

SELDOM STUDIED SCRIPTURES

By
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*Dedicated to
TERESA,
my loving companion.*

INTRODUCTION

Many Bible study groups have made a habit of studying the plan of redemption to the point of neglecting some scriptures that do not easily relate to that plan. As a general rule, they study Genesis, Exodus, parts of Leviticus through Judges, the highlights of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles and then on to the New Testament. Great benefit can be derived from just such a study. However, it leaves behind a large group of seldom studied scriptures.

The purpose of this book will be to acquaint its readers with those neglected passages. We will try to give the reader a basic knowledge and the appetite for deeper investigation.

We have tried to assemble the material in chronological order, to the best of our knowledge.

My thanks go to Ray Hawk for his permission to use an article he wrote on the Song of Solomon. Thanks should also go to Jerry Boultinghouse for her work in typing these lessons from my hand-written originals.

May God bless us all as we continue to study His word.

Gary C. Hampton

THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The Old Testament is a major portion of the Bible. It is the word of God. Containing a history of God's people from creation, it goes on up to near the time of our Lord's birth. The prophets, in particular, spoke of the coming Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom.

This portion of scripture is full of information, teaching, principles, and examples. Although it is not binding on us as a law, still we may gain much from reading it and studying it. Paul said that it was written for our learning and to serve as an example that we should not do as many of those people had done.

The sad thing about all of this is that we virtually ignore this part of the Bible. We claim that it is difficult to read. We say that it does not apply to us. And our religious friends accuse us of not believing it.

Brother Gary Hampton has prepared this series of studies on the Old Testament to call us back to it, to help us see the value of such scriptures, and to encourage us to be more serious about this section of God's word. He touches briefly on a number of the books, introducing us to several of the prophets and their message for God's people at that time.

We are grateful to brother Hampton for allowing us to print this book the first time in India and the second time here in the States. It is our prayer that each one who reads it will be brought closer to God with the desire to fully know His will for man today and to obey it.

J. C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi
September 17, 1986

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A BOOK FROM GOD

Before we start to study the Bible, we need to recognize that it is God's word. Such recognition will help us to study with a more serious attitude.

The Bible lays claim to inspiration. II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Paul used the Greek word *theopneustos* in the place where we find "inspiration." *Theo* means "God" and *pneustos* means "breathed," thus, God breathed, or God breathed out. The idea is that God spoke, since we exhale, or breathe out, through the vocal cords to speak.

Peter explains inspiration when he writes, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21). The Hebrew writer must have recognized this as he often said God said a certain thing, when we know man did the actual writing (See Heb. 1:5, 8; 5:5-6).

Many Old Testament writers claimed inspiration, as did some New Testament writers (See Isa. 1:1-2, 10, 24; Jer. 1:1-2; 2:1; Ezek. 1:1-3; I Thess. 2:13; II Pet. 3:2). Jesus considered Old Testament scriptures inspired and used them as authoritative (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). His whole purpose in coming to earth was to do God's will by fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Matt. 5:7-18; John 15:25). The New Testament writers considered Old Testament writers

inspired (Acts 1:15-16; 4:25; 28:25-27; Gal. 3:16-19).

The New Testament writers claim inspiration for other New Testament writers. The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Heb. 2:1-4). Peter classed Paul's writing as scripture (II Pet. 3:15-16).

However, such internal claims would be meaningless if they were not supported by evidence. In fact, such claims force us to test their validity.

We can know the Bible is from God because of the scientific facts which were written in it long before man recognized them or knew about them. In Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25, we find the expression "after his kind" in reference to the grasses, trees, fish, birds, cattle, and other beasts. These statements are made despite the fact that man, even hundreds of years later, believed in spontaneous generation. Only recently doctors have found certain special elements in the blood of a boy baby eight days old which help to heal. Yet, Moses, thousands of years ago, wrote by inspiration that boy babies were to be circumcised the eighth day (Lev. 12:3). In George Washington's time, doctors believed "bleeding" a patient would rid the body of impurities. Now, doctors realize that the blood is the life of the body, just as Moses wrote in the long ago (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14).

Specific prophecies about an event hundreds of years in the future could only come true if they were inspired of God. The Bible has many examples of such specific prophecy that was fulfilled. Just in the case of Christ, we find prophecies made from 400 to 700 years before the event which are true in details that could not have been guessed at. The place of his birth and fact that his mother would be a virgin are found in Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 7:14. Matthew tells us he was born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Matt. 1:20 -

2:1). His triumphant entry into Jerusalem is foretold in Zech. 9:9 and fulfilled in Matt. 21:1-5.

