


## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

1. We must HEAR the truth.  
(Romans 10:14; Romans 10:17)
2. We must BELIEVE Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Mark 16:16; John 8:24)
3. We must REPENT of our sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38)
4. We must CONFESS Christ before men.  
(Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:10)
5. We must be BAPTIZED into Christ.  
(Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16)

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“ALL THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST  
GREET YOU.” (ROMANS 16:16)

# COURSE 5

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### Lesson Booklet

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cover the same period of time. This indicates that Malachi prophesied during the two terms that Nehemiah served as governor over the little colony of Jews who had returned from captivity. Therefore, the date of Malachi's prophecy is the period from 444 B.C. to 425 B.C.

The people of God had become careless in keeping God's Law. Priests neglected their duties (Malachi 2:1-10). People offered lame and sick animals for sacrifice (Malachi 1:7-8). They failed to give their tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8-10). They even questioned God's goodness and His love for them (Malachi 2:17). Divorce was commonly practiced. Many of the Jews were putting away their original wives in order to marry pagan women (Malachi 2:14-16). They came to worship God, but they did not enjoy it. It made them weary (Malachi 1:13).

Malachi strongly condemns these sins. He had a unique way of teaching. He would make a statement. Then he would examine objections against what he had said. He would then answer his own objections. This style of teaching became the accepted style in the synagogue.

Malachi was permitted to reveal the coming of John, the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Jesus (Malachi 4:5-6).

## Lesson 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

We are beginning a journey which will take us through the Old Testament. This will be an exciting journey. We will become acquainted with some of the greatest men and women who have ever lived. We will also learn about some of the most important events in the history of the world. We will study about the creation of the universe and all things in it. We will learn about the beginning of sin, and see the gradual unfolding of God's plan to save man from his sins.

Our journey will begin with the creation of the world. We will travel to the Garden of Eden and then on to the Great Flood which covered the whole earth. We will watch as God chooses a man from whom He will make a nation. This nation will be the means by which God sends His Son into the world. We will see this nation become slaves in Egypt. We will watch as God delivers them and leads them to His Promised Land. We will see God's people when they are ruled by judges and later by kings. We will observe the chosen people's division into two nations. We will learn about the good kings of the two kingdoms as well as the bad ones. We will also become acquainted with great men God sent to His people who are known as prophets. We will study their prophecies which told of the coming of Christ and His kingdom.

However, before we start on our journey, we need to learn about the make-up of this book called *The Old Testament*.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE FIRST PART OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is one book which is made up of sixty- six separate books. The Old Testament has thirty-nine books in it. The New Testament has twenty-seven. The Bible can be summarized by three statements concerning Jesus Christ, its chief character:

- Someone is coming* is the message of the Old Testament.
- Someone has come* is the message of the first four books of the New Testament.
- Someone is coming again* is the message of the rest of the New Testament.

The Old Testament can also be divided into five sections according to the content of the books. The first section is known as *The Law*. These are the five books from Genesis to Deuteronomy. They are also called

*The Pentateuch*, which means *five volumes*. The Books of Law were written by Moses.

The next section of the Old Testament is called *The Books of History*. These twelve books begin with Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. They tell about the judges, kings, priests, and prophets of God's people. The Books of History are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

The next section of the Old Testament is known as *Poetry*. Sometimes it is also called *Wisdom Literature* because of the many wise sayings found in it. This section begins with the book of Job and includes Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. There are five books of Poetry and Wisdom Literature.

The last section of the Old Testament contains the inspired writings of prophets of God. There are seventeen books of prophecy. These are usually divided into two sections: (1) five books known as *Major Prophets*; and (2) twelve books known as *Minor Prophets*. The books of the Major Prophets are not more important than those of the Minor Prophets. They are simply greater in length.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT IS INSPIRED BY GOD

The word *inspired* means *God breathed*. This shows that the Bible came from God, not from men. The Holy Spirit revealed God's word to men whom He had selected. These men wrote the books of the Old and New Testaments. God used thirty-two different men to write the books of the Old Testament. From Moses, who wrote the first book, to Malachi, who wrote the last book, was 1,000 years. Yet, all the books fit perfectly together. This shows there was one Source from which the message of all of them came.

The New Testament claims the Old Testament was given by inspiration. (Please read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.) The Apostle Peter wrote,

***Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.*** (2 Peter 1:20-21)

The Old Testament also claims it was given by inspiration of God. David, who wrote many of the Psalms, said,

***The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue.*** (2 Samuel 23:2)

### ZECHARIAH: THE MESSIANIC PROPHET AMONG THE MINOR PROPHETS

Zechariah's name means *whom the Lord remembers*. He was a co-worker with Haggai in calling the Jews back to the work of God (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). The first part of his book is clearly dated (Zechariah 1:1). Zechariah began prophesying in 520 B.C., probably a few months after Haggai was called. The second part of Zechariah (the last six chapters) is very different from the first part. It was likely written many years later.

Not only did Zechariah encourage the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the temple, but he also prophesied of the coming of the Messiah (Christ). Except for Isaiah, Zechariah made more predictions about Christ than any other prophet. Just as Isaiah is *the Messianic prophet* among the Major Prophets, so Zechariah is *the Messianic prophet* among the Minor Prophets.

There are many Messianic prophecies in Zechariah. He foretold that Christ would come as a peaceful king (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-5). He prophesied that Christ would be betrayed by a friend (Zechariah 13:6; Matthew 26:21). He also foretold that the Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 26:14-27:10). He said that Christ is *the Branch* and the Seed of David (Zechariah 6:12-13; Isaiah 11:1-2; Romans 1:3-4). Zechariah prophesied that Christ would be both a king and a priest on His throne (Zechariah 6:12-13; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 6:14-16). Since Christ is our High Priest now, this means He is also our king now. If He is our king now, then it means that His kingdom has already come. God revealed to Zechariah that Christ would be crucified (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:33-37; Revelation 1:7). When this happened, a fountain would be opened for sin and cleansing (Zechariah 13:1; John 1:29; Matthew 26:28).

### MALACHI: THE MESSENGER OF JEHOVAH

The name *Malachi* means *My messenger*. Malachi was God's last inspired messenger to His people until the coming of John the Baptist four hundred years later. Nothing is known of Malachi's personal life. He was a fearless spokesman for God who rebuked the people of Israel for their sins and hypocrisy.

The conditions of God's people in the book of Malachi are the same as those in the book of Nehemiah. Chapters seven to ten of Ezra also

civilized people from Southern Russia. They came into Assyria and moved westward. They threatened Judah also.

King Josiah led a spiritual revolution. He removed idol worship, repaired the temple of God, and brought back true worship (2 Kings 22-23). Zephaniah and his fellow prophets assisted Josiah. They called the people back to God. However, most of the people repented only outwardly. When Josiah was killed in battle, they went back to idol worship. As a result, they were taken into Babylonian captivity a few short years later.

### HAGGAI: THE PROPHET OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The Minor Prophets we have studied so far all lived and prophesied before the Babylonian captivity. The last three Minor Prophets prophesied after the Babylonian captivity. They are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Haggai's name means *festive* or *festival*. He was among the first group of captives who were allowed to return at the end of the Babylonian Captivity. It is possible that Haggai was born in Judah and was among those taken captive to Babylon in 586 B.C. If this is true, then Haggai was a very old man when he prophesied to Judah.

Haggai was a man with a simple message: The temple must be rebuilt if God's people want to receive His blessings. Haggai and Zechariah worked together to encourage the Jews to rebuild the house of God (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). An effort was made to rebuild God's temple when the first group of captives returned. However, they faced opposition from the people of the land. They also became involved in building their own houses and earning a living. Soon, work on the temple stopped. Nothing was done for nearly sixteen years.

In the second year of King Darius (520 B.C.), Haggai was called to prophesy (Haggai 1:1). The little colony of returned Jews was suffering greatly. God had sent drought, disease, poor crops, and famine to awaken the Jews to their responsibilities. They lacked faith in God to fulfill His promises. They had not put God first in their lives. Haggai delivered a series of messages from God. These messages encouraged the people to trust in God and give Him first place. When they did this, they went to work and soon had the temple rebuilt.

Jeremiah claimed that God gave him his message,

***Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*** (Jeremiah 1:9)

### WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT TODAY?

The Old Testament was God's law for Israel. The New Testament is God's law for all men today. In the Old Testament, God foretold the time when He would make a new covenant or testament. (Please read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:6-13.) The New Testament became God's law following the death of Jesus Christ for our sins and the beginning of the church of Christ on Pentecost Day (Acts 2). Since we live under the New Testament today, some have wondered why we should study the Old Testament.

First, we should study the Old Testament because the New Testament is built upon its foundation. A man named Augustine said: "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed." The promises and prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament. Neither one would be complete without the other.

Second, we should study the Old Testament because we can learn much about how God deals with men. We serve the same God the people of Israel served. His law has changed, but He is still the same (Malachi 3:6). We learn from the Old Testament that God's spiritual blessings are only given to those who obey Him. We see that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. We learn that God is both just and merciful (Romans 11:22).

Third, we can be encouraged by the lives of the great men and women of faith. Paul said of the Old Testament,

***For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.*** (Romans 15:4)

We will never understand fully the New Testament unless we understand the Old Testament.

### OTHER FACTS ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are some other things about the Old Testament which are very helpful to know. First, the Old Testament was first written in the Hebrew language. Small portions were also written in Aramaic, a language which is similar to Hebrew.

Second, the Old Testament covers several thousand years of history. It begins with the creation of the world and ends with the prophet Malachi who lived about 400 years before Jesus.

Third, God's revelation to man can be divided into three time periods:

- The Patriarchal Age* lasted from creation to the giving of the Law of Moses to Israel at Mount Sinai.
- The Mosaic Age* lasted from the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- The Christian Age* began with the cross of Christ and will continue until the Lord comes again.

The Old Testament covers the first two ages. The New Testament covers the last age.

## **Lesson 2: GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS**

The first book of the Old Testament is called *Genesis*. Genesis means *beginning* or *origin*. Thus, the book of Genesis is the book which tells about the beginning of all things. In Genesis we learn that God was *in the beginning* (1:1). He existed before all things, for He is the Creator of all things.

Some of the beginnings recorded in Genesis are:

- the heavens and the earth
- all plant, animal, and human life
- all races, nations, and languages
- agriculture, music, arts, and crafts
- marriage and the family

The beginning of God's plan to save man is also recorded in Genesis.

This plan includes the beginning of:

- sin
- sacrifice
- prophecies of the coming Savior
- the nation through which the Savior would come
- the tribe from which the Savior would come

Genesis is the foundation of the five Books of the Law. It is also the foundation of the entire Old Testament. In fact, it is really the foundation of all the Bible. If the book of Genesis were removed from the Bible, the rest of the Bible would have no meaning. We would not be able to understand the plan of salvation, or the need for it.

another nation to punish Babylon. Babylon was punished in 538 B.C. when it was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians.

Many today think that God is not really interested in man. They do not believe He is at work among the nations. The Bible teaches differently! God is aware of every single thing that happens on the earth (Matthew 10:28-31). He is at work in the nations of men (Daniel 4:17).

## **Lesson 18: THE MINOR PROPHETS (3)**

The apostle Peter said of the Old Testament prophets,

***For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.*** (2 Peter 1:21)

The prophets were men who were chosen by God. They were inspired by His Spirit. They served as God's messengers to His people in their day. They also were allowed to foretell things which would happen in the future. Especially, they foretold the coming of Jesus Christ and the beginning of His church.

### **ZEPHANIAH: THE PROPHET OF JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT ON JUDAH**

Zephaniah's name means *Jehovah hides*. He was the great, great grandson of Hezekiah, one of the good kings of Judah. King Josiah was on the throne of Judah when Zephaniah prophesied. He was also a great, great grandson of Hezekiah. Therefore, Zephaniah and Josiah were cousins. Nahum, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah were all living during Zephaniah's lifetime. He may have known these prophets.

King Josiah reigned from 640 B.C. to 609 B.C. Zephaniah's prophecy was delivered during this time. Israel, the northern kingdom, no longer existed. It had been taken into captivity by Assyria one hundred years before this time. Assyria and Egypt were rivals for control of the world. The little kingdom of Judah was located between them. The armies of these two superpowers often marched through Judah on the way to fight against each other. Sometimes their armies clashed in Judah's territory. Each of these mighty nations tried to force Judah into an alliance with them. The world situation was about to change. Babylon, a state which had been conquered by Assyria, was becoming stronger. It would become independent very shortly. Later, Babylon would defeat Assyria and become the leading nation. Matters were made worse by the Sythians. These were a fierce, barely

ways. Once again, God sent His prophet to warn them of His coming judgment.

The Assyrians were very cruel people. Their soldiers were fierce, well trained men. They tortured the people they conquered. Often they burned their enemies, or cut their heads off. Sometimes they skinned them alive. God knows what is happening on earth. He does not take away man's free will. He will, however, punish man for his wickedness (Galatians 6:6-7). The book of Nahum makes this very clear. The Medes and Babylonians conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C. They destroyed it so completely that Alexander the Great stood on the site of its ruins three hundred years later and did not know it.

