¹¹ Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of Yahweh, the vengeance for his temple.

Isaiah 1:27

²⁷ *Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent by righteousness.*

Ezekiel 18:30

³⁰ *Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.*

9. What was the only way God's people could avert his wrath? How does the New Testament message reflect the message of the prophets (see Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30)?
 - **ANSWER.** *If they repented of their sins, God would not judge them. The New Testament authors also exhorted their hearers to repent lest they be destroyed for their sin. All throughout history, people have rebelled against God, and the only way to be reconciled is through the repentance of sins.*

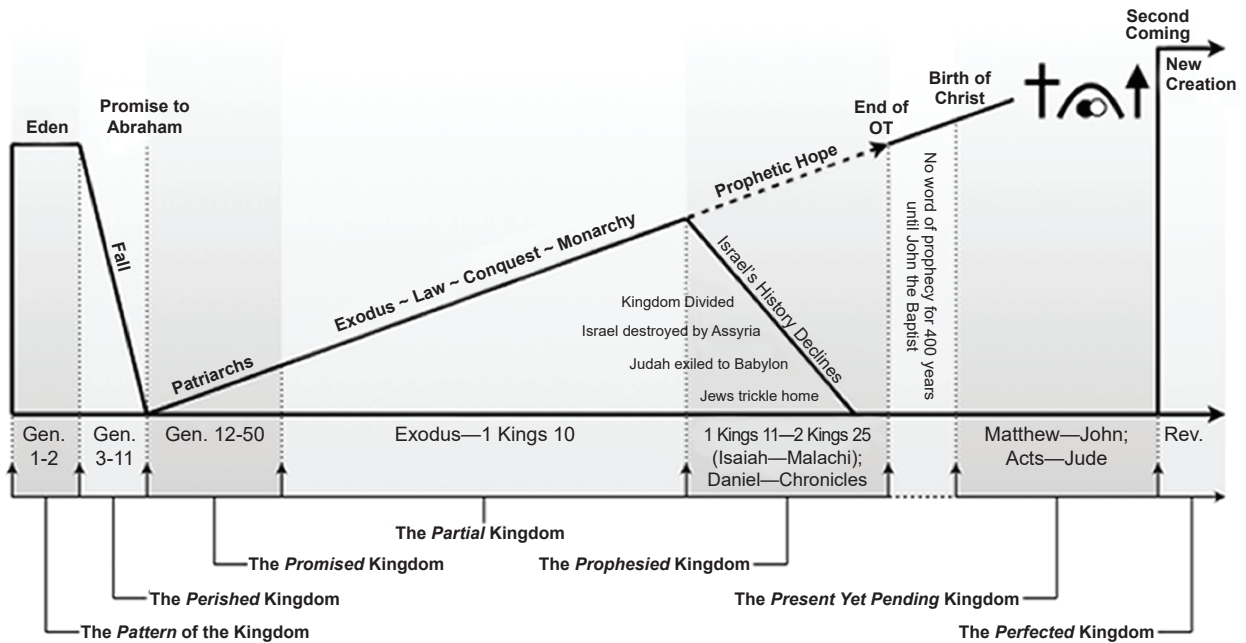
Salvation:

The second theme stressed in the Day of Yahweh is salvation. The same covenant promises that demanded judgment for God's people were also the basis for their hope. If they repented, God would bring upon them the covenant blessings. However, Israel's track record was not too promising, and the people of Israel eventually found themselves in exile, experiencing the climax of the covenant curses.

While the curse and exile fulfilled the conditional promises in the Mosaic covenant, underneath was God's unconditional promise that the woman's offspring (through the line of Abraham) would defeat the serpent, bring blessing to the nations, and restore God's kingdom.

Though the partial kingdom has been dismantled, God would rebuild it. But this kingdom would not merely be a pattern, nor a partial fulfillment, but the perfected kingdom. One day, God's people would dwell in God's place under God's rule and enjoy his blessing—forever! It is the hope of this kingdom to which the prophets point us.

Diagram of the Kingdom of God ²



10. What does the prophetic hope point to? At what point does God's kingdom reach its climax?

- **ANSWER.** *The prophetic hope points to Christ (his birth, death, burial, and resurrection). This was Israel's hope as she went into exile. God's kingdom reaches its climax at Christ's second coming which ushers in the new creation.*

🔗 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ Stephen Dempster, "Prophetic Books," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 122-126.

² This diagram is adapted from Vaughan Roberts' diagram in Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 157

Jeremiah

2

📖 INTRODUCTION

The great world power Assyria had destroyed Samaria and taken Israel captive a century earlier (722 B.C.). But since then, Babylon had crushed Assyria and began consuming the kingdoms of the earth until they finally set their sights on Judah, the sole remnant of God’s people. God commissions the prophet Jeremiah to warn Judah of the impending judgment for (old) covenant violation, but also to offer hope in a restored (new) covenant. Jeremiah’s message is thrown down and stamped on by most people who hear, which causes him much grief throughout his ministry. Yet he is faithful to preach God’s word to a people who need to hear it. His ministry extends into the exile of Judah to Babylon, though he himself is taken to Egypt near the end of his life.

📖 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the reasons Israel was experiencing such harsh realities.
- explain Jeremiah’s two-fold ministry of “tearing down” and “building up.”
- describe the new covenant and how it differs from the old covenant.

Total pages of reading for this week: 35



The New Covenant is at the core of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Luke 22:20), and therefore forms the basis of the Christian faith. Jeremiah contains one of the classic Old Testament passages on this theme: Jeremiah 31:31–34. Be sure to discuss this text and its implications for the Christian.

The instructor should also be re-directed to the “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ” resource listed at the end of every lesson. This valuable resource may provide great insight into passages in each book that point forward to the redemptive work of Christ (with New Testament references listed as well). It may serve as a helpful discussion starter, or even a seed for a devotional thought from the book being studied each week.

Another helpful place to get resources is the end of each chapter in *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. There are recommended books and commentaries for each book of the Bible.

Beginning with this lesson and continuing with every subsequent lesson, students will be asked to summarize the message of each book in their own words (Integrative Assignment). It may be a good idea to leave time during class to share their summaries with the other students. You could ask for volunteers to share what they wrote, or you could split the class into groups of two or three and have each person share their summary. This will motivate them to think through their summary and make it clear rather than just to write something down to complete the lesson. Student feedback is a great way to learn and grow in our ability to communicate ideas clearly. It may be helpful to have them write their summary in such a way that a 5-year-old could understand it. This will also help them to be clear and simple.



Day 1

THE LATTER PROPHETS

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 163–167.

- ▷ Note: This reading will be review from last week’s lesson.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 159.

- ▷ stop at “Jeremiah: Demolition and Reconstruction”
- ▷ Note: This reading will be review from last week’s lesson.

1. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

“Jeremiah initiates not only the Latter Prophets but also the second half of the Hebrew Bible. It looks back on what has happened and it points the way forward to the future. Looking back on the failure of the covenant at Sinai, which has led to the judgment of exile, Jeremiah announces a new covenant” (DD, 159).

VERDICT: GUILTY!

God’s promise of life and blessing was always contingent on obedience to his commands. This is the only way his kingdom will flourish—when his people submit to his rule. This fact remains true even in the Promised Land. If God’s people reject God’s rule, they are rejecting life and blessing and turning towards sin and death.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 238–243.

Like a prosecuting attorney, Jeremiah makes the case that the people of Judah have violated their covenant with Yahweh and deserve judgment. Blessing is conditioned on obedience to the Mosaic covenant, which they have all but forsaken.

Jeremiah 5:19

¹⁹ *And when your people say, “Why has Yahweh our God done all these things to us?” you shall say to them, “As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.”*

2. What was the primary sin of Israel and Judah’s covenant violation?

- **ANSWER.** *They worshipped the false gods of the people around them (WOTARCA, 240).*

It is easy for modern readers to think of idolatry in terms of physical statues and shrines that God’s people bowed down to. While this certainly occurred, idolatry is a matter of the heart, and it occurs when we desire anything more than God. Even we, who do not worship statues or other images, are still prone to idolatry—worshipping our reputation, money, comfort, sexual gratification, a secure future, a family, kids who love God, etc.

Judah has forsaken Yahweh and is running headlong after other gods. Jeremiah describes it as adultery (Jeremiah 2:20; 3:2, 20–21; 5:7). It is evil. If someone were to ask you to define evil, what would you say? Or what would you offer as examples of evil? Murder? Rape? Oppressing the poor and helpless? These are all examples of evil. But Yahweh defines evil in a way that may surprise you: *evil is turning away from Yahweh to find satisfaction in things that can’t satisfy.* Consider what God says:

Jeremiah 2:12–13

¹² *Be appalled, O heavens, at this;*

be shocked, be utterly desolate,

declares Yahweh,

¹³ *for my people have committed two evils:*

they have forsaken me,

the fountain of living waters,

and hewed out cisterns for themselves,

broken cisterns that can hold no water.

One way to determine if something is an idol for you is to ask how you would respond if it were taken away. Sometimes that’s what it takes for God to teach us to love him with all our heart.

Imagine being stranded in a desert. You are given the choice between an endless supply of pure, cold water from a spring or a muddy hole in the ground that only has a bit of lukewarm water at the bottom. God likens himself to the spring of water that will sustain life and satisfy one's thirst. When we sin (in any way), we are foolishly rejecting the Fountain of Living Water and trying to satisfy our thirst by slurping up the muddy water at the bottom of a hole. It cannot satisfy!

3. Restate Jeremiah 2:13 in your own words and then write down one specific way you 'commit evil' and how you can change that.

- *ANSWER. Answers will vary. My people keep doing evil things; namely, they are turning away from Me, the only One who can provide lasting satisfaction, and they are trying to find other sources of satisfaction, but none of them provide what they are really looking for.*

Corrupt leadership is largely responsible for Judah's spiritual condition. Judah's kings, by and large, are not obedient to the Mosaic Law. This disobedience threatens to destroy the Davidic kingdom, the very one God had promised to his servant David.

Jeremiah 22:2-5

² *Hear the word of Yahweh, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David...*

³ *Do justice and righteousness...* ⁴ *For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David.*

⁵ *But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares Yahweh, that this house shall become a desolation.*

4. In light of 2 Samuel 7:11-17, why is God's warning to Judah's kings in this passage so serious?

The Davidic covenant did not nullify the Mosaic covenant. God's people were not "off the hook" because of the Davidic covenant.

- *ANSWER. God had made promises to David that he would build him a house that would endure forever (2 Samuel 7:13). Here, God is warning Judah's kings that if they disobey his words, then he will destroy that house!*

Day 2

‘TEAR DOWN’ AND ‘BUILD UP’

If a construction company wants to rebuild a structure in the same place that an old worn down structure is located, the first stage of the process involves wrecking balls and bulldozers. The old structure must be demolished before the new structure can be rebuilt in its place.

We see this principle in the book of Jeremiah. Judah’s verdict before Yahweh is, “Guilty.” There is no way around it. Jeremiah is sent to pronounce this judgment to the people. His message is comprised of two parts. Let us consider Jeremiah’s calling and his response to it.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 159–161.

- ▷ begin at “Jeremiah: Demolition and Reconstruction”
- ▷ stop at “Something Went Drastically Wrong”

“The death of Israel in exile was not something unforeseen but a consequence of disobedience” (DD, 160).

The end of 2 Kings is depressing, to say the least. God’s people experience the climax of covenant curses as Babylon takes Judah into captivity, and it is clearly a result of their disobedience. It is exactly what God promised would happen if they failed to keep the covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15–68; Leviticus 26:14–39). Then when you flip the page to Jeremiah 1, you read about Jeremiah’s call that involves both “destruction” and “construction.”

Jeremiah 1:9–10

⁹ *Then Yahweh put out his hand and touched my mouth. And Yahweh said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.*

¹⁰ *See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”*

5. What is the two-fold commission God gave to Jeremiah? Explain what this means.
- **ANSWER.** *Jeremiah was commissioned to pronounce judgment on Judah for her sin and to provide hope that judgment would not be the last word. Babylon would destroy Judah and the nation would cease to exist. Yet, there would be a remnant that God would bring back to the Promised Land and “plant” and “build” them into a dynasty once again.*
6. True/False: In Jeremiah, as well as the rest of the Latter Prophets, the message of destruction dominates the text offering little hope for the Davidic dynasty.

THE PEOPLE’S RESPONSE TO JEREMIAH’S MESSAGE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 244–249.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Jeremiah Voiced the Prophet’s Anguish over His Calling and Ministry”

The book opens with repeated calls for Judah to return to Yahweh by renouncing their sinful ways in order to avoid divine judgment. Israel was an unfaithful spouse, and God’s law prohibited a divorced couple to remarry (Deuteronomy 24:1–4). But Yahweh was willing to extend his mercy to his faithless people.

Jeremiah 3:12–13

¹² *Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,
“Return, faithless Israel,
declares Yahweh.*

*I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,
declares Yahweh;*

I will not be angry forever.

¹³ *Only acknowledge your guilt,
that you rebelled against Yahweh your God
and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree,
and that you have not obeyed my voice,
declares Yahweh.”*

Jeremiah 4:14

¹⁴ O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil,
that you may be saved.
How long shall your wicked thoughts
lodge within you?

7. How do these verses highlight God's merciful character?

- **ANSWER.** *Judah deserved to be punished according to God's law. Yet God was willing to forgive them if they repented and began serving him once again.*

You would think the preaching of a man whose mouth contained the very words of God (Jeremiah 1:9) would be persuasive to turn hearts. Sadly, this is not the case in Jeremiah. On the contrary, Jeremiah's message is met with stubborn refusal to repent and obey to God's word.

Jeremiah 7:25-26

²⁵ From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. ²⁶ Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

Jeremiah 44:16

¹⁶ As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Yahweh, we will not listen to you.

8. Why do you think repentance can be so difficult, even though it is really a "simple" solution to dealing with sin?

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. God simply requires one to repent in order to avert his anger. However, sin is so powerful and deceptive that it can make us believe that persistence in sin will satisfy us more than repentance. Our thinking has been twisted by the curse, and therefore we don't always see things as they are. This is one of the reasons the Bible (God's revelation to a blind and sinful humanity) is so important!*

This is one of the reasons the Bible (God's revelation to a blind and sinful humanity) is so important!

Throughout Chapters 1–25, calls to repent become less and less common as divine judgment becomes more and more certain. Shockingly, even the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. did not turn the people from the error of their wicked ways.

The limited examples of obedience and faithfulness point to the sad reality that only a tiny portion of Judah's population responded positively to Jeremiah's preaching. The majority of the people would know only Yahweh's wrath.

“The book of Jeremiah provides a reminder that response to the word of God is a matter of life and death” (WOTARCA, 248).³

³ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 3

THE LIFE OF JEREMIAH

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, 249–250

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Jeremiah Voiced the Prophet’s Anguish over His Calling and Ministry”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Jeremiah Portrayed Babylon as God’s Instrument and Object of Judgment”

Because his message emphasized the destruction of Judah, Jeremiah naturally faced great opposition throughout his life. Jeremiah is known as the “weeping prophet.” He experienced deep personal anguish over the extreme opposition and difficulties he encountered.

Thinking of some modern scenarios where speaking opposition amidst a certain group would bring defensive, potentially dangerous, anger might help your students understand Jeremiah’s situation.

Jeremiah 15:10

¹⁰ *Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.*

Jeremiah 20:7–8

⁷ *O Yahweh, you have deceived me,
and I was deceived;
you are stronger than I,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all the day;
everyone mocks me.*

⁸ *For whenever I speak, I cry out,
I shout, “Violence and destruction!”
For the word of Yahweh has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.*

9. As you read this section, record any thoughts or reactions you have to Jeremiah’s life as a prophet. Consider his message, the response of God’s people, his own response, his prayers to God, etc.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

10. Select the statement that best describes Jeremiah's response to his difficult life:

- a) We should not be angry at the unrighteous like Jeremiah was, but rather we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us like Jesus commanded.
- b) Jeremiah's prayers demonstrate how God's people can be honest with God about their feelings and experiences, knowing that God will execute perfect justice and mercy according to his divine will.
- c) Jeremiah's "confessions" (which included curses towards his enemies) justify our hatred towards evil-doers and provide precedence for returning evil with evil.
- d) Jeremiah's "confessions" were inappropriate responses to God's actions and they did not align with God's character ("...merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" Exod. 34:6).

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 161–162.

▷ begin at "Something Went Drastically Wrong"

Dempster helpfully makes the connection between the prophet's own emotional response to Judah's rebellion and God's emotional response to Judah's rebellion. That is, one way God expresses deep grief over his people's rebellion is through his prophet's grief over them. We get a glimpse into the heart of God by reading Jeremiah's words to the people, and it is a grief-stricken response.

Jeremiah 10:19–20

¹⁹ *Woe is me because of my hurt!*

My wound is grievous.

*But I said, "Truly this is an affliction,
and I must bear it."*

²⁰ *My tent is destroyed,*

and all my cords are broken;

my children have gone from me,

and they are not;

there is no one to spread my tent again

and to set up my curtains.

11. Why was God so heartbroken over his people's failure to keep the covenant?

- **ANSWER.** *In Dempster's words, "The covenant was not simply a legal, contractual matter, but one that was intensely personal, alive with love, in which the relationship was primary" (DD, 162).*

Jeremiah 2:2–3, 5

² "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says Yahweh,
"I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.

³ Israel was holy to Yahweh,
the firstfruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it incurred guilt;
disaster came upon them,
declares Yahweh."

⁵ Thus says Yahweh:
"What wrong did your fathers find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthlessness and became worthless?"

12. What comparison does Yahweh use to describe his people's love for him in the beginning of their covenant relationship? What happened to Israel and what was their end?

- **ANSWER.** *God describes their love for him as a bride who loves her husband. Yet, this love did not last long. When they came into the land, they turned from God and worshiped other gods that were worthless. As a result, Israel became worthless herself.*

Day 4

DECREATION

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 163–164.

- ▷ stop at “Small Beginnings: Some Real Estate and a Plant”

It is wrong to think that Yahweh was sitting in heaven waiting for Israel to sin so that he could punish them. Sadly, this is often the portrait people have of God from the Old Testament—he is only a God of wrath. But this is not the whole picture. It grieves God deeply to inflict punishment on his people, even though it is only just and righteous of him to do so.

God must tear down and uproot what he so graciously and tenderly planted. The language Jeremiah uses to describe Judah’s judgment is rife with de-creation language. Just as God had created his people to live in his land and under his rule, now he was destroying his people and casting them out of their land, all because they had rejected his rule. His kingdom was in ruins.

Jeremiah 4:23–26

²³ *I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.*

²⁴ *I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.*

²⁵ *I looked, and behold, there was no man,
and all the birds of the air had fled.*

²⁶ *I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before Yahweh, before his fierce anger.*

13. Compare this passage with Genesis 1:1–31. What similarities do you notice? What differences?

- **ANSWER.** *In Jeremiah, the land became like what was before God’s creating work (formless and void). There was no light. The land was in chaos. There were no animals. There was no man. The plants had all grown barren. The cities were destroyed. Most of this language was used in Genesis 1, but it is flipped on its head. God is undoing what he did at creation. This is very symbolic of his judgment.*

This “decreation” of Judah is merely a prelude to the universal judgment that God would pour out on the nations. The last six chapters of Jeremiah (46–51) contain oracles against the nations.

If God’s judgment involves a loss of creation—the very foundation of life—then it is not surprising that it also involves a loss of covenant blessings. Judah is not merely losing its land (Jeremiah 7, 26), but its dynasty (22:24–30). Ironically, it is the land that the people trust in (namely, the temple—7:4, 9–10) and the dynasty that the kings trust in (namely, God’s promises to David—22:1–5), neither of which will protect them on the Day of Judgment.

14. Why was it foolish for Judah to trust in God’s promises of land and dynasty to save them from divine judgment?

· **ANSWER.** *God’s promises of land and dynasty both have conditional elements to them. It was foolish to think that they could live in sin and expect covenant blessings. They needed to repent and turn back to Yahweh.*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 250–254.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Jeremiah Portrayed Babylon as God’s Instrument and Object of Judgment”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Jeremiah Promised Restoration and a New Covenant Between Yahweh and His People”

Judah would have missed the point if they had seen their captivity as merely the result of poor leadership decisions or a weak military. Their situation was theological at its core—it was just clothed in historical events, the way God usually works his world. That is, Babylon was not just a stronger nation preying on a weaker insubordinate nation. God raised Babylon and gave her strength and might in order that she might be his servant to punish his people for violating the Mosaic covenant. Just as God had used Assyria to punish Israel, God is now using Babylon to judge Judah. The prophets even refer to these nations and their kings as “servants” of Yahweh.

Jeremiah 25:9

⁹ Behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares Yahweh, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

The natural response to an impending attack by another nation would have been to calculate the strength of one's own army, gather troops, prepare for a siege, train for war, etc. All these things would have been futile for Judah to attempt, since their God was actually fighting on their enemy's side!

Jeremiah 38:2-3

² Thus says Yahweh: He who stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, but he who goes out to the Chaldeans shall live. He shall have his life as a prize of war, and live. ³ Thus says Yahweh: This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and be taken.

15. What counter-intuitive strategy did Jeremiah exhort Judah to utilize in their present situation? Why were Judah's leaders so resistant to this idea?

- **ANSWER.** Jeremiah told King Zedekiah that submission to Babylon was the only way to avoid complete destruction (Jeremiah 21:8-10; 38:1-3, 17-23). Obviously, this would have sounded foolish, traitorous, and anti-nationalistic to the leaders of Judah.

We noted in the previous lesson that God's judgment was not reserved only for Israel and Judah (cf. Amos 2:4-8), but also for the nations, since all peoples had broken his law and violated his character (Isaiah 23-30; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 35-42; Nahum; Amos 1:3-2:3).

Jeremiah 46:19

¹⁹ Prepare yourselves baggage for exile, O inhabitants of Egypt! For Memphis shall become a waste, a ruin, without inhabitant.

Jeremiah 46:25-26

²⁵ Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, said: "Behold, I am bringing punishment upon Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh and Egypt and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who trust in him. ²⁶ I will deliver them into the hand of those who seek their life, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers. Afterward Egypt shall be inhabited as in the days of old, declares Yahweh."

Jeremiah 51:11

¹¹ Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of Yahweh, the vengeance for his temple.

While God uses nations as he pleases to accomplish his purposes, he still holds every king, nation, and people responsible for their actions. Every person will stand before Yahweh one day and receive a just reward for his actions on earth (2 Cor. 5:10). Even Babylon did not avoid divine judgment. Babylon's destruction by the Persians in 539 B.C. is a foreshadow of this reality. One day, all of God's enemies will be destroyed forever, when God's ultimate enemy, named "Babylon" by the author of Revelation, will be thrown into the lake of fire for eternity (Revelation 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).

Revelation 16:19

¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.

Revelation 17:5

⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."

Revelation 18:10

*¹⁰ They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say,
"Alas! Alas! You great city,
you mighty city, Babylon!
For in a single hour your judgment has come."*

Revelation 18:21

*²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying,
"So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,
and will be found no more."*

16. What term does John use in Revelation to identify the epitome of evil on earth that will be thrown into the lake of fire for eternity?

· ANSWER. *Babylon*

Yet, despite the judgment, God also promised that he would restore the fortunes of those nations that repented (Jeremiah 12:14–16; 48:47; 49:6, 36), just as he would for Israel (Jeremiah 30–33).

Day 5

“BUILD AND PLANT”

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 254–258.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Jeremiah Promised Restoration and a New Covenant Between Yahweh and His People”

Israel experienced the climax of the covenant curses: exile from the Promised Land. Some of God’s people (including Jeremiah) actually return to Egypt—an exodus reversal—further emphasizing the disastrous results of disobedience to God’s covenant. Israel had indeed been plucked up and broken down, destroyed and overthrown (Jer. 1:10).

But the flip-side of Jeremiah’s message had yet to “take root.” God would still “build and plant” his people back in their land. There would be another exodus, greater than the first, led by another Davidic king, also greater than the first.

🔗 **BIBLE STUDY:** Jeremiah 31:31–34; 32:36–41; 33:14–18; Deuteronomy 30:1–6

Jeremiah 31:31–34

³¹ Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares Yahweh. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 32:36–41

³⁶ Now therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence': ³⁷ Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. ³⁸ And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

Jeremiah 33:14–18

¹⁴ Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'Yahweh is our righteousness.' ¹⁷ For thus says Yahweh: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, ¹⁸ and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.

17. Underline every promise you can find contained in the new covenant. Which is the most staggering promise to you?

• ANSWER. Answers will vary

18. When do you think these promises would be fulfilled? In Jeremiah 33:14–18, what figure would be the key to Israel's salvation and the fulfillment of all God's promises? How would this figure rule the land?

• ANSWER. These promises would be fulfilled in the new covenant when Jesus, the son of David, would come and rule over God's people in justice and righteousness. He would restore God's kingdom on earth.

Deuteronomy 30:1–6

¹ And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you, ² and return to Yahweh your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ then Yahweh your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you. ⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. ⁵ And Yahweh your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

19. Write down some of the connections between Moses' prophecy and Jeremiah's prophecies. How does Jeremiah expand on these concepts?

· **ANSWER.** Answers will vary. Both prophets speak of a time when God's people would return to him (Deuteronomy 30:2–4; Jeremiah 32:37); God's people would once again practice heart obedience (Deuteronomy 30:2; Jeremiah 31:33; 32:39–40); God will restore their fortunes (Deuteronomy 30:3, 5; Jeremiah 32:27; 33:16); God will perform heart surgery to cause his people to love and obey him (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31:33; 32:39). Moses says Israel will obey God's law (written on stone); Jeremiah says God will write his law on their hearts. Moses speaks of Israel loving God with all their heart and soul; Jeremiah speaks of the same, yet adds that Yahweh "will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul" (Jeremiah 32:41).

The problem with the Old Covenant was not the Mosaic Law itself, but Israel's heart which was stubborn and rebellious and unable to keep the law (cf. Deuteronomy 29:4; Jeremiah 5:23). The New Covenant would enable all of its members to permanently obey God's commandments by transforming their heart and giving them the internal desire and disposition to do so. The restored remnant of Israel and the nations would never again have to experience judgment and exile for disobedience to Yahweh's commands, and they would forever enjoy the fullness of blessing in the Promised Land (32:39–41).

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 164–167.

- ▷ begin at “Small Beginnings: Some Real Estate and a Plant”
- ▷ stop at “Ezekiel: The Life-Giving Divine Presence”

“In the Sinai covenant Israel was required to serve God with all its heart and soul; God now rejoices over the Israelites ‘planting them in the land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul’ (32:41). What Israel cannot do, God will do” (DD, 165).

The same God who exercised judgment on his people would mercifully restore and rebuild them. This is consistent with his character (Exodus 34:6–7).

Jeremiah 31:28

²⁸ *And it shall come to pass that as I watched over [the house of Israel and the house of Judah] to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares Yahweh.*

This restoration process involved a new covenant, as mentioned above.

20. According to Dempster, why would the “new covenant work,” unlike the Sinai covenant? What do you think this means?

- **ANSWER.** *In the new covenant, God’s law would be written on his people’s hearts, not on tablets of stone. With a new heart, God’s people would be able to obey him and love him and keep the covenant.*

When would God begin the process of rebuilding and replanting? According to Jeremiah 30:24, it would be ‘in the latter days’ but according to Jer. 29:10, it would be after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Thus, it may be concluded that the exodus from Babylon back to the land of Canaan marked the beginning of God’s resurrection of the Davidic dynasty. This was foreshadowed in captivity with the release of Jehoiachin from prison, as is highlighted in 2 Kings 25.

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of Jeremiah so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Jeremiah suffered greatly as a prophet who declared God's word to a rebellious generation. Describe a time when you were mistreated for speaking truth in a hostile situation. How can Matthew 5:11–12 provide comfort to you in these times?
2. Discuss the seeming paradox between God's mercy and justice demonstrated to Israel, Judah, and the nations. What do you find surprising? Difficult to accept? Comforting? Consider things like his patience, his calls for repentance, his using nations to punish other nations, his wrath towards idolatry, his authority over all nations, his inclusion of all nations in the new covenant, etc.
3. Discuss the characteristics of the New Covenant. How does it differ from the Mosaic covenant? What texts speak about this covenant or its implications for God's people?
4. Your own question(s):

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,655–2,657.

Ezekiel

3

🔗 INTRODUCTION

While Jeremiah had the responsibility of declaring destruction and restoration for God's people, it was Ezekiel's job to specify why this destruction was coming upon them and what this meant for God's presence while they were in exile. Ezekiel was taken into exile in 597 B.C. and was given his call to prophesy to Judah shortly after (while in Babylon). His message would have been the last thing the exiled Israelites would have wanted to hear, and thus Ezekiel may have had one of the most difficult ministries of all the prophets. On top of this, God asked him to do bizarre acts as symbols of greater realities that God was performing among his people.

Interestingly, the phrase "know that I am Yahweh" occurs more than seventy times in the book, indicating one of the main themes in Ezekiel's writing. God punishes his people (Ezekiel 7:4), disperses them among the nations (12:15), destroys cities and desolates lands (12:20), establishes his covenant (16:62), gives his Sabbaths (20:12), brings his people into the land of Canaan (20:42), punishes pagan nations (30:19), does good to his people (36:11), vindicates the holiness of his great name (36:23), raises his people from the grave (37:13), and dwells among his people (37:28), all so that Israel and the nations may "know that I am Yahweh." As you read, consider this theme and how you might know Yahweh better through this study.

🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▶ understand the significance of God's presence among his people, even through exile.
- ▶ communicate the beauty and necessity of God's grace for sinful people.
- ▶ show how salvation belongs to Yahweh alone.

Total pages of reading for this week: 23



You could potentially begin class this week by reading (or having a student read) Ezekiel chapter one and then praising God for being such a glorious God. This will set the tone for the class and magnify the God who shows such grace to sinful people.

If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. For the book of Ezekiel, DeRouchie recommends

- ▷ Block, Daniel I. *The Book of Ezekiel*, 2 vols. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 1998.
- ▷ Duiguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- ▷ Stuart, Douglas. *Ezekiel*. TPC. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002.
- ▷ Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Message of Ezekiel*. BST. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.



Day 1

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EZEKIEL: AN OVERVIEW

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 167–172.

- ▷ begin at “Ezekiel: The Life-Giving Divine Presence”
- ▷ stop at “Isaiah: The Shoot from Jesse’s Stump”

The book of Ezekiel begins with an extraordinary vision of the glory of God, wherein he is portrayed as transcendent and sovereign. Ezekiel falls on his face in response. In contrast to this majestic divine image, Ezekiel is referred to as a “son of man” ninety-three times in the book, which emphasizes his weakness as a prophet and his dependence on God’s Spirit to work through him (Ezekiel 2:2).

After the vision of God (Ch. 1) and Ezekiel’s call (Chs. 2–3), Ezekiel is given his first assignment as a prophet: he is to lay on his side for a total of 430 days!

1. According to Dempster, what important images do these initial events in the book evoke in the reader’s mind? What do these images foreshadow? (see *DD*, 168–169)

· **ANSWER.** *A transcendent God in the clouds is commissioning a son of man not only to prophesy but to bear the punishment for Israel’s sin (Ezekiel 4:4–6). Ezekiel is a type (a kind of foreshadowing – see a full definition in Day 5 of Lesson 12) of Christ who would be sent by his transcendent Father to warn his people of judgment and then to bear the punishment for their sins on the cross (Matthew 17:5; 24:30; Luke 24:46–47).*

2. What is the greatest punishment that Israel experiences (*DD*, 169)? In the context of a covenant relationship, why is this the case? (Consider what this would mean in a father/son or husband/wife relationship).

· **ANSWER.** *The departure of the divine presence is the greatest punishment since a covenant relationship requires two parties (both God and people). Israel’s sin forced God’s presence out of the temple and out of the land. The covenant had been broken and the people could not experience blessing apart from God’s presence.*

At one point, God's people recognize their lost condition and ask the essential question God wanted them to ask:

Ezekiel 33:10

¹⁰ Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?

The book makes clear what Israel needed:

Ezekiel 11:19–20

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 18:31

³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 36:26–27

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.