Very little is known about Nahum himself. His name means *consolation*. He came from a place called Elkosh. He prophesied during the same time as Habakkuk and Zephaniah. He may have known Jeremiah.

### **HABAKKUK: THE PROPHET WHO QUESTIONED GOD**

Habakkuk's name means *embrace*. It is found twice in the book which bears his name. It is not found anywhere else in the Bible. Other than his name, we know nothing about the life of this prophet.

Habakkuk prophesied between 612 B.C. and 606 B.C. We know this because he spoke of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) being God's instrument to punish his people. Babylon did not become a world power until she conquered Nineveh in 612 B.C. Babylon invaded Judah in 606 B.C. and took many of its citizens into captivity. This was the fulfillment of Habakkuk's prophecy. Since Habakkuk predicted the Babylonian invasion of Judah, the book likely was written after 612 B.C. when Babylon became a world power. But it likely was written before 606 B.C. when the threat began to be carried out.

The prophet looked at the people of Judah. He saw how far astray from God they had gone. He did not understand why God did not punish His people for their sins. He questioned God. God replied that he was going to punish His people. They would be punished by the Chaldeans who would conquer them. Habakkuk was confused. The people of Judah were wicked. But they were not nearly as bad as the Chaldeans. How could God use a wicked nation to punish another nation which was not as wicked?

The message of Habakkuk is very simple. God is going to use Babylon to punish His people for their sins. Then He is going to use

## **GENESIS REFUTES THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION**

Evolution denies that God created all things. It says that man gradually developed from lower forms of life. Genesis, however, teaches that God created man fully formed. Also, it teaches that man was created in the image of God (1:27). God created man, as well as all animal and plant life, with the ability to bring forth after their own kind (1:11-12,21,24-25). Evolution says that everything evolved over thousands of millions of years. Genesis, however, clearly teaches that God created the world and everything in it in six actual days (1:31; 2:1; Exodus 20:11).

### **THE FIRST ELEVEN CHAPTERS ARE THE CORNERSTONE**

Just as the cornerstone is essential to the foundation of a building, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are essential to the whole book. The New Testament supports the truthfulness of Genesis, chapters 1-11. If these chapters are not true, then we cannot believe the New Testament. Jesus spoke of the beginning of the creation and the origin of marriage just as they are taught in Genesis (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-10). Genesis tells of Eve's being tempted. Paul confirms this in Second Corinthians 11:3. Paul said Adam was the first man in First Corinthians 15:45 just as Genesis teaches. Peter mentions the account of Noah and the Great Flood which is found in Genesis (1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 3:5-6).

The fall of man into sin is recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. The very first promise of the coming Savior is given in verse 15. The Savior, who would bruise the head of Satan, would come of the seed of the woman. This is a promise of the virgin birth of Christ. It is also a promise of His victory over Satan by dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

Chapter 4 tells of the murder of righteous Abel by his brother Cain. Chapter 5 records the genealogy (family history) of Seth. Jesus came into the world through this family. Chapters 6-8 tell of the great worldwide flood which was sent as a punishment for man's sins. Only Noah and his family found grace in the eyes of God. They were saved when they obeyed God by building an ark (ship). Chapter 11 tells of the tower of Babel where the many different human languages began. The human family history of Christ begins in Genesis. The important links in it are Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, and Abraham.

## ABRAHAM'S HISTORY IS RECORDED IN CHAPTERS 12-25

Abraham was selected by God to begin the chosen nation through which the Savior would come into the world. He left his home in Ur at God's request. He went to the land of Canaan which God promised to give to his seed. He and his nephew Lot separated because they had so many cattle there was not room for them to live together. Later Abraham rescued Lot when he was captured in war. On the way home he was met by Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem). Abraham gave gifts to him. Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

God had promised Abraham that in his seed would come the One who would bless all the earth. However, Abraham and Sarah had no children. Sarah suggested Abraham have a son by her maid, Hagar. This showed her lack of faith. Ishmael was born to Hagar and Abraham, but God did not accept him as the Promised Seed through whom the nation would come. When Abraham and Sarah were very old, their faith had become stronger. God then gave them a son who was named Isaac. Abraham's strong faith in God was shown when he was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice when God commanded it (Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:17-19).

Sarah died at the age of 127 years. She is the only woman whose age is recorded in the Bible. Abraham lived to be 175 years old. He was buried in the cave of Machpelah beside Sarah.

### THE HISTORY OF ISAAC IS RECORDED IN CHAPTERS 25-27

Isaac's wife, Rebekah, gave birth to twin sons. They were named Esau and Jacob. Because Esau was born first, the family headship should have passed to him. However, he was unworthy of it (Hebrews 12:16-17). Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentils (beans). Jacob deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing. This made Jacob the head of the family. It meant that God's promise would be fulfilled through Jacob's children.

### THE HISTORY OF JACOB IS RECORDED IN CHAPTERS 28-50

Jacob went to Padan-Aram for a wife. On the way he stopped at Bethel where he had a dream of a ladder into heaven. Here he made a vow to God. In Padan-Aram, Jacob fell in love with Laban's daughter, Rachel. He agreed to work for her for seven years. Laban

## MICAH: THE PROPHET OF THE POOR

Micah lived at the same time as Isaiah in Judah and Hosea in Israel. He was from a small village called Moresheth-Gath. It was located twenty-two miles southwest of Jerusalem. Micah's prophetic ministry was during the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. During his lifetime, Judah's greatest enemy was Assyria. When King Ahaz refused to join an alliance with Israel and Syria against Assyria, these two nations invaded Judah (Isaiah 7; 2 Kings 16). God delivered His people from this crisis. Later when Hezekiah was king, Sennacherib of Assyria invaded the land and besieged Jerusalem. God sent His angel. The angel killed one hundred eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night and the Assyrians fled (Isaiah 36-37; 2 Kings 19:29-36).

In Micah's day, Judah was prosperous. Her people were worldly and materialistic. Outwardly, they were very religious. Sacrifices were offered, but they were just forms to be observed. True devotion to God was lacking. Neither did the people apply the principles of their religion to everyday life (Micah 6:6-8). There were many false prophets who spoke what the people wanted to hear (Micah 2:11; 3:5-8). Witchcraft and idolatry were practiced along with the worship of God. Judges and other government officials were corrupt. They took bribes and perverted justice. The poor were oppressed. Micah spoke out against these evils.

Micah also prophesied of the coming of the Savior. He foretold that the Lord would be born in Bethlehem of Judah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6).

### NAHUM: PROPHET OF NINEVEH'S DOOM

Nineveh, capital of Assyria, was a very old city (Genesis 10:8-11). Assyria became one of the strongest nations in the world in the eighth century before Christ. Nineveh then became the chief city of the world. Nineveh was very strong. Its center was surrounded by eight miles of walls. These walls were one hundred feet high and wide enough to drive three chariots side by side on top. The city itself covered an area of nearly sixty square miles. One hundred and fifty years before the time of Nahum, Jonah had prophesied against Nineveh. Because the people repented at the preaching of Jonah, the city was spared. However, they had eventually gone back to their old



was a man chosen by God to be His spokesman to His people. The work of a prophet was two-fold:

- To call God's people to repentance;
- To reveal God's future judgments and the coming of the Christ and His kingdom.

The prophets were some of the greatest men who ever lived. Many were persecuted and some were killed. They were men of God who were raised up by God to deliver His message at crucial times in history.

### JONAH: THE RUNAWAY PROPHET

Jonah was a prophet of God, but he was proud, patriotic, and prejudiced. He loved his nation. He was proud to be one of God's chosen people. However, he did not understand the responsibility which went with his privileges. Jonah prophesied during the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Kings 14:23-25). Israel was strong and prosperous. Her well-being was threatened by the growing power of Assyria. Nineveh, Assyria's capital, was the greatest city in the world. Israel feared and hated Assyria. Jonah shared the prejudice of his fellow Israelites.

When God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh to warn the city of His coming judgment upon it, Jonah did not want to go. He thought he could run away from God by leaving Israel behind. He soon learned that God is the God of all the earth (Psalm 139:1-12). Jonah booked passage on a ship sailing to Tarshish (Spain). God sent a fierce storm. Jonah was thrown overboard. He was swallowed by a great fish which God had prepared. For three days, Jonah was in the belly of this sea creature. He repented of his rebellion during this time. God commanded the sea creature to vomit Jonah upon the land, and the prophet went to Nineveh.

In Nineveh, Jonah preached,

***Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*** (Jonah 3:4)

All the people repented from the king to the poorest person. Jonah sat outside the city waiting for God to destroy it. When God did not punish Nineveh because of the repentance of its people, Jonah was angry with God. The book ends at that point. Likely it was written by Jonah himself to set forth the lesson that God loves all people. God will turn from His judgments upon nations when they turn to Him in repentance.

tricked Jacob and gave him Leah instead. Jacob then worked another seven years for Rachel.

Jacob and his two wives, Leah and Rachel, and their maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, had a family of twelve sons and one daughter. The twelve sons became the heads of the twelve tribes, which formed the nation of Israel. Judah, the fourth born son, became the one through whose seed Christ came (Genesis 49:10).

The family line of Christ is now: Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah.

### THE STORY OF JOSEPH IS RECORDED IN CHAPTERS 37-50

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. He unwisely showed this by giving Joseph a beautiful coat. This made his brothers jealous. They sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph was a righteous young man. Even though he had many troubles, God blessed him. Eventually he became the ruler of all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. God used this to save His people from a great famine that came all over the world. Joseph brought Jacob and his brothers and their families to Egypt where there was food. Jacob died in Egypt and was taken back to Canaan to be buried. When Joseph died in Egypt at the age of 110, he knew God would return His people to the Promised Land. Therefore, he left his instructions that his bones should be carried there and buried.

Joseph's life shows how God works providentially. God can overrule in the affairs of men to bring about His will. He did this in order to place Joseph in the position in Egypt where he could save His people from starving. God still works providentially today. We cannot always see or understand it, but God works in the lives of His people to bring about what is best for them (Romans 8:28).

### Lesson 3: EXODUS: ESCAPE FROM EGYPT

The second book of the Pentateuch is called *Exodus*. Exodus means *going out*. This book tells how Jacob's family grew into a nation in Egypt. It tells how the Egyptians became afraid of God's people and made slaves of them. Exodus also reveals how God delivered His people from Egypt.

Genesis recorded the beginning of God's chosen family through which the Savior would come into the world. Exodus continues their history by showing how they actually grew from a family into a nation. Exodus deals with two themes: **Deliverance** and **Law**.

Moses is the chief character in the book of Exodus. He is also one of the greatest leaders who has ever lived. His lifetime of 120 years can be divided into three periods:

- Forty years as a prince in Egypt
- Forty years in the wilderness of Midian as a shepherd
- Forty years as the leader of God's people

Moses is the human author of the book of Exodus. The book itself claims Moses as its author (Exodus 17:14; 24:4). Jesus said Moses wrote Exodus (Mark 1:44; John 7:19-23). The Apostle Paul also gave Moses credit for writing Exodus (Acts 26:22-23). From ancient times the Jews have believed Moses wrote Exodus. It was written during the time Israel was in the desert. This was sometime between 1500 B.C. and 1400 B.C.

Genesis and Exodus are very closely connected. Genesis closes with Israel in Egypt. Exodus begins at that point and continues Israel's history. Exodus covers a period of about 360 years. It begins with the death of Joseph and continues to the building of the tabernacle at Mount Sinai.

### ISRAEL ESCAPES FROM EGYPT IN CHAPTERS 1-18

The people of Israel multiplied rapidly in Egypt. After a time, a new Pharaoh came to the throne. He did not know about Joseph and how he had saved Egypt from famine. He feared the people of Israel because of their growing numbers. Therefore, he made them slaves. The people of Israel were treated very badly. However, the more they were afflicted, the faster they grew. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the male babies, but they did not do it. Finally, in order to stop Israel from growing so rapidly, Pharaoh commanded that all male babies should be cast into the river.

Moses was born during this time. His parents feared God. They refused to kill their baby. They hid him for three months. Then they made a little ark (boat) of bulrushes and put Moses in the river near the place that Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. Miriam, Moses' older sister, watched nearby. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby. At her request Miriam called Jochebed, Moses' mother, to be his nurse. Therefore, Moses was brought up as a prince in the palace of Pharaoh. He was cared for by his own mother who must have told him about the true God and his people.

God's message to the Northern Kingdom. Perhaps he went back to his life in the country as a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees.

### OBADIAH: THE PROPHET OF EDOM'S DOOM

Obadiah's name means *servant of Jehovah* or *worshiper of Jehovah*. There are several men in the Old Testament who bear this name. However, none of them can be identified with the prophet. We know nothing about the prophet except that he was a messenger of God who spoke against Edom. The basic message of Obadiah is that God will punish Edom because they aided the enemies of Judah when they looted Jerusalem. The people of Israel and Edom had a long history of hatred for each other. The two nations were related. Israel descended from Jacob and Edom descended from Esau, Jacob's brother. The rivalry between Jacob and Esau began while they were still in their mother's womb (Genesis 25:22-26). God, in His providence, had selected Jacob to be the head of the family. It was through Jacob that the chosen nation came (Hebrews 12:16-17; Romans 9:10-13).

Edom had refused to let Israel pass through her land when they were on the journey to the Promised Land (Numbers 20:14-21). Later, when David became king, he conquered Edom (2 Samuel 8:13-14). In the days of King Jehoram, Edom revolted and gained her independence (2 Kings 8:20-22).

Bible scholars are divided over the date of Obadiah. Some believe it deals with the time the Edomites aided the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Others place Obadiah in the time of Jehoram. This was about 845 B.C. Philistines and Arabians attacked Jerusalem and were assisted by the Edomites. This is probably the correct date. However, no matter which date we accept, the message of the book is the same.

Obadiah prophesied God would destroy Edom for its pride and unbrotherly attitude. This was fulfilled in the fourth century before Christ. The Nabataean Arabs conquered the Edomites and drove them from their land. They settled in the southern part of Judah and became known as Idumea. After they were conquered by the Romans in the first century, they disappeared from history.

### Lesson 17: THE MINOR PROPHETS (2)

There are seventeen books of prophecy in the Old Testament. Five books are known as **Major Prophets**. The other twelve books are called **Minor Prophets** because their books are shorter. A prophet

could restore His blessings to them. The basic message of Joel is a call to repentance.

Joel speaks of the *day of the Lord* as a day of God's judgment upon His people. Joel was also inspired by God to look nearly nine hundred years into the future to another day of the Lord (Joel 2:28-32). This day was the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit in the *last days*. He said that *whoever called upon the name of the Lord* would be saved. There would be salvation and deliverance in Jerusalem. On Pentecost day, when the apostles had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter quoted Joel's prophecy. He said it was fulfilled in the events on Pentecost (Acts 2). God's Spirit was poured out. It was in *the last days* (the Christian Age). It was in Jerusalem. Salvation was possible when convicted believers were told to,

*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins.* (Acts 2:38)

#### AMOS: THE PROPHET OF JUSTICE

Amos was different from many of the other prophets. He was not a *son of the prophets* (a professional prophet who had been trained in the schools of the prophets). He earned his living as a herdsman and a *dresser of sycamore trees*. He lived in a small town of Tekoa in the wilderness of Judah. Tekoa was about six miles southeast of Bethlehem.

Even though Amos lived in Judah, he was sent by God to prophesy to Israel in the north. He was very plain, bold, and uncompromising in his preaching. In Israel, the worship of Baal, along with calf worship, had been mixed with the true worship of God. God sent Amos to Bethel, one of the centers where Jeroboam I had established calf worship. Bethel was located on Israel's southern border with Judah.

The time of Amos' work was about 760 B.C. to 750 B.C. Jeroboam II was on the throne of Israel. The nation was at peace. It was a time of great prosperity as well. The people had forgotten God who had given them their blessings. They were lazy, wicked, and worldly. The upper classes lived in luxury. The lower classes often suffered for lack of the basic necessities of life.

The lifetime of Amos overlapped that of Hosea. Both prophesied to Israel. The two prophets may have known one another, but we have no record of it. It appears the people of Israel rejected Amos' message. We do not know what happened to him after he delivered

When Moses became a man, he gave up the pleasures of Egypt. He chose to be a slave with his own people instead of a prince. (Please read Hebrews 11:24-26.) One day he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He defended the Israelite by killing the Egyptian. When this became known, Moses fled from Egypt. He went to the land of Midian where he met Reuel (also called Jethro), a priest of God. He married Reuel's daughter, Zipporah, and became the father of two sons.

After forty years the Lord spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. He told him that he must deliver His people from bondage. Moses made many excuses, but God answered them all. Aaron, Moses' elder brother, was sent to be Moses' spokesman. Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel go, but the wicked ruler refused. God sent a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to free His people. First, the water was turned to blood, but Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then the land was filled with frogs, but Pharaoh's heart was still hard. After this the dust of the land became lice. Still Pharaoh refused to let the people go. God then sent a plague of flies upon Egypt. Only the Egyptians were affected. The land of Goshen where Israel lived was not touched by the flies. This time Pharaoh said Israel could go. Then he changed his mind and refused. Next, God sent a murrain (sickness) upon all the cattle, sheep, camels, horses, and donkeys of Egypt so that they died. Pharaoh's heart was hardened once again. After this, God sent boils (sores) upon the Egyptians. The Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He did this by giving him a command which Pharaoh refused to obey. Then God sent hail (ice) upon the land. All the crops were destroyed. Pharaoh confessed he had sinned. However, when God took away the hail, he hardened his heart again. After this, God sent a plague of locusts. Again Pharaoh admitted he had sinned. Then he changed his mind and would not let Israel go. The next plague God sent was thick darkness over all of Egypt. This lasted for three days. Still Pharaoh would not let Israel go. Finally, God sent the last plague. All the firstborn of both men and animals would die. Israel, however, was spared. They were told to kill a male lamb. It had to be one year old. It also had to be without spot or blemish. It was to be eaten the night God destroyed all the firstborn. The blood of the lamb was put on the doorposts of the houses where God's people lived. If the blood was seen on the door, God passed over them and the firstborn lived. If the blood was not

applied, the firstborn died. This was the beginning of the Feast of the Passover. Jesus Christ is the Passover sacrifice for us today (1 Corinthians 5:7). If His blood has been applied to us, we will be saved. If not, we will be lost forever.

That night Pharaoh let the people go. Israel marched to the Red Sea. Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after Israel. The sea was in front. The Egyptian army was behind. Moses raised his rod and God parted the waters. Israel crossed over on dry land. When Pharaoh's army tried to follow, the waters closed over them. They were all drowned.

In the desert God provided for His people by giving them manna to eat. He gave them water from a rock. He also gave them victory over the Amalekites who attacked them.

### **THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT MOUNT SINAI IN CHAPTERS 19-24**

The Israelites camped at Mount Sinai where God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. God called Moses up into the mountain. Moses was alone with God for forty days. God revealed His Law for the people of Israel to Moses during this time. The heart of this Law is the ten commandments. The first four commandments concern man's responsibility to God. The last six concern man's responsibility to his fellow man. These commandments are found in Exodus 20:1-17. The Law given at Sinai was God's Law for Israel. It continued until Christ died on the cross (Colossians 2:14). Now we live under the Law of Christ, which is also called the *New Testament* (Hebrew 7:12; 8:6-13).

### **THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE IN CHAPTERS 25-40**

The tabernacle was a tent made up of two rooms. These rooms were known as the *holy place* and the *most holy place*. It was surrounded by an outer court. Here the priests offered up sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. The tabernacle was a tent which could be taken down and moved whenever Israel moved. It was built according to the pattern (plan) God gave to Moses (Exodus 25:9, 40).

As God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, so today He delivers us from slavery to sin. Moses was Israel's Lawgiver and Deliverer from physical bondage. Jesus Christ is our Lawgiver and Deliverer from spiritual bondage.

newspaper. They deal with people and their problems. Outward circumstances change, but people remain the same.

### **HOSEA: THE PROPHET WITH A BROKEN HEART**

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is that of Hosea. His book is a love story. Hosea loved his wife, Gomer, with all his heart. She, however, was unfaithful to him. She had many other lovers. Eventually, she left him and their children and went after men who gave her gifts. Time passed by. Gomer lost her beauty. Her lovers no longer wanted her. She was reduced to slavery. Hosea bought her, forgave her, and she became his wife again after a period of cleansing.

The story of Hosea illustrates God's love for His people, Israel. God loved Israel and redeemed her from Egypt. He was faithful to her. He gave her a rich land and many blessings. Israel, however, continually forsook God and worshiped the idol gods of the pagan nations around her. God, like Hosea, never lost his love for His bride. He was ready to take her back whenever she was willing to return. However, Israel had to repent and be cleansed before God could accept her again as His bride.

Hosea's name means *help, salvation, or deliverance*. It comes from the same Hebrew word from which *Joshua* comes. The New Testament form of Joshua is *Jesus*.

Hosea was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This would be from 750 B.C. to the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. Isaiah and Micah were also prophesying in Judah during this same period of time.

### **JOEL: THE PROPHET OF PENTECOST**

Joel was one of the earliest of the Minor Prophets. He prophesied about 830 B.C. He was a prophet of Judah. An invasion of locusts had completely stripped the land of all plant life. A drought came after the locust invasion. This was followed by fires throughout the land. Nothing was left. Both men and animals faced starvation. The temple worship had ceased because there was nothing to offer in sacrifice.

This disaster had come upon the land because God's people were living in sin and refused to repent (Deuteronomy 28:38). God called upon the people of Judah to return from their sinful ways so that He

as the kingdoms represented by the four parts of Nebuchadnezzar's image in chapter two.

In chapter eight, Daniel dreamed of a ram with two horns. This represented the Medo-Persian Empire. The two horns represented the two kings who ruled jointly. A male goat from the West attacked the ram and broke his horns. This represented the Greek army under Alexander. They defeated the Medo-Persian Empire in 331 B.C.

In chapter nine, Daniel's vision of seventy weeks is recorded. The angel Gabriel told Daniel,

***Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city.*** (Daniel 9:24)

Christ would come at the latter end of this period to ***make an end of sins.***

Chapter ten tells of Daniel's vision of a man. An angel came to Daniel to tell him what would happen to the Jews in the later days. He told of the coming of the prince of Greece. This was Alexander the Great.

Chapter eleven tells of conflicts in the nations. These would take place before Christ was born. Four kings would rule in Persia. Alexander would conquer Persia. His kingdom would be divided into four parts at his death. The kingdom of the North (Syria) would fight against the kingdom of the South (Egypt). Antiochus Epiphanes IV, an evil king of Syria is prophesied in verses 21-45.

Chapter twelve deals with the deliverance of the Jews from Antiochus Epiphanes IV. It also tells of the righteous and the wicked being raised at the same time. This refutes pre-millennialism which teaches the righteous are raised first and the wicked 1,000 years later.

### **Lesson 16: THE MINOR PROPHETS (1)**

There are twelve books known as the **Minor Prophets**. These prophets are not less important than those called **Major Prophets**. Their books are simply shorter. Some of the Minor Prophets lived in Israel; others in Judah. Some preached in the large cities; others in the rural areas. Jonah preached to Assyria. Obadiah's message was directed toward Edom. The dates of the Minor Prophets range from the ninth century before Christ to the fifth century before Christ.

All of the Minor Prophets were servants of God who proclaimed His will to people in need of repentance. Although they were written hundreds of years ago, their writings are as up to date as today's

## **Lesson 4: LEVITICUS, NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY**

The last three books of the Pentateuch are Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses was the human author of these books also. Twenty of the chapters of Leviticus begin with the statement: "***And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying.***" "***The Lord spoke to Moses,***" appears forty times in the book of Numbers. Deuteronomy clearly claims Moses as its author (Deuteronomy 1:1,5; 4:44-45; 31:24-26). Jesus said the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament) was written by Moses (John 5:45-47). However, the last chapter of Deuteronomy may have been written by Joshua for it tells of Moses' death.

Leviticus was written at Mount Sinai. Numbers probably was written near the end of the wandering in the desert. Deuteronomy would have been written shortly before Moses' death (Deuteronomy 1:5; Numbers 36:13).

### **LEVITICUS: THE WAY OF HOLINESS**

Leviticus served as a guide for the priests and Levites. It contains instructions about sacrifices, offerings and tabernacle worship. It also shows that sinful men can approach a sinless God by means of sacrifice (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:22;10:4). Leviticus emphasizes that blood is essential to atonement for sins (Leviticus 17:11). The two key words in Leviticus are: (1) holiness and; (2) atonement. The book is named for the Levites, the tribe from which the priests came.

There are five major offerings by which Israel could maintain holiness before God.

- Burnt offerings showed complete dedication to God.
- Meal offerings showed gratitude to God for His blessings.
- Peace offerings showed communion or fellowship with God.
- Sin offerings atoned for sins. Sin offerings were a type of Christ's sin offering for us.
- Trespass offerings were for specific acts of wrongdoing.

### **NUMBERS: WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS**

This book is called *Numbers* because all the males who were old enough to serve in the army were numbered. This was done at Mount Sinai and later as they prepared to enter Canaan. Numbers covers the

time of Israel's wandering in the desert from Mount Sinai to the Plains of Moab. This was about 38 years. The book can be divided into five sections.

The first section records the preparation to begin the journey from Mt Sinai (Numbers 1:10 - 10:10). A count was taken which showed there were 603,550 men old enough to serve in the army. The Levites were not included. Instructions for the health of the camp, for tabernacle worship, and for moving the camp were also given

The second section tells of the journey from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 10:11-14:45). On this journey, several things happened. The people longed for the food in Egypt. They were sent quail by God, but were punished for their sins of murmuring and complaining. Also, Aaron and Miriam rebelled against Moses' authority. Miriam was stricken with leprosy as punishment. Perhaps this was because she was the leader of the rebellion; and, being a woman, it was not proper for her to claim such authority. Also twelve spies were sent out from Kadesh-Barnea. They were gone for 40 days. They brought back a report that Canaan was a *land flowing with milk and honey*. However, ten of the twelve spies feared the people of the land. They lacked faith in God to give them the land. Only Joshua and Caleb disagreed. The people followed the faithless spies. Because the people lacked faith, they were sentenced to wander in the desert for forty years. Of that generation, only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

The third section covers about 37 years (Numbers 15:1-21:35). It tells the events of the journey from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab. The accounts of Korah's rebellion, Moses' striking the rock instead of speaking to it, and the fiery serpents being sent among the people are among the events recorded. This section ends with the defeat of Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the possession of their land east of Jordan.