3. What did Israel need in order to obey Yahweh and keep the covenant?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel needed a new heart and a new spirit that would enable them to obey Yahweh and his commandments.*

Similar to Jeremiah, Ezekiel prophesies of a new covenant, yet he transcends Jeremiah's description of the covenant by saying that God will atone for the sins of his people (Ezekiel 16:63). But atonement and forgiveness are not all that's needed. God's people are spiritually dead and they need divine breath breathed into them to make them live. This reality is portrayed through Ezekiel's vision of the killing-fields of Babylon being scattered with Israel's bones. The scene is quite bleak and hopeless.

“Then the resurrection miracle happens. The divine Spirit assembles the bones into a mass of skeletons, applies muscle, ligaments and skin, and then inspires the renewed bodies with new life (cf. Gen. 2). Thus is created a mighty new humanity that can be placed in a new ‘Eden’” (DD, 170).

God’s people are outside of God’s land and are not under God’s rule and are therefore experiencing curse, not blessing. Even the Davidic throne is laid waste as Zedekiah, the only Davidic king mentioned in the book, has his crown removed in judgment (Ezekiel 21:26–27). Clearly he is not the one who would fulfill the Davidic covenant!

Yet, with the resurrection of God’s people would come the resurrection of the Davidic dynasty. Two images are given to portray this reality: a shepherd and a sprig.

Ezekiel 34:23–34

²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am Yahweh; I have spoken.

Ezekiel 17:22–24

²² Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I am Yahweh; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am Yahweh; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

4. What can we learn about Yahweh’s character from these passages that speak of God restoring his people?

· **ANSWER.** *Yahweh is a servant who takes care of his people (Ezekiel. 34:23); Yahweh keeps his covenant (34:34); Yahweh’s word is powerful and will always be accomplished (34:24; 17:24); Yahweh is faithful to preserve his remnant (17:22); Yahweh is a universal God (17:23); Yahweh wants to be known (17:24); Yahweh reverses the states of affairs, humbling the proud and exalting the lowly (17:24).*

We read the Bible because it tells us about God. It is God's Word to us about himself. Therefore, every time we read Scripture we should ask the question, "What does this tell me about God?" This is true, even for prophetic books like Ezekiel. Consider what ways you may "know that I am Yahweh" as you study this book.

Day 2

EZEKIEL'S CALL

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 260–265.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ezekiel Accentuated the Temple as Mediating God’s Glorious Presence on Earth”

As was mentioned in the introduction to this lesson, Ezekiel was sent to warn the people of Judah that judgment was certain because of their sin. He was also told that the people would not listen to him because they were rebellious.

Ezekiel 2:3–5

³ *And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. ⁴ The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ ⁵ And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

Ezekiel 3:7

⁷ *But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart.*

5. True/False: There is no proof in the book of Ezekiel that anyone ever listened to his voice.

YAHWEH'S SOVEREIGNTY

Yahweh created the world and therefore has the right to hold all of his creation accountable. We have seen this idea numerous times from the universal fall (Genesis 3) to the promise of universal restoration of blessing (12:1–3) to the judgment of the nations because of their sin (Jeremiah 46–51). This idea also appears in Ezekiel (specifically Chs. 25–32). God’s wrath was not only meant to show *Israel* Yahweh’s demand for righteousness, but to show *all the nations* his demand for righteousness.

Ezekiel 38:23

²³ *So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am Yahweh.*

Ezekiel 39:6–7

⁶ *I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am Yahweh. ⁷ And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel.*

6. Sprinkle shows that the book of Ezekiel is bookended with two visions that highlight Yahweh's universal supremacy (WOTARCA, 262–263). Describe these two visions.

- **ANSWER.** *The first vision (Ch. 1) is that of Yahweh exalted in the heavens. He is sitting on a throne over the expanse of the earth, portraying him as sovereign over all creatures and all nations. The latter vision (Chs. 40–48) is that of the glory of Yahweh returning to Jerusalem and residing once again on the throne in the temple (43:1–9), which is located on top of a high mountain in a city (40:2) “ruling,” as it were, over the rest of creation.*

Perhaps the most succinct and forceful summary of God's sovereignty in all the Bible comes from the psalmist's lips:

Psalm 115:3

³ *Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.*

Ezekiel fleshes this concept out as Yahweh sovereignly use nations to judge other nations, including his own people. All of this was for one purpose: that the whole world might “know that I am Yahweh.”

Ezekiel 36:22

²² *Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.*

7. Is it wrong or self-centered for Yahweh to act for his sake? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *It is not wrong for God to act for his own glory—to do otherwise would be idolatry. God is the only being in the universe for whom this could be said, since he alone is worthy of all praise and adoration. Thus, he acts in human history to make this reality known to all people. The salvation of Israel (and all his people) is that all might see and love his mercy and grace towards a sinful and rebellious people.*

All of history is driving towards a specific goal—namely, the exaltation of Yahweh's name above all else. It is for this purpose that God created the world and it is for this purpose that he designed redemptive history the way he did. In the end, God will destroy all his foes and restore the shalom that once characterized the world. His kingdom will be restored and his Son, the Davidic King, will rule over God's people forever.

Ezekiel 39:21–25

²¹ *And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.* ²² *The house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day forward.* ²³ *And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword.* ²⁴ *I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.* ²⁵ *Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: Now, I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.*

8. Summarize the passage above in your own words.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*
After I have punished Israel for their sins, everyone will fear me and know that I am Yahweh, the God of Israel. I gave Israel into the hands of their enemies and they were destroyed because they forsook me. Yet, I will restore Israel because I don't want my holy name to be marred by the fate of my people.

Day 3

YAHWEH'S PRESENCE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 265–269.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ezekiel Accentuated the Temple as Mediating God’s Glorious Presence on Earth”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ezekiel Believed that God Abhors Sin and Will Judge It Accordingly”

God has always intended to dwell with his people. This, in and of itself, is a mind-boggling reality! We know that the intrusion of sin into God’s creation created a barrier between him and his people—a barrier that will not be completely abolished until Christ returns and undoes the curse by judging sin and death. Yet God has always made a way to dwell among his people. The first example of this occurred in the tabernacle where the glory of Yahweh resided (Exod. 40:34). Then, with the establishment of the monarchy, Solomon built the temple and, once again, we see the glory of Yahweh filling the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). It is here that God dwells with his people in the Old Testament.

9. In the Old Testament, where did God’s presence dwell among his people? Select the correct answer. According to Sprinkle, was God’s presence limited to this place? How does Ezekiel show this is the case?

- a) Mt. Sinai
- b) The temple
- c) In the hearts of the Israelites
- d) God did not dwell among his people until the New Covenant

- **ANSWER.** *God’s presence was not limited to the temple. Solomon himself declared that the temple he built for Yahweh could not contain him (1 Kings 8:27)! Ezekiel tells us that God’s glory appeared to him beside the Chebar canal, outside the temple (1:1–3). Also, Yahweh’s presence was with Israel while they were in Babylon in exile (11:16).*

But when Israel breaks God's covenant, there are consequences, the most significant being the removal of God's presence. The prophet Ezekiel has a vision that demonstrates this heart-breaking truth. Observe the progression as the glory of Yahweh departs from the ark of the covenant, then from the temple, and then from the city.

Ezekiel 9:3

³ *Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house.*

Ezekiel 10:18

¹⁸ *Then the glory of Yahweh went out from the threshold of the house.*

Ezekiel 11:23

²³ *And the glory of Yahweh went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city.*

10. Explain what happened to God's presence with the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. and the subsequent exile in Babylon.

· **ANSWER.** *God's presence had already left the temple before the Babylonians destroyed it in 586 B.C. (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:23), thus, God was not destroyed even though his house was. Even in exile, God's presence was with his people (11:16). All of this points to the reality that "heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27).*

But God's presence is not gone for good. Curse is never the last word for God's people. God "sanctuaries" among his people while they are in Babylon. But more significantly, he promises that his glory will return and he will dwell among them once again. This theme dominates the latter part of the book (Chs. 34-48).

THE SHEPHERD

Specifically, God's presence among his restored people is described in three ways. First, Ezekiel describes Israel as sheep who have been scattered and have no shepherd (34:5-6). Israel's leaders ("shepherds") do not care for the sheep; rather they feed themselves and allow the sheep to be preyed upon (34:8). Sheep without a shepherd are the epitome of helplessness (cf. Matt. 9:36), and for a people exiled outside their land with no leader, this naturally leads to hopelessness. But Yahweh is a God of hope!

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 22-24

¹¹ For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.... ²² I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am Yahweh; I have spoken.

11. According to v. 15, who will be Israel's shepherd? According to v. 23, who will be Israel's shepherd? Circle these two shepherds in the text above. What can you conclude concerning the agent through whom God's presence will be mediated to his people in the restoration?

· **ANSWER.** Verse 15—the Lord GOD. Verse 23—a Son of David (cf. 37:24). In the restoration, God's presence will be mediated through a Son of David who is also a Son of God! This can only be Jesus.

The Spirit

The second way in which God's presence is described is through his Spirit. Consider these texts that speak of the restoration.

Ezekiel 36:27–28

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.

Ezekiel 37:13–14

¹³ And you shall know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares Yahweh.

Ezekiel 39:29

²⁹ And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.

There will come a day when God's Spirit will indwell his *people*, not merely the *temple*. Israel's exile is not the end of God's presence; rather, it is the means through which greater promises of his presence are given to his desperate people. These promises are fulfilled in the new covenant when God himself comes to earth in the form of a man and then leaves his Spirit to indwell each individual member of the new covenant.

God's presence can be difficult to understand, especially for a culture that is so centered on the 'here and now,' the tangible, the material, what we can see. Yet, as Christians, we must not underestimate or deny the reality of God's presence with us every second of our lives. Jesus promised to be with us always "to the end of the age" (Matthew 20:28). Yet, shortly after he made this comment, he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) and has never appeared since. Did he go back on his word?

The way in which Jesus fulfilled his promise was by sending his Spirit to dwell in the hearts of his disciples (John 14:16–17). Consider what Jesus says about his own presence and the presence of his Spirit.

John 16:7

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

12. According to Jesus, would it be better for God's people for him to still be walking this earth, or is it better for his Spirit to indwell each of God's people? Explain why you think this is the case.

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus says it is better for him to go away because he would send his Spirit to indwell each of God's people. While Jesus necessarily had to come and die to pay for the sins of God's people, his role here on earth has finished (for now). It is up to the Spirit to enlighten the eyes of the hearts of God's people and grant them faith so that they will believe in Jesus and his work on the cross. The Spirit is the One who raises people to life. Further, it is the Spirit who personally indwells God's people and governs his/her relationship with the Son and the Father.*

The New Temple

The final way in which God's presence is described in Ezekiel is through a restored temple. Ezekiel has a vision of a new temple wherein God's glory will reside once again (Chs. 40–43). Yet, in many ways, this temple seems too magnificent and too glorious to describe the second temple built by Israel under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

As Sprinkle explains, Ezekiel's vision almost certainly describes the new heavens and new earth, which are described by John in Revelation using similar terms (see Revelation 21:10, 15 and Ezekiel 40:2–3; Rev. 21:16 and Ezek. 42:15–20; Rev. 22:1–2 and Ezek. 47:1–12).

But before this future and ultimate fulfillment, we must understand that the Spirit of God dwells in his church, which Paul says is being built into a dwelling place for God—i.e. a temple (Ephesians 2:21–22; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). As God builds his church, each individual member is a “living stone” (1 Peter 2:5) and is added to this temple which contains the throne of almighty God, from which the river of life flows, restoring all of creation to its pre-fall condition.

“This life-giving flow thus signifies that God’s return to his new temple in the “new Jerusalem” is in some way a return to Eden, where the Creator resided in perfect harmony with his creation. In Ezekiel’s words at the end of the book, the renewed paradise of God will be called, “The LORD Is There” (Ezekiel 48:35)” (WOTARCA, 268).⁴

According to John, this is exactly what we find in the new heavens and new earth, where God’s presence is finally and fully among his people forever, and it will not be mediated through a temple, but through the direct presence of God himself.

Ezekiel 48:35

³⁵ *And the name of the city from that time on shall be, Yahweh is There.*

Revelation 21:3

³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*

Revelation 21:22

²² *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*

⁴ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 4

AN ADULTEROUS PEOPLE

While the restoration of God's people included Yahweh's glorious presence (Ezek. 48:35), Israel would still experience the curses for covenant disloyalty, a fact reminding readers that God takes sin seriously.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 269–271.

- ▶ begin at “The Author of Ezekiel Believed that God Abhors Sin and Will Judge It Accordingly”
- ▶ stop at “The Author of Ezekiel Affirmed that Salvation is Possible Only by God's Relentless, Unmerited Grace”

Sin is described in many ways throughout the canon of Scripture: hardening one's heart (Exodus 9:34); being stiff-necked (Exodus 34:9); breaking the covenant (Leviticus 26:15); rejecting the word of Yahweh (1 Samuel 15:23); idolatry (Ezekiel 23:49); trying to find pleasure and satisfaction apart from Yahweh (Jeremiah 2:13); suppressing the truth about God for lies (Romans 1:18); and more.

But perhaps the most graphic and provocative depiction of sin is that of the act of adultery. It is a fitting metaphor in a story about a God and his covenant people, after which the very institution of marriage is patterned. Ezekiel uses the picture of an unfaithful spouse to describe Israel's sin—a picture that unveils the ugly face of sin and speaks to the heart of every man or woman who reads these words.

Ezekiel 16:1–34

¹ Again the word of Yahweh came to me: ² “Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ³ and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴ And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. ⁵ No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

⁶ “And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’⁷ I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

⁸ “When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine.⁹ Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.¹⁰ I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk.¹¹ And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck.¹² And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.¹³ Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.¹⁴ And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.

¹⁵ “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his.¹⁶ You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be.¹⁷ You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.¹⁸ And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them.¹⁹ Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the Lord GOD.²⁰ And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter²¹ that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them?²² And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood.

²³ “And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! declares the Lord GOD),²⁴ you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square.²⁵ At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring.²⁶ You also played the whore with the Egyptians,

your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

²⁷ Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. ²⁸ You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. ²⁹ You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.

³⁰ “How sick is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, ³¹ building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square. Yet you were not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment. ³² Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! ³³ Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings. ³⁴ So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.

The Bible talks about God’s dealings with a hard, violent, and crass world.

Ezekiel 16 is a prime example of the uncensored language many of the biblical writers use (especially the prophets) to shock their readers and awaken them to the reality of their sinful condition.

13. How is Israel described in this passage as a result of her sin? Underline the key word in vv. 15–34. How was Israel’s sin even worse than that of a prostitute (see vv. 30–34)?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel is described as whore (prostitute), which is the key word used in this passage. Yet, Ezekiel describes their sin as worse than a prostitute because Israel actually gave gifts and bribed people to come in to them so that they could commit adultery.*

14. Consider your own struggle with a specific sin(s). How can this sin be seen as spiritual adultery? As you reflect on this, record your thoughts and take some time to pray about this area(s) so that you might be a more faithful bride to Christ (Ephesians 5:22–27).

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

15. While adultery is used to describe the nature of Israel's sin, Ezekiel also points out a specific sin that has led to their condemnation. According to Sprinkle, what was one of the most significant ways Israel sinned against Yahweh? Select the correct answer.

- a) Worshipping idols of pagan gods
- b) Constantly committing violence and bloodshed among themselves and among other nations
- c) Showing partiality and social injustice against those less fortunate
- d) Sacrificing their children to pagan gods

Ezekiel 16:49

⁴⁹ Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

While God loves all mankind, Scripture indicates that he has a particular affection and concern for those who are poor, helpless, and vulnerable. In Israel's culture, those who fit this description were often the poor, the widows, and the orphans (fatherless). Because God deeply loves and cares for the marginal in society, so should those who are made in his image.

1 John 3:17

¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

James 1:27

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

16. Choose one (or both) of the verses above and put it into your own words.

· ANSWER. Answers will vary

A1. 1 John 3:17: If you have all your needs met and see someone else who has a need, but you do not meet that need, you should not call yourself a Christian.

A2. James 1:27: Genuine Christianity—the kind that pleases God—will manifest itself in caring for orphans and widows while not being conformed to the world's selfish way of thinking.

Day 5

SAVED BY GRACE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 271–276.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ezekiel Affirmed that Salvation is Possible Only by God’s Relentless, Unmerited Grace”

In this section of reading Sprinkle describes Yahweh’s relentless, unmerited grace as the ultimate hope not just of Israel, but of all mankind. In his words, “Grace is Yahweh’s ability to keep his promise and to bless Israel *despite* its sinful ways” (WOTARCA, 271).⁵

Sprinkle uses Ezekiel 16 (a passage we considered yesterday) to show one of Yahweh’s greatest manifestations of this grace by highlighting the last verses of this chapter (which we did not consider).

Ezekiel 16:59–63

⁵⁹ For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, ⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. ⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am Yahweh, ⁶³ that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD.”

17. What is so striking about Ezekiel 16:59–63 given the first 58 verses of the chapter? What does this highlight about God’s character?

- **ANSWER.** *Despite Israel’s sinful life of adultery and broken covenant, Yahweh makes a new everlasting covenant with his people and promises to atone for all that they have done. This is an amazing act of grace toward an undeserving recipient.*

⁵ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distribution is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

As Sprinkle noted, the first two-thirds of the book of Ezekiel focus primarily on sin and judgment (though there are glorious glimpses of hope, such as the passage above), while the last 16 chapters of Ezekiel (Chs. 33–48) highlight God’s grace in amazing ways.

“[Ezekiel] 36–37 stands as one of the most important passages for understanding the New Testament doctrine of salvation and the contours of Ezekiel’s salient concern for God’s grace” (WOTARCA, 274).⁶

🔗 BIBLE STUDY: Ezekiel 36:22–32

Ezekiel 36:22–32

²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ 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. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

⁶ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Ezekiel 36 (and 37) describes the restoration of God's people from their exile and from their broken relationship with Yahweh.

18. Underline every action Yahweh will take in this restoration process.
Circle every action God's people will take in this restoration process.
What does this passage teach you about the doctrine of salvation?

· *ANSWER. There are no actions that Israel performs in its restoration (the only actions Israel does is sins and is ashamed of its sin). The entire act, from beginning to end, is the work of Yahweh. The same is true of salvation. God brings people to life who would otherwise be unable to save themselves. He does this for his own sake and to vindicate his holy name.*

19. According to v. 27, how will God's people be able to walk in his statutes and obey his rules? When will this promise be fulfilled (see Acts 2:1–4; cf. Joel 2:28–29)? How will this be different than what Israel previously experienced under the old covenant (see Deuteronomy 29:4; Romans 8:7, 9)?

· *ANSWER. God's people will only be able to walk in his statutes and obey his rules when God places his Spirit in his people. This promise is fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when God's people are filled with his Spirit. Under the old covenant, the Spirit did not indwell the entirety of God's covenant people. Rather, God's presence dwelt in the tabernacle. Thus, God had not given his people the ability to keep his commandments perfectly (Deuteronomy 29:4); rather, he showed them their need for a Savior by giving them law.*

20. What image does Ezekiel use to show the “newness” of Israel's heart in v. 26? How does this image differ from the image portrayed in Deuteronomy 30:6 and Jeremiah 31:33?

· *ANSWER. Ezekiel uses the image of a heart transplant (Ezekiel 36:26). Moses uses the image of a circumcised heart (Deuteronomy 30:6). Jeremiah uses the image of a “law-inscribed” heart (Jeremiah 31:33). A transplant means that there is an entirely different heart. An inscription is merely something done to the heart.*

Israel is spiritually dead. In fact, this is the natural state of all mankind ever since Adam and Eve sunk their teeth into the forbidden fruit (cf. Ephesians 2:1). As a result, God's people are now "east of Eden"—just as Adam and Eve were. They have stone hearts that are incapable of pumping life-giving blood through their spiritual veins (Ezekiel 36:26). They are described as a graveyard full of dusty skeletons (37:1–2). All due to their failure to keep God's commandments. And this would be the end of the story if it were not for God's grace.

"But God..." are two of the most beautiful words in the entire Bible (see Ephesians 2:4), since they highlight God's grace towards spiritually dead people. God breathed life into the bones of Israel making them living beings with flesh and skin (Ezekiel 37:5–14). Of course, this is symbolic of their spiritual lives; nonetheless, it is just as real! In the same way, God is still calling people from the dead to be his people and to share in the covenant blessings promised to Israel thousands of years ago (see Ephesians 2:1–10 and 1:3–14).

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of Ezekiel so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Describe a time when you were shown grace by someone when you clearly did not deserve it. How did this make you feel?
2. How do passages like Ezekiel 16 make you feel when you read them? How does this effect the way you view your own sin?
3. Compare and contrast Ezekiel 37:1–14 with Ephesians 2:1–10. Discuss the doctrine of salvation from these passages.
4. Your own question(s):

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,657–2,659.

Isaiah

4

§ INTRODUCTION

Isaiah began prophesying prior to the destruction of Israel by Assyria and thus, his message contains warning of judgment for God’s people. For the modern reader who is far removed from their time and culture, the prophets certainly sound like they are beating a dead horse by this point! But we must remember that it was not every day that God’s people heard a prophet speak. Isaiah’s words were crucial for the people of Judah to heed, just as they are crucial for modern readers to heed.

The first half of the book emphasizes the impending destruction of Israel (Chs. 1–39) while the latter half offers the hope of salvation for God’s people through a certain “suffering servant” (Chs. 40–66). The final chapters describe a new heavens and new earth where God will rule as king. God’s kingdom will be restored. Things will one day be the way they were supposed to be from the beginning.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand why Yahweh alone ought to be the object of hope in one’s life.
- ▷ describe the Suffering Servant (key passages, his identity, his mission, and those who are the object of his mission).
- ▷ explain the two-part redemption (physical and spiritual) that Isaiah foretells.

Total pages of reading for this week: 26



This lesson is rather content-heavy, and it is not realistic to get through all the material in one class. The instructor should choose what to discuss or not to discuss ahead of time, though the topic of the Suffering Servant should surely be discussed, as it is a key component of God's restored kingdom and is unique to the book of Isaiah.

If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. For the book of Isaiah, DeRouchie recommends

- Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1998.
- Oswalt, John N. *Isaiah*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Smith, Gary V. *Isaiah*, 2 vols. NAC. Nashville: B&H, 2007, 2009.
- Young, Edward J. *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.



Day 1

.....

DESTRUCTION IS NEAR

Though Isaiah's message resembles that of other prophets in many ways, his preaching carries the beat of a different drum. Specifically, Isaiah highlights the fact that on the Day of Yahweh, all that is proud and exalted will be brought low and humbled, while all that is low and humble will be exalted and raised up. In this way, portions of Isaiah reflect Hannah's prayer from 1 Samuel 2 where God reverses the state of affairs for his oppressed people. Ultimately, however, it is God himself—represented by the Suffering Servant, whose unparalleled humility leads him to death—who will be exalted on the Day of Yahweh, while all that has to do with sin will be crushed under the Messiah's foot (Isa. 53; 2:11).

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 172–173.

- ▷ begin at “Isaiah: The Shoot From Jesse’s Stump”
- ▷ stop at “A Glorious Destiny”

The book of Isaiah begins in a rather shocking way, as Yahweh describes his people with all their sin and imperfection. God calls heaven and earth to bear witness to his disobedient son, Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 30:19; 31:28), whose land has been absolutely devastated. Consider the opening verses of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1:2–4, 7

² *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
for Yahweh has spoken:*

*“Children have I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.*

³ *The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s crib,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.”*

⁴ *Ah, sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,*

*offspring of evildoers,
children who deal corruptly!
They have forsaken Yahweh,
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged....*

⁷ *Your country lies desolate;
your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence
foreigners devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.*

1. What was the cause of Israel's state of affairs? Was what they experienced just? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *Their sin was the cause of their destruction. This was just because they had broken the covenant God made with them at Sinai. They deserved covenant curses.*

Although this is Israel's current condition, it would not always be this way, since this was never God's intention for his beloved people. Yet Israel's restoration and blessing was contingent upon their repentance, just as the Mosaic covenant prescribed.

Isaiah 1:16–19

¹⁶ *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,*

¹⁷ *learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.*

¹⁸ *"Come now, let us reason together, says Yahweh:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.*

¹⁹ *If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land."*

Yet, at this point in the story God's people had not repented. They were still haughty and living contrary to God's law.

2. What parable did Isaiah give in Isaiah 5:1–7 to show the utter heinousness of Israel's sin? Explain this parable in your own words and identify what the vinedresser, the vineyard, and the wild (bitter) grapes represent.

· **ANSWER.** *Isaiah gives a parable of a vineyard in which Yahweh takes choice vines and plants, nourishes, and protects them. Yet, the vineyard only produces bitter grapes that are no good and therefore he has to destroy the vineyard. Yahweh is the vinedresser, while the vineyard represents Israel. The bitter grapes represent the wicked deeds of Israel.*

RESTORATION WILL FOLLOW

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 173–175.

- ▷ begin at “A Glorious Destiny”
- ▷ stop at the paragraph that begins “The next section describes...”

Isaiah 2:5–4:1 further describes Israel's degenerate condition, yet this passage is bookended by two promises of restoration. The first promise describes Zion as being exalted above all the other nations on the Day of Yahweh (2:1–5). The nations will “flow” to Jerusalem to learn of Yahweh's law (2:3) and there will be no more war (2:4). The latter promise describes a national cleansing that will take place among God's people which will result in a holy nation (4:2–6). These twin promises provide the hope God's people need in a period of divine judgment.

3. According to Dempster, what growing tension is signaled by these twin themes of judgment and glory? (*DD*, 174)

· **ANSWER.** *In Dempster's words, “an inherently sinful people coming and a coming judgment alongside a glorious destiny for Israel ushered in by a messianic figure” (*DD*, 174).*

4. What is unusual about Isaiah's commission to the prophetic ministry? (Isaiah 6:9–10; see *DD*, 175)
- a) Isaiah was called to perform strange sign acts to physically represent his message to God's people.
 - b) God equipped Isaiah with his Spirit to perform miraculous acts to validate his prophetic message.
 - c) Unlike most of the other prophets, Isaiah's ministry would result in widespread repentance among the people of Israel.
 - d) Isaiah's prophetic task would accomplish the antithesis of what it was supposed to—namely, the hardening of God's people.

Isaiah's call signals that God is not finished with his people. As one scholar observes, "Ch. 6 offers on the individual level the solution to the national problem depicted in Chs. 1-5. A sinful man is humbled, cleansed, and then commissioned to do the Lord's work. The remainder of the book will flesh out the implications of this chapter on a national scale."

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 278–280.

- ▷ stop at "The Author of Isaiah Warned of the Dangers of Pride and Unbelief"

Day 2

WHOM WILL YOU TRUST?

The historical setting is important to understand in order for the content of Isaiah to make sense (as with any book of the Bible). Assyria (to the northeast of Israel) experiences a period of weakness which allows for peace and prosperity for Israel and Judah during the days of King Uzziah. Isaiah is called to his prophetic ministry at the very end of Uzziah's reign (Isaiah 6:1). When Tiglath-Pileser III rises to power in Assyria, the pagan nation experiences a surge of strength and prosperity that evokes fear in the surrounding nations, including Judah. This happens during the reign of King Ahaz, Uzziah's grandson. Much of the book of Isaiah deals with Ahaz and his response to this Assyrian threat. Will he trust Yahweh, or will he look to himself, to other nations, or to idols for protection and hope? Isaiah has much to say on this issue, as well as many other crucial topics including redemption through the atoning death of a substitute (Ch. 53).

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 280–283.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Isaiah Warned of the Dangers of Pride and Unbelief”
 - ▷ stop at “The Author of Isaiah Called People to Trust God”
5. What happened to Judah politically in the days of King Uzziah and what was Judah's response? (*WOTARCA*, 280)
- **ANSWER.** *Judah became wealthy and strong during the days of King Uzziah. Thus, they became self-confident and arrogantly trusted in their own strength rather than relying on God's protection.*

King Ahaz faces a very different set of circumstances than Uzziah did. Syria and Israel create a league against the super-power Assyria, but they attack Judah in the process to coerce them into joining them. Ahaz (of Judah) was faced with a decision. Would he trust Yahweh or would he look to the nations for help? Isaiah warns King Ahaz:

Isaiah 7:9

*If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.*

What would his response be? And perhaps the bigger question for the reader is, what will our response be in times of great pressure? Who will we trust in?

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 283–287.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Isaiah Called People to Trust God”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Isaiah Believed the Suffering Servant Paid for the Sins of Many”

Sadly, Ahaz refuses to trust Yahweh and is therefore given a sign (Immanuel—Isaiah 7:14) that Assyria will be destroyed, but that his own land will also (7:17, 20). It is out of this darkness that “a great light” will shine (9:2) as a divine child-king will establish peace among God’s people (7:6). He will sit on David’s throne and rule in righteousness and justice forever (7:7). God’s people will be gathered from the nations (11:10–12)—which will miraculously include gentile nations—and a “shoot from the stump of Jesse” will rule righteously over a redeemed people of Israel.

But before this will happen, judgment will come to God’s people. We have seen that it would be foolish for Ahaz to trust in himself, since God promised to humble all those who are proud and arrogant (2:11, 17; 5:15–16). But what about trusting other nations? Isaiah 13–35 addresses this issue.

6. Why would it be foolish for Judah to trust other nations to protect against the Assyrian attack (see *WOTARCA*, 281–282)?
 - **ANSWER.** *Yahweh was planning to destroy all the nations because of their pride and rebellion against him. Thus, it would be foolish to trust in a nation that was ultimately doomed to destruction.*

7. While you may not be tempted to trust in other geo-political nations to save you from another nation’s attack, what things are you tempted to trust in when your reputation is at stake, when your job is taken away, when you have to tell someone a hard truth, when your children don’t turn out the way you wanted them to, when society seems to be becoming more and more antagonistic towards Christians, etc.? Why is it foolish to trust in these things?
 - **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

After King Ahaz came King Hezekiah who was also faced with an Assyrian attack. Though King Hezekiah initially trusted in Egypt and even Babylon to protect Judah from Assyria, he eventually realized his utter dependence on Yahweh, a God he could not see.

Isaiah 37:20

²⁰ So now, O Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are Yahweh.

God honored Hezekiah's humble trust and struck down 185,000 Assyrian troops in one night. This historical reality ought to motivate us as Christians to trust God when situations in life seem insurmountable. Though we can see our money, our jobs, our reputation, our family, our heritage, etc., ultimately, these things cannot save us from life's challenges. Though we cannot see God like we can see these things, he alone should be our hope and in him alone should we trust.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 175–176.

- ▷ begin at the paragraph that begins “The next section describes...”
- ▷ stop at “Another Israel—An Obedient Son”

Isaiah 9:6–7

*⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.*

8. What hope does Isaiah give the people of God and through whom will this hope be realized?

- *ANSWER. Isaiah prophesies of a time when God's kingdom will be completely restored—Eden will be reestablished! A Davidic King will rule over God's people forever in perfect justice and righteousness.*

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah deal primarily with Judah's judgment through exile. Their sin would cost them both politically and spiritually. While there are a number of passages (such as Isaiah 9:6–7 above) in the first half of the book that give hope for God's people, the latter half focuses on this hope, which we will explore in the final three sections of this lesson.

Day 3

THE SERVANT

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 287–289.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Isaiah Believed the Suffering Servant Paid for the Sins of Many”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Isaiah Longed for God’s Glorious Kingdom”

Smith mentions that Isaiah refers to two different “servants” in the book. The first is a reference to the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people. Yet, Isaiah is clear that this servant failed miserably to accomplish God’s plans for his people.

Isaiah 41:8

⁸ *But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;*

Isaiah 42:18–19

¹⁸ *Hear, you deaf,
and look, you blind, that you may see!*
¹⁹ *Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind as my dedicated one,
or blind as the servant of Yahweh?*

The other servant Isaiah mentions is a singular person from among the nation. This servant would act faithfully and would accomplish God’s goals for his people.

Isaiah 42:1–4

¹ *Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.*
² *He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;*

- ³ *a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.*
- ⁴ *He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

 **BIBLE STUDY:** Isaiah 52:13–53:12

- ¹³ *Behold, my servant shall act wisely;
he shall be high and lifted up,
and shall be exalted.*
- ¹⁴ *As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—*
- ¹⁵ *so shall he sprinkle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which has not been told them they see,
and that which they have not heard they understand.*
- ^{53:1} *Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?*
- ² *For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.*
- ³ *He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
- ⁴ *Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*
- ⁵ *But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*
- ⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;*

*and Yahweh has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

- ⁷ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.*
- ⁸ *By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?*
- ⁹ *And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*
- ¹⁰ *Yet it was the will of Yahweh to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand.*
- ¹¹ *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.*
- ¹² *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

9. For what does the servant suffer so horribly? What do you notice about his response to this unjust treatment? Why do you think God would allow this to happen to his servant?

· **ANSWER.** *The servant suffers, is smitten by God, is wounded, crushed, whipped, oppressed, afflicted, and finally dies for the sins, transgressions, and iniquities of other people, not his own. Yet he endures this suffering with amazing humility—he does not resist the mistreatment (v. 7). Though he is treated horribly, it was God's will for this to happen. Someone had to suffer sin, and God desired for that person to be his servant.*

This theme of substitutionary atonement began in Leviticus with the sacrificial system. Isaiah is extending it to God's anointed Servant who would atone for all the sins of God's people.

Verse 10 says that the servant "makes an offering for guilt." This is the same word used in Leviticus 5 to describe the guilt offering, which was necessary for the atonement of sins that broke one's relationship with God and with others. This type of sacrifice required repentance from the one who offered the sacrifice, and was designed to make reparations for the wrongs committed against God and others.

10. According to vv. 10–12, what is the result of the servant's death? Why was this good news for God's people?

- **ANSWER.** *The servant's death would accomplish a guilt offering, which would atone for Israel's sins and make reparations for all the wrongs God's people had done against Yahweh. They would be justified in God's sight. This was good news because they were experiencing God's wrath over their sins and this prophecy provided hope that their sins would be dealt with by another.*

One commentator highlights the implications of the servant's death being called a "guilt offering" in Isaiah 53:10:

"When Jesus gave his life a ransom for many, the fullest satisfaction was made to God. What Jesus paid on the cross was more than the penalty for sin; his death was sufficient to make reparation for all that had been defrauded by the human race. And upon his offering for sin, God the Father could say, "I have all back, and more!"⁷

11. What is the most striking thing in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 to you? Explain why.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

7 Ross, Allen P. *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002, (153).

THE IDENTITY OF THE SERVANT

While the Old Testament is vague as to who exactly this servant is, links can be made between this suffering servant and the Davidic Messiah who would rule over God's people (Isa. 9:6–7) and who would bring peace and justice to the nations (49:1–4). Further, the description of the servant growing like a 'root' and 'young plant' in Isaiah 53:2 appears to be similar to the passages that describe the Messiah who is like a 'stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots' (11:1). Thus, the hope of Israel—indeed, the hope of all mankind—lies in a Suffering Servant who possesses Davidic kingly qualities.

As Smith highlights, "The New Testament writers and Jesus himself unequivocally identify Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these prophecies about the Suffering Servant" (*WOTARCA*, 288).⁸

12. List three connections between the Old and New Testaments that identify Jesus as the Suffering Servant that Isaiah speaks about (see *WOTARCA*, 288–289). Include references.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

• **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

In the first portion of the Tanakh (Genesis –2 Kings) we saw a tension developing between God's faithfulness to keep his promises and his faithfulness to judge his people for their sin. This tension gradually increases as one reads about the covenant promises God makes to Abraham, Moses, and David alongside the constant failures of God's people to adhere to his law.

In Isaiah, we begin to see a glimpse of how this tension will be resolved—it is through a servant who will be crushed for the iniquity of other people (not his own), yet who will reign in perfect justice and righteousness on the throne of David forever, establishing God's kingdom once again! The hunt for the woman's serpent-crushing offspring, the blessed son of Abraham, and the ruling son of David, is narrowing more and more.

⁸ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 4

THE SERVANT'S MISSION

We've considered how the Servant of Isaiah 42:1–4 and 52:13–53:12 is the only hope for all mankind since he will pay the penalties for their sins through a brutal death. This Servant is the obedient Son of God that Adam and Israel failed to be (cf. Exodus 4:22; Luke 3:38). But who does he come *for*? Who benefits from his life and death?

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 176–182.

- ▷ begin at “Another Israel—An Obedient Son”
- ▷ stop at “The Twelve: The Impending Eschaton”

Consider Yahweh's words to the servant:

Isaiah 42:6–8

- ⁶ *“I am Yahweh; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
⁸ I am Yahweh; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.*

Isaiah 49:6

- ⁶ *he says:
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

13. According to these verses, who is the object of the servant's mission?

- **ANSWER.** *The nations.*

As Genesis 1:1–12:3 makes abundantly clear, God is the God of the whole earth, not just the God of Israel. And just as the whole world was infected by the curse, so will salvation reach to the ends of the earth through the Servant Messiah.

“The servant has become the means of bringing covenant salvation to the world, which means the illumination of the nations... Indeed, the extremities of the globe hope in this salvation (Is. 51:5; 60:9). Balaam’s rising star (Num. 24:17) and Abraham’s universal blessing (Gen. 12:3) have merged” (DD, 177).

14. How does Dempster summarize the servant’s mission (DD, 178)? Select the correct answer. Then explain what this means (cf. Isa. 53).

- a) Humiliation, Sprinkling, Exaltation
- b) Incarnation, Death, Resurrection
- c) Humiliation, Redemption, Glorification
- d) Judgment, Forgiveness, Exaltation

· **ANSWER.** *Jesus would come as a lowly servant, not in pomp and glory. His mission involved the sprinkling of the nations, which is an allusion to the Day of Atonement when God forgave the sins of his people. This sprinkling would involve unimaginable suffering, after which he would be “exceedingly exalted” (Isaiah 52:13).*

Dempster provides a helpful summary of the servant’s identity in Isaiah, as well as his mission and its implications for the world.

15. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

“A Davidic ruler will emerge from the stump of a judged and devastated Israel. This individual is a faithful Israel. His mission leads to suffering that will restore the tribes of Israel and be a light to the nations. The effect of his mission is to provide salvation and justice to the ends of the earth through a sin-bearing sacrifice. Through his sacrifice, the Spirit is poured out upon people and a covenant like the Davidic covenant is made with them as he extends to them ‘the sure mercies of David.’ The Davidic ruler will then assume his kingly role. How this will happen is not spelled out in the text” (DD, 181).

The prophets speak of a new exodus, one greater than the exodus from Egypt. We saw this in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah, however, carries this new exodus theme one step further, prophesying that Israel's redemption will happen in two phases: physical release from captivity in Babylon (Isa. 42:18–43:21) and forgiveness of sins and a restoration of the covenant (43:22–44:23). While the former involved only the people of Judah, the latter would include all the nations as we observed in Isaiah 42 and 49 above. Notice the two distinct redemptions in Isaiah:

Physical Release from Captivity:

Isaiah 43:5–7

⁵ *Fear not, for I am with you;*

*I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you.*

⁶ *I will say to the north, Give up,*

*and to the south, Do not withhold;
bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the end of the earth,*

⁷ *everyone who is called by my name,*

*whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made.*

Isaiah 43:14

¹⁴ *Thus says Yahweh,*

*your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
“For your sake I send to Babylon
and bring them all down as fugitives,
even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice.”*

Forgiveness of Sins:

Isaiah 43:25

²⁵ *I, I am he*

*who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.*

Isaiah 44:21–22

- ²¹ *Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you; you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.*
- ²² *I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.*

This spiritual redemption from sin will happen as the servant accomplishes his mission on earth—namely, to die in place of the guilty (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). By removing the obstacle that stands between God and his people (59:2), the servant will appease God’s wrath. The guilty will be pardoned. Those who are poor will be given hope. Those who are broken-hearted will be healed. Those who sit chained in the dark prison of their sinful souls will be unshackled. Yahweh will pour out his mercy and kindness. Yet, Yahweh will also demonstrate perfect justice as he avenges all his enemies.

Isaiah 61:1–2

- ¹ *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because Yahweh has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison for those who are bound;*
- ² *to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,*

Luke 4:16–21

- ¹⁶ *And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.*
- ¹⁷ *And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written,*
- ¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.
And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say
to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

16. Yesterday we identified Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. What do you notice about where Jesus ends his quotation from Isaiah 61:1–2? What does this tell you about the purpose for his first and second coming?

- **ANSWER.** *Jesus ends the quotation before the line that speaks about the "day of vengeance of our God." Jesus' first coming was to redeem his people as a Suffering Servant. His second coming will be to judge the wicked and avenge his enemies as the Conquering King.*

Day 5

THE RESTORED KINGDOM

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 289–292.

▷ begin at “The Author of Isaiah Longed for God’s Glorious Kingdom”

From Genesis 1, God’s story has revolved around his kingdom—God’s people under God’s rule and enjoying God’s blessing. This would only exist through a covenant relationship. Mankind’s fall into sin destroyed this kingdom and the prophets recount the climax of the covenant curses for rebellion against God’s rule.

Yet we’ve also seen God’s infinite mercy and steadfast love on display as he promised to restore his kingdom by first fixing the very cause of the broken kingdom. He would fix the covenant relationship by atoning for the sins of his people through the servant who would then restore creation to its original state. This redemption will usher in a “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:11). Consider the verses below from Isaiah that foretell of the restored kingdom of God:

“*God’s People*”

Isaiah 45:22

²² *Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.*

Isaiah 11:11

¹¹ *In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.*

Isaiah 19:21–25

²¹ And Yahweh will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know Yahweh in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering.... ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom Yahweh of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

17. What do you notice about who God’s people will include in these verses?

- **ANSWER.** God’s people will include people from all nations, not just Israel/Judah. Even Egypt, one of Israel’s greatest enemies will be called “My People”!

“In God’s Place”

Isaiah 11:9

⁹ For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 65:17–25

¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness....
²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit....
²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,”
says Yahweh.

Isaiah 60:19

¹⁹ *The sun shall be no more
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give you light;
but Yahweh will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.*

The story of the Bible does not merely recount a return to Eden, though the prophets speak in these terms often. But as it is clear in the latter section of Isaiah, things on earth will be much *better* than they were in Eden! God designed history in such a way that he would receive more glory and his people would enjoy him in greater ways through a creation, a fall, and a redemption. History is not merely a *comedy* where God is restoring the world to its original order after a cosmic conflict. Rather, history is a *deep comedy* to which things are brought to a better, more glorious, end than they were in the beginning. The first Eden will be but a shadow compared to the second Eden!

18. In what ways will the second Eden be greater than the first?

- **ANSWER.** *In the restored creation, the entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh (Isaiah 11:9), whereas in the first Eden, Adam and Eve were commissioned to be fruitful and multiply so that the earth would see God's image reflected throughout (Genesis 1:26–28). All that was once a threat to God's people will be rendered harmless (Isa. 65:25; cf. Gen. 3:15). The glory of Yahweh will illuminate the earth rather than the sun, moon, and stars (Isa. 60:19; Gen. 1:15–19).*

“Under God’s Rule”

Isaiah 9:6–7

⁶ *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷ *Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.*

Isaiah 11:4–5

⁴ *but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*
⁵ *Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

Isaiah 42:1–4

¹ *Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.*
² *He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;*
³ *a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.*
⁴ *He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

Isaiah 59:16–17

¹⁶ *He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;
then his own arm brought him salvation,
and his righteousness upheld him.*
¹⁷ *He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.*

19. Who will administer God's rule in the new creation?

- **ANSWER.** *“The Servant, the Messiah, and God all claim that they will be responsible for bringing about a world of justice, righteousness, and peace” (DD, 292). In other words, the Davidic King, the Servant, the Messiah, and Yahweh are all one and the same.*

20. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

“In glorious hues, the book paints a hope-filled picture of global restoration under the headship of the messianic Servant, who would pay for the sins of many at the cost of his own life, establish justice and peace in the world, and make a way for ethnic Jew and Gentile alike to enjoy lasting relationship with God in the new creation. This glorious vision has begun to be fulfilled in Christ Jesus, and it will reach its consummation after he returns to earth as conquering King” (DD, 292).

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of Isaiah so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. The western church is perhaps in a situation similar to Judah in the days of King Uzziah—relative peace, prosperity, and comfort. What dangers and temptations can blindsides the church if they are not careful and watchful during such a time as this?
2. Discuss the mission of the Servant in Isaiah. Consider passages like Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:5–7; 52:13–53:12; and 61:1–2. Also discuss what the Servant would accomplish at each of his two comings. How does Jesus fulfill the Servant’s mission (refer to *WOTARCA*, 288–289)?
3. While God makes extraordinary promises of restoration to his people, what does God require from them? (see Isaiah 55:6–7; 66:2; cf. Acts 2:28; 3:19)
4. Your own question(s):

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,653–2,655.

The Twelve—Part 1

5

🔗 INTRODUCTION

The Prophets in general are notoriously difficult to understand, an observation we made in the first lesson. Nonetheless, most people are familiar with at least some of the key passages, especially from the Major Prophets. The Minor Prophets tend to receive even less attention than the Major Prophets, rendering their content even more unfamiliar. But once again, their message is both accessible and relevant for modern readers. It is important to realize that the title “*Minor Prophets*” refers merely to their relative brevity rather than to their significance in God’s inspired Word.

The Prophets help us to understand *why* God’s treasured people were experiencing the horrendous judgment they were going through. The reason was because they failed to keep his commandments, and the reason they failed to keep his commandments was because they did not love Yahweh their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5), despite their hypocritical external religious conduct. Here is just a sampling of this idea:

Hosea 6:6

⁶ *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Micah 6:6–8

⁶ *“With what shall I come before Yahweh,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
⁷ Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”*

⁸ *He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does Yahweh require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Malachi 1:10

¹⁰ Oh that there were one among you who would shut the [temple] doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.

The twelve minor prophets continue the main themes present in the three major prophets, though there is perhaps even more emphasis on the Day of Yahweh, as we will see.

🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand the main thrust of the minor prophets.
- ▷ have a better understanding of the Day of Yahweh and its implications for both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Total pages of reading for this week: 15



You may want to review the material from Lesson 1 in preparation for this lesson. Specifically, the discussion on the Day of Yahweh is pertinent to the Minor Prophets, which is the focus of Lessons 5 and 6.

If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. Two of the several recommended for this section of the Old Testament are listed below. For more recommendations, consult *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*:

- ▷ McComiskey, Thomas Edward, ed. *The Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- ▷ Longman, Tremper, III, and David E. Garland, eds. “Daniel–Malachi.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.

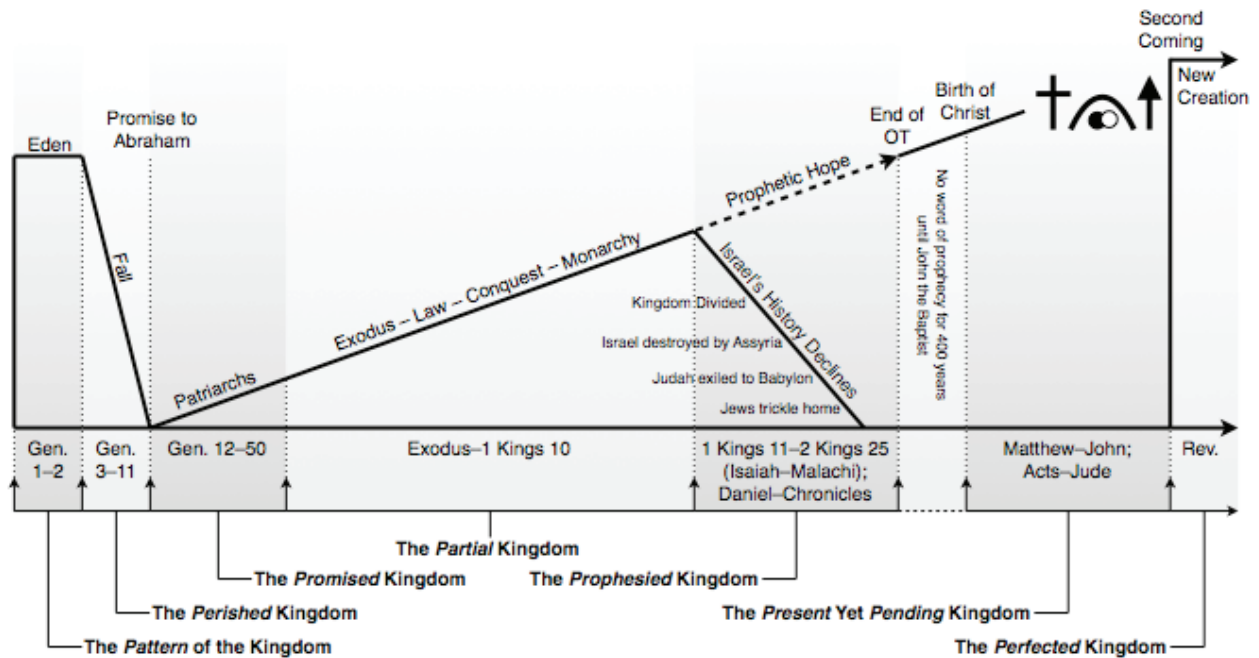


Day 1

GETTING ORIENTED

As always, it is important to understand where we are in the overall story of redemption. The prophets do not recount historical narrative as much as they provide commentary on the story that takes place from 1 Kings–Chronicles (see below). As Israel’s history declines into sin, curse, and ultimately exile, the prophets speak of the restoration of the kingdom of God in such a way that the “end product” seems to be even better than the first. That is, they speak of a return to Eden; yet, the second Eden is going to be even better than the first one was! This will happen as God himself—through the seed of the woman, the offspring of Abraham, the Davidic King, the Suffering Servant, the Messiah—sets out to restore his kingdom on earth.

Diagram of the Kingdom of God



1. What do you notice happens to the kingdom of God during “The Prophesied Kingdom?” What do you notice about the trajectory of the prophets’ message during “The Prophesied Kingdom?” What twin themes do you think this disparity points to?

- **ANSWER.** *During “The Prophesied Kingdom,” the kingdom of God declines while the prophetic hope points forward and upward to the coming of Christ. This divergence points to the twin themes of judgment and salvation, the increasing tension that has developed throughout the Tanakh.*

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 182–183.

- ▷ begin at “The Twelve: The Impending Eschaton”
- ▷ stop at “Sin and Judgment”

2. What three themes does Dempster say the Twelve emphasize (*DD*, 182)?

- **ANSWER.** *“The sin of Israel, the just judgment of God, and hope after the judgment” (*DD*, 182).*

Rather than examining each book of the Twelve individually, we will spend the next two Lessons considering these overall themes found within them. There is evidence that the twelve books were intentionally placed together and in the order we have them today, thus forming one book (called “The Twelve”) and communicating one message that speaks louder than their “sum total.”

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 294–297.

3. Use the reading to fill in the chart on the next page with the correct information for each prophet. You may also refer to Figure 14.1 (*WOTARCA*, 299) for help.

Prophet	Audience	Time Period	Notable Feature
Hosea	Israel	760–730 B.C.	<i>Hosea was commanded to marry a prostitute as a symbol of God's union with an unfaithful Israel.</i>
Joel	<i>Judah</i>	600 B.C.?	<i>Joel used a locust plague to remind Judah of a coming day of judgment.</i>
Amos	Israel	760 B.C.	Amos condemned Israel primarily for their lack of concern for social justice.
Obadiah	Judah; Edom	586 B.C.?	<i>Obadiah confronted Edom, a pagan nation, who was oppressing the people of Judah.</i>
Jonah	<i>Israel</i>	770 B.C.	Jonah narrates a story with a theological point rather than providing a collection of oracles.
Micah	Judah	737–690 B.C.	<i>His prophecies diverted an Assyrian attack on Jerusalem in 701 B.C.</i>
Nahum	<i>Judah; Assyria</i>	650 B.C.	<i>Nahum offered hope to Judah by proclaiming the destruction of Assyria, the current world power.</i>
Habakkuk	Judah; Babylon	630 B.C.	Habakkuk addressed God, not people, wanting answers for how he could judge Judah with the more evil Babylonians.
Zephaniah	<i>Judah</i>	627 B.C.	Zephaniah spoke about the Day of Yahweh on which Judah's idolatry would be judged.
Haggai	<i>Judah</i>	520 B.C.	Haggai encouraged the rebuilding of the temple in order to usher in the fulfillment of the restoration promises.
Zechariah	Judah	520–518 B.C.	<i>Like Haggai, Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding of the temple in order to usher in the fulfillment of the restoration promises.</i>
Malachi	Judah	450 B.C.	<i>Malachi sought to revive God's people who had forgotten their identity by warning of the Day of Yahweh.</i>

4. Write one question about the Minor Prophets that you would like to answer as you work through the next two lessons.

· ANSWER. *Answers will vary*

While the message of judgment certainly rings loud and clear in the Minor Prophets, so does the message of repentance in order that God would show mercy to his people.

Joel 2:12–13

¹² “Yet even now,” declares Yahweh,
 “return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ and rend your hearts and not your garments.”
Return to Yahweh your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
 and he relents over disaster.

Day 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Who are the main characters and what are the major places in the Minor Prophets? This may sound like an easy question, but the prophets use labels for people and places that may not seem so straightforward. Consider the following verse:

Micah 1:5

⁵ *All this is for the transgression of Jacob,
and for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what is the high place of Judah?
Is it not Jerusalem?*

Who does “Jacob” refer to? To Israel or to Judah or to all of God’s people? And who or what or where is Samaria? Without identifying these people and places, the prophets can become quite confusing. The following chart may prove to be helpful as you read through the passages in the next two lessons.

	Judah	Israel (a.k.a. Ephraim)	Assyria 870–626 B.C.	Babylon 626–539 B.C.	Persia 539–323 B.C.
Capital	Jerusalem	Samaria	Ninevah	Babylon (capital of the Babylonian empire)	—
Prominent Kings (chron. order)	Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Ahaz Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Jehoiachin Zedekiah	Jeroboam I Omri Ahab Jehu Jeroboam II Hoshea	Tiglath-pileser III Shalmanesar V Sargon II Sennacherib	Nabopolassar Nebuchadnezzar	Cyrus
<p>Additional Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Jacob” often refers to the people of Israel in their disobedience and wickedness (cf. Mic. 1:5; Mal. 3:6). • <i>Syria</i> is different from <i>Assyria</i>. The actual region or nation of Syria is called Aram and is located directly north of Palestine. Its capital city is Damascus. During the period of the prophets, Syria/Aram formed an alliance with Israel/Ephraim and then threatened to attack Judah. King Ahaz of Judah turned to Assyria for help. Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, listened to Ahaz and captured Syria’s capital Damascus (2 Kings 16:5–9; Isa. 7:1–9). Later, Shalmanesar V (or Sargon II) of Assyria also captured Israel in 723 B.C. Babylon destroyed both Assyria and Syria in 612 B.C. 					

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 298–303.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of the Twelve Affirmed God’s Amazing Love for Israel and Sin’s Horrific Nature”

5. Using Figure 14.2 (WOTARCA, 300–301), match the following dates with the correct historical event that took place on that date.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. 930 B.C. (D) | A. Fall of Samaria (Israel) to Assyria; Israel exiled |
| 2. 723 B.C. (A) | B. Babylon fell to Persia |
| 3. 586 B.C. (E) | C. Second temple completed |
| 4. 539 B.C. (B) | D. Kingdom divided |
| 5. 538 B.C. (F) | E. Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon; first temple destroyed; Judah exiled |
| 6. 516 B.C. (C) | F. King Cyrus (Persia) decreed exiles could return to homelands; first return of Jewish exiles |

The ministry of the writing prophets spans just over 300 years, and involves three major world powers (Assyria, Babylon, and Persia). Yet, the message in the prophets is clear that Yahweh reigns supreme over every dynasty and over every nation and uses all of them to accomplish his grand purposes.

MAIN THEMES

6. What major Old Testament event is foundational for understanding both the role of the prophets and their message of sin, judgment, and hope? Select the correct answer.

- a) God's creation of man and his promises to destroy evil
- b) God's promises to Abraham
- c) The giving of the law on Mt. Sinai
- d) The Davidic Covenant

Amos 5:21–24

²¹ *I hate, I despise your feasts,*

and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² *Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,*

I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,

I will not look upon them.

²³ *Take away from me the noise of your songs;*

to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

²⁴ *But let justice roll down like waters,*

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

7. Why did God speak this way to his people when it appears that they were keeping his Law?

- **ANSWER.** *The people of Israel were performing the ritual duties externally, but not from the heart. God never desired mere external conformity to his Law; he desired heart obedience demonstrating itself in a life characterized by justice and righteousness.*

As we saw in Deuteronomy, God did not merely require external obedience to his law, but heart obedience. The prophets confronted the people for many reasons. At times, we see that Israel has forsaken God's Law all together. But the majority of times, we observe God's people adhering to a form of religion, but not the religion God desired. In other words, Israel obeyed God's law externally while their heart was intoxicated with idolatry. They needed to repent!

8. Fill in the blanks from the reading. What are the three main themes the prophets emphasize?

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

“Through emphasis on Israel’s sin, Yahweh’s just judgment, and hope after curse, this prophetic collection describes Israel’s history in light of the covenant and so serves as a close ally of the Law, urging Israel to return to their roots as the people of God” (WOTARCA, 298).⁹

- **ANSWER.** *Israel’s sin, Yahweh’s judgment, and hope after curse.*

In the next three days, we will consider the first two of these themes. In Lesson 6, we will focus on the last theme and what it means for God's kingdom.

⁹ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 3

ISRAEL'S SIN—A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 303–305.

- begin at “The Author of the Twelve Affirmed God’s Amazing Love for Israel and Sin’s Horrific Nature”
- stop at “The Author of the Twelve Clarified the Implications of Yahweh’s Covenantal Commitment to Israel”

Hosea 1:2

² *When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea, Yahweh said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking Yahweh.”*

9. What image does Hosea begin the Twelve with to describe God’s love towards his people and their unreciprocated faithfulness to him?

· **ANSWER.** *The metaphor of marriage.*

Because we cannot see God, it is difficult to understand how our sin affects him. That is why prophets like Hosea (and Ezekiel) provide vivid, real-life portraits of how our sin grieves God. Hosea actually had to experience the reality of a broken marriage relationship as God called him to marry an unfaithful prostitute, an attempt to shake the people of Israel from their idolatrous stupor.

This is an important paragraph, and it may be beneficial to linger here for a time during class.

Hosea 2:13

¹³ *And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals
when she burned offerings to them
and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry,
and went after her lovers
and forgot me, declares Yahweh.*

Although Hosea loved his wife greatly, she persisted in her unfaithfulness, and as a result, God tells Hosea to name their three children Jezreel, No Mercy/Love, and Not My People.

Hosea 1:4–5

⁴ And Yahweh said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. ⁵ And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

Hosea 1:6

⁶ She conceived again and bore a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all.

Hosea 1:9–10

⁹ And Yahweh said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”

¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.”

10. What message did the names of Hosea’s three children communicate to the house of Israel?

- **ANSWER.** “Jezreel” symbolized a dark future for the house of Israel, as the name was linked to a city in which a notorious massacre took place (2 Kings 10:1–10). “No Mercy/Love” and “Not My People” indicated that Israel’s covenant with God had been broken. These would have been chilling words in light of Yahweh’s self-attested character (Exodus 34:6) and his intentional decision to make Israel his treasured people (19:5).

We have seen time and time again that sin and curse never have the final word. Consider God’s response to Israel, portrayed through Hosea’s redemption of his unfaithful wife (Hosea 3:1–5).

Hosea 11:8–9

⁸ *How can I give you up, O Ephraim?*

How can I hand you over, O Israel?...

My heart recoils within me;

My compassion grows warm and tender.

⁹ *I will not execute my burning anger;*

I will not again destroy Ephraim;

for I am God and not a man,

the Holy One in your midst,

and I will not come in wrath.

11. What does this passage suggest about God's inner divine "struggle" and what is the solution of the tension? (see WOTARCA, 304–305)

- **ANSWER.** *Yahweh is a God of compassion and mercy, but also a God of justice and wrath. Ultimately, God punishes his people for their sin, but then he renews his covenant in an amazing demonstration of love and mercy. This is demonstrated in the renaming of Hosea's three children (Hosea 1:10–2:1).*

The marriage relationship is the most intimate relationship humans can have among themselves because it points to the greater reality of a covenant relationship between God and his people (which includes both married *and* unmarried people)! Consider the final outcome of creation when God's people—his bride—will finally and eternally be in his presence, never to sin against him again.

Revelation 19:6–9

⁶ *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

⁷ *Let us rejoice and exult*

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ *it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

⁹ *And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the
marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of
God.”*

12. What stands out the most to you about this text?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 4

SIN AND JUDGMENT

Yesterday, we considered Hosea's marriage relationship to an unfaithful spouse, a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh who had set his steadfast love on them from the beginning. While an adulterous wife is a vivid picture of sin, it is not the only one we find in the minor prophets.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 183–184.

- ▷ begin at “Sin and Judgment”
- ▷ stop at “The Restoration of All Things”

Consider the following passages:

Amos 2:6–7

⁶ *Thus says Yahweh:*

*“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—*

⁷ *those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned.*

Micah 3:1–3

¹ *And I said:*

*Hear, you heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel!
It is not for you to know justice?—*

² *you who hate the good and love the evil,
who tear the skin from off my people
and their flesh from off their bones,*

³ *who eat the flesh of my people,
and flay their skin from off them,
and break their bones in pieces
and chop them up like meat in a pot,
like flesh in a cauldron.*

Micah 7:2–6

- ² *The godly has perished from the earth,
and there is no one upright among mankind;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and each hunts the other with a net.*
- ³ *Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well;
the prince and the judge ask for a bribe,
and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul;
thus they weave it together.*
- ⁴ *The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.
The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come;
now their confusion is at hand.*
- ⁵ *Put no trust in a neighbor;
have no confidence in a friend;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your arms;*
- ⁶ *for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*

Zephaniah 1:4–6

- ⁴ *I will stretch out my hand against Judah
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal
and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests,*
- ⁵ *and those who bow down on the roofs
to the host of the heavens,
those who bow and swear to Yahweh
and yet swear by Milcom,*
- ⁶ *those who have turned back from following Yahweh,
who do not seek Yahweh or inquire of him.*

13. According to these passages, was God unjust for sending his people into exile? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *God was not unjust for sending his people into exile because they were living contrary to his word and forsaking his commandments. Thus, they deserved the covenant curses and God's divine punishment.*

Dempster cites passage after passage describing the numerous manifestations of God's judgment against his people (*DD*, 181). It was not a pretty picture! Sin always has disastrous consequences since it does not reflect the image of God (the very purpose of our existence) and it destroys the shalom that God intends to pervade creation. It would be foolish not to learn from history that rebellion against our Creator King is an unwise decision.

14. True/False: After the exile, the people of Israel had repentant, humble hearts that desired to follow after Yahweh and keep his law.

THE DAY OF YAHWEH

We have discussed the Day of Yahweh in previous Lessons, but it deserves attention again at this point, since it is one of the central focuses of the Twelve. The Day of Yahweh encapsulates two main theological themes: judgment and hope.

Joel 1:15

¹⁵ *Alas for the day!*

*For the day of Yahweh is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.*

Joel 2:11

¹¹ *Yahweh utters his voice*

*before his army,
for his camp is exceedingly great;
he who executes his word is powerful.
For the day of Yahweh is great and very awesome;
who can endure it?*

Obadiah 15

¹⁵ *For the day of Yahweh is near upon all the nations.*

*As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head.*

Zephaniah 1:7

⁷ *Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of Yahweh is near;
Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice
and consecrated his guests.*

Zephaniah 1:14

¹⁴ *The great day of Yahweh is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of Yahweh is bitter;
the mighty man cries aloud there.*

15. According to these passages, was the Day of Yahweh something to look forward to? Why or why not?

- **ANSWER.** *The Day of Yahweh was not something to look forward to because on it would come the judgment of Yahweh on the sins of mankind.*

16. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

“When the prophets are read together as they were intended, a growing concern for an impending day of eschatological disaster for Israel and the world is readily apparent. This is the so-called ‘Day of Yahweh’. ... The ‘day’ hangs over the book like an ominous cloud” (DD, 184).

Day 5

FALSE SECURITY

While the Day of Yahweh was certainly a time of judgment (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15: 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Zephaniah 1:7, 14), the prophets also speak about it being a time of restoration, salvation, and hope (Joel 2:28–32; Obad. 17–18; Mal. 4:5). We will consider this aspect of the Day of Yahweh in the next lesson. Right now, it is sufficient to realize that there were reasons to look forward to this day as well. Whether the Day of Yahweh was a day to look forward to or to dread depended on whether or not the individual (or nation) possessed repentant, humble, righteous hearts or selfish, arrogant, rebellious hearts.