The fourth section is the account of Balaam and Balak (Numbers 22:1-25:18). Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse Israel. Every time he tried to curse them, Balaam blessed them instead. Even though God spoke to Balaam through his donkey, he persisted in wrong-doing. When he failed to curse Israel, he taught the Moabite women to seduce the men of Israel to engage in idolatry and fornication. He knew this would bring God's anger upon Israel (cf. 2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14).

stone which became a mountain, the church has grown and spread to the whole earth (Matthew 28:19-20; Colossians 1:23).

In chapter three, we read of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being cast into a fiery furnace. The king had made a great image (idol). He required all his people to bow down before it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down for that would be idolatry (Exodus 20:1-6). The king had them thrown into the furnace which had been heated seven times hotter than usual. A fourth man appeared in the furnace with them. They were not harmed in any way. The smell of fire or smoke was not even on them.

In chapter four, we read how Nebuchadnezzar learned that God actually rules in the kingdoms of men. He had a dream one night. He saw a huge tree. Birds nested in its branches. Animals took shelter under it. But it was cut down and only a stump remained. When the wise men could not tell the meaning, Daniel was called. Daniel told the king his throne would be taken from him until he learned that God rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17). A year later, the king was driven from his throne. He was forced to live like a beast in the wilderness. When he learned his lesson, he was restored to his throne. Chapter five tells how Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall during the rule of King Belshazzar. The handwriting warned that Babylon was *weighed in the balances and found lacking*. That very night, Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians.

Chapter six contains the famous story of Daniel being cast into the lions' den. The Medes and Persians made Daniel one of the three governors who were over the whole kingdom. Because the king liked Daniel so well, the others were jealous. They could find no wrong in Daniel so they persuaded the king to pass a law. The law forbade anyone praying to any god except the king for thirty days. They knew Daniel would remain loyal to God. When Daniel continued praying to God three times a day as was his custom, he was arrested. The king did not want to punish him, but the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed. Therefore, Daniel was cast into the lions' den. God sent his angel to close the lions' mouths. Daniel was brought out unharmed the next day. The men who made this law were then thrown to the lions.

The last six chapters of the book of Daniel deal with the future history of God's people. In chapter seven, we read of Daniel's dream of four beasts. These four beasts represent four kingdoms. They are the same

God. Daniel was a great man because he was a good man. God was able to use him because he was good.

In Daniel, chapter one, we learn of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah being taken to Babylon. They were chosen to be trained for the king's service. Their names were changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were fed from the king's table. This would include fermented wine, unclean meats, and food not properly prepared according to the law of the Jews (Leviticus 10:8-11; 11:1-47; 17:10-16; Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35). They could not eat this food without violating God's laws. Therefore, they requested they be fed vegetables to eat and water to drink. They soon excelled the other youths in health and appearance.

Daniel, chapter two, contains a prophecy of the coming of God's kingdom. One night, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. When he awoke, he was troubled by the dream, but could not remember what it was. He called his wise men, but they could not tell him the dream. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar ordered they all be killed. When Daniel learned of this, he sent word to the king that he would interpret his dream. He asked his friends to pray that God would reveal the dream to him.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he saw a great image. Its head was of fine gold. Its breast and arms were of silver. Its thighs were of bronze. Its legs and feet were of iron and clay. A stone struck the image and broke it to pieces. The stone then became a mountain and filled the whole earth.

God, through Daniel, revealed the meaning of the king's dream. The four parts of the image represented four powerful kingdoms. The head of gold represented Babylon. The Babylonian Empire lasted from 612 B.C. to 538 B.C. The breast and arms of silver represented Medo-Persia, which ruled from 538 B.C. to 331 B.C. The belly and thighs of bronze represented the Greek Empire which was established by Alexander the Great. It lasted from 331 B.C. to 30 B.C. The fourth kingdom was Rome. Rome ruled much of the world from 30 B.C. to A.D. 476.

Daniel said,

***And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*** (Daniel 2:44)

God's kingdom is the church of Christ (Matthew 16:16-19). It was established in Jerusalem during the days of the Roman rulers. Like the

The last section tells of the final preparation to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 26:1-36:13). Males of military age were again counted. The number was 601,730. The cities of the Levites were set aside. Cities of refuge were also chosen. One who killed another person accidentally could seek safety in such a city until his case was heard by the elders of Israel.

### **DEUTERONOMY: MOSES' FAREWELL ADDRESS**

When this book began, Israel was camped in the Plains of Moab, east of Jordan. Moses had served God for forty years. Joshua was selected to be the new leader. Moses gave his final speech to Israel. He stated again the Law God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. He added warnings of what would happen if the Law is disobeyed. He told of the blessings that will come if it is obeyed.

The book of Deuteronomy gets its name from two words: (1) deuteros - two or second; (2) nomos - law. Deuteronomy is a second giving of the law. It is a repeat of the Law given at Mount Sinai. The purpose of Deuteronomy was to prepare Israel for entering Canaan to be God's chosen nation.

The ten commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy, chapter five. Moses made it very clear that they were given only to the nation of Israel. The *Great Commandment* in the Law is stated:

***Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.***

(Deuteronomy 6:4-5 KJV; cf. Matthew 22:35-40)

Many warnings are given that God's Law must not be changed in any way (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32). In chapter eighteen, Moses gave the test of a prophet. If one's prophecy does not come to pass, he is a false prophet. He also speaks of a Prophet who would one day be sent by God. This is a reference to the coming of Christ (Acts 3:22-23).

The death of Moses is recorded in chapter 34. Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land because of his sin when he struck the rock (Numbers 20). God permitted him, however, to climb Mount Nebo to the top of a peak called Pisgah where he could see the whole land. Then Moses died in the land of Moab. He was buried by God. No man knows the place. Moses was 120 years old at his death, but he was still a strong, able man.

***His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.***

(Deuteronomy 34:7)

He had served well in bringing God's people to the Promised Land. Now, Joshua, a younger man, who had been his assistant, would lead the nation in taking Canaan.

An important teaching found in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy is that of obedience. God's blessings are only given as a result of obedience. He always punishes disobedience if it is not repented of.

We have completed our study of the first section of the Old Testament. We have traveled through the major events of the Books of Law. We have now come to the Jordan River and are ready to enter the Promised Land.

### **Lesson 5: JOSHUA: THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN**

Joshua was one of the great men of God in the Old Testament. He served for 40 years as Moses' assistant (Exodus 24:13; 33:11). He led the army of Israel to victory when they were attacked by the Amalekites at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-16). Joshua and Caleb were the only ones of their generation who were allowed to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 13:1-14:38).

*Joshua* is written the same as *Jesus* in Greek. This explains why Joshua is called Jesus in Hebrews 4:8 in the King James Version of the Bible. Joshua's original name was *Hoshea* which means *salvation*. It was changed to *Joshua*, which means *savior* (Numbers 13:16).

The book of Joshua has a special place in God's plan to save man. God promised to make a great nation from Abraham's family. This would be the nation from which Christ would come. It was necessary for this nation to have a land in which to live. Therefore, God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-7; 17:8; Galatians 3:8,16). The book of Joshua shows how God fulfilled the land promise to Abraham.

#### **JOSHUA BECOMES THE LEADER OF ISRAEL**

The children of Israel were camped east of the Jordan River. Mourning for Moses was now over and it was time to enter the Promised Land. When God gave the command to begin the conquest, He made a two-fold promise to Joshua:

- There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.*** (Joshua 1:5)
- I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*** (Joshua 1:5)

sins. Eight chapters of the book of Ezekiel are filled with condemnation of the Gentiles for their sins (Ezekiel 25-32).

Finally, the book of Ezekiel clearly teaches that God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:3-5). This means that He will not tolerate His people worshiping idols. Just as a man who loves his wife will not tolerate her committing adultery, so God will not permit His people to follow after other gods. Ezekiel taught that worshiping idols was spiritual adultery (Ezekiel 23). Today, we are guilty of spiritual adultery when we put anything ahead of God in our lives (Matthew 6:24; Colossians 3:5).

One writer said of the book of Ezekiel: "Probably no book of the Old Testament is as little read as this, and it may well be the least popular, as it is the least known of the Old Testament" (John Paterson). Christians must not fail to read and study Ezekiel. It is a part of the Word of God. It has valuable lessons for us today.

### **Lesson 15: DANIEL: GOD'S SPOKESMAN IN THE KING'S COURT**

Daniel was probably born between 625 B.C. and 620 B.C. during the reign of Josiah, the last good king of Judah. He was of the tribe of Judah and may have been a member of the royal family (Daniel 1:3-6). Daniel was among those who were taken to Babylon in 606 B.C. He would have been a very young man at this time, possibly a teenager. Daniel's name means *God is my judge*. The Babylonians changed it to *Beltshazzar* which means *Bel* (Babylonian god) *is my protector*.

Daniel was faithful to God all his life. He lived before, during, and beyond the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity. He must have been about one hundred years old when he died. During his long life, Daniel served as an advisor to the kings of Babylon and Medo-Persia. While Jeremiah prophesied to the Jews in Judah, and Ezekiel was God's spokesman to the Jewish captives in Babylon, Daniel prophesied in the courts of the pagan kings who ruled the world.

Very few faithful children of God have ever had as much influence on world history as Daniel did. In this respect, he is similar to Joseph who served as prime minister of Egypt when that nation was at the height of its power and glory. The lives of these two men show us that children of God can serve in the government and remain faithful to



filled with condemnation for Judah's sins. The prophetic messages delivered after the fall were prophecies of hope and encouragement. There are many wonderful lessons to be learned from the book of Ezekiel. These lessons can be of help to us today as we seek to teach God's Word to others (Roman 15:4). First, we learn from Ezekiel what it takes to be a successful preacher. A successful preacher must continue preaching even when people will not hear or respond (Ezekiel 2:3-10). He must preach nothing but the truth (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). He must also learn to *sit where people sit* if he is going to be effective (Ezekiel 3:15-16). In other words, he must live with them so that he can understand their problems and needs. He needs to have a vision of God in order to preach with power. Isaiah saw the Lord in the temple when he was called to prophesy (Isaiah 6). Ezekiel saw a vision of the Lord also (Ezekiel 1:4-28). Today, we see the Lord through the Bible, His inspired Word.

Another great lesson to be learned from Ezekiel is that each person is responsible for his own sins. The Jews of Ezekiel's day had a saying among them:

***The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.*** (Ezekiel 18:2)

This is the idea that children inherit the sins of their parents. Many religious people believe this today. This is why they baptize babies. They believe they are born as sinners. This is not true according to the Word of God. Ezekiel said:

***The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*** (Ezekiel 18:20)

Sin is not something one receives. It is something he does. A person becomes a sinner when he sins (1 John 3:4).

Still another important lesson taught in the book of Ezekiel is that God's promises are conditional. The Jews who were in Babylon thought Jerusalem would be spared because of God's promises concerning it. They had forgotten that God's promises are conditional (Deuteronomy 4:25-31).

The book of Ezekiel teaches us also that all people are subject to God's will. Even though the Jews were God's chosen people in the Old Testament, the Gentiles were also accountable to God for their

Then God gave Joshua a two-fold admonition:

- ***Be strong and very courageous.*** (Joshua 1:7)
- ***Observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee.*** (Joshua 1:7)

Joshua sent two spies across the Jordan to Jericho. Rahab, a harlot who lived in Jericho, hid the spies. She had heard of the mighty works of God in the desert. She had become a believer. Because of her faith, she and her family were spared when Jericho was destroyed. She later married an Israelite. She became a part of the family line of our Lord (Matthew 1:5).

When Israel crossed the Jordan, it was the time of harvest and the river was at flood stage. God made it possible for them to cross. The priests carried the ark of the covenant and went in front of the people. While they stood in the water at the edge of the river, the flood waters rose in a heap a great distance upstream. All of Israel crossed over on dry ground. Joshua had twelve large stones taken from the middle of the river. They were set up as a monument so future generations would see them and remember what God had done.

The first great battle to take the land was the battle of Jericho (Joshua 6). God told the children of Israel,

***I have given into thy hand Jericho.*** (Joshua 6:2)

God gave them the city, but they had to take it. They had to follow His instructions in taking it. This is like our salvation today. God gives it to us (Ephesians 2:8-9). But we have to receive it by following God's instructions. We must do what He tells us to do if we want to be saved (Hebrews 11:30).

Israel went around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they went around the city seven times. Then the priests blew the trumpets and the people shouted. The walls fell down and the army of Israel entered the city. Everyone was killed except for Rahab and her family. The city was to be a burnt offering to God. Therefore the Israelites were forbidden to take the spoils of war. Everything was supposed to be burned.

One man disobeyed. He took a beautiful garment and some gold from Jericho and hid them in his tent (Joshua 7). When the army of Israel went to fight against the city of Ai, they were defeated and thirty-six men were killed. God told them it was because someone had disobeyed Him and had taken some of the spoil at Jericho. Lots were cast and it was found that a man named Achan was guilty. He and all

his family were stoned. Then Israel's army went against Ai and easily took it.