Amos, one of the earliest prophets, indicts the nations (Amos 1:2–2:3), Judah (2:4–5), and Israel (2:6–16) for their sins. Then he reminds Israel of the punishment that God had already brought on them for their sins; yet, “‘You did not return to me,’ declares Yahweh” (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11). God consistently exhorts them to “Seek me and live” (5:4, 6, 14).

Yet they refuse to come to Yahweh on his terms. In effect they believe they have a right to God as his chosen people. They have the temple where Yahweh’s presence dwells. Surely the Day of Yahweh was intended for the pagan nations, not for Israel? Surely it would mean blessing for them rather than destruction, right? This sense of false security was highlighted by many of the prophets.

Micah 3:11

*“ Its heads give judgment for a bribe;
its priests teach for a price;
its prophets practice divination for money;
yet they lean on Yahweh and say,
“Is not Yahweh in the midst of us?
No disaster shall come upon us.”*

🔗 BIBLE STUDY: Amos 5:18–24

Amos 5:18–24

- ¹⁸ *Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh!
Why would you have the day of Yahweh?
It is darkness, and not light,*
- ¹⁹ *as if a man fled from a lion,
and a bear met him,
or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall,
and a serpent bit him.*
- ²⁰ *Is not the day of Yahweh darkness, and not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?*
- ²¹ *I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.*
- ²² *Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.*
- ²³ *Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.*
- ²⁴ *But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

17. Look at vv. 18–20. How did Israel have a false sense of security? What example does God give to illustrate this?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel believed that the Day of Yahweh would bring blessing and salvation for them, but destruction to their enemies. In reality, the Day would bring destruction for God's very own people. God compares it to a man who meets a lion and then flees from it only to run into a bear. Then he finally gets home where he thinks he will be safe and a serpent bites him. This would not be a good day! Neither will the children of Israel be able to escape the judgment God was bringing upon them.*

18. Look at vv. 21–23. For what sin(s) does Yahweh condemn Israel for? What does God ultimately desire from his people (v. 24)?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel was engaging in religious activities while their hearts were far from Yahweh (cf. Isaiah 29:13). God despises hypocritical worship! What he desires is moral purity that demonstrates itself in day-to-day life, especially in helping the weak and poor.*

19. Summarize this passage in your own words.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary.*

Don't be deceived into thinking that the Day of Yahweh will be good for you! It won't! It will actually bring the judgment of God, such that you will not be able to flee from it. I'm sick of your forms of religion that are empty and vain. I despise your manipulative attempts to draw near to me by abusing my laws. What I really desire from you is pure and undefiled religion. I desire you to reflect my character.

If you pressed the right buttons of any person's soul, they would likely admit that there will be some sort of reckoning for all the wrong committed on this earth. There is a longing in every soul for justice to abound, because every person—even the most wicked of us—is made in the image of God.

The problem today is similar to the problem in Amos' day—namely, we tend to focus on the loving, merciful, and gracious “side” of God while disregarding his holy wrath, his pure justice, and his perfect righteousness. But as Paul says in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

The other possibility (the two are not mutually exclusive) is that we don't see our sin for what it is, and therefore we do not believe we deserve God's wrath. This belief, too, is debunked by Scripture (Romans 3:10–18, 23; Ephesians 2:1–3).

While these sins may be easy to spot in the society around us, we should learn from Amos to look within the walls of our own churches—indeed, within the walls of our own hearts—before we look elsewhere. How many people in churches today are deceived into believing that Christ's coming will be a good day for them? That is, how many people call themselves Christians while living lives of secret sin and yet expect to be on Christ's “good side” when he returns to judge the world?

Consider Christ's words:

Matthew 7:21–23

²¹ Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” ²³ And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

One way this is apparent in American culture is the vast amount of apocalyptic or dystopian literature and film. Regardless of how accurate the theology is, its very existence says something about people's belief in or hope of coming judgment.

20. Why ought this passage be sobering to anyone who calls himself a Christian?

- **ANSWER.** *There are many people who call themselves Christians who have a false sense of security. On the day of judgment, their deeds will be revealed as what they were in the eyes of God: lawlessness. Thus, every Christian ought to examine his/her life and humbly seek Christ through repentance and a life aligned with his will.*

Paul makes clear that the Day of the Lord has *not* already come (2 Thessalonians 2:2), but that it *will* come one day as a thief in the night (i.e., when no one expects) (1 Thess. 5:2; cf. 2 Peter 3:10). The question every individual needs to ask himself is whether or not this is a day to look forward to or not.

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, explain why the Day of Yahweh was a day of judgment and gloom for most of Israel and for the nations.



§ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Consider some of the passages that describe the sins of Israel and Judah (Amos 2:6–7; Micah 7:2–6; Habakkuk 1:2–4; Zephaniah 1:4–6). In what ways does our society reflect the society to which the prophets were called to preach?
2. Why is false security so dangerous? What are ways God has called the church to help one other persevere in the faith?
3. Discuss God's justice in dealing with sin. How does his self-attested character (Exodus 34:6–7) create a tension when it comes to his dealings with sinful people?
4. Your own question(s):



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ D. A. Carson, “Reflections on Assurance,” *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Reflections on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, edited by Thomas Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 247–276.
- ▷ Thomas Schreiner, “Perseverance and Assurance: A Survey and a Proposal,” *Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 2.1 (1998): 32–62.
- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,659–2,661.

The Twelve—Part 2

6

📌 INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson, we considered Israel's sin and its consequences. This judgment would happen in the Day of Yahweh, a time in the near future for Israel. The first major fulfillment of this Day was the Assyrian invasion of Samaria and its destruction in 723 B.C. The second major fulfillment was the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Both of these historical events fulfilled (at least in part) many of the prophecies of the prophets.

Fortunately, there is more to the story than destruction and conquest! The Day of Yahweh also entailed salvation for the believing remnant of God's people. That is, in order for God to fulfill his promises to love his people and keep his covenant, he acted to preserve a portion of Israel who would be faithful to the covenant. However, even the remnant could not perfectly fulfill the role of Son of God. Like the major prophets, the minor prophets point forward to a Davidic king who would accomplish God's purposes for his people, triumphing over God's enemies, establishing peace, righteousness, and justice on the earth, and ruling over the earth forever! This Davidic King would once and for all restore God's kingdom on earth!

📌 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- articulate how the Day of Yahweh was good news for the broken and repentant.
- understand how the prophets speak of the restoration of God's kingdom, specifically, with regard to the role of the Davidic Messiah.

Total pages of reading for this week: 24



TEACHING NOTES

There is a lot to cover in the previous two lessons, and some of the themes may be hard to understand or to communicate to others. The following summary of the Day of Yahweh may be helpful either in preparation or to use in class.

A. The Day of Yahweh is a day of judgment for those who reject God's rule.

1. Those who are living in sin should not hope for the Day of Yahweh

Amos 5:18–20

Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh! Why would you have the day of Yahweh? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of Yahweh darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

2. Those in Amos' day are parallel to people in church today who hope for the Lord's return, yet who are living in sin. It will not be a glorious day for them, but a day of judgment.

B. The Day of Yahweh is a day of hope/salvation for the remnant who submits to God's rule.

Jeremiah 33:16

In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: "Yahweh is our righteousness."

Joel 3:1, 18

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem.... And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Yahweh and water the Valley of Shittim.

Amos 9:11, 13

“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.... Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.”

Micah 4:6

In that day, declares Yahweh, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted.



Day 1

A GOD MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS ... WHO WILL BY NO MEANS CLEAR THE GUILTY

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 305–308.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of the Twelve Clarified the Implications of Yahweh’s Covenantal Commitment to Israel”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of the Twelve Stressed the Need for God’s People to Reflect God’s Character”

Ironically, Yahweh’s self-declared character is the basis both for his justice and his mercy. Consider these passages from the minor prophets:

Joel 2:13–14

¹³ “*Rend your hearts and not your garments.*”

*Return to Yahweh your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.*

¹⁴ *Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for Yahweh your God?*

Jonah 4:2

² *And he prayed to Yahweh and said, “O Yahweh, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.*

Micah 7:18–19

¹⁸ *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?*

*He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.*

¹⁹ *He will again have compassion on us;
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.*

*You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.*

Nahum 1:3

³ *Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power,
and Yahweh will by no means clear the guilty.*

*His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the
dust of his feet.*

1. What passage of Scripture do these verses expound upon? Select the correct answer.
 - a) Genesis 3:15
 - b) Genesis 12:1–3
 - c) Exodus 34:6–7
 - d) Deuteronomy 6:4–9

As Dempster notes, “One objective of the book of the Twelve was to expound the implications of Israel’s basic theological confession revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai” (DD, 305). Yet this confession made by Yahweh himself reveals a tension that we have been tracking throughout the story of redemption.

2. Explain what this tension is.
 - **ANSWER.** “Yahweh is a God of perfect holiness and justice; Yahweh is a God of immeasurable mercy and compassion” (DD, 307).

3. How was this tension at least partially resolved?

- **ANSWER.** *Through repentance, God's wrath may be averted and his mercy dispensed on sinful people.*

While repentance from God's people may partially resolve the tension between God's justice and mercy, it cannot fully resolve it. The reason is because God's people never seem to repent in a manner that is worthy of the sin they commit. As Moses said in Deuteronomy, "Yahweh has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:4).

2 Corinthians 5:19–21

¹⁹ *That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

²⁰ *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

4. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

"Other biblical voices help clarify how a God of real justice and real compassion could acquit the guilty: God's righteous Servant (Isa. 53), also called his high priest (Zech. 3) and good shepherd (Chs. 11–13), would become a curse for us (Gal. 3:13), allowing God to extend mercy to the guilty while maintaining his justice" (DD, 308).

From an earthly perspective, God pouring out his wrath on an innocent substitute while extending mercy to sinners still seems like an injustice of monstrous proportions. This would never happen in an earthly court, nor would anyone desire for it to happen. The difference from the divine court is that God himself is both the one sinned against and the Judge, and therefore he has the right to dispense mercy and justice as he chooses, though he cannot neglect either.

As sinful human beings, we ought to relish both in God's mercy and in his justice. His justice forces us to take sin seriously; his mercy pardons us when we don't. May we praise this incomparable God!

Exodus 34:6-7

⁶ *Yahweh passed before him and proclaimed, “Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”*

Day 2

.....

THE RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM: LAND

In light of the broader story of redemption, the prophets speak with a louder voice than they might realize. They speak of the restoration of God's people who will be redeemed from bondage back to their land where the temple will be rebuilt and the land will be blessed with fruitfulness. Yet the return to Canaan (which began in 538 B.C.) was not as glorious as everyone had hoped it would be (as we shall see in later lessons). This meant the physical redemption and restoration of God's people was only the beginning of a greater, more glorious, spiritual, and eternal restoration that God was preparing his people for!

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 184–185.

- ▷ begin at “The Restoration of All Things”
- ▷ stop at “David”

In Genesis 1, we considered how God had taken great care to prepare a land to dwell with his covenant people. This land now lay in ruins and his people were exiled outside of it. But his plans for restoration included a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Isaiah 65:17–18; Micah 4:1–5; Zechariah 14:20–21).

Joel 3:18

¹⁸ *And in that day*

*the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and the hills shall flow with milk,
and all the streambeds of Judah
shall flow with water;
and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Yahweh
and water the Valley of Shittim.*

Amos 9:13–14

¹³ *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh,
“when the plowman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow to it.*

¹⁴ *I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.*"

THE RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM: GOD'S PEOPLE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 308–311.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of the Twelve Stressed the Need for God’s People to Reflect God’s Character”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of the Twelve Emphasized the Future Day of Judgment for the Wicked and of Salvation” for the Righteous”

Interestingly, a principle found throughout Scripture is this: *We become like what we worship.* Adam and Eve reflected Yahweh God so long as they obeyed him. But at this point in Israel’s history, God’s people were forgetting Yahweh and turning towards the gods of the nations around them, and were actually becoming like those gods!

Hosea 9:10

¹⁰ *[Your fathers] came to Baal-peor
and consecrated themselves to a thing of shame,
and became detestable like the thing they loved.*

It is no surprise that the things we spend our time pursuing, thinking about, loving, and worshipping begin to shape the way we live. For Israel, the fact that they “consecrated themselves to a thing of shame” meant that they were no longer consecrated to Yahweh. You cannot be “set apart” for two contrasting things!

Hosea 4:1–2

- ¹ *Hear the word of Yahweh, O children of Israel,
for Yahweh has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
there is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;*
- ² *there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.*

Hosea 4:6

⁶ *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

Hosea 5:4

⁴ *Their deeds do not permit them
to return to their God.
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,
and they know not Yahweh.*

Hosea 6:3

³ *Let us know; let us press on to know Yahweh.*

Hosea 6:6

⁶ *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

5. According to Hosea, what was the cause of Israel's sin and destruction? By implication from these verses, what would a knowledge of Yahweh produce?

· **ANSWER.** *Israel lacked a knowledge of God. By implication, a knowledge of Yahweh would produce faithfulness, steadfast love, and sacrifice.*

🔗 **BIBLE STUDY:** ; Amos 5:14–15; Micah 6:8; Zephaniah 2:3

Rather than setting their minds on pagan gods and becoming like them, the prophets called the people of Israel to reflect the God they served—the One who had compassionately redeemed them from Egypt, faithfully sustained them through the wilderness, patiently endured their covenant disloyalty, justly punished them for their sins, and then mercifully forgave them and redeemed them from bondage once again. This was the character they were to reflect as Yahweh's image-bearers, and in this way his glory would fill the earth!

Hosea 10:12

¹² Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek Yahweh,
that he may come and reign righteousness upon you.

Amos 5:14–15

¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil,
that you may live;
and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you,
as you have said.
¹⁵ Hate evil, and love good,
and establish justice in the gate.

Micah 6:8

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does Yahweh require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Zephaniah 2:3

³ Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the land,
who do his just commands;
seek righteousness; seek humility;
perhaps you may be hidden
On the day of the anger of Yahweh.

6. Underline every imperative (command) in these verses. Does godliness take hard work? Why or why not?

· **ANSWER.** Godliness (or Christ-likeness) takes a lot of hard work! Though we cannot produce godliness on our own, it requires effort on our part. As we work to put off our old man and put on our new man (Colossians 3:5–17), God works in us by his Spirit to bring about sanctification (Philippians 2:12–13; Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 15:10).

7. What principles can we glean from the passages above to help guide our walk with God and therefore to be better image-bearers?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. You reap what you sow, so sow righteousness! Engage in righteous thoughts and activities that will produce love in your life. Work to cultivate a fertile soul. Don't be passive in your Christian walk—actively seek God! Don't desire evil things, but those that are pure and wholesome. Hate what God hates. Love what God loves. Fight for just causes. Humbly walk with God rather than arrogantly walking without him.*

8. Consider the prophets' repeated calls to steadfast love, humility, righteousness, and social justice. Think of one practical way you can reflect Yahweh's character this week by "putting your faith into practice" in one of these areas so that others might know God better (see James 1:27–2:1; 1 John 3:17–18).

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 3

THE RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM: GOD'S RULE

The restoration of God's people to God's land will come about only when his people submit to his rule. This is the main theme throughout the Bible: God's kingdom. And his kingdom will only be established through a covenant relationship in which all three parts are functioning the way God intended.

It has become painfully evident that God's people do not—indeed cannot—submit to God's will perfectly. Even the best kings throughout Israel's history failed to lead the people in perfect submission to the Torah. The prophets speak of a coming Davidic king who would not only submit to God's rule perfectly, but who would also enforce God's rule among God's people, creating justice and righteousness and *shalom*.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 185–188.

- ▷ begin at “David”
- ▷ stop at “Summary of the Prophetic Commentary”

Genesis 49:12

¹² *The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

Numbers 24:17–19

- ¹⁷ *I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.*
- ¹⁸ *Edom shall be dispossessed;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.
Israel is doing valiantly.*
- ¹⁹ *And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion
And destroy the survivors of cities!*

Hosea 3:5

⁵ *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to Yahweh and to his goodness in the latter days.*

Amos 9:11–12

¹¹ *“In that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins
and rebuild it as in the days of old,
¹² that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,”
declares Yahweh who does this.*

Micah 5:2–5

² *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days....
⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh,
in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his god.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
⁵ And he shall be their peace.*

These verses anticipate the coming of a Davidic ruler; yet, there is still much ambiguity over this figure. When we get to the post-exilic period of Israel's history, the prophet Zechariah contributes a significant piece of the puzzle when he speaks of an individual who fulfills two roles that were not historically combined.

Zechariah 6:9–13

⁹ And the word of Yahweh came to me: ¹⁰ “Take from the exiles ... ¹¹ silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹² And say to him, “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of Yahweh. ¹³ It is he who shall build the temple of Yahweh and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

9. According to this passage, what two significant roles will the coming Davidic ruler fulfill (see DD, 186–187)?
- a) Judge and Priest
 - b) Priest and King
 - c) Prince and Prophet
 - d) King and Judge
10. True/False: The Davidic ruler’s rule would be established soon after Israel returned to their land.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 311–314.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of the Twelve Emphasized the Future Day of Judgment for the Wicked and of Salvation” for the Righteous”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of the Twelve Announced the Coming of a New David, Who Would Bring God’s Kingdom”

“The twelve prophets were God’s shock troops, commissioned to shake people up to realize the divine view of life and to see transformation of their character and ultimately of their society in order to be beacons of the coming age. For the ultimate reality is to be betrothed to Yahweh in righteousness and justice, to hear his words of favor—Jezreel, Loved, and My People—and to make the incredible response, ‘You are my God’ (Hosea 2:19–23)!” (DD, 312).

11. Why were the prophets so concerned with the spiritual transformation of individuals and of society?

- **ANSWER.** *In Dempster's words, "This was so because everything not in keeping with the divine will would be swept aside like chaff and burned up in a fire of overwhelming judgment" (DD, 312). The prophets' message was that those who aligned with God's will—that is, reflected his character—would be preserved on the Day of Yahweh while those who were proud and unrepentant would be destroyed.*

Modern day readers of the prophets must avoid falling into the trap of thinking these warnings were *for them and then*, because the New Testament authors make clear that these same warnings apply *to us and now*.

Consider Peter's words:

2 Peter 3:9–13

⁹ *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

¹¹ *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,* ¹² *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* ¹³ *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

While Jesus endured the judgment we deserved, we still await the ultimate Day of Yahweh (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3), in which we will face the final judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Those who are found in Christ will escape judgment (Romans 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:9) while those who are not will face destruction (John 3:36; 1 Thess. 5:1–3; 2 Thess. 1:9–10). Until then, Christians have been commissioned as ambassadors for the great King to preach the message of reconciliation to this lost and dying world.

2 Corinthians 5:18–20

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

12. How is the Christian's message similar to that of the prophets? How does it differ?

- **ANSWER.** *The role of the Old Testament prophets and new covenant Christians is to call people to be reconciled to God. This involves repentance from sin and a turning towards God. The message of Christians, however, is better because we do not claim God will merely “pass over” our trespasses, but that he has already paid the penalty through Jesus the Messiah and will give us his own righteousness through faith in Christ (Romans 3:21–26).*

Day 4

THE PROPHETS: A SUMMARY

As we tie up the Prophetic section of the Tanakh, it is important to be able to summarize where we've been and what the implications are in light of the overall redemptive story.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 188–189.

▷ begin at “Summary of the Prophetic Commentary”

13. True/False: When read as a whole in the context of the narrative storyline, the Twelve serve to inspire hope and comfort for God's people.

14. Summarize in your own words the mission of the Davidic servant-king (see *DD*, 189).

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. The Davidic Servant-King will come in both power and weakness, glory and humility, justice and forgiveness (wrath and mercy). He will come to set free those imprisoned to their own sinful hearts by establishing a new covenant with God's people and making the benefits of the Davidic covenant available to all. His first coming will be marked by weakness, humility, and a brutal death wherein he will offer his own body for the atonement of the sins of others. His second coming will be marked by power, glory, and authority as he establishes justice and peace in the world and rules on the Davidic throne forever. Thus he will be both a priest and a king, forgiving sins and reigning on the Davidic throne.*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 314–316.

▷ begin at “The Author of the Twelve Announced the Coming of a New David, Who Would Bring God's Kingdom”

With all this talk of a new covenant and restoration of God's kingdom, one may wonder what happened to all the previous covenant and promises God made with his people. Are they still in effect, or will they no longer be applicable to God's people?

Paul makes clear that no one can annul a covenant once it has been made—not even God! (Galatians 3:15–18)!

15. In the Minor Prophets, what does the focus on David and his city Jerusalem represent from the former prophets (i.e., what was promised in the former prophets)? What would this ultimately fulfill from the Law (the first section of the Tanakh)?

ANSWER. The focus on David and his city Jerusalem represents the future fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:4–17). While the Davidic covenant has not been fulfilled yet, it points ahead to the One who would fulfill it—the Suffering Servant, the Branch from Jesse's stump. Ultimately, these promises of a ruling Davidic King who would bring blessing, peace, and justice to the whole earth and fulfill the promises God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3).

While the prophets bear witness to a coming Davidic King who would fulfill the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7) as well as the Abrahamic promises (Genesis 12:1–3), it would be insufficient to stop here. We must remember that even the Abrahamic promises were given in the context of a perished kingdom, and their goal was to restore creation to God's intended pattern of the kingdom. Thus, the coming Davidic King would fulfill God's original purposes for mankind—to image him perfectly and thereby fill the earth with his glory. This is accomplished as Christ, the Davidic Son, builds his church, forgiving and uniting sinful people to himself, the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3), and then making them into new creations who reflect the image of their creator (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10).

The entire Old Testament is driving forward to one ultimate goal—to prepare the way for the coming Davidic Messiah who would accomplish God's goals for all creation, namely, the glorification of himself throughout the entire universe. This goal has been inaugurated by the first coming of Christ, when he initiated the period the prophets (and Paul) called “the last days.” God's kingdom awaits its final consummation when Christ returns a second time to establish justice and restore God's kingdom on earth.

Matthew 1:1

¹ *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham...*

16. With an understanding of Old Testament's focus on David, what is so significant about the first verse of the New Testament, as well as the structure of the genealogy in the following verses? (see inset on WOTARCA, 315)

· **ANSWER.** *Matthew immediately links the entire Old Testament with what he is about to say concerning Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises made to these men. Further, the structure of the genealogy of Jesus makes abundantly clear that Jesus is the ultimate David anticipated in the Old Testament.*

Day 5

INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITINGS

With the completion of the minor prophets, it is time to transition our attention to the third and final section of the Tanakh: The Writings.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 319–324.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, page 191.

▷ stop at “Ruth: Exile, Return, and David”

17. DeRouchie states that even after Israel returned from Babylon, “In many respects ... the exile still continued” (WOTARCA, 319). What does he mean by this?

· **ANSWER.** *Israel still had not experienced all the promises of complete kingdom restoration: they did not have new hearts (Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 36:26), there was no global justice and peace, the Davidic King had not come, and God’s presence still was not dwelling among his people. In short, the kingdom had not yet been restored, and God’s people were still experiencing the fallout from their covenant failure.*

Ezra 9:8–9

⁸ *But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by Yahweh our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery.*⁹ *For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.*

18. What is the purpose of the Writings? Select the correct answer.
- To enforce the old covenant among God's people.
 - To recount the fulfillment of all God's promises to his people, thus completing the story of redemption that began in Genesis.
 - To inaugurate the new covenant through the coming of the Davidic King.
 - To show the believing remnant how to maintain their faith in the context of suffering and many unanswered questions.
19. What phrase occurs at the beginning of the Prophets and the Writings that calls the reader to interpret these sections in light of the old covenant?

· **ANSWER.** *The call to "meditate on God's law day and night" occurs at the beginning of both canonical sections (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2).*

There is change in tone as one moves into the Writings from the Latter Prophets, which focused primarily on Israel's sin and judgment. The Writings, on the other hand, are dominated by a more positive thrust. The God who made promises to the woman, to the patriarchs, and to David, has not forgotten them, and he knows their every need. They can be comforted by this and the fact that in the end, not one of God's words will fail and his kingdom will be restored again.

20. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

"The rest of the Former Writings clarify how those hoping in God's kingdom were to live. In short, they were to embody in every setting the life of wisdom, waiting, and worship, grounded in God's Word, that was to characterize the messianic King" (WOTARCA, 320).¹⁰

¹⁰ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, explain why the Day of Yahweh was a day of hope and salvation for the remnant among God's people.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Discuss the tension that exists in God's character (Exodus 34:6–7; Joel 2:13–14; Jonah 4:2; Micah 7:18–19; Nahum 1:3). How was this tension partially resolved? How was this tension ultimately resolved (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19–21).
2. Discuss the area of social justice/injustice. How can you, as part of a local church, be obedient in this area in your community (or world)?
3. Discuss the Day of Yahweh. What will this day mean for the unrighteous and unrepentant? What will this day mean for the humble and repentant?
4. Your own question(s):



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ G. Bartholomew, “Wisdom Books,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 120–122.
- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,659–2,661.

Ruth and Psalms

7

§ INTRODUCTION

The first book in the Writings is Ruth. This may seem peculiar since Ruth is narrative whereas the rest of the Former Writings are poetic. Also, Ruth is one of the shortest books of the Former Writings, which are generally arranged longest to shortest. Thus, “Ruth stands out as a preface to the whole, calling the reader to interpret the remaining part of the Old Testament through a messianic lens of kingdom hope” (*DD*, 320). Specifically, “The mention of ‘Bethlehem’ at the beginning of Ruth (Ruth 1:2) and of ‘David’ at the end (4:17, 22) becomes a lightning rod for this messianic hope” (*WOTARCA*, 315).

The book of Psalms takes the last word of Ruth and runs with it! Israel has a Davidic King who will reign on God’s throne forever. This ought to evoke worship in God’s people, even in the midst of turmoil, despair, sin, and lament. The book of Psalms drives toward the goal of worshipping the Davidic King who sits on the throne of Yahweh.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the message of Ruth and how it provides an appropriate transition into the Former Writings.
- realize that expressing one’s feelings to God is not wrong, but it should always lead to worship.
- describe the reign of the Davidic King and identify who it is that fulfills this role.

Total pages of reading for this week: 42



TEACHING NOTES

This lesson requires significantly more reading than most others. Thus, the reading from *Dominion and Dynasty* (pp. 194–202) is not required and is not discussed in this lesson. The reading is helpful for understanding the overall structure and flow of the book of Psalms. The instructor is encouraged to read it as it will supplement class discussion and prepare the instructor for questions that may be raised during class time. It may help to know which sections you will stop at before teaching Lesson 6, so that you can help students focus their study time.

Some helpful quotes that summarize the discussion from *Dominion and Dynasty* follow:

- “The first division consists largely of laments (Pss. 3–41), and the first and last psalms of this division (Pss. 3; 41) show that, despite treachery towards the divine king, whether that of his own son (3) or of his closest friend (41), God gives the king triumph over his enemies” (p. 196).
- “In the second book, closure is achieved with Psalm 72. There are many lament psalms in this collection, but this particular psalm reveals the light at the end of the tunnel: the day when the Davidic king will rule the earth. He will bring an end to injustice, and justice will flower in the land. All nature will be renewed.... The last line of the Psalm proper reaches a thematic climax with the statement that the Abrahamic promises of blessing on the earth is realized in him: ‘All nations will be blessed in him and they will bless him’ (72:17)” (p. 196).
- “The next grouping of psalms (73–89) points to disaster for the nation. Within the scope of Israelite history it is tempting to understand these psalms as reflecting the judgment leading up to the exile. The call is to have faith, despite the current bleak circumstances. This is the message of the wisdom psalm (73) that opens this division of the Psalter. The triumph of the wicked is apparent, not real, and this truth can be seen only from the perspective of the sanctuary (73:17). Significantly, this collection of psalms concludes with a poem (Ps. 89) that poignantly contrasts the stark reality of the present situation – exile, judgment and the absence of a Davidic monarch – with the promise of the enduring throne of David (2 Sam. 7)” (DD, 196–197).
- “The next Psalter division (Pss. 90–106), like the previous one, begins with a wisdom psalm, whose unique Mosaic title points back to the wilderness experience of the Israelites as a time when Israel was consumed by God’s wrath and judgment for their sin. Why? To suggest that, just as the previous exile ended, so will this one.

The community is directed to view things from a divine perspective where a human millennium is but a day (Ps. 90:4)... The flurry of kingship psalms in this section addresses the absence of human kingship in Israel (Pss. 93; 95–99). There is no human king on the throne of David (Ps. 89), but God is still reigning. And his reign is universal; consequently, the nations can be invited to worship Yahweh, for they are his people too (Ps. 100)!” (DD, 199).

- *“Psalm 110 depicts the installation of a new ruler with his enemies under his feet and he smites them on the head, a resounding echo of the reclaimed dominion of humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26–28; 3:15). But it also combines royal and priestly motifs: the new king will virtually transcend not only David but also the Israelite priesthood (Pss. 111–118)” (DD, 200).*
- *“The last five psalms (146–150) are not only a fitting conclusion to the five books of the Psalter but also a specific answer to David’s call.... The key note is ‘Hallelujah!’ Here is the goal of creation: all of created reality being directed in praise by choirmaster, King David” (DD, 201).*
- *“The canonical structure of the Psalms thus clearly develops the prophetic theme of a renewed earth under a Davidic leader” (p. 202).*

In the discussion questions, if you choose to have volunteers read the psalm they wrote, be sensitive to the circumstances in which students find themselves. You may be surprised by the emotional reaction of students, since most people do not usually take the time to express their emotions through poetry. If you feel led, take time to pray over these psalms.



Day 1

RUTH

Though the book of Ruth is short, its message is powerful, and it serves as a beautiful transition from the doom and gloom of the Minor Prophets into the hope-filled Writings.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 191–194.

- ▷ begin at “Ruth: Exile, Return, and David”
- ▷ stop at “Psalms: David, David, and David”

1. What two themes does the book of Ruth unite that have been the focus of the biblical storyline? How does it do this?

- **ANSWER.** *Ruth unites the themes of genealogy and geography. The book takes place in Bethlehem, the source of the original Davidic ruler (1 Samuel 16:4), as well as the ultimate Davidic Ruler (Micah 5:2; cf. Matthew 2:1, 6). The book also shows the ancestors of the Davidic line, through which blessing would reach to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1–3; 2 Samuel 7).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 326–334.

On an individual level the story of Ruth is quite inspiring as Ruth, a foreigner from one of Israel’s enemies, willingly places herself in a vulnerable position by leaving her homeland and following her widowed mother-in-law Naomi to the land of Israel (Ruth 1:16) where she will likely never marry and be shunned by the culture at large. Yet there is a righteous man named Boaz who cares for, protects, and shows favor to this woman in contrast to the wicked culture around him (2:8, 14). Upon discovering that he has family ties to Ruth (her

deceased husband was a relative of Boaz's), he decides to redeem this "worthy woman" (3:11) from a life of disgrace and affliction by marrying her (4:9–10).

On a redemptive history level, the story of Ruth rings of hope as Israel is reminded to trust God to redeem his people and to care for and protect them as his covenant people.

"Set within its historical and biblical context, what appears to be a simple love story between two people becomes a revolutionary tale that sounds the promise of national redemption" (WOTARCA, 327).¹¹

Ruth 4:9–10

⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, ...¹⁰ "Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.

Isaiah 54:4–5

⁴ Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;
for you will forget the shame of your youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

⁵ For your Maker is your husband,
Yahweh of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.

2. According to these texts, how does Boaz's "redemption" of Ruth foreshadow a greater redemption that Jesus (a distant descendant of Boaz) will accomplish?
- **ANSWER.** Boaz's covenant faithfulness and "redemption" of Ruth is a shadow of Christ's redemption and faithfulness to his own people. Jesus will redeem his bride so that she will not be disgraced and will no longer have any shame or reproach. This will come through the death of Christ and his atonement for his people (Isaiah 53).

¹¹ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

3. True/False: The book of Ruth shows how the concept of blessing for the faithful does not apply to God's people, since no one is completely faithful to the covenant.

Ruth 4:18–22

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

4. What is so significant about this genealogy that concludes the book of Ruth?

· **ANSWER.** *Boaz was the grandfather of David, the greatest King in Israel's history, and the one to whom the promises of a restored kingdom were given (2 Samuel 7). Just as Boaz redeemed Ruth, an oppressed and vulnerable woman, David would secure protection and establish a righteous rule for God's people during his reign. Ultimately, however, the Messiah, the greater David, would come from this family line and would restore God's kingdom by defeating sin and death once for all and establishing perfect justice, peace, and righteousness forever. He would redeem God's people and betroth them to himself for all eternity!*

The book of Ruth shows how God is faithful to bless those who glorify him by aligning themselves with his covenant and reflecting his character. The blessings pronounced by Naomi had immediate fulfillments (2:13; 3:17; 4:13), yet she did not realize that through Boaz and Ruth's offspring would come David (4:17) and ultimately Jesus (Matthew 1:1, 5–6, 16), who would bring blessing to a world characterized by sin, death, and chaos. Thus, Jesus would do on a global level what David would do on a national level, which was what Boaz had done on a personal level—redeem and restore his people!

Day 2

PSALMS

The next book in the Tanakh continues the theme from the last word of the previous book: David. While Ruth took place long before the book of Psalms was finalized, the two are placed back to back in the Tanakh immediately after the prophets to show how David—or more precisely one of his descendants—is the solution to Israel’s broken condition.

The book of Psalms is one of the most well-known books of the Old Testament, and it is the most quoted book in the New Testament. One of the reasons for this is because the book hits so close to home for believers of all generations and cultures. That is, “The book of Psalms teaches people how to communicate with God, to express their emotions, to live well, to understand God’s kingdom, and to worship him rightly, all in a world where evil still lingers and where Yahweh’s universal reign is not yet fully manifest on earth as it is in heaven” (WOTARCA, 338).¹²

Another reason the book of Psalms is so popular is because of its poetic nature, which taps into the power of imagery from everyday life to communicate profound truths about God and his world. As one author notes, “Images often grab our emotions before they engage our minds. We feel their sense before we grasp their meaning.”

This becomes apparent when one reads the Psalms.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 336–342.

Unlike every other book in the Tanakh up to this point, the book of Psalms cannot be pinpointed to a specific historical context. One reason is that the individual psalms were written over centuries and in different contexts, and only later were they compiled into the book we have in our Old Testament. Another reason is that the psalmists intentionally wanted their songs to influence the lives of God’s people in whatever context they found themselves, even if it was not exactly like the one from which they wrote.

¹² Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

5. What about the book of Psalms lets the voice of the psalmist be the words of every worshipper throughout and in ever-changing contexts?
 - a) Between all 150 psalms, nearly every life circumstance is covered and therefore believers can relate to at least one psalm in any context they find themselves.
 - b) Only a dozen or so psalms include a specific historical context leaving 138 without them, which means the historical contexts must not be essential for understanding or identifying oneself with the psalmist.
 - c) Psalms can be interpreted however the modern reader wants to, allowing them to fit the various life situations of modern day Christians.
 - d) The psalms were written over two millennia ago by Old Covenant saints, and thus they do not apply to New Covenant Christians.

Even though few psalmists provide the specific historical context in which they wrote, the overall mood and sense of the psalm is usually discernible by the reader. One reason for this is that the psalmists used poetry to communicate their feelings to God. As with most poetry, there are certain forms that the poets follow in order to “pack the most punch” in their writing.

6. Match the following genres of psalms with their correct description:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Psalms of Praise (C) | A. The writer calls his readers to give thanks/praise to God, usually for some specific instance of God’s deliverance or help. |
| 2. Psalms of Lament (B) | B. The writer calls out to God and asks for help. |
| 3. Psalms of Thanksgiving (A) | C. Focus the reader on who God is and what he has done. |

7. Read the following psalms and try to identify what type of Psalm it is according to the above descriptions or the general structures of the psalm genres described in *WOTARCA*, 339–341.

Psalm 142

A MASKIL OF DAVID, WHEN HE WAS IN THE CAVE. A PRAYER.

¹ With my voice I cry out to Yahweh;
with my voice I plead for mercy to Yahweh.

² I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.

³ When my spirit faints within me,
you know my way!
In the path where I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.

⁴ Look to the right and see:
there is none who takes notice of me;
no refuge remains to me;
no one cares for my soul.

⁵ I cry to you, O Yahweh;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."

⁶ Attend to my cry,
for I am brought very low!
Deliver me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me!

⁷ Bring me out of prison,
that I may give thanks to your name!
The righteous will surround me,
for you will deal bountifully with me.

· ANSWER. [Psalm of Lament]

Psalm 124

A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF DAVID.

- ¹ *If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side—
let Israel now say—*
- ² *if it had not been Yahweh who was on our side
when people rose up against us,*
- ³ *then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;*
- ⁴ *then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;*
- ⁵ *then over us would have gone
the raging waters.*
- ⁶ *Blessed be Yahweh,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!*
- ⁷ *We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped!*
- ⁸ *Our help is in the name of Yahweh,
who made heaven and earth.*

· ANSWER. [*Psalm of Thanksgiving*]

Psalm 113

- ¹ Praise Yahweh!
Praise, O servants of Yahweh,
praise the name of Yahweh!
- ² Blessed be the name of Yahweh
from this time forth and forevermore!
- ³ From the rising of the sun to its setting,
the name of Yahweh is to be praised!
- ⁴ Yahweh is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens!
- ⁵ Who is like Yahweh our God,
who is seated on high,
⁶ who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
- ⁷ He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
⁸ to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
- ⁹ He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise Yahweh!

· ANSWER. [Psalm of Praise]

8. True/False: The psalmists strictly followed genre patterns and thus it is the interpreter's job to determine what genre the psalm is written in before understanding can take place.

Day 3

.....

EMOTIONS IN THE PSALMS

Consider the vast spectrum of emotions contained in the Psalms:

Psalm 6:3, 6

- ³ *My soul also is greatly troubled....*
⁶ *I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears.*

Psalm 27:4

- ⁴ *One thing have I asked of Yahweh,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of Yahweh
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of Yahweh
and to inquire in his temple.*

Psalm 62:1, 3, 5

- ¹ *For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation....*
³ *How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him....*
⁵ *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

Psalm 95:2

- ² *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Psalm 137:8–9

- ⁸ *O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed,
blessed shall he be who repays you
with what you have done to us!*
⁹ *Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rock!*

9. Record any thoughts, reactions, or reflections as you read these passages.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

God's personality and character is multi-faceted—indeed, infinitely so. God is also an emotional being, which means his emotions are multi-faceted. He gets angry (Exodus 32:9–10; Deuteronomy 9:7–8; Romans 1:18; Colossians 3:6), delights (Psalm 35:27; Proverbs 3:12; Isaiah 42:1; Micah 7:18), is grieved (Genesis 6:6; Ephesians 4:30), is joyful (Psalm 16:11), has compassion (Exod. 34:6; Jonah 4:2), just to name a few. It makes sense, then, that creatures made in his image possess a similar capacity to experience a whole host of emotions. This is part of what it means to be human!

Sadly, many Christians have adopted a form of stoicism which tries to suppress the very emotions that God created us to experience. We tend to think that feeling anger, exuberant joy, regret, lament, pain, and pleasure are inherently wrong and we should do whatever we can to hide these emotions so that others do not know what we are experiencing. We believe there is virtue in appearing strong and that any display of sadness or emotional brokenness comes across as weak. The effects of this type of thinking are perilous. It breeds denial, hypocrisy, and deceit (as well as self-deception), none of which please our God.

No, the problem is not our emotions; it's our sin. The very nature of sin is parasitic in that it takes what God has made good and twists and perverts it to be something that no longer resembles God and his character. Sin takes anger and uses it to vindicate one's own cause, not God's. Sin uses regret to make one wish he had made different choices to advance his own kingdom, not God's. Sin uses lament to turn one's focus inward rather than to God who alone can bring healing. Thus when we express our emotions, we must do so in a way that is consistent with God's holy character. The psalms help us do just that.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 343–350.

▷ stop at “The Author of Psalms Taught How to Live and Think Wisely”

10. According to Crutchfield, what are three reasons why lament is healthy?

· **ANSWER.** *1) Lament protects from denial and repression; 2) Lament provides verbal containers into which a person can pour his own sometimes inexpressible pain; 3) The very structure of the lament brings healing.*

11. Why is worship such an important part of the human life? Why is *what* we worship so important?

- **ANSWER.** *Worship moves our focus off of ourselves and onto something other and bigger than ourselves, which gives us perspective on how to live and prioritize our lives. Everyone worships something, and Scripture testifies that we become like what we worship (Ps. 115; 135:15–18). Thus, it is imperative that we worship our Creator who alone is worthy of all praise and worship.*

Psalms 42 and 43 together form a single Lament in which the Psalmist talks to himself. Internal dialogue, self-talk, and preaching to yourself are all important parts of the Christian life because often what we *feel* contradicts what we *know* is real. For example, we may *feel* condemned and guilty by the weight of a particular sin and this can make us *feel* abandoned by God. Yet we know that God's forgiveness in Christ is *real* (Ephesians 1:7) and that those who are in him will experience no condemnation (Romans 8:1) and that nothing can separate us from the love of God (8:31–35). We may need to preach these truths to ourselves to maintain a healthy view of God, our sin, and the gospel.

Psalm 42:5–6

⁵ *Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation.*

Psalm 103:1–5

¹ *Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!*
² *Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,*
³ *who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,*
⁴ *who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,*
⁵ *who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

12. Are there areas in your life that you have been listening to yourself when you should be preaching to yourself? What are some specific passages or truths that you should preach to yourself to help whatever situation it might be?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 4

THE WAY OF THE WICKED VS. THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 350–352.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Psalms Taught How to Live and Think Wisely”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Psalms Encouraged Waiting for God’s Kingdom and Messiah”

Crutchfield highlights four areas in which the book of Psalms teaches God’s people to live and think wisely: torah piety, theodicy, the righteous versus the wicked, and fear of Yahweh. While each of these topics deserves a lesson on its own, time and space keeps us from digging too deeply into any one of them. We will, however, briefly consider the theme of the way of the righteous versus the way of the wicked, and no psalm addresses this theme better than the very first.

Psalm 1:1–6

- ¹ *Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;*
- ² *but his delight is in the law of Yahweh,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*
- ³ *He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.*
- ⁴ *The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*
- ⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*
- ⁶ *for Yahweh knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

13. List as many contrasts between the righteous and the wicked that you can find in this psalm.

- **ANSWER.** *The righteous are like a healthy tree that has deep roots and produces fruit (vv. 3–4), but the wicked are like worthless chaff that gets blown away by the wind (v. 4). The righteous meditate on God’s Law day and night (v. 2), but the wicked listens to wicked counsel, sinners, and scoffers (v. 1). The righteous prosper in all they do (v. 3), but the wicked do not (v. 4). The righteous will be protected by God on the day of judgment (v. 6), but the wicked will perish on the day of judgment (vv. 5–6).*

Because the psalmists refer to the righteous and to the wicked so often in their songs, it is important to identify who it is that is righteous in their minds. After all, David and other psalmists declare that there are none righteous, none who does good (Psalms 14:1–3; 53:1–3), a belief the apostle Paul shared (Romans 3:10–12). It is true, every human being is sinful at heart (3:23); yet, righteousness is attained when one confesses his/her sin, repents, and receives forgiveness from God who covers over all their sin by the blood of Jesus (3:21–26). These are the ones who are righteous, godly, and upright in the psalmists’ eyes.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 352–354.

- begin at “The Author of Psalms Encouraged Waiting for God’s Kingdom and Messiah”
- stop at “The Author of Psalms Called People to Worship Yahweh in Light of His Person and His Works”

In the course of redemptive history, we are still waiting for God to restore his kingdom on earth. The prophets made clear that this would happen through a Davidic king who would establish a new covenant between God and his people and rule over the earth in perfect justice, righteousness, and peace. The Psalms embrace this hope as God’s people wait for the coming Messiah to accomplish this restoration.

14. What does the psalmist in Psalm 2 urge the people and the kings of the earth to do?

- **ANSWER.** *Submit to the rule of God’s Anointed One (Messiah).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 354–356.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Psalms Called People to Worship Yahweh in Light of His Person and His Works”

Psalm 72:18–19

- ¹⁸ *Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.*
- ¹⁹ *Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!*

Psalm 86:10

- ¹⁰ *For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.*

Psalm 150:2

- ² *Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

15. For what two things do the psalmists call the reader to worship God?

- **ANSWER.** *His works and his person.*

16. Give some examples of each of these categories that you have experienced in your own life and spend some time praying and worshipping God for them.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 5

THE DAVIDIC KING

Ever since 2 Samuel 7, David has been the key figure in the Tanakh. He would be the ideal king to rule God's people. He would be a son to God (2 Sam. 7:14). He would reign over his kingdom forever (7:13, 16). In other words, David was the answer to the perished kingdom. Psalms highlights this fact from beginning to end.

"[Psalms 1 and 2] provide perspective on the storyline of Scripture. The Psalter keeps hope alive by indicating that Israel is still expecting an all-conquering hero who will be anointed by Yahweh to rule the world. The second psalm shows the resistance to this rule, the Lord's sovereign decision to affirm this rule based on Nathan's oracle, the implications of this kingship (universal dominion), the obliteration of all resistance, and the need for submission to the rule.... It is clearly David who is emerging as the focus of the Bible. Somehow the hopes of the Israelite nation are placed on his shoulders" (DD, 195).

However, the fact that neither David nor his immediate successors met up to this ideal kingship forced the Israelites to look for another king—an "other-worldly" king, we might say. The Old Testament is clear that Yahweh reigns over this world (Ps. 9:7; 10:16; 47:2, 7–8; 103:19; 145:13; 146:10). Yet it is also clear that his rule is often mediated through an earthly king whom he anoints over his people (2; 110). The Book of Psalms often speaks of both of these kingships: the divine and the earthly. One day, these two kingships would be united in the God-man Jesus Christ whose kingdom would spread throughout the whole world and would endure forever. Psalm 72 speaks of this kingship fulfilled in the ultimate son of David.

📖 BIBLE STUDY: Psalm 72

Psalm 72:1–20

OF SOLOMON.

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- ² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!

- ³ *Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!*
- ⁴ *May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!*
- ⁵ *May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!*
- ⁶ *May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!*
- ⁷ *In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!*
- ⁸ *May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!*
- ⁹ *May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!*
- ¹⁰ *May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!*
- ¹¹ *May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!*
- ¹² *For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.*
- ¹³ *He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.*
- ¹⁴ *From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.*
- ¹⁵ *Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!*
- ¹⁶ *May there be abundance of grain in the land;
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;*

*and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field!*

¹⁷ *May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed!*

¹⁸ *Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.*

¹⁹ *Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!*

²⁰ *The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.*

17. Who is this psalm attributed to? What does this mean concerning the fulfillment of the Davidic promises?

- **ANSWER.** *This psalm is attributed to Solomon. Because Solomon is praying for another king after him, this means he was not the fulfillment of the promises God gave to David in 2 Samuel 7. Even Solomon looked forward to the Messiah who would come and fulfill all God's promises.*

18. According to vv. 5, 7, and 17a, what is the length of this king's days? According to v. 8, what will be the extent of this king's dominion? According to vv. 9–11, who will serve this king? According to vv. 2–4 and 12–14, how will this king treat the poor and oppressed?

- **ANSWER.** *This king will live as long as the sun and moon remain. His dominion will extend to the ends of the earth. All nations and kings will serve this king. He will treat the poor and oppressed with justice, compassion, and tender care.*

19. It is quite clear that whoever this Davidic king is, he will fulfill God's promises to David (2 Sam. 7). But according to verse 17b, what else will this Davidic king fulfill?

- **ANSWER.** *He will fulfill the promise of blessing to the whole earth that God gave to Abram in Genesis 12:2.*

Now consider these verses from the gospel of Matthew:

Matthew 1:1

¹ *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

Matthew 9:27

²⁷ *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David."*

Matthew 12:22–23

²² *Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.* ²³ *And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?"*

Matthew 15:22

²² *And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."*

Matthew 20:30–31

³⁰ *And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"* ³¹ *The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"*

Matthew 21:9

⁹ *And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Matthew 22:41–42

⁴¹ *Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question,* ⁴² *saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David."*

20. What point do you think Matthew is trying to make in his gospel about Jesus' identity?

- **ANSWER.** *Matthew is trying to indicate that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Davidic promises. He is the ultimate Son of David!*

Optional Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 194–202.

- ▷ begin at “Psalms: David, David, and David”
- ▷ stop at “The Wisdom Literature: To Master the World”
- ▷ Note: This reading is not required, though it is helpful for understanding the overall flow and structure of the book of Psalms.



§ INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

Consider a life circumstance you have experienced recently and think about the emotions this circumstance has evoked in you, whether it's anger, praise, lament, thanksgiving, desperation, discouragement, worship, anxiety, etc. Write your own short psalm to convey your emotions to God. Make sure your thoughts are genuine yet also in accord with God's character.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Discuss the various genres of psalms and how they help you communicate your feelings and emotions to God.
2. Look up the following passages: Psalm 41:13; 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48; and 145:21. What is similar about them? What is the focus of each passage? These verses are the last verse or two of the five books of Psalms. What does this tell you about the overall focus of the book of Psalms? The book concludes with a crescendo of praise to Yahweh in chapters 146–150.
3. Your own question(s):

 **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- ▷ John Piper, *A Sweet and Bitter Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).
- ▷ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973).
- ▷ Mark Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007).
- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,640–2,641 and 2,648–2,652.

Job and Proverbs

8

📖 INTRODUCTION

Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs all fall into a genre called wisdom literature. These books are still part of the Former Writings, which are *not* part of the narrative story of the Old Testament. Rather, together with the Latter Prophets, these books function as commentary on the storyline, and in particular, they teach God's people how to live life according to God's will in a world that is broken, confusing, and seemingly backwards at times.

📖 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the doctrine of retribution and how it accounts for life in general, but not all the time.
- know how to respond when life does not make sense.
- understand what godly wisdom is in contrast to folly, and how it is demonstrated in everyday life.

Total pages of reading for this week: 27



TEACHING NOTES

In addition to the quotes from Plantinga Jr.'s *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* in Day 5, the following quotes may be helpful in stimulating classroom discussion. They are all taken from "Chapter 7: Sin and Folly."

- *"In the biblical view, the wise are righteous and the righteous are wise: these are people who love and fear God, affirm God's world, live gladly within its borders, and make music there according to divine time and key signatures. The wise are always 'in order.' Insofar as they live right, they also live well. The book of Proverbs usually doesn't even bother to distinguish between righteousness and wisdom: it pairs up righteousness with wisdom and wickedness with folly in such a way that the distinction between a moral judgment and a prudential judgment fades"* (115–116).
- *"The shortest and clearest way to state the relation between sin and folly is to say that not all folly is sin, but all sin is folly. Sin is both wrong and dumb... What is it about sin that makes it so foolish? Sin is the wrong recipe for good health; sin is the wrong gasoline to put in the tank; sin is the wrong road to take in order to get home. In other words, sin is finally futile. Pride, for example, is futile because self-fascination is so often unrequited. Moreover, pride is subject to the tolerance effect, the law of diminishing returns: the more self-absorbed we are, the less there is to find absorbing"* (121–122; this quote is merely an extension of the quote in Day 5).
- *"God-fearing people have a dreadful love for God, an awe-filled love that knows God is not mocked, that we reap whatever we sow, that God is not to be fooled with, scorned, or ignored but trusted, loved, and obeyed. Everything wise and righteous is built on this unshakable foundation"* (127).

Another resource that may be helpful in the discussion on Job is this blog post by Ed Welch entitled "Extreme Suffering Takes Us to One Question":

"Almighty God, why have you done this to us? Have you no heart, no feelings? Have you no eyes to see with? Have you no ears to hear us with? You are wicked, O Lord, as wicked as a man."

These are the words of a Jewish man who was watching people die while being driven in a dank, vomit and blood-laden, over-crowded truck from a ghetto in Hungary to Auschwitz. He had entered the extremes of human pain. Though laconic by nature, he could not hold back. He had to speak this anti-psalm.

Most of us have our points when suffering has the power to take us into the anti-psalms. For some—and I have witnessed this—it could be a flat tire or plumbing mishap. For others the line is not crossed until the life of a loved one is in jeopardy. Yet for those like the Apostle Paul, there is no line. No amount of suffering could shake his confidence in God. I fear that my own line is between the flat tire and the loved one in jeopardy.

If we have a line at which faith withers, there is only one question. Do I live for God or does he live for me? There are other questions we could ask such as, do I believe that God loves me? But that does not quite get to the stark, either/or essence of human life. God is in heaven, we are on earth. He is the Creator, I am his creation. Do I live for him or does he live for me?

—Ed Welch, “Extreme Suffering Takes Us to One Question,” CCEF Blog, December 12, 2013: <http://www.ccef.org/resources/blog/extreme-suffering-takes-us-one-question>. Last accessed March 3, 2016.



Day 1

WISDOM LITERATURE

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, page 202.

- ▷ begin at “The Wisdom Literature: To Master the World”
- ▷ stop at “Job: The Moral Government of the Universe”

1. According to Dempster, what theme from Genesis 1 does wisdom literature develop?

- **ANSWER.** *Wisdom literature develops the theme of mastery of the world. In the beginning God commissioned Adam and Eve to rule creation and exercise dominion over it. This requires wisdom, or skill, to accomplish.*

JOB

The story of Job addresses one of the most perplexing questions of life: Why do bad things happen to good people? Here is a man who is righteous on all accounts and yet experiences some of the most terrible suffering anyone can imagine—all of his children die in unpredictable and unexpected circumstances, he loses all his wealth as well as his health, and he is left hanging without answers to these seemingly punitive occurrences.

The author begins the story with a narrative that introduces the characters and the plot. Then the body of the book is comprised of a series of poetic speeches between Job and several of his friends, dialoging about the cause of Job’s suffering. In the end, God steps in and provides the needed revelation to make sense of the unanswered questions throughout the book.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 202–206.

- ▷ begin at “Job: The Moral Government of the Universe”
- ▷ stop at “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs: A Solomonic Stamp”

“The first wisdom book points unequivocally to the fact that, despite the evidence, God rules the world and that this rule is of a different order from what one might expect” (DD, 202).

As readers who have been given the divine perspective on the story, it is easy to scoff at Job and his friends’ inadequate thinking on Job’s suffering. Yet, as anyone who has experienced similar circumstances knows, unexplained suffering can leave one feeling lost in darkness.

2. True/False: Job questions the integrity of God in creating humanity only to inflict suffering on them.

After speeches from three of Job’s friends, along comes the only Israelite in the book, Elihu. His approach differs from the previous three “counselors” in that he “suggest[s] there is a human wisdom that can help one to understand God’s governance of the world in the face of human suffering” (DD, 204).

3. What concept does Elihu introduce that serves as a sign of divine favor (DD, 204)? How does Matthew 3:17–4:1 exemplify this concept?

- **ANSWER.** *An innocent person may still be in need of divine discipline and testing (DD, 204). Jesus was God’s beloved son (Matthew 3:17). Although he was innocent, God led him into the wilderness to test him (4:1). Ultimately, this was for Jesus’ good and it confirmed his ministry for the last three years of his life.*

4. What is striking about Satan’s action at the end of the book?

- **ANSWER.** *Whereas Satan accused Job at the beginning of the book, he is silent at the end of the story. This silence shows that, ultimately, he cannot accuse God’s people but must submit to God’s verdict concerning his own.*

God’s ways are not man’s ways and his thoughts are not man’s thoughts—they are much higher (Isaiah 55:8–9)! Stories like Job’s provide a glimpse of the way in which God has designed this world: he works through things that are not supposed to be to accomplish greater things that ought to be. This reality was demonstrated most poignantly on the cross when the greatest injustice and suffering ever endured by an innocent man was endured silently (53:7) so that God’s power would be revealed in weakness (53:1–2). Only through suffering the worst possible evil could Jesus exercise ultimate dominion over that evil and give victory to all God’s chosen people. Jesus turns evil on its head and produces good from it.

Day 2

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YAHWEH GIVES AND YAHWEH TAKES AWAY

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 358–360.

Perhaps the most well-known verse in Job comes from his response to his tragic loss. It is simply staggering!

Job 1:21–22

²¹ *And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh.”* ²² *In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

Job 2:10

¹⁰ *“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

5. Besides being an inspiring example of faith, what surprising truth does Job’s response teach us about why bad things happen to good people?
 - **ANSWER.** *Job says that God was the One behind these “evil” events, and the inspired author immediately points out that Job did not sin in saying this.*

THE DOCTRINE OF RETRIBUTION

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 361–362.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Job Acknowledged Humanity’s Inability to Fully Grasp God’s Work and Purposes”
6. How does Curtis define the doctrine of retribution?
 - a) People reap what they sow.
 - b) People may return evil for the evil done to them.
 - c) God sometimes punishes even those who are innocent.
 - d) An eye for an eye.

These verses are classic examples of the doctrine of retribution:

Job 4:8

⁸ *As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
And sow trouble reap the same.*

Galatians 6:7–8

⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

7. Does the doctrine of retribution apply to every situation in life? Why or why not? Does the story of Job violate this principle?

- **ANSWER.** *While the doctrine of retribution is a general principle that applies to all of life, God is not bound by it. He may have other purposes that humans cannot perceive that may seem to violate this principle, but in the grand scope of reality God is always just. The story of Job shows how this principle does not always apply. There were things going on in heaven that did not relate directly to Job's sin.*

The narrator of Job, Yahweh, and Job himself claim that Job had done nothing to deserve the suffering he underwent. He was “blameless and upright.”

Job 1:1

¹ *There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*

Job 1:8

⁸ *And Yahweh said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?”*

Job 9:20–21

²⁰ *Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove me otherwise.*

²⁰ *I am blameless....*

Yet, Job suffers horribly. Why? There are three options at this point: 1) the narrator, Yahweh, and Job were all liars and he really did deserve his suffering; 2) Yahweh is unjust in that he punishes innocent people for no reason; or 3) Yahweh has reasons for suffering that extend beyond the limit of man's understanding.

We know the first option is not possible since the Bible affirms that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Proverbs 30:5; John 14:6; 17:17; Romans 3:3–4; Hebrews 6:18; 1 Peter 1:25). The second option forms the central question in Job's dialog with his three friends throughout the book. They incorrectly believe that the doctrine of retribution is a sufficient explanation for all of life. God could not and would not punish an innocent person, and because Job was suffering, they concluded that he must be lying and was really in sin. They were partially correct in that God does not pervert justice (Job 8:3). Yet they drew an incorrect conclusion: Job must be lying (they did not have the narrator's or Yahweh's affirmation of Job's innocence). Yet, the message of the book of Job is to communicate the last option: God reserves the right to use suffering and evil to accomplish greater purposes than what we might perceive.

Consider this passage from the gospels:

John 9:1–3

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Who would have thought that a man born into a life of shame, mistreatment, vulnerability, and affliction would serve as an instrument to show God's power? Who would have thought that's Job's integrity—even through suffering—would serve to silence the Accuser and display God's worthiness to be worshipped even apart from earthly blessings?!

The book of Job makes clear that there are reasons for suffering besides personal sin. While generally true, the doctrine of retribution is not a sufficient answer for everything that happens in life. Yes, every action has consequences, but there are also times when God is accomplishing purposes that may not have a direct correlation to our choices and actions. We may be oblivious to what God is up to. The wise person will choose to trust God and worship him rather than joining Job's wife by cursing God and giving up on life (Job 2:9).

8. Are there any unanswered questions in your life that you feel God might be doing something bigger than you realize? Briefly describe the situation. Then, take some time to pray and submit yourself to God's good will.

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 3

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BAD ADVICE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 362–364.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Job Acknowledged Humanity’s Inability to Fully Grasp God’s Work and Purposes”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Job Recognized That God Accepts the Honest Cries of His Hurting People”

Job’s first three friends were worthless counselors, for the reasons mentioned above. They had a very skewed and narrow view of God and his dealings with the world. Consider Job’s response to Eliphaz’ “counsel” and how Yahweh responds at the end of the book to all three of Job’s friends.

Job 6:14–15

¹⁴ *He who withholds kindness from a friend
forsakes the fear of the Almighty*

¹⁵ *My brothers are treacherous as a torrent-bed,
as torrential streams that pass away....*

¹⁷ *when it is hot, they vanish from their place.*

Job 42:7

⁷ *After Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.”*

“After Eliphaz counseled Job to turn from his sin and to ask God for forgiveness, Job observed how unhelpful such directives were because he did not know anything to confess. In chapter 6, he observed that what a suffering person needs in such circumstances is kindness from his friend rather than theological advice and analysis which, in Job’s case, only intensified his pain.... The book of Job, therefore, clearly warns against the arrogance of assuming that our theological categories constitute a comprehensive statement about how God works” (WOTARCA, 363–364).¹³

¹³ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

9. In your own words, explain the warning that the book of Job gives to those who counsel others who are suffering or are in affliction?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Don't presume to know all the answers to life's perplexities, and don't think that a theological answer is going to ease pain and suffering for someone in need. Perhaps it is more helpful to merely listen than to offer bad advice, especially when you don't know all the reasons for someone's pain.*

CRIES OF PAIN

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, page 364.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Job Recognized That God Accepts the Honest Cries of His Hurting People”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Job Clarified How to Respond When God’s Justice and Goodness Appear Questionable”

Consider this amazing reality about God’s response to human suffering and pain:

“Job’s laments—or those of Jeremiah or the authors of many psalms—make clear that God accepts such cries of pain and that even blameless and upright people sometimes respond to profound tragedy in such ways.... God’s people can be honest with him—telling him exactly how they feel in their pain and distress—and still speak right words about God. The Lord knows the difference between words of pain and confusion coming from his hurting people and words of blasphemy and disdain. When the former are involved, he responds to his children as a loving father would to a hurting child” (WOTARCA, 364).¹⁴

The illustration of a father/mother and a child is helpful to understand God’s disposition towards his children. Too often, we believe the lies that God is not concerned about our hurts, or he has other more important things to take care of besides us, or we must suppress or cover our feelings of pain since surely they render us unworthy to approach the God of the universe. But a good parent’s love is rooted deep in their heart towards their children. They would never shun

¹⁴ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

a child if he came with such pain or suffering. And if you “who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:11).

10. How would you explain the difference between words or attitudes of pain and confusion and words of blasphemy and disdain?

· **ANSWER.** *Words of pain and confusion express how the heart feels without getting angry at God. There is a trust in God’s sovereignty even amidst the suffering. Words of blasphemy or disdain, on the other hand, rejects God’s plan to use suffering for his purposes. It comes from a heart of entitlement that expects a “better life” than one was dealt.*

“I REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES!”

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 364–368.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Job Clarified How to Respond When God’s Justice and Goodness Appear Questionable”

Although God was understanding of Job’s feelings, he desired Job to understand his sovereign control over both the physical and moral dimensions of life. At the end of the book, God makes his point by asking Job a series of difficult and pointed questions.

🔗 **BIBLE STUDY:** Job 38–40, 42

Job 38:4, 12, 18, 22, 24, 28, 35, 36; 39:1, 2; 40:2

⁴ *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*

¹² *Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place?*

¹⁸ *Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?*

²² *Have you entered the storehouses of snow?*

²⁴ *What is the way to the place where light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?*

⁴ *Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?*

³⁵ *Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go
and say to you, "Here we are?"*

³⁶ *Who has put wisdom in the inward parts
or given understanding to the mind?*

^{39:1} *Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of does?*

² *Can you number the months that they fulfill,
and do you know the time when they give birth?*

^{40:2} *Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it.*

11. Take a moment to reflect on these questions yourself. What can you learn about Yahweh from these verses?

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. God is absolutely sovereign over all of life. He does whatever he pleases. There are numerous things in life that we don't even think about as human beings, but God is controlling and sustaining every one of them.*

Job's response was the only possible one:

Job 42:1-6

¹ *Then Job answered Yahweh and said:*

² *"I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

³ *Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?
Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

⁴ *Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make known to me.*

⁵ *I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;*

⁶ *therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."*

God does not expect us to be able to understand all that he does in life. We are human—we can't! Sometimes his justice and our present experiences do not seem to be compatible. Rather than turning us away from God, these experiences should draw us to our knees in humble submission to his divine purposes. It is not wrong to question God when life doesn't make sense, but at the end of the day, one must acknowledge one's finiteness and submit to God's sovereign wisdom. We should seek to know him in a deeper level like Job did (Job 42:5) and to fear him for who he is, not for what he gives.