Israel had strict orders to make no covenant with any of the people of the land. All were to be destroyed (Exodus 23:31-33; Deuteronomy 7:1-5). However, the people of Gibeon had heard of Israel's great victories (Joshua 9). They were afraid. They planned to deceive Israel into making a covenant with them so they could survive. They told Israel they were not of the land but had come from a distant city. They asked Israel to make a covenant of peace with them. Israel made the covenant without first consulting with God. When they learned they had been deceived, they had to keep the covenant. They did not kill the people but made them servants instead.

A very unusual event is recorded in chapter ten. Five Canaanite kings had united their armies. They came out to battle against Israel. God rained down hailstones upon the Canaanites so that many of them were killed. Joshua then commanded the sun to stand still so that Israel could finish the battle against the Canaanites. The sun did not move in the heavens for a whole day.

***And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of a man: for Jehovah fought for Israel.***  
(Joshua 10:14)

Finally, the land was under the control of Israel. The various tribes entered into the land set aside for them, but the conquest was not fully completed until the time of David. When Joshua became old and knew he would soon die, he called all Israel to assemble together (Joshua 23:1-24:28). He urged the people to keep God's Law. He reminded them that God had given them all the land. He had promised them. (Please read Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14.) Nothing had failed to come to pass. Some people today falsely teach that God did not fulfill the land promise to Israel. They say it will be fulfilled in the future when Christ sets up an earthly kingdom. They believe the Jews must all return to Israel and take the land again. They are guilty of ignoring what the Bible plainly says.

***So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*** (Joshua 21:43)

If a promise has been fulfilled, it cannot be fulfilled again. Joshua challenged the people to serve God.

***The word of the Lord came to me*** is found forty-nine times. Another phrase, ***and you shall know I am the Lord***, is found more than sixty times.

It appears from reading the book that Ezekiel had three purposes in mind when writing:

- The people of Judah needed to understand the reason for the captivity.
- They needed to turn from the worship of idols and return to worshipping God.
- They also needed to have corrected the mistaken idea they would speedily return to their homeland. Before they could return to their homeland, they had to first return to God!

Ezekiel was truly God's spokesman to His people in their hour of greatest need! He was well prepared for this task. He was the son of Buzi, a priest (Ezekiel 1:3). His name means *God will strengthen*. This tells us that God was the Source of his spiritual strength. Ezekiel was probably born about 622 B.C. This was during the reign of the good king, Josiah. It is very likely that Ezekiel had heard Jeremiah preach in his youth. He may have met Daniel in Babylon (Ezekiel 14:14,20).

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon when he was a very young man (2 Kings 24:14-16). His call to be a prophet was ***in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar*** (Ezekiel 1:3). He was a married man, but his wife died the day the final siege of Jerusalem began (Ezekiel 24:1-2,15-18). He prophesied to the captives at Tel Abib by the River Chebar (Ezekiel 3:15). Tel Abib was about sixty miles south of the city of Babylon. The River Chebar was possibly a canal between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Ezekiel was about thirty years of age when he was called to be a prophet (Ezekiel 1:1-2). It was in the fifth year of the Captivity. He continued to prophesy until the twentieth-seventh year of the Captivity. This was a total of twenty-two years. We do not know what happened to him after this. Perhaps he died at the age of 52.

The prophecies of the book of Ezekiel all center around the fall of Jerusalem. The forty-eight chapters of Ezekiel can be divided into two main sections. Chapters 1-24 were delivered before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Chapters 24-48 were delivered after the fall of Jerusalem. The prophetic messages delivered before the fall were

Many who saw Jesus were reminded of Jeremiah. Jeremiah loved the people. He was kind, compassionate, and courageous, just like Jesus.

## **Lesson 14: EZEKIEL: GOD'S SPOKESMAN IN A FOREIGN LAND**

Five Old Testament books of prophecy are known as the *Major Prophets*. They are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Four of them are named for the prophets who wrote them. Lamentations is included because it was written by the prophet Jeremiah. Isaiah prophesied to the nation of Judah in the eighth century before Christ. Jeremiah prophesied to Judah during the time its people were being carried into the Babylonian Captivity. Ezekiel was taken into Babylon with the second group of captives. He was called by God to prophesy to the captives in Babylon. Daniel was in the first group who were taken captive. He served God as a prophet in the courts of the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were contemporaries. This means that their lives overlapped. However, Isaiah lived about one hundred years earlier. Isaiah foretold the coming of the Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 39). Jeremiah preached to the people of God and told them to accept the period of captivity as just punishment from God for their sins (Jeremiah 25). Ezekiel spoke of the return from Babylon (Ezekiel 20:39-44). Daniel foretold what would happen to the Jews after the time of the Babylonian Captivity (Daniel 8-11).

We must keep in mind there were three times the Jews were carried into Babylon. In 606 B.C., certain of the royal family, including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were taken (Daniel 1:1-6; 2 Kings 24:1). In 596 B.C., many of the skilled craftsmen, priests, and other leading people were taken (2 Kings 24:1-17). Ezekiel was among these. Finally, in 586 B.C., the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army. The rest of the Jews were taken as slaves to Babylon (Jeremiah 39; 2 Kings 25:1-11). A small group remained in the land.

The book of Ezekiel is a unique book. It has long been regarded as one of the most difficult books, if not the most difficult book, in the Old Testament. Ezekiel is written in *apocalyptic language*. This is highly figurative speech. It contains many signs, symbols, and allegories. There are several key phrases which occur in Ezekiel. Ezekiel is called the *son of man* about one hundred times. The phrase,

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* (Joshua 24:15 KJV)

The people all agreed to serve the Lord. But when Joshua and all the elders who had served with him died, then the people began to worship idols.

Before leaving the book of Joshua, we need to answer an objection that is often made. Unbelievers often argue that God's command to destroy all the people of Canaan shows that He is cruel and unloving. They forget that God is a God of justice as well as a God of love. Since He is just, He must punish evil. The Canaanites were very, very wicked (Leviticus 18). God had waited for 400 years before carrying out His judgment (Genesis 15:16). The people had plenty of time to repent, but they did not. Why did God allow the small children to be killed as well as the adults? If the children had lived to adulthood, they would have become sinners like their parents and therefore would have been lost. By dying when they were young, they were innocent and, therefore, safe.

## **Lesson 6: JUDGES: THE DARK AGES OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY**

### **RUTH: A LESSON OF LOVE AND PROVIDENCE**

The time of the Judges was a very dark period in the history of God's chosen people. Israel continued to be faithful to God during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders of his generation.

*And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after hem, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel.*

(Judges 2:10)

This shows that God's people are never more than one generation from apostasy. The only way to prevent this from happening is for every generation to teach its children well (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Israel's history during this time can be summed up in four words: (1) sin; (2) slavery; (3) supplication; (4) salvation. Israel began worshipping idols. God punished them by allowing one of the neighboring nations to bring them into bondage. The people prayed to

God for deliverance. God sent a judge to free them from their enemies. Israel remained faithful to God until the death of the judge. Then the cycle was repeated.

The book of Judges shows what happens to people when they forget God and follow their own ways. Twice it is recorded that,

***In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*** (Judges 17:6; 21:25)

Read also Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 14:12.

The book of Judges covers the period of time between the death of Joshua and the first king of Israel. There were 15 different judges in all. The first judge was Othniel and the last was Samuel. The human author of Judges is unknown. Possibly it was written by Samuel, but we do not know for sure.

When the book of Judges begins, we find the Canaanites still controlling some of the land. There are several reasons for this. First, God had said He would drive out the Canaanites gradually.

***I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.*** (Exodus 23:29-30)

Second, Israel failed to destroy all the people of the land as God had commanded them (Judges 2:1-5). Third, the Canaanites who were left recaptured some of the land when Israel became weak (Judges 19:10-13). Fourth, because of their sins, Israel could no longer stand up to their enemies (Judges 2:13-14).

The first judge of Israel that God raised up was Othniel (Judges 3:7-11). He delivered the people from the oppression of Cushanrishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. The second judge was Ehud, a left handed man (Judges 3:12-30). Because the people forgot God after the death of Othniel, God allowed Eglon, king of Moab, to oppress them. When the people repented and cried to God, Ehud was sent to deliver them. He brought tribute to Eglon. He asked to be alone in the king's presence. Eglon thought Ehud had a secret message for him so he sent all the people out. Ehud then stabbed the king with a dagger and escaped.

Deborah was the only female judge (Judges 4:4-5:31). Israel was oppressed by the Canaanites. The commander of the Canaanite army was Sisera. Israel's commander was Barak. The armies of the two

would make a new covenant with His people. It would be different from the covenant He had made with them at Mount Sinai. That covenant was written on tables of stone (Exodus 24:12). This new covenant would be written on human hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The new covenant is the New Testament, the Law of Christ (Hebrews 8:6-13; 2 Corinthians 3). Jeremiah taught the important lesson that man, by himself, cannot find his way. He must rely upon God and His Word if he would be saved from his sins (Jeremiah 10:23). Jeremiah also prophesied that the Babylonian Captivity would last for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:8-13). After that, God's people would be allowed to return to their homeland.

God's message to Judah, delivered by Jeremiah, was not popular with the people. On one occasion, King Jehoiakim had Jeremiah's written prophecies read to him. As each part was read, the king took his knife and cut them up. Then he burned them in the fire. He thought he could destroy the Word of God! But God's Word can never be destroyed (Matthew 24:35)! God's Word will be the standard by which we will all be judged at the Last Day (John 12:48). God told Jeremiah to write His words on another scroll. He added many more words besides. Because of Jehoiakim's lack of respect for God's Word, God said he would die (Jeremiah 36)!

The book of Lamentations was also written by Jeremiah. He wrote it to describe the terrible destruction of Jerusalem. Some have described Lamentations as *a funeral dirge for Jerusalem*. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was made in the third century before Christ, Lamentations is called *The Tears of Jeremiah*. Each of the five chapters of Lamentations is a poem. It shows clearly that God will punish even His own people if they do not repent of their sins.

Jeremiah, *the weeping prophet*, is a good example for preachers of the Gospel today. Preachers are often persecuted for preaching the truth, just as Jeremiah was. Jeremiah sometimes became discouraged, but he never quit (Jeremiah 20:9). Preachers, who truly love God and the souls of men, will never quit (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

Jeremiah was like Jesus in many ways. On one occasion, Jesus asked His disciples,

***Who do men say that the Son of man is? They replied, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.*** (Matthew 16:13-14)

Jeremiah was born about 650 B.C. The first verses of Jeremiah chapter 1 tell us several things about him. His father was Hilkiah, a priest. His home was a village about four miles north of Jerusalem. He was very young when called by God to be a prophet. He was not a poor man, for he owned property and had a personal secretary (Jeremiah 32:6-15; 36:4). God told Jeremiah not to marry or have a family (Jeremiah 16:1-4). Jeremiah's name shows he was chosen by God. It means *Jehovah has appointed*. Jeremiah is often called *the weeping prophet* because he shed tears over the sins of his people. Although he was God's spokesman for many years, he did not succeed in turning the people back to God. His own family rejected him. He was beaten and put in prison on several occasions (Jeremiah 26:8-11; 32:1-3; 33:1; 37:13-15; 38:6-13). Jeremiah was taken to Egypt by the people who killed Gedaliah, Babylon's governor over Judah (Jeremiah 41-43). When he continued to preach God's Word, he was stoned to death, according to Jewish history.

A key passage in Jeremiah sets forth the message of the book. In chapter 2, verses 12 and 13, the prophet points out that God's people had committed two serious sins. First, they had forsaken God, *the fountain of living waters*. Second, they had hewn out for themselves *cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*. A fountain of living water is a spring that always brings forth an abundant supply of fresh, clean water. God is like this. He is a constant source of blessings. A cistern has no water supply of its own, but is only a storage place for water. A broken cistern would hold no water at all. The people of Judah had come to trust in the idols of foreign nations. These idols were not living and, therefore, could bring no blessings. They trusted in their own wisdom and strength. But the only wisdom and strength to be found was in God. They also trusted in their alliances with heathen nations to protect them. But these nations had no power unless God chose to give it to them. Thus, all the things the people of Judah trusted in were empty, just like broken cisterns. Judah had rejected the true God Who alone could bless them. In God's place they trusted in things which could bring no blessings!

Jeremiah's preaching fell on deaf ears because the people had become very corrupt. The priests and prophets were as bad as the others (Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:11-12; 23:1-40). Jeremiah pleaded for the people to return to God's way and *walk in the old paths* of God's Law. They refused (Jeremiah 6:16). Then Jeremiah prophesied that one day God

nations fought against each other. When Sisera saw his army was being defeated, he fled. He came to the tent of Heber and asked Heber's wife, Jael, to hide him. He lay on the ground and Jael covered him. While he was sleeping, Jael drove a tent peg through his head and killed him. Another well known judge of Israel was Gideon (Judges 6:1-8:35). The Israelites had again turned away from God. God allowed the Midianites to loot the land and take what they wanted. Finally, the people cried to God for help. God sent His angel to Gideon to tell him he had been chosen to be the deliverer. Gideon did not believe the angel and demanded proof. The proof was given and Gideon called his army together. God did not want the people to think they would win because of their own strength. He told Gideon to allow all the fearful to return home. Twenty-two thousand left and ten thousand remained. God said there were still too many. The army was put to a test. As a result, everyone was sent home except for three hundred. Gideon then gave the men trumpets and torches in pitchers. He divided them into three groups. At his signal, they broke their pitchers, blew their trumpets, shouted, and rushed at the Midianite camp. The Midianites fled in confusion. A great victory was won that day when three hundred men defeated thousands of their enemies.