12. Record any observations, reflections, or questions you may have had while reading surveying this profound book of the Bible:

- ANSWER. *Answers will vary*

Day 4

PROVERBS

“Proverbs endeavored to persuade its readers to choose God’s narrow path of wisdom rather than to follow the broad path of folly. By examining a wide selection of life experiences, Proverbs made clear how wisdom and folly are demonstrated in practical life. Its overall purpose is to transform immature people into adults who are wise, mature, and God-honoring. For this reason, the book continues to have great relevance for life today” (WOTARCA, 370).¹⁵

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 370–374.

13. Who is the primary intended audience of Proverbs and what is the overall purpose of the book?

· **ANSWER.** *The primary intended audience is “my son,” though this could refer to young men in general. Ultimately, however, the book applies to all people since God calls everyone to walk in wisdom. The overall purpose of Proverbs is “to transform immature people into adults who are wise, mature, and God-honoring” (WOTARACA, 370).¹⁵*

Proverbs 10:29

²⁹ *The way of Yahweh is a stronghold to the blameless
but destruction to evildoers.*

Proverbs 15:9

⁹ *The way of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh,
but he loves him who pursues righteousness.*

Proverbs 21:16, 21

¹⁶ *One who wanders from the way of good sense
will rest in the assembly of the dead.*

²¹ *Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life, righteousness, and honor.*

¹⁵ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

14. Explain the metaphor that the author of Proverbs uses throughout the book to describe life.

- **ANSWER.** *Life is described as a journey or a walk (way, road, path, manner of life). One can either walk in a way of righteousness and wisdom or in the way of foolishness and evil. Another aspect this metaphor highlights is that life is a long process, with habitual actions that lead to long-term consequences.*

Proverbs 4:23

²³ *Keep your heart with all vigilance,
For from it flow the springs of life.*

15. Rewrite this verse in your own words.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Be careful to guard your heart diligently, because the condition of your heart determines how you will live your life.*

Why is it so important to guard one's heart? Because inward character determines one's outward behavior. Or to say it another way, the root determines the fruit. Jesus applies this principle to words in Matthew 12:34: "Out of the abundance of one's heart the mouth speaks." Ultimately, it is Christ alone who can change the heart so that it produces the fruit of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Galatians 5:16–23). But those who are wise will choose words to build others up and not tear them down. Just as the Minor Prophets taught, wisdom begins by fearing Yahweh and seeking to reflect his character in all areas of life.

16. Imagine Lady Wisdom were to follow you through the course of one day. What specific things do you think she might point out to you that belong to the path of foolishness?

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 5

.....

WHAT ARE PROVERBS?

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, page 375.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Proverbs Asserted That True Wisdom Is Grounded in the Fear of Yahweh”

Nearly the entire book of Proverbs is written in such a way to help its readers apply godly wisdom to every situation in life. Each proverb, or saying, is meant to be memorable and packed full of life experience and profound wisdom to guide God’s people down the narrow path that leads to life (cf. Matthew 7:13–14).

17. True/False: A proverb is more than a general principle of life; it is intended to be understood as a promise, a law, or a guarantee.

THE FEAR OF YAHWEH

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 375–377.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Proverbs Asserted That True Wisdom Is Grounded in the Fear of Yahweh”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Proverbs Gave Practical Guidance for Wise Living”

Estes explains the concept of the fear of Yahweh not as a negative fright that prompts one to flee from Yahweh, but a positive sense of awe that “causes humans to tremble before God in dread or to turn to him in reverence” (WOTARCA, 376). Perhaps the fear of Yahweh is not only at the root of *wisdom*, but of godliness in general, since “when we fear the Lord, we embrace what he desires and avoid what he disapproves” (WOTARCA, 376).¹⁶

Proverbs 9:10

¹⁰ *The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom;
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

¹⁶ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Proverbs 2:1–5

- ¹ *My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,*
² *making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding...*
⁵ *then you will understand the fear of Yahweh
and find the knowledge of God.*

18. Explain how the fear of Yahweh can be both the first precept of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) as well as the final goal of wisdom (2:5).

- **ANSWER.** *One must possess a right understanding of who God is and love him (i.e., fear him) in order to walk according to his character (i.e., to walk in wisdom). On the other hand, as one walks in wisdom, he or she will better understand his or her own sin and God's holiness which will create a greater fear and awe of who he is. "The fear of Yahweh guides the wise person from start to finish on the path toward life. Every wise motivation and choice, action and attitude, must reflect this fundamental value" (WOTARCA, 375–376).¹⁷*

WISDOM AND FOLLY

"Biblical wisdom is grounded ultimately in a positive relationship with Yahweh that causes one to adopt his values as the pattern for life" (WOTARCA, 377).¹⁷

Wisdom ought not be seen as a gift that some people have and others do not. Wisdom should characterize the life of every believer, because ultimately, it is an understanding of the way God designed his world and a willingness—indeed, an eagerness—to walk according to it. *Wisdom is living God's way in God's world!*

Folly, on the other hand is the rejection of God's rule and a propensity to live according to one's own desires. And anything that is a rejection of God's rule is sin. Thus, sin is the prime example of folly. One theologian offers some insightful comments on wisdom and folly and their relationship to one another:

"In the literature of Scripture, wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it" (115).

¹⁷ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

“To be wise is to know and affirm reality, to discern it, and then to speak and act accordingly. The wise accommodate themselves to reality” (118).

“If wisdom is knowledge of God’s world and the knack of fitting oneself into it, then, predictably, folly is contrariness or destitution in these areas—a kind of witlessness with respect to the world and a tendency either to bang one’s shins and scrape one’s elbows on it or else to miss its opportunities and waste its gifts” (119).

“The shortest and clearest way to state the relation between sin and folly is to say that not all folly is sin, but all sin is folly. Sin is both wrong and dumb.... What is it about sin that makes it so foolish? Sin is the wrong recipe for good health; sin is the wrong gasoline to put in the tank; sin is the wrong road to take in order to get home. In other words, sin is finally futile” (121).

“Why is it not only wrong but foolish to offend God? God is our final good, our maker and savior, the one in whom alone our restless hearts come to rest. To rebel against God is to saw off the branch that supports us.... Rebellion against God and flight from God remove us from the sphere of blessing, cutting us off from our only invisible means of support” (123–124).¹⁸

Ultimately, sin simply cannot give us what our hearts desire because sin does not belong in God’s world. It is an intrusion, a perversion of all the good God created. The momentary pleasure that sin offers will inwardly corrupt the soul until sin runs its course and produces death in its victim (James 1:14–15).

Wisdom, on the other hand, rejects the lies of sin and lives according to God’s way. This includes a fear of God that produces righteous and holy living. Walking in wisdom is not merely an option for how we *should* live our lives; it is a description of the *only* way life works in God’s world.

19. How does this author define wisdom? Folly?

- **ANSWER.** *Wisdom is living the way God planned for us to live in his world. It is knowing reality and choosing to speak, act, and respond accordingly. Folly is to neglect this reality or even to be ignorant of it completely. Those who don’t know God, cannot live wisely. “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1).*

¹⁸ Plantinga, Cornelius Jr. *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2010.

20. In your own words, state why sin is foolish and stupid (not just morally wrong).

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Sin is foolish because it cuts one off from the only source of blessing and satisfaction possible: God himself! While sin promises greater pleasure than holiness, in the long run, it cannot offer what it promised in the first place, since its end is death and nothing more (James 1:15). Holiness, on the other hand, has far greater promises that are backed by God's word (Psalm 16:11; Matthew 5:8; Galatians 6:7-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 377-380.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Proverbs Gave Practical Guidance for Wise Living”

“The ultimate goal of wisdom is the formation of responsible moral character that corresponds to the righteous standards of Yahweh. Although Proverbs is a very practical book, it endeavors to do nothing less than to transform a life that is predisposed by its sin nature toward folly into a life directed by and toward godly wisdom” (WOTARCA, 380).¹⁹

So we end this lesson with the central call in the book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 4:5-9

- ⁵ *Get wisdom; get insight;
do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.*
- ⁶ *Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.*
- ⁷ *The beginning of wisdom is this: **Get wisdom,**
and whatever you get, **get insight.***
- ⁸ *Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honor you if you embrace her.*
- ⁹ *She will place on your head a graceful garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”*

¹⁹ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



Choose one of the books covered in this lesson and write a short paragraph showing how it helps Israel “to maintain their faith, even amidst life’s sufferings and enigmas” (*WOTARCA*, 320).²⁰

²⁰ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Describe a “Job” experience in your own life where God’s justice did not seem evident and his divine purposes were unseen. Did God ever reveal the purposes behind the pain and suffering? If so, how did that change your perspective on the experience and what did you learn from it? If not, what did you learn from the experience?
2. How would Proverbs have been helpful for a people who were in exile due to their foolish and sinful decisions? Include topics like the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, the fear of Yahweh, wisdom, and folly in the discussion.
3. Discuss the relationship between wisdom and righteousness and between sin and folly. What examples can you think of that demonstrate the folly of sinful choices and the wisdom of righteous choices?
4. Your own question(s):



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Walton, “Retribution,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, edited by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 647–655.
- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” *ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,647–2,648 and 2,652–2,653.

Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations

9

§ INTRODUCTION

The next three books—Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations—continue the Former Writings and provide commentary on the storyline of Scripture. Specifically, they teach how God’s people were to maintain their faith in Yahweh when life does not seem to make sense (Ecclesiastes), in an intimate marriage relationship (Song of Songs), and amid divine judgment (Lamentations). Each book has a different emphasis that contributes to helping God’s people enjoy life in the old covenant as they place their hope in Yahweh.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand what the proper response is when life’s perplexing questions remain unanswered.
- grasp the beauty of intimacy within a marriage relationship, and see how that intimacy is a reflection of God’s love for his bride.
- identify the object of hope when experiencing immense pain and suffering.

Total pages of reading for this week: 28



This is the only lesson that covers three books of the Bible. You will need to be selective in what you decide to cover in class time. Don't feel like you have to cover all the material.

If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. Here are a few of DeRouchie's recommendations.

- ▷ Fredericks, Daniel C., and Daniel J. Estes. *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*. AOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010.
- ▷ Garret, Duane A. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*. NAC. Nashville: B&H, 1993.
- ▷ Provan, Iaian. *Lamentations*. NCBC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.



Day 1

ECCLESIASTES

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 206–207.

- ▷ begin at “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs: A Solomonic Stamp”
- ▷ stop at the paragraph that begins with “The Song of Songs celebrates...”

The book of Ecclesiastes continues the theme of the fear of Yahweh that was highlighted in Proverbs. Yet, there is a clear contrast in the overall emphasis of the two books.

1. Describe the contrast between the emphasis of Proverbs and the emphasis of Ecclesiastes.
 - **ANSWER.** *Proverbs emphasizes “living life to its fullest” (in the godly sense of the phrase), namely by living wisely. When one lives according to God’s way, life flourishes and blessing abounds. Ecclesiastes, on the other hand, emphasizes the mystery, complexity, and sometimes absurdity of life. The curse and its effects are brought to center stage. In Dempster’s words, “Proverbs seems life-affirming; Ecclesiastes life-denying. The one sees the possibilities that life affords; the other its limitations” (DD, 206).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 382–388.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ecclesiastes Provided Important Instruction About Living Well ‘Under the Sun’”

Qoheleth (i.e., the Preacher) knew that the best way to help students understand reality and therefore to live according to Yahweh’s order was not simply by giving them the “right answers,” but by challenging them to struggle with difficult issues (WOTARCA, 384).

Ecclesiastes 12:11

¹¹ *The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.*

Questions are one of the best ways to teach and to communicate one's message. Jesus was a master at this technique. A classic example of this is found in the gospel of Mark.

Mark 11:27–33

²⁷ *And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” ²⁹ Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” ³¹ And they discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ³² But shall we say, ‘From man?’—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”*

2. True/False: The Preacher raised many questions about life in Ecclesiastes all of which he answered from a biblical worldview.

UNDER THE SUN

“Life ‘under the sun’ is life as we experience it in a world that is fallen and cursed by God ... and that is filled with significant challenges, which are hard to understand” (WOTARCA, 385). ²¹

Ecclesiastes 7:13

¹³ *Consider the work of God:
who can make straight what he has made crooked?*

²¹ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

The story of Job testifies that there are divine, or “heavenly,” realities that our limited knowledge cannot know. Ecclesiastes shows that there are also countless things in life “under the sun” that do not make sense.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

One does not need to look long at this world to see that things are not the way they're supposed to be. Life is often unpredictable. Things do not always turn out the way one would expect. The wicked often prosper. The righteous often fail. Injustice seems to thrive all around us.

Ecclesiastes 9:11–12

¹¹ Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

And again:

Ecclesiastes 8:17

¹⁷ Then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

3. Why do you think God chooses to keep things hidden from his people at times? Is it possible to maintain a right view of God, even when one cannot fully understand him or his ways?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. God chooses to withhold his purposes from man for a number of reasons, one of which is that it keeps man humble by preventing him from boasting. It is possible to maintain a right view of God even though we cannot fully understand him or his ways. Qoheleth demonstrated this in Ecclesiastes.*

“Qoheleth recognized that God causes things to work out the way they do, but the sage does not indicate whether that is good or disconcerting. Sometimes hindsight allows us to see God’s goodness in experiences that initially showed few signs of his beneficence. However, ... there are others that seem random, with few hints of goodness.... Sometimes things work to our advantage; sometimes they seem to work to our disadvantage. It is hard to deny the truth that Qoheleth affirmed in this book; his description of life is frustratingly exact” (WOTARCA, 387–388).²²

4. Describe a situation in your own life that, from all earthly perspectives, did not make sense? In hindsight, did you see God’s goodness, or did it remain a frustrating mystery and even disconcerting?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

²² Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 2

THE END OF THE MATTER

For some of the reasons already covered, Ecclesiastes is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to interpret. It is not surprising, then, that there are many different views on the book, though most of these views can be boiled down into two broad camps by this watershed question: Is Qoheleth's theology sound or not?

In other words, there are some people who interpret the theology in Ecclesiastes (and even Job) as a contradiction to the wisdom taught in Proverbs, for instance, where the axiom "the righteous are blessed and the wicked perish" is generally true. Ecclesiastes, on the other hand, teaches that such a notion is naive and optimistic when one takes a look at reality where there seems to be no moral order and God's ways seem hidden from man. Conservative scholars who hold this view claim that the narrator "corrects" this bad theology at the end of the book with a passage we will consider shortly (Ecc. 12:13–14). Thus, the "nonorthodox speeches" throughout the book only serve as a foil to communicate the main message.

Consider the opening paragraph in one scholar's commentary:

"Life is profitless; totally absurd. This oppressive message lies at the heart of the Bible's strangest book. Enjoy life if you can, advises the author, for old age will soon overtake you. And even as you enjoy, know that the world is meaningless. Virtue does not bring reward. The deity stands distant, abandoning humanity to chance and death."

5. If this quote accurately represents the theology of Ecclesiastes, does it seem consistent with the rest of Scripture? Why or why not? Does the fact that the "correct theology" is given in the last two verses of the book (12:13–14) change your opinion?

· **ANSWER.** *If this quote accurately represents the theology of Ecclesiastes then the book would stand as an oddity in light of the rest of Scripture. Even if the last two verses correct it, the book as a whole would seem disjointed with the story of redemptive history that is driving towards a God-glorifying goal. Yes, there are many things in life that don't make sense, but life is not "profitless" or "absurd" or "meaningless" and it would be strange for an entire book in the canon to communicate this message with only two verses "correcting" its theology.*

Much of the discussion centers on how one interprets a key word in the book: *hebel*. This Hebrew word occurs 38 times in the book and shows up in the following refrain, which opens and closes the book (Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8):

Ecclesiastes 1:2

² *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,*

vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (ESV, also NASB, NRSV, NKJV, KJV)

² *“Futile! Futile!” laments the Teacher,*

“Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!” (NET, also HCSB)

² *“Meaningless! Meaningless!”*

says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.” (NIV, also NLT)

6. How do the different translations of this verse influence the way you understand it?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Indeed, *hebel* can carry negative nuances such as “worthless,” “valueless,” “meaningless,” “vain,” “irrational,” and “absurd,” which would support the view that Qoheleth’s theology is incorrect throughout the book. In this case, he would have a pessimistic, skeptical, cynical, or black view of reality. But it seems unlikely that Qoheleth would claim that “everything” in life (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:8) is worthless, meaningless, or absurd. Indeed, if *hebel* were taken this way it would not make sense in all the contexts in which it is used in the book.

But *hebel* can also be taken positively as “transient,” “fleeting,” “brief,” “enigma,” or “mystery,” in which case the book would take on a different message. Perhaps the best way to understand the word *hebel* is “enigma.” This maintains a positive nuance of the word and fits every use of it in the book. Life is “not fully comprehensible but still meaningful.”

In the same vein, another scholar argues that the best way to translate the term is “frustratingly enigmatic.”

The author is searching for the meaning of life, but it is all “frustratingly enigmatic.”

A helpful illustration for this concept is the process of putting together a jigsaw puzzle. When all the pieces lie scattered on the table, there is no order and therefore you cannot see the “big picture.” It does not make sense and at times it seems impossible to figure out how all the pieces fit together. It can be “frustratingly enigmatic.” But the Maker knows how it all fits together, and when we see life’s pieces come together, we know a little more about God.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 388–390.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ecclesiastes Provided Important Instruction About Living Well ‘Under the Sun’”

We will now consider the epilogue to the book of Ecclesiastes in which the narrator (not Qoheleth) offers some concluding comments.

🔗 **BIBLE STUDY:** Ecclesiastes 12:9–14

Ecclesiastes 12:9–14

⁹ Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

7. How does this passage confirm that Qoheleth was not out of line in his preaching in Ecclesiastes? What phrases or terms tell you so (see also 3:14; 5:7; 8:12–13; 11:9)?
 - **ANSWER.** *The narrator says that the Preacher was wise and taught the people knowledge. He also wrote “many proverbs with great care” and “words of truth.” The narrator’s call to “fear God” is consistent with Qoheleth’s writing, as well as his affirmation of a final judgment.*
8. According to the last two verses of Ecclesiastes, what is the “end of the matter [when] all has been heard?” In other words, what does the author exhort his readers to do when life does not make sense?
 - **ANSWER.** *We must “fear God and keep his commandments.” Fearing God involves faith and trust in his sovereignty.*

“In calling his audience to fear God, [Qoheleth] is calling them to a life of faith and trust in God. He recognized that even in a world characterized by hebel, many good gifts come from God and attest to his goodness. He exhorted his students to enjoy those things to the full while acknowledging their source. Qoheleth also saw that the frustrating realities of life and the inability of humans to fully comprehend God’s work have the power to draw people to faith and trust in the sovereign Lord who always accomplishes his purposes (3:11–14; 7:13), and this, for Qoheleth, was the only way to experience life with meaning and significance” (WOTARCA, 389–390).²³

²³ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 3

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SONG OF SONGS

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 207–208.

- ▷ begin at the paragraph that begins with “The Song of Songs celebrates...”
- ▷ stop at “Lamentations: Curse and the Mercies”

Dempster focuses on the larger context of the canon in his discussion of the Song of Songs.

Song of Songs 8:6–7

- ⁶ *Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of Yahweh.*
- ⁷ *Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
he would be utterly despised.*

Jeremiah 2:2

- ² *Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says Yahweh,
“I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.”*

Isaiah 62:4–5

⁴ *You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for Yahweh delights in you,
and your land shall be married.*

⁵ *For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.*

9. According to Dempster, what does the love between the two lovers in Song of Songs point to? How would an exiled Israel have read Song of Songs differently than the original audience?

· **ANSWER.** *The love between the lovers in Song of Songs points to the relationship between God and his people when they first left Egypt. However, because of their sin, Israel went into exile. Israelites reading this book in exile would have been reminded of the promises God made to “remarry” his people and to establish an intimate covenant relationship with them once again.*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 392–398.

More than merely an allegory of Yahweh’s love for Israel (or Christ’s love for the church), this book celebrates the love relationship between a man and woman in the context of marriage. The book traces the development of the relationship between Solomon (“my beloved”) and the Shulammite woman (“my love”) through a collection of song cycles between the two lovers. Throughout the book, their love grows and develops from an initial attraction into a deep, mature intimacy.

Song of Songs 2:2–3

- ² *As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among the young women.*
- ³ *As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the young men.*

10. How does the structure of Song of Songs distinguish the three phases of Solomon's relationship with his beloved? List the divisions of the book with their references as well as a heading for each section.

- **ANSWER.** *The book shows the development from an attraction to a marriage to an increasing intimacy throughout life. Structure: Progressing Toward Marriage (Song 1–3); Wedding Ceremony (Ch. 4); Growing in Intimacy (Chs. 5–8). (see WOTARCA, 394–395)*

The celebration of sexual intimacy in Song of Songs is a two-edged sword: it calls the married person to treasure, cultivate, and guard this precious gift from God, and it warns the single person to resist lust and entering into sexual relationships before marriage.

Song of Songs 5:1

- ¹ *Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love!*

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

Song of Songs 8:4

- ⁴ *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.*

11. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

“The flame of unrestrained, guiltless, and pure love is kindled only in the context of marriage, where it unites a husband and wife in an ‘unquenchable’ way. Such a treasure is a gift that no person can purchase” (WOTARCA, 395).²⁴

²⁴ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Song of Songs also shows the transforming power of love. It was in the context of curse that God said the woman's *desire* would be for her husband.

Then, in Genesis 4:7, God tells Cain that "sin lies crouching at the door. Its *desire* is for you, but you must rule over it." Again, this is a negative use of the term that describes something that is inconsistent with God's world. These are the only two times this particular word is used until we get to Song of Songs 7:10, where the author shows how true love (God's way) can undo the damaging effects of sin and redeem one's *desire*.

Genesis 3:16

¹⁶ *To the woman he said,*

*"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you."*

Song of Songs 7:10

¹⁰ *I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me.*

12. What other ways can you think of where a true expression of love can have redeeming influence in a world that has all but lost the biblical notion of love?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Parents loving their children rather than seeing them as inconveniences; friends loving their neighbors as themselves; coworkers loving those who mistreat them; the church loving the community by serving and helping the poor and needy; husbands loving their wives as themselves.*

Day 4

LAMENTATIONS

We are still in the Writings, which is not part of the narrative storyline of the Tanakh, which ended in 2 Kings 25 with Babylon taking Judah into captivity. Lamentations was written shortly after that tragic downfall, most likely by someone remaining in the land of Canaan. Through it, God's people express their deep grief over the recent events that took place in Jerusalem: families have just been split apart; women, children, and men have just been savagely slaughtered; the temple was destroyed; the city lay in ruins; and most of the people of Israel had been taken away into exile to Babylon, roughly an 800-mile trek through the desert. Emotions were still raw and the pain would have been indescribable.

Canonically, the fact that Lamentations immediately follows a book like Song of Songs (which depicts Israel's future relationship with Yahweh) serves as a splash of cold water in the face that brings Israel back to the present reality—exile and curse. And perhaps the more difficult reality to swallow was the fact that this curse was their own fault.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 400–406.

Lamentations 1:4–5

- ⁴ *The roads to Zion mourn,
for none come to the festival;
all her gates are desolate;
her priests groan;
her virgins have been afflicted,
and she herself suffers bitterly.*
- ⁵ *Her foes have become the head;
her enemies prosper,
because Yahweh has afflicted her
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.*

Lamentations 2:17

¹⁷ *Yahweh has done what he purposed;
he has carried out his word,
which he commanded long ago;
he has thrown down without pity;
he has made the enemy rejoice over you
and exalted the might of your foes.*

13. True/False: The author of Lamentations accepted that the suffering the nation was experiencing was flowing from the righteous wrath of God.

Just like many of the lament psalms, Lamentations peels back the curtain on the human soul and reveals the depths of pain and suffering. Listen to the author's thoughts toward and about God:

Lamentations 3:1–20

¹ *I am the man who has seen affliction
under the rod of his wrath;*
² *he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;*
³ *surely against me he turns his hand
again and again the whole day long.*

⁴ *He has made my flesh and my skin waste away;
he has broken my bones;*
⁵ *he has besieged and enveloped me
with bitterness and tribulation;*
⁶ *he has made me dwell in darkness
like the dead of long ago.*

⁷ *He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;
he has made my chains heavy;*
⁸ *though I call and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer;*
⁹ *he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones;
he has made my paths crooked.*

- ¹⁰ *He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a lion in hiding;*
- ¹¹ *he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces;
he has made me desolate;*
- ¹² *he bent his bow and set me
as a target for his arrow.*
- ¹³ *He drove into my kidneys
the arrows of his quiver;*
- ¹⁴ *I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,
the object of their taunts all day long.*
- ¹⁵ *He has filled me with bitterness;
he has sated me with wormwood.*
- ¹⁶ *He has made my teeth grind on gravel,
and made me cower in ashes;*
- ¹⁷ *my soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what happiness is;*
- ¹⁸ *so I say, "My endurance has perished;
so has my hope from Yahweh."*
- ¹⁹ *Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!*
- ²⁰ *My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.*

14. List some of the ways in which the author felt Yahweh had dealt with him.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Yahweh's wrath was against him (Lamentations 3:1); his hand was against him (v. 3); he was physically afflicted (v. 4); he was trapped (v. 7); Yahweh did not listen to his prayers (v. 8); Yahweh ravaged him like a wild animal (vv. 10–11); he attacked him like an enemy (vv. 12–13); humiliated him (v. 14); taken away peace (v. 17).*

The author of Lamentations expresses these thoughts and emotions in five individual laments that comprise the book itself.

15. What literary device does the author use in four out of the five laments? What does he communicate by this?

- **ANSWER.** *Four of the five laments are acrostic poems that use the Hebrew alphabet. Although the fifth lament is not an acrostic, it has twenty-two lines which reflects the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. “Through this structure, the lamenter seems to have been focusing on the completeness of his grief, for he drew on every letter that could be used to express the depth of his pain” (WOTARCA, 403).*²⁵

Just like the prophets showed us, it was the same covenant promises that were the basis for Israel’s curse that were the basis for their salvation. God was punishing his people as he said he would; yet, he would also forgive their sins like he said he would (Leviticus 26:40–45; Deuteronomy 30:1–10; Hosea 2:19–23). This was due to his mercy and faithfulness (Lamentations 3:21–23). Often, however, God’s plan takes longer than we might want it to and the only thing we can do in the meantime is to wait for Yahweh.

Lamentations 3:24–26

²⁴ “Yahweh is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”

²⁵ Yahweh is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul who seeks him.

²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of Yahweh.

16. Rewrite these verses in your own words.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. Because Yahweh is all I have, I will put my trust in him. Yahweh blesses those who wait for him and those who diligently long for him. Therefore, the best thing I can do right now is to wait quietly for God to come to my rescue.*

²⁵ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

Day 5

DAVIDIC MERCIES

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 208–210.

▷ begin at “Lamentations: Curse and the Mercies”

While Song of Songs vividly depicted Israel’s future relationship with Yahweh, Lamentations shows that the covenant relationship has been severed and Israel is like a widow or a virgin without a groom.

Lamentations 1:1

¹ *How lonely sits the city
that was full of people!
How like a widow has she become,
she who was great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
has become a slave.*

Lamentations 2:5

⁵ *The Lord has become like an enemy;
he has swallowed up Israel;
he has swallowed up all its palaces;
he has laid in ruins its strongholds,
and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah
mourning and lamentation.*

Lamentations 2:13

¹³ *What can I say for you, to what compare you,
O daughter of Jerusalem?
What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For your ruin is vast as the sea;
who can heal you?*

Lamentations 2:15

¹⁵ *All who pass along the way
clap their hands at you;
they hiss and wag their heads
at the daughter of Jerusalem:
“Is this the city that was called
the perfection of beauty,
the joy of all the earth?”*

Lamentations 4:22

²² *The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished;
he will keep you in exile no longer;
but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish;
he will uncover your sins.*

17. What does the abundance of female metaphors for Jerusalem communicate in the book of Lamentations? How do these metaphors contrast with the metaphor of Israel as Yahweh’s bride in Song of Songs?

· **ANSWER.** *Currently, Israel’s husband, Yahweh, has left her because of her faithlessness and spiritual adultery. She is alone and does not have a lover. In the Song of Songs, Yahweh was her lover and their relationship was deep and intimate, but that is not the reality at the present moment.*

The book shifts back and forth between “we” and “I,” which can make it difficult to discern who is speaking at times. But in Lamentations 3, the use of “I” is consistent at the beginning and end of the chapter. The question is who is “I” and what implications does this have?

Lamentations 3:1–6

¹ *I am the man who has seen affliction
under the rod of his wrath;*
² *he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;*
³ *surely against me he turns his hand
again and again the whole day long.*
⁴ *He has made my flesh and my skin waste away;
he has broken my bones;*

- ⁵ *he has besieged and enveloped me
with bitterness and tribulation;*
⁶ *he has made me dwell in darkness
like the dead of long ago.*

18. Who does Dempster believe the “I” refers to in this passage and how does it relate to the people’s loss of hope?

- **ANSWER.** *Dempster believes the “I” refers to the king, particularly Jehoiachin, who was experiencing exile and curse like the rest of the people. The people had hoped in their Davidic king (Lamentations 4:20), but now their hero was in the “dungeon” alongside themselves. However, he would be able to sympathize with the people’s suffering like many of the psalms express (Psalm 143:3; 22) as well as with the cries of the suffering servant (Isaiah 50:6; 53:4).*

The lament in Chapter 3 turns into a cry of hope as the author looks to the only source of hope and comfort he has.

Lamentations 3:21–23

- ²¹ *But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:*
²² *The steadfast love of Yahweh never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;*
²³ *they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

19. According to Dempster, what do the “mercies” and “faithfulness” refer to in this passage?

- **ANSWER.** *They are not general, but refer to God’s faithfulness and mercy to establish the Davidic dynasty, even amid all the wreckage. The people’s hope lies in this reality.*

Dempster says this concerning the hope-filled prayer of Lamentations 3:

“This is the prayer of an Israelite who claims the mercies of the Davidic covenant, a sufferer whose intensity embodies that of the people and whose suffering may look forward to one whose compassionate suffering will mean that there will be comfort and consolation for Israel despite their disobedience (Lamentations 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; cf. Isaiah 40:1–2)” (DD, 210).

20. One of the closing paragraphs in this chapter of *Dominion and Dynasty* is helpful in tying up the Former Writings and refocusing our attention to the storyline of Scripture that picks up in the book of Daniel. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

“At the end of the poetic commentary, then, the reader is reminded again of the problem of the exile, judgment, and the imprisonment of the Davidic king. This returns the reader in a forceful way to the point at which the narrative storyline was suspended with the judgment scene of 2 Kings 25. As that scene came to a close, hope was provided by the release of Jehoiachin. The intervening poetic commentary showed that that hope is nothing less than crucial. Jehoiachin represents the Davidic line, the shoot from Jesse’s stump (Isaiah 11:1), the righteous ‘plant growth’ (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8), the new David (Ezekiel 34:24; Hosea 3:5). Babel does not have the last word; the genealogy of Abraham does” (DD, 209).

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.



§ INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of the books covered in this lesson and write a short paragraph showing how it helps Israel “to maintain their faith, even amidst life’s sufferings and enigmas” (*WOTARCA*, 320).²⁶

²⁶ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Read Romans 11:33–36 and discuss God’s wisdom along with some of the themes from Ecclesiastes. How does one practically maintain faith in God’s wisdom in a world full of queries?
2. How does the theology of Ecclesiastes both free us to enjoy the good gifts that come from God (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13) and yet teach us to fear God and obey his commandments when life doesn’t make sense (3:14)?
3. Compare and contrast the love celebrated in Song of Songs with the “love” celebrated in our culture.
4. Describe a difficult time in your life when all you could do was wait for Yahweh (cf. Lamentations 3:24–26). How did this stretch your faith? Did God show up the way you expected him to?
5. Your own question(s):

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,”
ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,653 and 2,657.

Daniel and Esther

10

§ INTRODUCTION

The first nine lessons of this curriculum have covered two sections of the Tanakh: The Latter Prophets and the Former Writings. Both of these sections stand outside (or, more specifically, within) the redemptive storyline that began in Genesis and continues through Chronicles and into the New Testament where it finds its fulfillment in Christ. Recall that the storyline was suspended at the end of 2 Kings and these two sections of the Tanakh provided commentary on Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh.

In the previous lesson, we saw how Lamentations “[p]rovides an apt bridge back into the final narrative portion of Jesus’ Bible. Here Israel’s narrative history picks up again, but the focus is future-oriented, filled with anticipation of complete restoration, the destruction of all God’s enemies, and the global establishment of the divine kingdom through the Messiah” (*WOTARCA*, 406).

The first book in the Latter Writings is Daniel, and the context is the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.). From all earthly accounts, it seems as if the kingdom of Israel—the one whom God had miraculously redeemed from Egypt by destroying the world super-power with divine plagues, the one who had swept through the Promised Land devouring city after city, and the one who had ruled the Middle East for hundreds years—had fallen never to rise again. Daniel corrects this flawed understanding by showing that God’s kingdom would triumph in the end.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- explain what the future holds for the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of men.
- identify the Son of Man and his role in the restoration of God’s kingdom.
- see God’s sovereignty at work in history to preserve his chosen nation Israel so that he could restore the kingdom of God through it (i.e., through the Davidic King).

Total pages of reading for this week: 31



If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. Here are a few of DeRouchie's recommendations.

- ▷ Baldwin, Joyce G. *Daniel*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- ▷ Longman, Tremper, III. *Daniel*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- ▷ Allen, Leslie C., and Timothy S. Laniak. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. NIBCOT. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003.
- ▷ Baldwin, Joyce G. *Esther*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.



Day 1

DANIEL

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 408–409.

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 213–214.

§ BIBLE STUDY: Daniel 2:17–45

Daniel 2:17–45

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.”

²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.” ²⁶ The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. ³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

³¹ “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. ³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, ³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. ⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as

you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

1. What do you notice about Daniel’s overall spirit in this story (see esp. vv. 17–18, 30)? To whom does Daniel attribute knowledge, wisdom, might, and sovereignty (vv. 20–23, 26–30)?

- **ANSWER.** Daniel has a very humble spirit in this account. The first thing Daniel does is ask his friends to pray that God would intervene in the life-threatening situation and give him insight (Daniel 2:17–18). Daniel himself then prays, blessing and praising God for his wisdom, knowledge, sovereignty, and power (2:20–23). He then approaches the king boldly in the confidence that God has answered his prayer (2:24). Before the king, he attributes all the knowledge and insight to God, taking no credit for himself (2:30). Everything he does is God-exalting!

2. Explain the dream that Nebuchadnezzar has. What does the statue represent? How many different parts of the statue are there and what is each part made of? What does each part represent?

- **ANSWER.** Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a giant statue made of four parts: a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, middle and thighs of bronze, and legs/feet of iron mixed with clay. A stone comes and crushes the statue so that nothing is left. The four parts of the statue represent four consecutive kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome (respectively). Yet one day, all these kingdoms would be destroyed.

3. What does the stone represent? What is striking about the contrast between the statue and the stone (specifically, what they were made of)? What happens to it (2:34–35, 44–45)? When will this take place (2:28)?

· **ANSWER.** *The uncut stone represents the kingdom of God. The uncut stone was just that—a stone with no glitz or glory. When compared to the statue that was made of precious metals, it was not glorious at all. In the same way, when compared to some of the kingdoms of this earth, God’s kingdom does not appear glamorous. Yet, one day it will come and destroy all earthly kingdoms and grow until it fills the earth (2:35, 44–45; cf. Isaiah 2:1–5; 11:9). This will happen in the “latter days” (Dan. 2:28; cf. Isa. 2:1)*

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus has a lengthy discourse on the kingdom of heaven in which he offers a string of parables to describe what this kingdom would be like. Consider these two parables taken from this discourse:

Matthew 13:31–33

³¹ He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³ He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

4. What do Jesus’ parable and Nebuchadnezzar’s dream have in common (what reality do they both teach about the kingdom of God)? What are some ways this reality manifested itself when Christ came?

· **ANSWER.** *God’s kingdom will begin “humbly” and seemingly insignificant (uncut stone/smallest seed), yet it would grow into the most powerful kingdom on earth (mountain/large tree). His kingdom would permeate this entire world (mountain covering the earth/loaf completely leavened). Christ came into this world humbly. His angels appeared to shepherds (Luke 2:8–20). He was laid in a feeding trough after his birth (Luke 2:7). Few people knew of his birth (Matthew 2:2–3). He grew up a “normal” man with a normal job (carpenter) until the last few years of his life. On top of this, the kingdom of God grows in ways that seem backwards or contradictory to worldly wisdom (Matthew 19:28–30; 1 Corinthians 1:26–31).*

Day 2

.....

THE SON OF MAN

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 215–218.

▷ stop at “The Seventy Weeks: A Blueprint of History”

Dempster notes that Daniel 7–12 expands Nebuchadnezzar’s dream through even more visions and dreams. In chapter 7, Daniel has a vision of four beasts who emerge from the ocean and are given authority to rule over the earth for a short time (7:6, 12). But then they appear before a divine council where their fate changes.

Daniel 7:11–14

¹¹ *I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

¹³ *I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.*

¹⁴ *And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.*

5. How does this vision parallel and expand the eschatological vision in Daniel 2?

- **ANSWER.** *The four beasts parallel the four parts of the statue, both of which represent four consecutive earthly kingdoms (Daniel 7:17). The divine council and the son of man that strip the beasts of their dominion (7:12) parallel the uncut stone in Ch. 2 that destroys the statue. Both of these vision will happen in the latter days.*

In Daniel 7, the son of man, to whom all authority is given, is closely associated with “the saints of the Most High,” similar to the way a king would have been inseparably linked with his people. In a very real sense, they share the same fate. While both will undergo extreme suffering (7:21, 25), ultimately they will possess a kingdom that is unshakable and will reign forever (7:22, 27).

“Interestingly, in Daniel, the son of man does not seek to establish his own authority or to wrest authority through violence, but is simply given authority over the world by God... His victory will mark the victory of the saints, who will also receive universal dominion. Humanity will regain the dominion and royal status conferred on it at the beginning” (DD, 217).

Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

Revelation 3:21

²¹ *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Revelation 5:9–10

⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying,*

*“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,*

*for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,*

¹⁰ *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

Revelation 22:3-5

³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.... ⁵ and they will reign forever and ever.

6. What connections do you see between the son of man and the saints of the Most High in Daniel 7 and Jesus and his ransomed servants from these New Testament texts?

· **ANSWER.** *Just as the saints of the Most High must suffer with the son of man (Daniel 7:21, 25), they also are given a dominion with him (7:27). Jesus fulfills the son of man prophecies in Daniel, and his redeemed are the “saints of the Most High” spoken of in Daniel 7. Just as Christ had to suffer (Luke 24:26, 46), so must his disciples (Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12). Yet, as Christ will reign forever (1 Timothy 6:16; 1 Peter 5:11; Revelation 1:6), so will his saints reign with him forever (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 22:5)! This was God’s intention from the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:28).*

Jesus identifies his true identity when he answers Pilot’s question, “Are you the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Blessed?” Referring to Daniel 7, Jesus responds, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62). Jesus is the Son of Man, “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14).

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 410–414.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Daniel Showed That human Pride Is Evil and Results in God’s Judgment”

Daniel 4:32

³² *The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.*

7. One of the purposes of the book of Daniel is to show that:
- a) Israel's God is constantly vying for supremacy over the gods of the earth.
 - b) Yahweh's kingdom waxes and wanes with the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms.
 - c) Israel would one day crush the earthly kingdoms and rise as the world superpower, as in its former days.
 - d) Yahweh is king over all the earth, no matter what the earthly circumstances may indicate.

REMAINING FAITHFUL TO YAHWEH

The book of Daniel gives multiple scenarios wherein God's people were faced with tremendous pressure to compromise their faith and bow to the gods of the culture around them (cf. Daniel 3:15; 6:7). Even in countries where it is unlikely that Christians will be thrown into a furnace or a lion's den for refusing to bow to the government or the secular worldview, the temptations to assimilate one's faith to vain philosophies still exist.

8. Can you think of a specific situation where it would be easy to compromise your faith in Christ because of worldly pressures around you? What is one practical way you can resist this temptation, even if there are undesired consequences as a result?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Perhaps one day, by God's Spirit working through the witness of God's people, unbelieving bosses, spouses, parents, children, neighbors, relatives, politicians, teachers, and presidents might declare: "In all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of [Your Name], for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions" (Daniel 6:26–27).

Day 3

THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 218–221.

- ▷ begin at “The Seventy Weeks: A Blueprint of History”
- ▷ stop at “Esther: History with an Israelite Shape”

According to Daniel 9, a period of “seventy sevens” will follow the seventy-year exile in Babylon (9:24). Dempster interprets this figure to mean 490 years. It is at the end of this period of time that God will establish a new world order and Israel’s desolation will finally be over. The ultimate jubilee will arrive!

“And when the seventy weeks are completed, the kingdom of God—the little stone, the son of man granted all authority—will be a reality” (DD, 218).

Daniel 9:24

²⁴ Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

9. What will happen at the end of the seventy weeks and what will the period after that be like for God’s people?
 - **ANSWER.** *Transgressions and sin will be dealt a lethal blow. Iniquity will be atoned for. Righteousness will flourish. An anointed one [messiah] will be killed and cut off (Daniel 7:26). But he will also make a covenant with many and put an end to sacrifice (7:27). After the seventy weeks, God’s people will suffer great persecution, a prophecy consistent with the New Testament witness (as well as church history).*
10. True/False: The book of Daniel focuses on the clash between the kingdom of God and anti-God kingdoms.

The next reading from *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* will develop this idea further.

“SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 414–419.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Daniel Showed That human Pride Is Evil and Results in God’s Judgment”

The book of Daniel serves as a microcosm of the larger story of history. This curriculum has sought to follow the development of God’s kingdom on earth from its beginning until the coming of Christ. This kingdom, however, faces opposition from its inception as every single human being has, to some degree, resisted God’s kingdom.

The very first sin in the garden of Eden was the epitome of all human pride. God’s kingdom was perfect and mankind was enjoying the blessing of it. It was only when man decided he did not want to follow God’s rules, but to make his own, that things fell apart. To attempt to create one’s own kingdom has never been a wise decision, and it never will be.

Some people resist God’s kingdom in subtle ways, while some people communicate their defiance of any king besides themselves more explicitly, such as kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar of Babylon.

Daniel 3:15

¹⁵ Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?

Daniel 4:30

³⁰ And the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”

Daniel 5:22–23

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have

praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

11. Why do you think God hates such pride?

- **ANSWER.** *Pride draws attention to objects that are, at best, sinfully corrupt. Only God is worthy of exaltation. He created this world for his glory (cf. Isaiah 43:7) and those who try to steal that glory will be punished.*

The book of Daniel shows us that the God of heaven and earth has the power and authority to crush human pride. He is on a mission to build his kingdom through a covenant relationship with his redeemed people. Anyone who resists that mission will be cut off.

What is scary is that resisting God's kingdom does not have to look like the Babylonian empire. Satan is a master at taking good things—like a family, career, ministry, education, etc.—and turning them into mini-kingdoms in our minds. We take what we love or what our God-given talents and seek to make a name for *ourselves* by it.

James 4:6

⁶ *God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

God states, “Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear” (Isaiah 45:23). This is a reality that Paul picks up on and applies to Jesus (Philippians 2:10–11). Every tongue will one day “acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord” (2:11). The question is whether one will do so willingly or by force. The answer is a matter of blessing or curse, life or death (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15–20).

Thus, it is foolish to pursue one's own kingdom. As Daniel shows, all kingdoms besides God's are passing away. They may seem glamorous, powerful, and mighty for a time (recall the statue of Nebuchadnezzar from Daniel 2), but in the end they will all be crushed by a profoundly simply yet infinitely powerful kingdom (recall the uncut stone)—the kingdom of God!

12. Consider what kingdoms you might be trying to build in life that are not God's kingdom. It might be helpful to ask yourself the following questions: What is your motivation? What drives you? What thoughts go through your head when you dream about your success in a particular area? Is it the approval of man or is it the approval of God? How can you re-orient your life so that your family, your career, your hobbies, your reputation, your ministry, your education can all be used to build God's kingdom and not your own? Record any thoughts and take time to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be *your* name. *Your* kingdom come, *your* will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10).

· ANSWER. *Answers will vary*

Day 4

ESTHER

The book of Esther takes place after the Babylonian captivity in Mesopotamia, from where thousands of Jews had recently packed up their few belongings and returned to their homeland, Judah. Many, however, chose to remain in Persia since they had already begun establishing new roots, albeit in a foreign land. One decision by one Jewish man not to bow down to Haman, a Persian official, turned whatever little peace these Jews had into a nightmare. Esther shows God's sovereignty at work to preserve his chosen people from extermination.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 420–427.

13. True/False: Although the book of Esther contains no explicit reference to God, it draws attention to God's sovereignty perhaps more than any other book of the Bible.
14. If the author of Esther published a diary of your life, what examples might it include of God's providential protection, guidance, and leading through life's so-called "coincidences"? (Refer to *WOTARCA*, 422–424 for examples from Esther).

• **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

The Jews are in a dire situation as they face the threat of extermination by the Persians. Their only hope lies in the courage of one woman who found herself providentially placed in the king's court. She has the decision to speak up and risk her life, or to be silent and die with the rest of God's people. Consider how Mordecai and Esther process this situation.

Esther 4:13–17

¹³ Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” ¹⁵ Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶ “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” ¹⁷ Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

15. What do you notice about Mordecai’s faith in this passage?

- **ANSWER.** *Mordecai believed that relief and deliverance would come for the Jews one way or another, because God’s promises to his people had not yet been fulfilled. He knew God would not abandon his people to die forever. But he also believed that Esther might be the means by which God would deliver them at the present time; thus, he told her to act.*

16. What truth does the book of Esther function as a case study for? Select the correct answer.

- a) “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20).
- b) “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).
- c) “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Roman 8:28).
- d) “Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

Day 5

ISRAEL'S SIGNIFICANCE

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 221–223.

- ▷ begin at “Esther: History with an Israelite Shape”
- ▷ stop at “Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles: The End and the Beginning”

Esther 2:5

⁵ Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite.

1 Samuel 14:51

⁵¹ Kish was the father of Saul.

Esther 9:24

²⁴ For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them.

17. What is the connection between Mordecai and Saul and between Haman and Agag? What significance does this have in the book of Esther?

- **ANSWER.** Both Saul and Mordecai were descendants of Kish. Haman was a descendant of Agag. In the book of 1 Samuel, Saul refused to kill King Agag (1 Samuel 15:9), which revealed his disobedient heart. In Esther, Saul's descendant “gets vengeance” over the Amalekites as Haman and his entire family are destroyed (Esther 7:10; 9:14; cf. Numbers 24:7, 20). Thus, Saul's line has “been redeemed.”

Esther 6:13

¹³ And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.”

18. Explain why the Jewish nation is so important and why Haman's plot to destroy them is vain.

- **ANSWER.** *God had promised to restore his kingdom through the Jewish nation (specifically, through the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David). If they were completely destroyed, then there would be no heir to the promises God made to Abraham and David. Thus, Haman's plans were directly opposed to Yahweh's plans for his chosen people. He had no hope.*

In the end, God's kingdom will triumph over all the kingdoms of earth. This truth was expressly demonstrated in the book of Daniel and it is reiterated in the story of Esther.

19. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

“Esther's opposition to Haman continues the major theme running through the narrative, that of the woman against the beast: Eve versus the serpent; Sarah and Rebecca versus barrenness; Tamar versus Judah; Jochebed and Miriam versus the Pharaoh; Deborah and Jael versus Sisera; Ruth and Naomi versus death; Hannah versus barrenness; Jehosheba versus Athaliah. In all these examples of struggle these women of faith are engaged in a battle to save the people of God. The victory of Esther over Haman dramatically continues this theme” (DD, 223).

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

20. What theme from the larger narrative does Esther's opposition to Haman continue? How is this theme fulfilled in the New Testament?

- **ANSWER.** *Ever since Genesis 3, the woman and the serpent have been in conflict. This is evident throughout the entire narrative of Scripture and it is fulfilled on the cross when Jesus, the offspring of the woman, defeats the serpent by dying and rising from the dead.*



§ INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT

In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of Daniel or Esther so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. What kinds of kingdoms can you identify in this world? In the culture? In your church? In your own life? How can you view these things rightly with respect to God's kingdom that will last forever?
2. Discuss God's sovereignty manifested in both Daniel and Esther. How can these examples encourage and strengthen you when worldly pressures tempt you to compromise your faith?
3. Discuss the significance of the nation of Israel for all of human history and God's providential work to protect and sustain it. Why were the pagan nations' attempts to destroy Israel futile?
4. Your own question(s):

 **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- ▷ “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,”
ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,646–2,647 and 2,659.

Ezra-Nehemiah

11

🔗 INTRODUCTION

As the Old Testament canon winds down, the final two books (Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles) explicitly focus on the kingdom of God, the theme we have been tracing throughout this curriculum. At the fall, God's perfect kingdom (*Pattern of the Kingdom*) took a major blow as his people rejected his rule over them (*Perished Kingdom*). God, in his infinite mercy and grace made promises to restore this kingdom through one family line (*Promised Kingdom*). This process began with Abraham and continued through the monarchy until God's people proved faithless once again and ended up in exile (*Partial Kingdom*). As the kingdom unraveled again, God sent prophets to indict the nation for its sin, but also to preach about the restored kingdom through a Davidic, Messianic, Servant who would atone for the sins of God's people, destroy God's enemies, and rule in justice and righteousness forever (*Prophesied Kingdom*). Thus, there are massive expectations when one comes to Ezra-Nehemiah, a book that recounts the return from exile and the initial restoration process of God's kingdom.

However, as we will see, these expectations are hardly met. The problem with God's people was not shackles forged by Babylonian hands, but shackles forged by their own sinful hearts. In order for God's kingdom to be restored, it would take more than a pagan's king's permission to return and build the temple. God's people needed new hearts, a promise contained in the new covenant. Nonetheless, the release from Babylonian prison was a miracle in and of itself, and thus it should not be overlooked. God was faithful to his promises in this event and God's people had much to rejoice in as a result.

🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand how the release from Babylonian prison was evidence of God's faithfulness to his promises, but was only the beginning of a restoration process that would ultimately be accomplished through Christ.
- ▷ identify the cause of the Babylonian captivity and the basis for God's forgiveness of his people.
- ▷ describe the response of God's people upon hearing the Word of God read from and obeyed.

Total pages of reading for this week: 17



If you feel you need more information for this lesson, we suggest that you obtain copies of the Recommended Resources to help gain a broader perspective on the topics discussed. In addition to those resources, Jason DeRouchie also recommends several commentaries at the end of each chapter of *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*. Here are a few of DeRouchie's recommendations for Ezra and Nehemiah.

- ▷ Fensham, F. Charles. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- ▷ Kidner, Derek. *Ezra and Nehemiah*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- ▷ Steinmann, Andrew E. *Ezra and Nehemiah*. CC. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2010.

Please note that we believe these commentaries would be helpful to you as you seek to know God and his Word, however, they offer diverse theological approaches and are the word of man, not of God, so their claims should be carefully evaluated and subjected to scripture—the highest authority for Christians.



Day 1

THE INITIAL RETURN

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 223–225.

- ▷ begin at “Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles: The End and the Beginning”
- ▷ stop at “Chronicles and the Goal of History”

While Ezra-Nehemiah precedes Chronicles *canonically*, it follows Chronicles *chronologically*. This is an interesting fact given the opening verses of Ezra-Nehemiah and the closing verses of Chronicles.

Ezra 1:1–3

¹ *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:* ² *“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.* ³ *Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.”*

² Chronicles 36:22–23

²² *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:* ²³ *“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him. Let him go up.’”*

1. What do you notice about these two passages? Why is this significant?

- **ANSWER.** *These passages are nearly identical. Ezra-Nehemiah begins where Chronicles ends, which means they are in reverse chronological order. The canonical message is that the return from exile does not usher in the restored kingdom, but only initiates the process. Ezra-Nehemiah communicates that the restoration was not complete; Chronicles reiterates the “return from exile,” but the reader of the canon realizes that there is a greater “return from exile” to come.*

Post-exilic prophets like Haggai and Zechariah spoke of the return from exile in glorious terms. They spoke of the people’s obedience, blessing, God’s glory indwelling the rebuilt temple, the prosperity of Jerusalem, the judgment of Israel’s enemies, etc. Truly it would be a glorious day!

Haggai 2:1–9

¹ *In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ² “Speak now ... to all the remnant of the people, and say, ³ ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? ⁴ Yet now be strong ... all you people of the land, declares Yahweh. Work, for I am with you, declares Yahweh of hosts, ⁵ according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. ⁶ For thus says Yahweh of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷ And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says Yahweh of hosts. ⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares Yahweh of hosts. ⁹ The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says Yahweh of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares Yahweh of hosts.’”*

2. What is shocking about the contrast between the vision of kingdom restoration that prophets like Haggai and Zechariah held and the reality of kingdom restoration described in Ezra-Nehemiah?

- **ANSWER.** *The prophets (especially Haggai and Zechariah) described the restoration of the kingdom as a momentous event, whereas Ezra-Nehemiah depict a sinful people who compromise their faith, adopt pagan religion, intermarry with pagan peoples, and pursue their own interests rather than God’s.*

3. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

“Read in a canonical context, the command to rebuild the temple after seventy years of exile is a direct echo of Daniel 9. This period, as noted by Jeremiah, has been completed; and Cyrus, who is depicted in the prophetic literature as God’s Messiah (Is. 45:1), is the catalyst with his proclamation that the exiles can return to build the temple of the Lord. The seventy years may be over, but the seventy weeks have just begun. Clearly, the people are still in exile at the end of the Tanakh, with emancipation and restoration a prospect. A long exile still awaits before the Messiah comes and restores all things” (DD, 225).

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

4. True/False: The fact that Israel has returned to Canaan indicates that they are no longer in exile.

As one might expect, Israel needs more than a second (or third or fourth) chance to remain faithful to God’s covenant. God desires to make certain that his people understand their need of him. He is building a kingdom in which he will receive all the glory. Thus, the initial return from exile in Babylon marked the beginning of the restoration process, but it also showed that a greater work was needed in the hearts of God’s people, a work that would be accomplished in the new covenant.

Day 2

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RETURN FROM BABYLON

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 428–433.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Acknowledged the Threat of Opposition to God’s People and Purposes”

The return *from* Babylon mirrored the deportation *to* Babylon in that each occurred in three phases. God was “undoing” the curse the same way the three mentions of “blessing” to Abram in Genesis 12:1–3 countered the three mentions of “curse” in Genesis 3–11.

5. Match each aspect of the return with the appropriate phase that it occurred in or describes.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. 458 B.C. (B) | A. Phase 1 |
| 2. Nehemiah was the governor (C) | B. Phase 2 |
| 3. Problems with interfaith marriage (B) | C. Phase 3 |
| 4. 538 B.C. (A) | |
| 5. Temple completed (A) | |
| 6. 444 B.C. (C) | |
| 7. 49,697 Israelites returned (A) | |
| 8. The book of the Law was read (C) | |
| 9. Covenant renewal (C) | |
| 10. 1,754 Israelites returned (B) | |

6. What theological concern does Ezra-Nehemiah address? Select the correct answer.

- a) Would God abandon his people and revoke the promises he had made to them?
- b) When would the Gentile nations be included in God’s people?
- c) How would Israel reflect God’s image and be his treasured possession while in exile?
- d) Would the exile “purge” God’s people and make them faithful to God’s covenant?

In order for a pagan world-power to loosen its grip on God's chosen people God would have to intervene. But as the story of redemption has demonstrated so far, Yahweh is a God accustomed to intervening in space and time to act on behalf of his people!

Ezra 1:1

¹ *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.*

Nehemiah 6:16

¹⁶ *And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.*

Romans 8:31

³¹ *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

7. What truth about God does Ezra-Nehemiah teach? What is one specific way this truth can provide comfort and/or encouragement to you in your life right now?

· **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary. God is sovereign and when he decides to work for his people, nothing can thwart his purposes!*

Now consider these verses that speak of Yahweh's character:

Nehemiah 1:5

⁵ *And I said, "O Yahweh God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments."*

Nehemiah 1:8–9

⁸ *Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,"⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there."*

Nehemiah 9:32

³² Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.

Not one of God's words would fail. He is a covenant-keeping God. Upon repentance, God would lavish blessing upon his people. He would also make a way for his promises to Abraham and David to come true, even if his people would were unfaithful to uphold their end. He would provide the necessary covenant-keeping partner.

8. True/False: God made new promises to a new Israel after the return from exile, because their fathers had forfeited the previous promises made to the nation.

Day 3

OPPOSITION TO GOD'S PEOPLE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 433–434.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Acknowledged the Threat of Opposition to God’s People and Purposes”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Emphasized the Need for Spiritual, Social, and Physical Boundaries”

Ever since Genesis 3, there has been a colossal battle taking place. The woman God created to worship and adore him sided with the serpent in opposition to all that was right and good and true (Genesis 3:1–7). As part of the serpent’s curse, God placed enmity between the woman and the serpent and between their offspring (Gen. 3:15)—an enmity that would rear its ugly head throughout the storyline of Scripture. Thus, all the opposition that God’s people faced—barrenness, pagan nations, slavery, genocide, etc.—was a direct result of the serpent’s attempt to put an end to the offspring of the woman. But God planned to bring blessing back to the world, to restore his kingdom, through the woman’s offspring, and thus he sovereignly turned all the plans against his people on their head to work to accomplish his purposes (cf. Gen. 50:20; Nehemiah 4:15).

The exile in Babylon was no different. The serpent’s offspring (Babylon) surely would have thought it had defeated the woman’s offspring (Israel). Yet God intervened and brought his people out of slavery, a fact we considered yesterday. However, God’s enemy does not give up that easily. Even in the restoration process there was much opposition to God’s people. Consider the following verses:

Ezra 4:4–5

⁴ Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. ⁵ They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Nehemiah 2:19

¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” ²⁰ Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”

Nehemiah 4:3–5

³ Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!” ⁴ Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. ⁵ Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

Nehemiah 6:9

⁹ For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

Nehemiah 4:14, 20

¹⁴ And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” ... ²⁰ Our God will fight for us.

9. How did God’s people respond to the opposition they faced in the rebuilding process?

- **ANSWER.** *The Israelites depended on God and appealed to him to protect them. They trusted that God would strengthen them and prosper their efforts and then they took actions to continue the work God had called them to.*

Even 2,500 years later, opposition is nothing new to those who have chosen to follow Jesus. After all, Jesus told his followers to expect to be persecuted.

John 15:20

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

Acts 14:22

²² Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

2 Timothy 3:12

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" (Tertullian).

10. Why do you think God designed to use persecution to build his church?

- **ANSWER.** Answers will vary. God chose to use what is weak and despised and foolish to shame those who are "strong" and "wise" so that no one would boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). Just as sin took what was good and corrupted it into something it was not supposed to be, so redemption takes something bad (e.g., persecution) and turns it into something good. God is glorified when his church is willing to endure hardships for his sake, since it shows the worth of following him. God beats sin at its own game and therefore builds his church by it. Tertullian's quote (above) testifies to the fact that the church has grown the most during times of persecution.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 434–437.

- ▷ begin at "The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Emphasized the Need for Spiritual, Social, and Physical Boundaries"
- ▷ stop at "The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Called for Covenant Loyalty Through Conformity to the Law of Moses"

Ezra 9:2

² They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.

Ezra 10:11

¹¹ Now honor Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.

11. Why was it so important for Israel to remain distinct from and uninfluenced by the pagan nations around them upon their return?

- **ANSWER.** *In order to serve as a channel of blessing to the nations, Israel had to remain holy, as Yahweh was holy (Leviticus 20:26). Only by obeying the covenant would they be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and show Yahweh's worth to the nations (Exodus 19:5-6).*

Nehemiah 1:3

³ They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

12. What physical object represented the separateness that Israel was to maintain from the other nations? Select the correct answer. Then explain what two ways this object functioned.

- a) The rebuilt temple
- b) The walls of Jerusalem
- c) The ark of the covenant
- d) The tablets on which the ten commandments were written

Explanation:

- **ANSWER.** *The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls provided a physical boundary between Israel and the nations that both protected them and set them apart. But it also served as a spiritual boundary that prevented them from spiritual defection and idolatry.*

Day 4

THE LAW OF MOSES

The entire nation of Israel was founded on the covenant that God made with Moses on Mt. Sinai. In this covenant, God gave Israel a set of laws, promising to bless them for obedience and to curse them for disobedience. It was the law of Moses that formed the basis for the prophets' ministry, as they condemned Israel for covenant disloyalty and called them to repent. Sadly, Israel stiffened their neck and remained in their sin.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 437–439.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Called for Covenant Loyalty Through Conformity to the Law of Moses”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Demonstrated How God Favors Those Who Dependently Seek Him”

Nehemiah 1:7

⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

13. According to Nehemiah, what caused the Babylonian captivity?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel did not keep the Mosaic covenant.*

Israel's negligence of the law of Moses led to the covenant curses prescribed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. The exile functioned as a splash of cold water to the face. As a result, the post-exilic Israelites paid closer attention to the Book of the Law.

We see one instance of this in Nehemiah 8, when all the people who had returned gather together to hear the Book of the law read from and then explained so they could understand it. Ezra, the scribe, played a central role in this event since he was a man committed to God's word.

Ezra 7:6, 10

⁶ [Ezra] was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses ... for the hand of Yahweh his God was on him.... ¹⁰ For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of Yahweh, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Here are some of the responses of God's people upon hearing the word read from:

Nehemiah 8:3

³ And [Ezra] read from [the Book of the Law of Moses] ... from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:5-6

⁵ As he opened it all the people stood. ⁶ And Ezra blessed Yahweh, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped Yahweh with their faces to the ground.

Nehemiah 8:8

⁸ They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

Nehemiah 8:9

⁹ All the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:12

¹² And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

14. Compare Israel's response to the preaching of God's word with your own experience, whether personal or corporate. Record any thoughts you have.

· ANSWER. Answers will vary

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 439–441.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of Ezra-Nehemiah Demonstrated How God Favors Those Who Dependently Seek Him”

15. Fill in the blanks from the reading:

“ Prayer expressed through confession and covenant renewal plays a central role in the events recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah” (WOTARCA, 439).²⁷

The underlined words in this quotation are left blank in the Student Workbook. We suggest that the instructor read the quote aloud to allow students to check their work.

Consider these prophetic words that Moses penned nearly 1,000 years before the time of Ezra and Nehemiah:

Deuteronomy 4:25–31

²⁵ When you father children and children’s children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God, so as to provoke him to anger, ²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷ And Yahweh will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where Yahweh will drive you. ²⁸ And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. ²⁹ But from there you will seek Yahweh your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰ When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to Yahweh your God and obey his voice. ³¹ For Yahweh your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

16. What would happen to God’s people *after* he scattered them among the nations and they served other gods (see Deuteronomy 4:29–30)? What was the basis for this (see 4:31)?

- **ANSWER.** *God’s people would seek God with all their hearts and be obedient to him. The reason they would do this was because Yahweh is merciful and gracious to his people and faithful to the covenant.*

²⁷ Jason DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2013). Used by permission. No duplication or distributed is permitted without written permission of the publisher.

We see in Ezra-Nehemiah a genuinely repentant heart among God's people. For once, they humble themselves and acknowledge their sin. For once they turn to God and seek him with all their hearts. For once they plead with him on the basis of his mercy to help them in their present need. For once they learn that obeying God brings blessing while rejecting his rule brings curse.

Ezra 8:22

²² The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.

Nehemiah 10:28

²⁸ All who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God ... ²⁹ join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

Day 5

COVENANT RENEWAL

Nehemiah's prayer has been referred to a number of times throughout the readings for this lesson. We will now consider it in more detail.

🔗 BIBLE STUDY: Nehemiah 9:6–37

Israel was undergoing a period of revival as the Book of the Law was finally being heeded. This period was marked by corporate worship, prayer, and confession. Nehemiah 9 recounts a covenant renewal that Israel performed wherein they acknowledged their failure and pleaded with God for forgiveness.