Perhaps the best known of all the judges was Samson (Judges 13-16). Samson was a Nazirite from birth (Judges 13:4-5; Numbers 6). He was not allowed to drink wine, nor was his hair allowed to be cut. He grew up to be a man of very great strength. In his day, the Philistines oppressed the people of Israel. Samson loved a Philistine girl. He insisted on marrying her in spite of his parent's objections. He became angry with his wife at their wedding feast and left. When he returned, he found she had been given to another man. He took revenge by sending foxes with firebrands tied to their tails into the grain fields of the Philistines. Later he killed 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey. Next, Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. The leaders of the Philistines offered Delilah money to find the secret of Samson's strength. Three times Samson lied to Delilah. Finally he told her that if his hair was cut, his strength would be gone. She had his hair cut while he was sleeping. He was captured and his eyes were put out. In prison, Samson's hair began to grow. On a great sacrifice day, all the Philistine leaders and their wives assembled in the temple of their god. They brought Samson out to entertain them. He rested upon two pillars of the temple and prayed

to God for strength. He then pulled the temple down killing 3,000 Philistines as well as himself.

### THE BOOK OF RUTH

The little book of Ruth is a beautiful story of love. It also shows how God cares and provides for His people. Most important, however, is that the book of Ruth provides another link in the family line of our Savior. We have seen the family line of Jesus come from Adam to Seth to Noah to Shem to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and to Judah. Judah is the tribe from which the Christ came. The book of Ruth shows the family from which Christ came. It is the family of Jesse, who was the father of David (Ruth 4:13-22).

Ruth was another Gentile who was in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:5). Elimelech and Naomi, Israelites from Bethlehem in Judah, left their home in a time of famine. They went to live in Moab. Their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, married Moabite girls. Ruth was one of them. Elimelech died. Later, Mahlon and Chilion died. Naomi decided to return to her home in Bethlehem. She tried to send her daughters-in-law back to their own people. Ruth did not want to go. She loved her mother-in-law. She had also become a believer in the God of Israel. Ruth's words to Naomi are among the most beautiful words of love recorded in the Bible.

***And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if***

***ought but death part thee and me.*** (Ruth 1:16-17) Through God's providence, Ruth met Boaz, a wealthy farmer. Boaz was a relative of Ruth's husband who had died. According to the Law of Moses, if a man died without children, his nearest relative must marry his wife and raise up children (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Boaz married Ruth. They had a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. Jesus was a descendant of David.

Northern Kingdom were evil men. Assyria conquered Israel in 721 B.C. Most of the people were taken into captivity. As a nation, Israel never again came into existence.

The Southern Kingdom was known as Judah. It was made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Jerusalem, where the temple was located, was the capital of Judah. Although most of its rulers were wicked, a few were faithful to God. Judah became worse and worse. Because of this, God allowed Babylon to conquer it in 606 B.C. Some of the leading citizens, including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were taken to Babylon at this time. When Judah rebelled against Babylon in 596 B.C., others, including Ezekiel, were taken as captives to Babylon. Finally, in 586 B.C., the army of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. Solomon's temple was torn down. Most of the remaining people were taken to Babylon. During Judah's last days, Jeremiah served as God's spokesman to them.

Jeremiah was born during a troubled time in history. Great nations were struggling for control of the world. The powerful Assyrian Empire was slowly dying. Babylon became a superpower when its army conquered Nineveh, capital of Assyria, in 612 B.C. Egypt had been a world power for more than one thousand years. It was striving to maintain its power against threats from Babylon. The little nation of Judah was located between these two superpowers. When the armies from the Babylonian Empire in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley marched to fight the armies from the Egyptian Empire in the Nile Valley, they had to go through Judah. Many times, battles were fought on Judah's territory. Its people suffered greatly as a result. Kings of Judah were tempted to make alliances with either Babylon or Egypt as protection against the other one. Jeremiah and the other prophets warned them to trust in God instead of these alliances.

Spiritually, the people of Judah had sunk very low. After the death of Hezekiah, a good king, his wicked son, Manasseh, came to the throne (2 Kings 21:1-9). Manasseh was followed by his son, Amon, who was also wicked (2 Kings 21:19-22). When Amon was killed by his own servants, his eight year old son, Josiah, was placed on the throne (2 Kings 21:23-26). Josiah was the last of the good kings of Judah. He led the people back to God and His Law (2 Kings 22-23). Sadly, his reformation was cut short when he was killed in battle at the age of 39 (2 Kings 23:29). Jeremiah was called by God to prophesy during the rule of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:1-10).

were made by these critics, actually change *virgin* to *young woman*. The Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, and the Good News Bible all make this mistake.

For centuries both Jews and Christians understood that Isaiah 7:14 spoke of a virgin birth. Nearly all translations of the Bible, including those made by the greatest Hebrew scholars of their age, understood that Isaiah 7:14 spoke of a virgin, not simply a young woman. In the New Testament, the apostle Matthew quoted Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:23). Matthew, who was inspired of God just as Isaiah was, said a virgin would give birth. Surely, the same Holy Spirit who revealed Isaiah's message to him, and inspired Matthew to quote it, understood the meaning of the word He used better than the critics and unbelieving "scholars"! If the critics are true, then Jesus was just an ordinary man who was born of human parents. If He were an ordinary man, He would not be qualified to be our Savior and Mediator. We would still be in our sins and without hope.

Isaiah also foretold the coming of the kingdom of Christ, which is the church of Christ (Isaiah 2:2-4). He said:

- It would come in the last days.
- It would be in Jerusalem.
- God's house would be built.
- All nations would come into it.
- The law of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem.

This prophecy was fulfilled on the first Pentecost day after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). Jews from every nation were assembled in Jerusalem. It was in the last days (the last age or dispensation). The Lord's house, which is His church, was established. From Jerusalem, this good news of salvation was carried to the whole world.

The book of Isaiah is strong proof that the Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Isaiah also proves that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 20:30-31).

### **Lesson 13: JEREMIAH: THE WEEPING PROPHET LAMENTATIONS: THE TEARS OF JEREMIAH**

The nation of Israel divided in 975 B.C. Jeroboam I led the ten northern tribes to rebel against King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. The Northern Kingdom came to be known as Israel. Its capital was eventually located in Samaria. All of the kings who ruled over the

### **Lesson 7: THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS AND CHRONICLES: THE RISE AND FALL OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

The six books of First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles record the history of God's people from Samuel, the last judge, to the end of the Babylonian Captivity. This is a period of about 600 years. This period can be divided into three sections.

- The end of the rule of the judges; Eli and Samuel's leadership.
- The United Kingdom with Saul, David, and Solomon each ruling for 40 years.
- The Divided Kingdom.

The history of the Divided Kingdom tells of the ten northern tribes, which were known as Israel. They were ruled from their capital city of Samaria by nineteen different kings. All of these kings were evil and turned the people away from God. Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.

The tribes of Judah and Benjamin made up the Southern Kingdom, which was known as Judah. Their capital was at Jerusalem. They were ruled by nineteen kings and one queen. Eight of the twenty rulers were good and served God faithfully. The rest were evil and led the people away from God. Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon in three stages. In 606 B.C., many of the young people from the royal family were carried to Babylon. Among these were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In 596 B.C., some of the priests and skilled craftsmen were taken to Babylon. Ezekiel was among them. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, including the temple built by Solomon, and took the rest of the people into captivity in Babylon. The book of First Samuel tells of the judgeship of Samuel and the kingdom of Saul. It is believed that Samuel wrote the first twenty-four chapters and the prophets Nathan and Gad completed the book (1 Chronicles 29:29-30). The book begins with the birth of Samuel and closes with David as king of Judah.

Samuel was raised up by God to be the judge of Israel because the sons of Eli were corrupt. The people of Israel were not satisfied with God's rule through the judges. They wanted to have a king so they would be like the nations around them. God gave the people what they wanted. Saul was anointed by Samuel to be king. He began his

reign very well, but soon pride and jealousy caused him to depart from God. He committed suicide and the kingdom was given to David.

The book of Second Samuel tells mainly of the rule of David, Israel's greatest king. David was an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:25-36; Romans 1: 2-4). He also was a poet and musician. He wrote many of the psalms in the book of Psalms. He is known as *the sweet psalmist of Israel* (2 Samuel 23:1). He is also called *a man after God's own heart* (Acts 13:22). Much of the history recorded in Second Samuel is also found in First Chronicles. We do not know who the human author of this history is, but it was probably written either by Nathan or Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29-30).

The book of First Kings continues the history of the United Kingdom. It covers a time period of 120 years. The book begins with the death of David and the selection of Solomon to be king. It ends with the death of Ahab, ruler of the Northern Kingdom.

Solomon's glorious reign is known as *the Golden Age* of Israel. God blessed Solomon with great wealth, wisdom, peace, and prosperity. The temple was built during his rule. Sadly, in his old age, Solomon's heart was turned away from serving God. The foreign women he married led him to worship idols.

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom divided because of the foolish decision of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The ten northern tribes were ruled by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Rehoboam was left with only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The great prophet Elijah lived during this time. He was the head of a long line of great prophets who called the people back to God.

The book of Second Kings continues the history of the kings. It covers a period of more than two hundred years. It begins with the death of Ahab and ends with the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity. The Jews commonly believed Jeremiah wrote Second Kings. The first half of the book tells the story of Elisha, God's spokesman who followed Elijah. Elisha prophesied for about fifty years. Sixteen miracles which he performed are recorded in Second Kings.

The book of First Chronicles covers the same period of history as Second Samuel. The Jews commonly believed that Ezra wrote First Chronicles. It is clear from reading First Chronicles that the author

Isaiah has been more strongly attacked by critics of the Bible than almost any other book of the Bible. Perhaps this is because Isaiah gives such strong proof that the Bible came from God. Isaiah foretold many events in history hundreds of years before they happened. This proves he was inspired by God. Critics and skeptics do not want to believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Therefore, they refuse to accept the evidence which shows that Isaiah spoke from God.

Isaiah contains evidence that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Christ in Isaiah exactly. Critics of the Bible do not like this for it proves they are wrong. Therefore, they try to explain away Isaiah's prophecies. Sometimes they say that Isaiah did not write all of the book of Isaiah. Some claim that Isaiah was written by two different men. Others say there were three or more who wrote the book. They claim the parts which predict future events were written much later after the events had already happened.

Did Isaiah write all of the book which bears his name? For two thousand years both Jews and Christians believed he did. Jesus, Paul and the other writers of the New Testament quote from the book of Isaiah. They say it was written by him. There is no proof that the theories of the critics are true. Some critics say that Jesus read all the prophecies in Isaiah of the Christ. Then He organized His life to do what Isaiah foretold. But this would be impossible. Isaiah foretold that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23). How could Jesus have arranged this? Isaiah also predicted the manner of Jesus' death and His burial (Isaiah 53; John 19). This would have been very difficult to arrange, especially if Jesus were just an ordinary man as the critics claim. The fact is that Isaiah lived more than seven hundred years before Jesus was born. He predicted many things concerning the coming of the Christ and His kingdom. Jesus fulfilled all these prophecies exactly. Therefore, Jesus is exactly who He said He was! He is indeed *the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:8-10).

The prophecy that Jesus would be born of a virgin is found in Isaiah, chapter 7. Critics do not believe Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. They think He was just an ordinary man with a human father instead of being the *only begotten Son* of God (John 3:16). They say the Hebrew word which is translated as *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14 should be *young woman*. Some of the modern translations of the Bible, which



who were *sawn in two*. According to the Jews, this is the way Isaiah was killed. When he was a very old man, the evil king, Manasseh, had his body placed between two planks of wood and sawed in two.

Isaiah lived and preached during a very important time in the world's history. During most of his lifetime, Assyria was the most powerful nation on earth. Babylon was only beginning to gain strength as a nation. While Isaiah lived in Judah, Romulus and Remus were beginning the city of Rome. The Greek cities of Athens and Sparta were just being built. It was during Isaiah's lifetime that the Northern Kingdom, Israel, was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Micah, Amos, and Hosea were other prophets of God who lived during Isaiah's lifetime.

During most of the time that Isaiah preached to God's people, the nation of Judah was very prosperous. People forgot about God because they were so involved in the things of this world (Isaiah 59:1-8). The rich people lived in luxury and idleness. The poor suffered from lack of food and clothing (Isaiah 3:14-15; 32:9-15). Many of the people were drunkards (Isaiah 5:11-12, 22-23; 28:7-8). The women were just as bad as the men. They were lazy and were drunkards also (Isaiah 3:16-26). Government officials were corrupt. They used their offices to oppress the poor (Isaiah 1:21-23). Even the prophets failed to do the job God had given them. Instead of rebuking sin and delivering God's message, they preached what the people wanted to hear (Isaiah 9:14-16; 30:8-14).