Nehemiah 9:6–37

⁶ *You are Yahweh, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.*

⁷ *You are Yahweh, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. ⁸ You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.*

⁹ *And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, ¹⁰ and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day.*

¹¹ *And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. ¹² By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. ¹³ You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, ¹⁴ and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and*

statutes and a law by Moses your servant. ¹⁵ You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

¹⁶ *But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.* ¹⁷ *They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.* ¹⁸ *Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,’ and had committed great blasphemies,* ¹⁹ *you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.* ²⁰ *You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.* ²¹ *Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.*

²² *And you gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner. So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan.* ²³ You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess. ²⁴ *So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would.* ²⁵ *And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.*

²⁶ *Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.* ²⁷ *Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.* ²⁸ *But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you,*

you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies.²⁹ And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.³⁰ Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.³¹ Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.³³ Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.³⁴ Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them.³⁵ Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works.³⁶ Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves.³⁷ And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

17. In verses 6–15 and 22–25, Nehemiah recounts Israel’s inception as a nation. Underline every action that Yahweh takes to bring this nation into existence. Why would Nehemiah spend so much time rehearsing all that God had done for the Israelite nation?

· **ANSWER.** *The fact that Yahweh had brought this nation into existence and done so much for them makes their sin even more detestable. They owed their very lives to God. Yahweh deserves all allegiance and obedience.*

18. Verses 16–21 and 26–31 reveal Israel’s response to all that God had done for them. Why is this response so shocking (notice the negative conjunctions “but” verse 16 and “nevertheless” verse 26)? What phrase do you see repeatedly interjected in the midst of their sinful response? Circle this phrase every time it occurs. On what basis did Nehemiah appeal to God for forgiveness?

- **ANSWER.** *Even though God had done so much for Israel, they stiffened their neck and refused to obey him. God had done all good things for them and they still did not follow him! Yet, Yahweh’s mercy was relentless (Nehemiah 9:17, 19, 27–28, 31, 32; cf. Exodus 24:6). Nehemiah appeals to God’s mercy for forgiveness (v. 32).*

Nehemiah ping-pongs back and forth between Israel’s sin and Yahweh’s mercy in these verses. As one commentator notes, “Each of the two parties, God and man, stands out with special clarity against the background of the other. Sin abounds, grace superabounds. Israel opts for turning back to Egypt and for a new god; the Lord stands by his people, keeps his promises and meets their deepest (9:20) and most elementary needs (9:21). Throughout this miraculous pilgrimage ‘they lacked nothing’ (9:21) – and appreciated nothing (9:17). This part of their history ends with an undeserved and unstinted inheritance, ‘full of all good things’ (9:25).”

It is simply remarkable that Yahweh did not (and does not) give up on his people!

19. Do you sense a genuine repentance and acknowledgment of sin? What verses or phrases tell you so? Do the people question God’s justice or acknowledge and accept it? What verses or phrases tell you so?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel acknowledges their sin before God (9:16–18, 9:26, 9:28–30). They also acknowledge and accept God’s justice (9:27–28, 9:30, 9:33). There was no getting around the fact that they had rebelled against their God and deserved the punishment he gave them.*

20. List any other questions or observations you may have from this text.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Did the exile render God's promises to Israel void? Why or why not? Put yourself in their shoes and discuss some of the questions Israel would have pondered as they lay in bondage to Babylon.
2. In what ways have you faced the opposition of the "serpent's offspring" when you were trying to be obedient to God? How did you respond? What was the outcome?
3. Discuss Israel's covenant renewal (see Nehemiah 9–10). In your context (personal or church), when do you think it would be appropriate, or what would be appropriate contexts, for a covenant renewal?
4. Your own question(s):

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ "History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ," ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,646.

1–2 Chronicles

12

§ INTRODUCTION

While Ezra-Nehemiah provided hope for the restored kingdom of God, 1–2 Chronicles specifically focuses the attention on the Davidic Messiah who would accomplish this restoration. One of the ways the book does this is by highlighting David’s accomplishments rather than his failures, the most significant being his preparations to build the temple of God (which his son Solomon actually accomplishes). The other way David would be the means to bring about God’s restored kingdom is through the reign of one of his sons.

§ LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the distinction between 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles and why the author of 1–2 Chronicles crafted his book the way he did.
- understand why God requires his people to repent of their sin and to humbly seek his face.
- communicate some ways that Jesus the Messiah fulfills the Old Testament promises and shadows (typology).

Total pages of reading for this week: 27



Since this is the last lesson of *Old Testament Survey 2: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible*, it might be appropriate to spend about 30 minutes at the end of class either discussing any remaining questions or discussing ways in which the students' understanding of redemptive history has changed over the semester. Perhaps discuss how this will enhance their reading of the whole Bible, not just the Old Testament. This might help draw things together in their minds and give them a sense of closure.

If you would like to give feedback regarding this course, please do so by contacting us at info@bcmn.edu. We would be glad to hear from you.



Day 1

THE DAVIDIC HOUSE

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 225–227.

▷ begin at “Chronicles and the Goal of History”

Dempster has identified the twin themes of the Tanakh as “dominion” and “dynasty” (or “geography” and “genealogy”). These themes are interwoven throughout the entire canon, but at times they are more veiled than at other times.

“In case the goal of the Tanakh or the identity of this messianic figure, who will come and restore the dominion of humanity over the creation, has been lost, the last book of the Tanakh clarifies both emphatically” (DD, 225).

In Genesis, genealogies served a crucial role as they structured the entire narrative around God’s chosen line that proceeded from Adam and Eve down to Judah. No other book in the Tanakh uses genealogies to this degree to highlight its message, except, perhaps, for the book of Chronicles. Unlike Genesis, however, Chronicles clusters all the genealogies up front in the first nine chapters. Then the narrative begins in chapter 10.

1. What Old Testament figure does the narrative of 1–2 Chronicles focus on primarily? What is significant about this figure?
 - a) Adam
 - b) Abraham
 - c) Moses
 - d) David

- **ANSWER.** *God promised that a Davidic heir would be the one to restore his kingdom on earth. He would be the serpent crusher, the channel of blessing to the nations, and the conquering king from the tribe of Judah. The hope of Israel and all humanity hung on David's shoulders.*

2. To what geographical location does the narrative of 1–2 Chronicles focus on primarily? What is significant about this location?

- a) The Promised Land
- b) Jerusalem
- c) Babylon
- d) The nations

- **ANSWER.** *Jerusalem is significant because it is the city where Solomon built the temple, the dwelling place of God. After the temple was destroyed, according to the prophetic literature, Jerusalem would again be the dwelling place of God where the temple would be rebuilt and blessing would flow not just to Israel, but to all the nations (Ezekiel 47:1–12; Zechariah 8:23).*

In Lesson 3, we noted that Ezekiel's vision of the new temple was almost too good to be true. Indeed, it seemed "other-worldly." The language used to describe this new temple reflected the language used in Genesis to describe the garden of Eden and the language used in Revelation to describe the new heavens and new earth. God's temple, the place where he dwelt, was never restricted to a physical building. His presence is all-encompassing and reaches to all nations.

"As Jews make their way up to the temple, spurred on by the Psalms of Ascent ([Psalms] 120–134), the people from the nations will grab the hems of their robes, saying, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you' ([Zechariah] 8:23). The goal of the canon is clearly the great house of God, which is as inclusive as the globe" (DD, 227).

3. What does Dempster mean by "the great house of God"?

- **ANSWER.** *The term "house" has two meaning: a temple and a dynasty. While David's son Solomon would build the temple for God, God would build a dynasty for David.*

2 Chronicles 36:23

²³ Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him. Let him go up."

4. How does the last verse in 1–2 Chronicles (and thus, the Tanakh) point to this dual meaning of "house"?

· **ANSWER.** *God sovereignly moved in the heart of King Cyrus so that he released Jehoiachin from prison and allowed the Jews to return home. Thus, the Davidic house (dynasty) was resurrected. The Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Thus, God's house (the temple) was resurrected. The hope for God's people was rekindled and the reader is pointed forward to the future when these promises would be fulfilled.*

Day 2

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DAVID AGAIN? ... 'YES'!

1 Chronicles 17:11–12

¹¹ *When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.*

¹² *He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, page 442.

Bolen agrees with Dempster that the two major themes of 1–2 Chronicles are the temple and the Davidic dynasty (*WOTARCA*, 442). Its purpose is not so much to detail the events surrounding the establishment of the monarchy and the temple (cf. 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings), but to emphasize the fact that they are still the answer to Israel's problems. There is still hope for Israel!

5. What is one possible reason why 1–2 Chronicles is so positive concerning Israel's future while Ezra-Nehemiah is generally bleak? Can you think of another reason why this could be the case?

- **ANSWER.** *It is possible that 1–2 Chronicles was written shortly after that return from exile in 538 B.C. and thus the author had high hopes of Israel's renewed allegiance to Yahweh. Another reason is that the canonizer strategically placed 1–2 Chronicles at the end of the Tanakh so that it pointed the reader forward to the New Testament where the fulfillment of all God's promises would come to fruition in the Davidic Messiah, Jesus (cf. Matthew 1:1).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 443–447.

Many readers wrongly suppose that 1–2 Chronicles is merely a redundant account of 1–2 Kings. It is not surprising, since much of the content is shared and the two books are placed back to back in the English Bible. But to miss the differences between these books is to miss the primary message of 1–2 Chronicles.

As Bolen points out, the author of 1–2 Chronicles was well acquainted with 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, and he expected his readers to be as well. But he wrote at a later time to a different audience and therefore had a different message to communicate.

6. What is the primary difference between 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles (hint: consider the audience of each book)?

- **ANSWER.** *1–2 Chronicles was written to the post-exilic community who were asking God, “Will the kingdom be restored?” Therefore it focused on the continuation of the covenant through the Davidic messiah and offered hope for God’s people. 1–2 Kings was written to the Israelites who had just experienced the exile and were asking God “Why did the exile happen?” Therefore it focused on covenant failure and the resulting curse.*

Hardly any attention is given to Saul, the first king of Israel. Instead, the text almost immediately shifts to draw attention to David and the grand promises God made to him, since Israel’s future (as well as humanity’s) rests on the fulfillment of these promises.

1 Chronicles 11:2

² *In times past, even when Saul was king, it was you [David] who led out and brought in Israel. And Yahweh your God said to you, “You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over my people Israel.”*

1 Chronicles 12:23, 38

²³ *These are the numbers of the divisions of the armed troops who came to David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him, according to the word of Yahweh....* ³⁸ *All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with a whole heart to make David king over all Israel. Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king.*

1 Chronicles 14:2

² *And David knew that Yahweh had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.*

1 Chronicles 14:16–17

¹⁶ And David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer. ¹⁷ And the fame of David went out into all lands, and Yahweh brought the fear of him upon all nations.

1 Chronicles 17:11–13

¹¹ When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹² He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you.

1 Chronicles 17:24

²⁴ And your name will be established and magnified forever, saying, ‘Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel’s God,’ and the house of your servant David will be established before you.

7. What aspects of David’s life were not included by the author of 1–2 Chronicles? Why was this the case?

- **ANSWER.** *The author of 1–2 Chronicles deliberately chose not to include the negative aspects of David’s life (including his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah; cf. 2 Samuel 11).*

We know from 2 Samuel, however, that David was not a perfect man; neither were any of his successors. One Davidic king, Jehoram, committed monstrous sin, yet God would still not revoke his promises to continue the Davidic line forever.

2 Chronicles 21:7

⁷ Yet Yahweh was not willing to destroy the house of David, because of the covenant he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

The tension in the narrative arises again, since God had also made the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant contingent on the king’s obedience to the Mosaic covenant (cf. 2 Chronicles 6:16).

1 Chronicles 28:7

7 I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.

Another tension exists in the text.

1 Chronicles 28:5

5 And of all my sons (for Yahweh has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of Yahweh over Israel.

1 Chronicles 29:23

23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh as king in place of David his father.

2 Chronicles 6:10

10 For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel.

8. On whose throne did Solomon sit?

Note that this is an apparent tension in the text that should draw our attention.

- **ANSWER.** *Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh; yet, he also sat on the throne of Israel.*

Both of these tensions find resolution in the fulfillment of the Davidic promises: Jesus the Messiah. That is, Jesus is the only Davidic king who obeyed the Mosaic Covenant perfectly, and he came to sit “on the throne of Yahweh as king in place of David his father.”

But in Chronicles, the fact that “Solomon sat on the throne of Yahweh as king in place of David his father” (1 Chronicles 29:23) has massive implications, especially when considering that canonically, 1–2 Chronicles comes after the book of Daniel in which it was prophesied that God’s kingdom would destroy all the kingdoms of the earth and become a worldwide dominion. It was on the throne of this kingdom that Yahweh himself declared Solomon to be sitting!

A human king on a divine throne? If this sounds crazy, that’s because it is! In fact, it’s just as crazy as a God-man coming to earth to establish a new and eternal kingdom for God’s people. Yes, Jesus the Messiah is the only Davidic King who could ever sit on the throne of the only Divine King. The kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven combine in the reign of Jesus who sits on the Davidic throne forever!

Day 3

THE TEMPLE

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 448–452.

- ▷ stop at “The Author of 1–2 Chronicles Demonstrated How Covenant Loyalty Brought Blessings or Curses”

The fact that 18 chapters in 1–2 Chronicles are devoted to the preparation for and the building of the temple shows that this indeed is one of the emphases the author wants to communicate. The temple serves as a gauge to Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. In general, when the king, the Levites, and the people regard the temple and keep it holy, their relationship with Yahweh thrives (2 Chronicles 24:2–4; 29:2–3; 34:8), but when they disregard the temple and defile it with idols, prostitution, and greedy practices, their relationship with Yahweh crumbles (24:18; 28:24; 33:4, 6).

2 Chronicles 24:2–4

² And Joash did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh all the days of Jehoiada the priest.... ⁴ After this Joash decided to restore the house of Yahweh.

9. True/False: The author of 1–2 Chronicles was concerned that God’s people would seek the temple, but only because the temple signified God’s presence on earth.

In the New Testament, Jesus himself expands Israel’s temple theology. Whereas God once dwelt *among* his people, he would one day dwell *inside* them (John 14:17)! Paul says it this way:

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

10. According to Paul, where does God's presence dwell in the new covenant? How should we live in light of this?

- **ANSWER.** *In the New Covenant, God's Spirit dwells in the body of the church (cf. Joel 2:28–30; Acts 2:17–18). The church is a temple that God is growing, brick by brick (Ephesians 2:19–22). We ought to live lives of holiness because of this monumental reality! The glory of God that made Moses' face shine (Exodus 34:29–30) and killed Uzzah when he touched the ark (1 Chronicles 13:9–10) lives inside us and is seen when we perform deeds in Jesus' name (cf. Matt. 5:16).*

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 452–455.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of 1–2 Chronicles Demonstrated How Covenant Loyalty Brought Blessings or Curses”
- ▷ stop at “The Author of 1–2 Chronicles Called for Seeking Yahweh in Humility and Faith”

In the previous lesson, we observed words that the prophet Moses spoke nearly 1,000 years ago concerning Israel's future repentance and return to the Yahweh. In the same book, Moses exhorted the nation to keep Yahweh's law so that they would be blessed as they entered the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

¹⁵ See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God that I command you today, by loving Yahweh your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and Yahweh your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving Yahweh your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

These words were spoken to a nation that had not yet tasted the Promised Land. One thousand years later, the same promises hold true for a nation that had experienced the ultimate covenant curse—exile outside the land—but were now returning to the land Yahweh had sworn to their fathers.

1 Chronicles 22:13

¹³ *Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that Yahweh commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Fear not; do not be dismayed.*

2 Chronicles 34:24–25

²⁴ *Thus says Yahweh, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah.* ²⁵ *Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.*

2 Chronicles 34:30–31

³⁰ *And the king went up to the house of Yahweh, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of Yahweh.* ³¹ *And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before Yahweh, to walk after Yahweh and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.*

11. Why do you think the author of 1–2 Chronicles emphasized the Mosaic covenant so much?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel had just returned from exile. As the book of 1–2 Kings made clear, the exile was due to their failure to keep the Mosaic Covenant. Now that they had been shown immeasurable mercy and were back in the promised Land, they wanted to make sure they did not repeat their failure to walk after Yahweh. The people were given another chance to obey God's Law, and the author of Chronicles was pointing this out.*

12. True/False: Old Covenant loyalty was a one-time decision.

Day 4

SEEK YAHWEH!

1 Chronicles 22:19

¹⁹ Now set your mind and heart to seek Yahweh your God.

Required Reading: *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pages 455–460.

- ▷ begin at “The Author of 1–2 Chronicles Called for Seeking Yahweh in Humility and Faith”
- ▷ stop at “Conclusion”

🔗 **BIBLE STUDY:** 2 Chronicles 6:14–21, 36–39; 7:11–22

Yesterday, we noted that the temple is one of the emphases in 1–2 Chronicles and that its preparation and construction takes up 18 chapters of the book. At the end of this lengthy section comes the narrative climax of the entire book (2 Chronicles 6–7): Israel holds a temple dedication ceremony and the glory of Yahweh fills the Most Holy Place. At this service, Solomon prays over the house of God and over the people of God.

Consider Solomon’s prayer:

2 Chronicles 6:14–21, 36–39

¹⁴ And [Solomon] said, “O Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ¹⁵ who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. ¹⁶ Now therefore, O Yahweh, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.’ ¹⁷ Now therefore, O Yahweh, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David.

¹⁸ But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!

¹⁹ Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Yahweh my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you, ²⁰ that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house, the place where you have promised to set your name, that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. ²¹ And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen from heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive....

³⁶ If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near, ³⁷ yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,’ ³⁸ if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁹ then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.”

13. Where does Solomon understand Yahweh to dwell? What do Solomon and the people pray towards? What can you conclude about the temple and its purpose in God’s relationship with his people?

· **ANSWER.** Solomon understands that the temple he just built cannot contain the God of the universe (6:18); rather, God dwells in heaven (i.e., outside the physical world) (6:21). Yet he also knows that Yahweh has chosen to set his name in the temple, specifically the Holy of Holies (6:20). God’s does not live in the temple as humans live in a house, but his presence is certainly there. Thus, it is toward the temple that the people prayed (6:21). Even so, God hears his people from heaven (6:21). Thus, the temple serves as a divine “portal” where the God of heaven meets with his people on earth. Yahweh is both transcendent and present!

14. Although God's people had clear intentions of being obedient, what reality prevented this from happening (see esp. 6:36–37)? What did this reality require on the part of God's people?

- **ANSWER.** *Israel still possessed sinful natures; indeed, every human being sins (6:36)! This requires repentance. Only through repentance will God forgive his people and hear their prayers.*

Now consider Yahweh's response:

2 Chronicles 7:11–22

¹¹ Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of Yahweh and in his own house he successfully accomplished. ¹² Then Yahweh appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶ For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. ¹⁷ And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.'

¹⁹ But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰ then I will pluck you up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹ And at this house, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land and to this house?' ²² Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned Yahweh, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'"

The reality of the human's sinful heart met with God's requirements of obedience makes for a seemingly impossible outcome. Yet, God understands this tension better than we do. In this passage, Yahweh himself reveals what he desires from his people.

15. What does faithfulness to God's covenant require (see esp. 6:14)?

- **ANSWER.** *God's people need to humbly seek Yahweh and continually repent of their sins. God knows his people will sin, but his mercy trumps his justice when his people confess their sins and repent from their evil ways (cf. 1 John 1:9).*

Because the author of Chronicles was writing *after* the exile, he obviously knew that the Davidic kings were *not* obedient to the Mosaic Law. Thus, it might appear that his warnings to the Davidic kings were unhelpful at best, and painfully cruel at worst. But as one commentator notes, “[The Chronicler’s] purpose is not to rub salt in old wounds; rather it is to show how to avoid the consequences of disobedience. When the nation suffers because of disobedience, the proper recourse of the people is repentance. God’s people can always pray, repent, and seek forgiveness; he is always ready to hear and forgive (7:14–15).”

16. Examine your own life. Are there any areas that are not in line with God's Word? If so, take time to pray, repent, and seek Yahweh! Record any thoughts or meditations from this brief study.

- **ANSWER.** *Answers will vary*

Day 5

CONNECT THE DOTS

Required Reading: *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 231–234.

What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About, pages 460–461.

▷ begin at “Conclusion”

In Lesson 2 of *Old Testament Survey: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus’ Bible – Part 1*, we saw that the Bible is not simply a compilation of stories that have no connection to each other. Rather, the Bible tells a Story, and it’s a Story about God’s kingdom on earth. We pray that this has become evident through the course of this study.

But another reality should also have become apparent: the Story is not finished yet! Israel still lay in a kind of exile waiting for a Davidic King to come and restore God’s kingdom, establish justice and righteousness on the earth, and reign on David’s throne forever. The *shalom* that the prophets spoke of has not yet been reinstated. All the partial fulfillments of God’s promises were merely that—partial. But they pointed to greater realities. Realities that are fulfilled in the New Testament (and some that have yet to be fulfilled!). The Old Testament merely consisted of shadows of the good things to come. But they *would* come.

These shadows are what theologians call “types,” and their fulfillments in the New Testament are called “antitypes.” When read in light of each other, types and antitypes can help the reader to connect the dots and understand the overall message of the Bible. This is called “typology,” and it may be defined as follows: Typology is “A method of biblical interpretation by which a person, event, or institution (“type”) in the OT corresponds to another one (“antitype”) in the NT within the framework of salvation history.... The traditional understanding of biblical typology views the OT type as divinely ordained and a detailed predictive prefiguration of Jesus and the gospel realities brought about by him.”

Typology is helpful for understanding the overall structure of the Bible, which Dempster observes is “hour-glass” shaped. Broad realities are narrowed throughout redemptive history until they find their fulfillment in the single, specific person of Jesus Christ, which then have ramifications that broaden back to the entire universe again. Thus, Jesus is the fulcrum on which all of history pivots. Everything before him points to him, and everything after him flows from him!

This is a very important, and very meaningful paragraph.

Your students may want or need to pause here.

17. How do the twin themes of dominion and dynasty each reflect an “hour-glass” shape throughout redemptive history?

- **ANSWER.** *Dominion: Adam is called to rule over all creation, and then narrows to the Promised Land, then to Jerusalem, then to the Temple. God’s rule extends from here (the Temple), to Jerusalem, to Israel, to the nations, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).*
- **ANSWER.** *Dynasty: Humanity was called to image God but failed to do so. They are replaced by Israel, which narrows from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob (12 tribes), to Judah, to David, and then to one of David’s sons, namely, Jesus the Messiah. Then, through Jesus, God’s image “spreads” to the twelve disciples, to the people of Israel, to the Gentiles, to the universal church which comprises people from every language and tongue who image their Maker. They will all rule with Christ in an eternal dynasty.*

18. How does Jesus’ life summarize and retell the history of Adam and Israel?

- **ANSWER.** *Throughout his ministry, Jesus succeeds where the old Adam and the old Israel failed. Jesus was the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3) who exercised authority over the whole world (unlike Adam) (Matthew 28:18–20), and Jesus was the perfect Son of God who obeyed his Father (John 8:29) and kept the covenant in every way (unlike Israel) (Matthew 4:1–11; cf. Deuteronomy 8:1–10).*

Jesus truly fulfills the promises given to Abraham and to David.

Davidic Promises:

2 Samuel 7:12–16

¹² When your [David] days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you.... ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.... ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

Luke 1:32

³² [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.

Ezekiel 43:5–7

⁵ The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the temple. ⁶ While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, ⁷ and he said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever.

John 2:19–22

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

19. How do both meanings of the Davidic house merge in the person of Jesus Christ?

- **ANSWER.** Jesus is the son of David who sits on David's throne forever. He can only do this because he rose from the dead, never to die again! Jesus is also the fulfillment of the temple, in which God's presence is manifest perfectly and eternally. Thus Jesus is the fulfillment of David's dynasty and David's temple.

Abrahamic Promises:

Romans 4:13, 16

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith...

¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

Galatians 3:28–29

²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

20. According to Paul, how is God's promise to Abraham fulfilled?

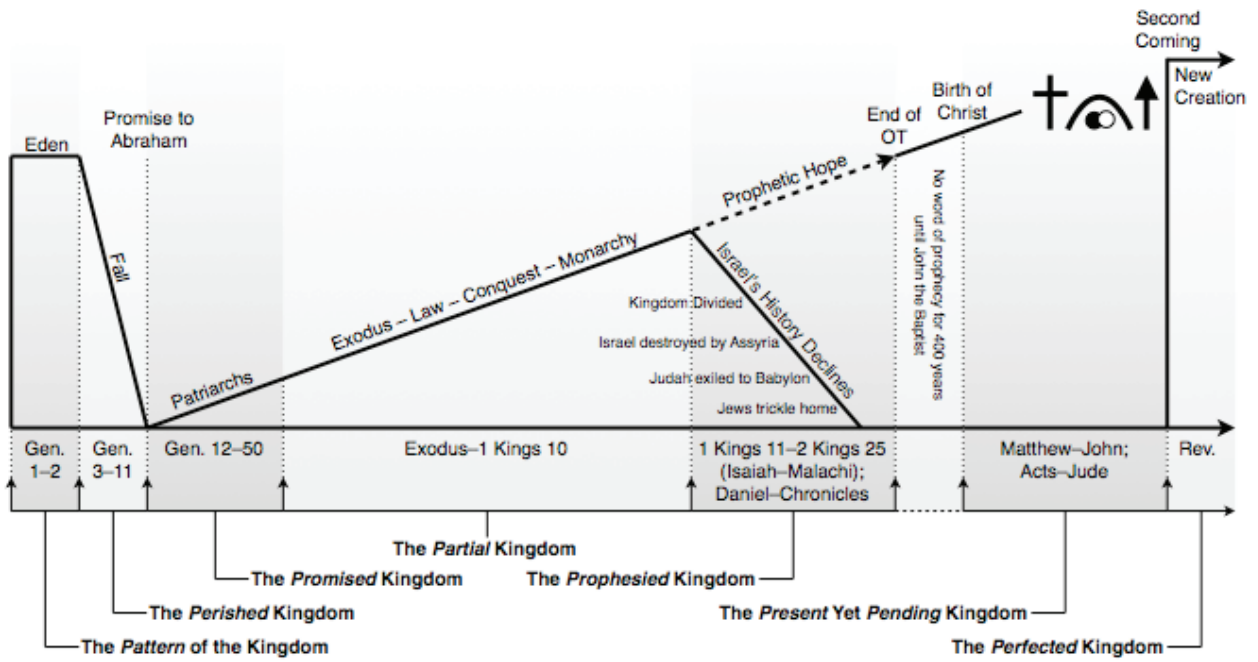
- **ANSWER.** *The church, which is composed of men and women from every nation who place their faith in Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment of Abraham's "great nation" promise and the entire world is their inheritance, not merely one country (Genesis 12:1–3). The church is the product of Jesus and his ministry of reconciliation.*

Consider again the last paragraph of *Dominion and Dynasty*:

"Although resonating with images from Eden, the new world surpasses all description. The temple described at the end of the Tanakh is absent. Present are the mighty God, the Lamb and the saints (cf. Rev. 21:22). From their throne flows a river of life with trees of life on either bank; the trees are constantly in leaf and the leaves give healing to the nations. The city of God has become one massive Holy of Holies (cf. Jer. 3:16–17). Consequently, human beings have been finally restored to their lost royal dignity and majesty, and, having God's name written on their foreheads, 'they will reign for ever and ever' (Rev. 22:5). 'Yahweh and his people are together and are one flesh'" (DD, 234).

And thus concludes God's Story of Redemption that began in Genesis 1 with *The Pattern of the Kingdom*. We have seen how sin led to *The Perished Kingdom*, but God chose Abram to be the means by which he would bring about *The Promised Kingdom*. These promises developed slowly but surely as Israel grew into *The Partial Kingdom*. With the division of the kingdom and the decline of Israel, the prophets preached of *The Prophesied Kingdom* that would come through a Davidic Messiah. Jesus fulfills this promise and ushers in *The Present Yet Pending Kingdom*, in which we live today. One day, however, Jesus will return as the conquering King who will consummate *The Perfected Kingdom* in which God's people will dwell in God's place under God's rule and enjoy God's blessing forever!

Diagram of the Kingdom of God



 INTEGRATIVE ASSIGNMENT



In one short paragraph, summarize in your own words the main message of the book of 1–2 Chronicles so that someone with no biblical knowledge could understand.



§ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions in preparation for discussion. As you have worked through this lesson, record any lingering questions that you may have.

1. Discuss this question: “Does being faithful to the covenant mean we will never sin?” Why or why not? Consider these texts as part of the discussion: 2 Chronicles 6:36–39; 7:11–22; John 14:15; 1 John 1:9.
2. Take time to make connections between some of the Old Testament themes discussed in this curriculum and their fulfillment in Christ. You may use *Dominion and Dynasty*, pages 232–233 for help.
3. How has your understanding of the Old Testament and its overall message changed through the course of this study?
4. Your own question(s):

§ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- “History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ,” ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2,644–2,646.

Key Chapters for Bible Reading

A

Appendix A

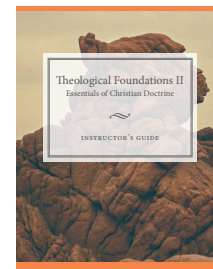
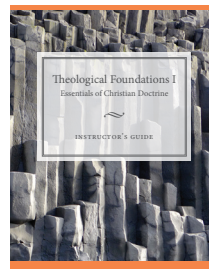
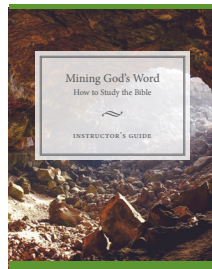
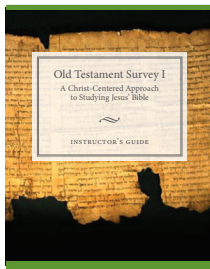
- ▷ Genesis 1–3, 9, 12, 15, 17, 22, 49
- ▷ Exodus 1:1–6:13; 14–15; 19–24; 32–34
- ▷ Leviticus 1, 4, 5, 16, 19, 26
- ▷ Numbers 1, 2, 13, 14, 22, 24
- ▷ Deuteronomy 4; 5–11; 17:14–20; 28–30; 32
- ▷ Joshua 1–2; 5:13–8:35; Ch. 24
- ▷ Judges 1:1–3:6; Chs. 19–21 1–2 Samuel > 1 Samuel 1–3, 8, 12, 15–17; 2 Samuel 7, 11–12, 24
- ▷ 1–2 Kings > 1 Kings 3; 8:1–9:9, 10:14–12:33; 16:29–17:1 with Ch. 18; 2 Kings 17, 21:1–23:27; Ch. 25
- ▷ Isaiah 6; 7; 9; 11; 36–37; 40; 44; 52:13–53:12; 65–66
- ▷ Jeremiah 1; 7–9; 11:1–13; 23:1–8; 31; 33; 36; 39
- ▷ Ezekiel 1; 18; 34; 36:16–37:28; 40–44; 48:30–35
- ▷ Hosea 1–2
- ▷ Joel 1–2
- ▷ Amos 5:18–24; 9:10–15
- ▷ Micah 3:9–4:5; 5:1–5; 6:6–8; 7:14–20
- ▷ Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:4; 3:16–19
- ▷ Zephaniah 1:1–2:3
- ▷ Zechariah 3–4, 8
- ▷ Malachi 3:16–4:6
- ▷ Psalms 1–2, 8, 19, 22–24, 42–43, 51, 89, 95–99, 136
- ▷ Job 1–2, 19, 28, 38–42
- ▷ Proverbs 1; 8–9; 31:10–31
- ▷ Ruth 1–4
- ▷ Song of Songs 7–8
- ▷ Ecclesiastes 1:1–11; 3:1–15; 9; 12
- ▷ Lamentations 3
- ▷ Esther 4
- ▷ Daniel 1, 9
- ▷ Ezra 7, 9; Nehemiah 8, 9
- ▷ 1–2 Chronicles: 1 Chronicles 17, 29; 2 Chronicles 3–7; 16–17; 34–36

Old Testament Survey II

A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible

Old Testament Survey 2: A Christ-Centered Approach to Studying Jesus' Bible is intended to survey the message of the Old Testament, both at the individual book level and at the canonical level. That is, students will not only grasp the main message of each individual book of the Old Testament, but they will understand how that message contributes to the overall message of the Bible. Emphasis will be given to tracing the flow of redemptive history from the beginning of time until the inter-testamental period, showing how the entire Old Testament points to, prepares the way for, and is fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah.

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