The book of Isaiah has sixty-six chapters. The first thirty-five chapters speak of God's judgments on evil and evildoers. Chapters 36 through 39 tell of a time when the Assyrian army surrounded the city of Jerusalem. They planned to attack and destroy it. The leader of the Assyrians boasted that God could not save them just as the gods of other nations they had conquered had been unable to deliver them. King Hezekiah prayed to God about the matter. That very night God sent His angel into the camp of the Assyrians. The angel killed 185,000 Assyrians and the rest of the army fled.

The last section of Isaiah contains chapters 40 through 66. These chapters foretold that the nation of Babylon would arise and oppress God's people. They also told of the sending of God's Servant to suffer for the sins of the people. Finally, the glory of the Messianic Age is described.

had two purposes in mind for writing: (1) To provide a history of God's people showing they had gone into captivity; (2) To give the family records so that families returning from Babylon could claim their land.

The book of Second Chronicles gives additional information about the kings of Israel and Judah. It covers a period of about four hundred years. This is the same time that is covered by the books of First and Second Kings. Second Chronicles begins with the glory of Solomon's rule and ends with the decree of Cyrus which permitted the Jews to return from captivity.

Even though all of the kings of Israel were wicked, and most of the kings of Judah were the same, there were some very outstanding men who ruled. In Second Chronicles, chapter 15, we learn of Asa, a good king. He listened to the words of Obadiah, the prophet. He called his nation back to God. He destroyed all the idols in the land and rebuilt the altar of the Lord. Then he led his people in making a covenant.

***And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul.***

(2 Chronicles 15:12)

Jehoshaphat was another good king (2 Chronicles 19-20). He led the people back to God. He also set up judges throughout the land. He warned them.

***Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah; and he is with you in the judgment.*** (2 Chronicles

19:6)

Hezekiah was one of the very best of all the kings of Judah (2 Chronicles 29-32). The Bible says,

***And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done.*** (2 Chronicles

29:2)

He restored the temple worship, opposed idol worship, and called Judah back to keeping the Passover. During Hezekiah's day, the Assyrian army attacked Jerusalem. Hezekiah prayed to God and God sent His angel who killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians (Isaiah 36-38).

One of the very best of all the kings of Judah was Josiah (2 Chronicles 34-35). He came to the throne of Judah when he was only eight years old. Both his father and his grandfather had been very wicked kings. Josiah commanded that the temple of the Lord be

repaired. The book of God's Law had been lost. It was found in the temple. When it was read to the king, he became greatly afraid. He restored the true worship of the true God. He had all idols torn down. The Bible says of Josiah,

***And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.*** (2 Chronicles 34:2).

In the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles we learn that,

***Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people.*** (Proverbs 14:34)

We also see the line of Christ come from the person to the nation to the tribe to the family: Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse, and David.

### **Lesson 8: EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER: THE RETURN AND RESTORATION OF THE JEWS**

First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles record the history of God's people from the time of the Judges to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. God's prophet, Jeremiah, had foretold that His people would be captives in a foreign land for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10). The period of captivity began in 606 B.C. when many of the king's family were taken to Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among these captives.

Ten years later, in 596 B.C., a second group were taken as captives to Babylon. This group was made up of priests and skilled craftsmen. Ezekiel, one of the greatest of God's prophets, was among them. Then, after another ten years, in 586 B.C., when the Jews in Judah continued to rebel against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem with his army. He destroyed the city, including the beautiful temple built by King Solomon. He took the rest of the people to Babylon to be slaves.

In 539 B.C., the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medes and the Persians. They were led by Darius and Cyrus. Soon after this, King Cyrus gave the Jews permission to return to their homeland. He also gave them permission to rebuild the temple of God (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). The first group of captives returned in 536 B.C. They were led by Zerubbabel, who was a descendant of King

was probably written when Solomon was a young man. Too, it was probably written before Solomon had married many wives. It shows the love between him and one wife.

We must understand the Song of Solomon is poetry. The persons who appear in this poem are:

- King Solomon, is the bridegroom
- The Shulamite maid, his bride
- The daughters of Jerusalem
- The brothers of the Shulamite maid

Two great lessons can be learned from the Song of Solomon. First, it teaches us that monogamy (one husband and one wife) is best. This was God's original plan for marriage (Genesis 2:21-25). It is still God's plan for marriage today (Matthew 19:3-9). Second, it teaches that sexual love is right in marriage, but sinful outside of it (Hebrews 13:4).

The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon have wonderful teachings in them. They should not be neglected in our study of God's Word (Romans 15:4). We must remember, however, that when we study them, we must consider the type of writing (proverbs and poetry). We must also consider the context of each statement. If we do these things, we will not draw false conclusions from them as do many false teachers.

### **Lesson 12: ISAIAH: THE MESSIANIC PROPHET**

Isaiah is often called *The Messianic Prophet*. He is called this because he records many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah into the world. *Messiah* means *the anointed one*. In the Old Testament, priests were anointed with oil when they were appointed to their office (Exodus 30:25-30; Leviticus 8:10-13). Prophets and kings were also anointed with oil when they were appointed by God (1 Samuel 16:1,13; 1 Kings 19:16). The prophets foretold the coming of One who would hold all three of these offices and be prophet, priest, and king all in one. Therefore, He was called *The Anointed One* or *Messiah*. The New Testament word for *The Anointed One* is *Christ*.

Isaiah prophesied during the rule of four different kings of Judah. They were Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah was probably born in Jerusalem about 760 B.C. He likely began prophesying about 740 B.C. He was God's spokesman to Judah for fifty years or even longer. Hebrews 11:37 speaks of some men of faith

Solomon also tried to find the meaning of life in pleasure. Many people do this today. They are only interested in fun, games, parties, drinking, dancing and such things. It is good for one to rest his body. There is nothing wrong with having fun if one does not do anything sinful, such as drinking or dancing. But having fun is not the purpose of man's life on this earth (Ecclesiastes 2: 1-3; 1 Timothy 5:6).

Solomon next tried to find the meaning of life in wealth (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11). He was a very rich man. He worked to become richer. Many people spend their whole lives acquiring wealth. When they die, they must leave it all behind. It is not wrong to have wealth if one uses it correctly. But seeking money and the things money can buy is not the reason God put man on this earth. Those who are interested only in material things will be unhappy in this life. They will lose their souls in eternity (Matthew. 6:19-21; 16:26; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

After Solomon tried all of these things, he realized what the true purpose of man's life on earth was.

***Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*** (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 KJV)

### THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Song of Solomon is known by other names also. In the Catholic Bible, it is called *Canticles*. It calls itself ***the Song of songs*** (Song of Solomon 1:1). Some have doubted that this book should be in the Bible. They do not understand the purpose of the book. They do not like the plain sexual references. They also point out that God's name is not mentioned.

If we understand the meaning of the book, we will see why God included it in the Bible. The purpose of the Song of Solomon is to show the joys and blessings of love between a husband and wife. The sexual relationship was created by God. It is holy and good when engaged in by a husband and wife who truly love one another. God intended it for man's happiness (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). God uses the love of the husband and wife to illustrate the love that Christ has for His church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 1:1). It is only one of more than one thousand songs he wrote (1 Kings 4:32). It

David. It is important to remember that the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity lasted from 606 B.C. until 536 B.C.

There were three different times the Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon. There were also three different times that Jews were permitted to return to their homeland. The first group of Jews who returned was led by Zerubbabel. This was in 536 B.C. The second group of Jews returned in 458 B. C. They were led by Ezra, a scribe of God's law. The third group to return was led by Nehemiah in 444 B.C.

Each one of these three leaders had an important job to do in rebuilding the nation of Judah. The temple of God was rebuilt under Zerubbabel's leadership. Ezra reorganized the temple worship. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

The three books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther tell the history of God's people during the rule of the Persian Empire. Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the captives who returned to Judah. Esther tells what happened to God's people who remained in Persia.

### EZRA

Ezra is one of the greatest men in the Old Testament. As a leader and writer, he ranks next to Moses. He was a priest. His great-grandfather was Hilkiyah, the high priest when Josiah was king (Ezra 7:1-5). It is likely that Ezra's parents were among those who were taken to Babylon. Therefore, he must have been born in Babylon.

Many Bible students believe Ezra wrote the books of First and Second Chronicles and Psalm 119 as well as the book of Ezra. They also believe God inspired him to begin synagogues as a place to worship. This was necessary because the Jews were in Babylon. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed. Also, Bible students think Ezra was used by God to collect together all the books of the Old Testament to form the one book we have today.

Ezra was an effective servant of the Lord because he had prepared himself to do God's work.

***For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.***

(Ezra 7:10)

Ezra also organized the priesthood according to the teaching of the Scriptures. In Ezra's day many of God's people had broken God's law and had married pagans. Ezra demanded that the people come out of these unscriptural marriages (Ezra 9-10).

## NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah wrote the book which is named for him. He was a *cup-bearer* (butler) to King Artaxerxes of Persia. Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. In 444 B.C. Nehemiah took his journey to Jerusalem. He remained as governor there for 12 years. At the end of this time, he returned to Persia. A short time later, he came back to Jerusalem to continue his work (Nehemiah 13:6). Nehemiah was a strong, courageous leader. He worked with Ezra the scribe and Malachi the prophet to keep the Jews faithful to God.

When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, he found the walls in ruins. Therefore, the city was defenseless before its enemies. He began the task of rebuilding the walls. Sanballat and Tobiah rebelled against him. When they failed to get Nehemiah to fight with them, they tried to get him to compromise. He refused. The walls of the city were rebuilt very quickly. The people of Judah *had a mind to work* (Nehemiah 4:6). Because of the fear that their enemies might attack them, the Jews worked with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other (Nehemiah 4:17).

Besides rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah also stood with Ezra in opposing unscriptural marriages with the pagans (Nehemiah 13:23-29).

## ESTHER

The book of Esther tells what happened to the Jews who chose not to return to Judah. It is one of the two books in the Bible which bear the name of a woman. The other book is Ruth. The book of Esther tells how a Jewish girl came to be the queen of Persia. God was able to use Esther in her position as queen to save His people from destruction.

The name *Esther* comes from a Persian word which means *Star of the East*. Her Jewish name was *Hadassah*. Esther's parents must have died when she was quite young. She was raised by a relative named Mordecai. Mordecai was a man who feared only God and refused to bow before any man. When Vashti refused to obey her husband, King Ahasuerus, she was removed from being the queen. Esther, a very beautiful girl, was chosen to take her place.

Later, Haman, one of the top officials in the king's government, became angry because Mordecai would not bow down to him. When he learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to get revenge by

women (Deuteronomy 17:14-17). When he was old, his pagan wives turned him away from worshiping the true God (1 Kings 11:1-8). During Solomon's rule, the people of Israel were very prosperous. When people have plenty, they often forget God. They forget the important rules of righteous living. The book of Proverbs was written to help people remember God and the right way to live. Proverbs are short, wise sayings. They usually make just one point. They are easily remembered. Most nations have proverbs which are commonly repeated among them. The wise sayings in the book of Proverbs were given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). They were meant for all people in all nations.

There are four sections in the book of Proverbs. Chapters 1-9 teach the importance of wisdom. Chapters 10-24 teach the principles of wisdom. Chapters 25-29 contain various proverbs by Solomon which were collected by the wise men of Hezekiah's day. Chapters 30 and 31 are the sayings of Agur and Lemuel.

## ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes has been called *the search for happiness under the sun*. The writer of this book is Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:1). There are some who think Ecclesiastes was written much later than Solomon's day. They say the book was credited to Solomon so it would be accepted. There is no evidence for this. If one believes all the Bible was inspired by God, he cannot accept this view, for the book itself claims to have been written by Solomon.

The book of Ecclesiastes deals with the purpose of life. It seeks to answer the question: "What should man do during his time 'under the sun' (on the earth)?" Solomon had the opportunity to test the various ways men seek happiness. He had great riches, and therefore could buy anything he wanted to buy. He also had great power, and therefore could do anything he wanted to. Besides this, he was the wisest man in all the earth. He knew how to test things to see which was best.

Solomon tried many different things. First, he looked for worldly wisdom (education, learning, and philosophy). Many people try to find happiness today by going to school and ever continuing their learning. Education is good if it is used rightly. However, it must never become the reason for living (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18; 2:12-16; 1 Corinthians 1:22-26; 2:1-5).

the book of Hebrews in the New Testament quotes from this psalm to prove that Christ was a high priest *after the order of Melchizedek* (Hebrew 5:5-6). Melchizedek is mentioned only three times in the Bible. Abraham offered tithes to this man who was both king and priest (Genesis 14:18-20). One thousand years later, David prophesied that Christ would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). Then one thousand years after this, the New Testament records the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jesus Christ.

The book of Psalms is truly the songbook of the Old Testament. Millions of people have found comfort and strength in its inspired poetry.

### **Lesson 11: PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SOLOMON**

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon are not studied very much today. A few verses are known from Proverbs. About the only people who study Ecclesiastes are Jehovah's Witnesses. They often take verses out of context to try to prove their false doctrines. Because the Song of Solomon has sexual references in it, many are embarrassed by it. However, these three books are a part of God's inspired Word to man. He expects us to study them (Romans 15:4).

King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, is the writer of these books. Some believe Solomon wrote the Song of Solomon in his youth, the books of Proverbs in his middle age, and the book of Ecclesiastes when he was old.

#### **PROVERBS**

Most of the proverbs were written by Solomon (Proverbs 1:1). However, chapter 30 is credited to Agur. Chapter 31 was written by Lemuel. Many Bible students believe that *Agur* and *Lemuel* were names used by Solomon. If this is correct, this means that Solomon is the author of the entire book.

Solomon was one of the greatest kings of Israel. During the time he ruled, Israel was a powerful and rich nation. Solomon was given great wealth by God (1 Kings 10:7, 14, 23). God also made him the wisest man in all the earth (1 Kings 3:11-12; 10:24). He wrote 1,005 songs and 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32). Too, God allowed Solomon to build His temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5-6). Solomon served God until his old age. He disobeyed God by marrying many foreign

plotting to have all the Jews killed. Haman tricked the king into making a law that all the Jews would be killed by the Persians on a certain day. When Mordecai learned this, he appealed to Esther to go before the king and plead for her people. He said to her,

***Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*** (Esther 4:14)

If one approached a Persian king without being asked, the king could have him killed. Esther feared to go to the king for this reason. However, she overcame her fears and approached the king. The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed, but the king gave the Jews the right to defend themselves. God gave them a great victory over their enemies. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built to hang Mordecai on. God's people were saved by the courage of a Jewish girl who had become the queen of Persia.

According to history, Esther was the queen of Persia from about 497 B.C. to 466 B.C. During this time, Persia was the greatest nation on earth.

The history of God's people in the Old Testament closes at the end of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. God's people were back in their homeland. The temple had been rebuilt. The worship had been restored. It would be 400 more years before the Savior came into the world.

### **Lesson 9: JOB: WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER?**

The book of Job deals with a question which has troubled men in all ages: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Why does God allow us to suffer if He really loves us and we are faithful to Him? Job teaches us that human suffering may be caused by many things. Because we suffer does not necessarily mean God is angry with us. It does not necessarily mean we are being punished for our sins.

We do not know who wrote the book of Job. The Jews have always believed it was written by Moses. Some think Job was written by Solomon. We do know it was given to us by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Job probably lived during the Patriarchal Age. He served as the priest for his family, which was done during that time (Job 1:5). Since the Law of Moses is not mentioned, this indicates Job lived before the Law was given at Mount Sinai. The book of Job shows the way of life that was common during the Patriarchal Age.

Job was a real man who actually lived on this earth. Ezekiel mentioned him as well as Noah and Daniel (Ezekiel.14:14, 20). James pointed to Job as an example of one who endured suffering with patience (James 5:11). Archaeologists have found in the records of ancient Babylonia the story of a man named Job who suffered greatly. The Bible tells us three important things about Job. First, he was a good family man. Even though he lived in an age when it was common for a man to have many wives, he had only one (Job 2:9). Job had respect for God's original marriage law which was given in the beginning (Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:3-9). Job had a large family of seven sons and three daughters (Job 1:2). Second, Job was a very rich man. The Bible says he was *the greatest of all the children of the east* (Job 1:3). He owned thousands of sheep, camels, donkeys, and oxen. He also had many servants (Job 1:3). Third, Job was a very good man.

***There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil.*** (Job 1:1)

He rose up early in the morning to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of his children (Job 1:5). God held up Job as a good example to Satan. He asked Satan,

***Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil.*** (Job 1:8)

Satan suggested to God that the only reason Job served Him was because God blessed him. He said that Job would curse God if God took away His blessings. God gave Satan permission to test Job. He only placed one restriction on Satan. He was not allowed to harm Job himself (Job 1:9-12).

Satan tempted Job by taking away all his wealth. Then he sent a storm that killed all of Job's children at one time. Job did not curse God as Satan had said he would. He worshiped God.

***And he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*** (Job 1:21-22)

God again pointed out Job as a good example to Satan.

***And Satan answered Jehovah and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth***

David wrote, *In sin did my mother conceive me* (Psalm 51:5), he did not mean he received his mother's sin. He is simply saying he was born into a world of sin, or a sinful environment.

Psalm 90 was written by Moses, who lived to be 120 years old (Deuteronomy 34:7). The psalm deals with the brevity of man's life on earth. Man's few years are compared with God, who is eternal. Because of the brevity and weakness of our existence on earth, we are commanded to *number our days*. This means that we should use our opportunities in this life to the very fullest.

Another well known and beloved psalm is Psalm 119. This psalm praises the law of God. It is divided into 22 sections in the Hebrew Bible. Each section begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The sections are in alphabetical order.

Psalm 139 was written by David. It emphasizes that God is omnipresent (everywhere) and omniscient (knows everything). There is nothing hidden from God. There is no place that man can go to escape from God (2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 15:3).

Many of the psalms are known as *Messianic psalms* because they foretold the coming of the Messiah (Christ). The second psalm is the first of those psalms. It was applied to Jesus by Paul in his sermon in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:31-33).

Psalm 16 was also quoted by Paul in the same sermon in Antioch (Acts 13:35-37). This psalm foretold the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. On the day the Lord's church began, the apostle Peter also used Psalm 16 to prove that God had raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24-33).

Psalm 22 is one of the greatest of the Messianic psalms. It was written by David one thousand years before Jesus was born. But it clearly describes the crucifixion of Christ. The first verse was fulfilled in Matthew 27:46. Verses 6 to 8 were fulfilled in Matthew 27:39-44. Verses 14 and 15 describe the pain and suffering of one who is being crucified. Verse 16 tells of Jesus being nailed to the cross. Verse 17 prophesied that none of Jesus' bones would be broken. This was fulfilled in John 19:31-37. Verse 18 foretold that the soldiers would gamble for the clothes of Jesus (John 19:24).

Psalm 110 is a Messianic psalm. It was written by King David (Matthew 22:41-46; Acts 2:34). It does not refer to anything in David's life. It is wholly a prophecy of the coming of the Christ. This psalm foretold the power and the priesthood of Christ. The writer of

Psalms is the longest book in all the Bible. It has 150 chapters. Psalms also contains the longest chapter in the Bible. This is Psalm 119, which has 176 verses.

The shortest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 117, which has only two verses in it.

Some people have argued that it is acceptable to use instrumental music in our Christian worship because it is mentioned so often in the book of Psalms. They forget that Psalms is a part of the Old Testament. The Old Testament or Old Covenant was fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44). Once it was fulfilled, it was removed as a law for God's people (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:23-25). Jeremiah had foretold this six hundred years before Christ was born (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Today, we live under the New Testament or New Covenant which was given by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:12; 8:6-13). We follow the New Testament pattern for worship. This pattern commands us to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). It leaves out instrumental music. There is no more authority for us to use instrumental music in our worship today than there is for offering animal sacrifices, dancing, burning incense, or worshiping on the sabbath day (Saturday).

There are many well known psalms. One of the best known and most beautiful is Psalm 8. It praises the glory of God as seen in His creation. It also exalts man as the highest of all God's creation. Matthew Fontaine Maury, the father of the science of oceanography discovered the *lanes of the sea* from this psalm. His son read Psalm 8 to him when he was sick. Verse 8 mentions *the paths of the seas*. Mr. Maury is reported to have said, "If God's Word says there are paths in the seas, they must be there. I will find them." He found the currents in the oceans which are followed by ships today.

Probably the best known and best loved of all the psalms is Psalm 23. This is often called *the shepherd's psalm*. It has likely been memorized by more people than any other chapter in the Bible. It is often read at funerals and other occasions of sadness.

Psalm 51 is believed to have been written by David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). It states his repentance for his sin against God. Verse 5 is wrongly translated in the New International Version in order to teach that David was born a sinner. This is a false doctrine. Sin is not inherited from one's parents (Ezekiel 18:20). Sin is a result of transgressing (breaking) God's law (1 John 3:4). When

*thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face.* (Job 2:4-5)

God gave Satan permission to afflict Job's body, but restricted him from taking Job's life. This shows us that God is stronger than Satan. He limits Satan's power (Read 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Satan afflicted Job with sores which covered his entire body. Job had lost his possessions, his children, and now his health was taken away. Job's wife told him,

*Curse God and die.* (Job 2:9 KJV)

Job replied,

*Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* (Job 2:10)

Job continued to trust in God and refused to blame God for his problems.

Job had three friends. These friends learned of Job's suffering. They came to see him. Their names were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. The Bible says they sat in silence for seven days before him. They argued that Job was a very great sinner. They told him God had sent this suffering on him because of his sins. They urged him to repent and confess his sins before God. Job knew this was not true. He knew he was innocent of wrong-doing. He did not know why he was suffering. He knew, however, that it was not because of his sins.

Much of the book of Job is made up of the speeches of Job's three friends and Job's replies to their speeches. Finally, Elihu, a young man, began to speak. The Bible says he was angry with Job.

*Against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.* (Job 32:2)

Elihu was also angry with Job's three friends because they had condemned Job, but had found no answer for his suffering. Elihu also believed that Job had sinned. He thought he was speaking for God. However, he really did not know any more than Job's three friends.

After Elihu had finished, God spoke. God did not tell Job that He had allowed Satan to afflict him. He simply challenged Job with His great wisdom. God's wisdom was much greater than that of Job and his friends. If they could not answer questions about how God does things in His creation, how could they understand human suffering?

When Job heard God speak, he realized he had no right to question God. He repented of having questioned God in any way. God then

told the friends of Job that He was angry with them. He told them to ask Job to pray for them. The Lord then blessed Job again. He gave him twice as many possessions as he had before. God also gave Job another family of seven sons and three daughters. Job lived one hundred and forty years after this.

There are many helpful lessons we can learn from the book of Job. First, we can learn that God is the Creator of all things. His wisdom is far above anything that we can ever understand. Because He is the Creator, God has no obligation to explain any of His actions to man.

Second, we can learn that if one truly has faith in God, he will remain faithful to God no matter what happens. He may not understand what is happening, or why. But he will trust God because God loves us and knows what is best for us (Romans 8:28).

Third, we can learn from the book of Job that innocent people suffer in this life along with the wicked. Natural disasters such as floods and famines affect everybody. Accidents can happen to anyone. Sickness comes to rich and poor, young and old, evil and good. Finally, death will come to everyone. These things are a part of the lives of all who live on this earth. They do not mean that a person is good or bad, but simply that he is a human.

Fourth, we can learn that Satan does not have unlimited power over us. God is stronger. He will not allow Satan to cause us to do anything that we do not want to do. God will not allow Satan to take away our power to choose between right and wrong.

Fifth, we can learn that Satan may use other people to discourage us. In Job's case, Satan used his wife and his three friends. We must always put God first, even before our closest friends and relatives (Matthew 10:37).

Sixth, we need to have patience as Job did. We must learn to endure the hardships of life (James 5:11). We must remember that, in the end, God's people will win.

Seventh, we can learn from the book of Job that life on earth is very brief. It is filled with many troubles (Job 5:7; 7:6; 8:9; 14:1-2; James 4:13-15).

Job is a wonderful book. It has many lessons for us today. We need to read and study it and apply its lessons to our lives.

## Lesson 10: PSALMS: THE SONGBOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The book of Psalms is the best known and most loved part of the Old Testament. It has been a source of comfort to millions of Bible readers for three thousand years. The name for Psalms in the Hebrew Bible is *Tehillim* which means *praise*. Our English word *psalms* comes from the Greek word *psalmoi* which originally meant a song or poem sung with instrumental accompaniment. By New Testament times, however, the word simply meant to *sing a hymn; to celebrate the praises of God in song* (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, page 675). The Jews often divided the Old Testament into three sections.

- The Law included the first five books.
- The Psalms included all the books of poetry and wisdom literature.
- The Prophets included the books of the prophets as well as the books of history (Luke 24:44).

The Jews sometimes called the book of Psalms simply *David* because David wrote more of them than anyone else (Hebrews 4:7; Psalm 95:7-8).

The Psalms were written by several different writers. They were composed during a period of about one thousand years from the time of Moses (about 1500 B.C.) to the time of Ezra (about 450 B.C.). Moses wrote one psalm (Psalm 90). Asaph wrote two. The sons of Korah are credited with eleven psalms. Solomon and Ezra are believed to have written two psalms each. David is the author of at least seventy psalms (2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; Matthew 22:41-46). We do not know who wrote about fifty of the psalms. Possibly David wrote many of them. The Jews believed Ezra was the one who collected all the psalms together into one book.

The New Testament quotes from Psalms more than from any other Old Testament book. There are at least ninety-three direct quotations from Psalms in the New Testament. There are many references to Psalms also. Many of the psalms foretold the coming of Jesus Christ. Beginning in ancient times, the book of Psalms has been divided into five *books* or sections. Book I includes the first forty-one psalms. Book II includes Psalms 42 to 72. Book III contains Psalms 73 to 89. Book IV contains Psalms 90 to 106. Book V is made up of Psalms 107 to 150.