The miracles worked in the Bible prove the spokesmen who worked them were from God. God gave Moses certain miraculous signs to use in proving to the Israelites that he was from God (Ex. 4:1-5). The miracles worked in bringing the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt were done to prove there was one God in the world and he was with Moses and the people (Ex. 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 11:7; 13:3; 14:14). Christ was raised from the dead to prove he was God's spokesman (Rom. 1:4). That the apostles were speaking by God's direction is clear because of the signs they were able to work (Mark 16:14-20; Heb. 2:3-4).

Other areas of proof could be explored, such as: the historical accuracy of the Bible; the unity of 66 books written by over 30 writers, in different languages, over 1600 years; geographic accuracy; and the greatness of the message. However, I believe we can already see that the Bible claims to be "God-breathed" and there are undeniable proofs that it is.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"A Book From God"

1. Name a verse which claims inspiration for the Bible.
2. What idea is behind the word "inspiration?"
3. Did Jesus believe Old Testament scriptures were inspired? Name a verse which shows that.
4. What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?
5. Did Peter think Paul was inspired?

6. Name three evidences of inspiration.
7. What does Moses say blood is?
8. Who prophesied that Christ was to be born of a virgin? Where?
9. What did Moses use to prove he was from God?
10. What proved Jesus was God's Son?
11. Name some other possible evidences of inspiration.

JOB AND HUMAN SUFFERING

Many people believe trouble and pain are the result of evil in one's life. They ask questions like: "Why is all this happening to me? I'm not such a bad guy, am I?" Their point is that God always causes the righteous to be the most prosperous and the wicked to suffer the most in this life. First century people believed calamity came because of wrongs committed (John 9:2; Acts 28:1-6; Luke 13:1-5).

However, this is a doctrine which is born of the devil. When God asked Satan if he had considered Job, that there was none like him who was blameless and upright, Satan said, "Does Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9). In other words, Job is good just for what he can get out of it. Job's friend, Eliphaz, suggests that Job should take pleasure in God's way because God would take up his cause and see to it that no evil would come upon him (Job 5:17-27). He is simply rephrasing Satan's idea that man serves God to benefit. This is the wrong reason for service (See Eccl. 12:13-14; I John 5:1-3).

Job was "blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1, RSV). Verse three tells us that he was the greatest man in the east, yet he suffered. Verse seven tells us that God knew of Job's upright, blameless character and the fact that he turned from evil, yet he suffered (Job 1:13-19). God knew that Job remained faithful in this time of trial, yet Job was allowed to suffer more (Job 2:7-8, 13). Joseph fled temptation because he would not sin against God yet he was cast into

prison (Gen. 39). The apostles were cast into prison and beaten for preaching the truth (Acts 5:40). Paul was an apostle, yet was beaten, stoned and shipwrecked (II Cor. 11:23-27). Christ was the Son of God, yet his enemies crucified him.

Besides teaching us that the righteous can suffer, Job teaches us some other great lessons. One, we should be ready to reject the sinful suggestion of even our dearest loved ones (Job 2:10; comp. Luke 14:26). Two, when his faith was tested by tragedy, he worshipped (Job 1:20). Three, God cares (Job 42:10-17; comp. Matt. 10:29-31; I Pet. 5:7). Four, though it seems trouble will never end, it will (Job 7:1-6, comp. II Cor. 4:16-18; I Pet. 5:10). Five, though man thinks he has wisdom, it is nothing (Job 12:2-3; comp. I Cor. 1:18-25). Six, we sometimes do not recognize God's answer to prayer (Job 19:9-18; 30:20; comp. Rom. 8:26-27; Matt. 20:20-23; James 4:3). Seven, be careful what you say since it may return to haunt you (Job 42:2; comp. James 1:19; Prov. 10:19; 10:3; 17:20; 18:7). Eight, life is short (Job 9:25-26; comp. James 4:13-17).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Job and Human Suffering”

1. What did first century people believe about calamity?
2. Do some people still believe this?
3. What did Satan believe Job's reason was for being good?
4. What is the right reason for service?
5. What kind of man was Job?
6. Did good people in the Bible suffer? Name some.

7. Can our loved ones suggest wrong actions to us?
8. Does God care when we suffer?
9. Can trouble be endless?
10. Does it matter what we say?

GREAT LESSONS FROM JOB

The book of Job teaches us that Satan is relentless in his efforts to capture men (Job 1:7; 2:2). Peter tells us that Satan is constantly looking for men to devour (I Pet. 5:8). Paul indicates that he knew Satan employed a number of different devices to discourage and hold back the progress of the church (II Cor. 2:11). He sends wolves in from the outside to destroy God's flock by false teaching and employs even some of the churches' leaders to teach false doctrine and draw the flock away from the truth (Acts 20:28-31; II Tim. 4:3-5). He also uses division into groups following after men instead of the Lord (I Cor. 1:10-13).

Job also teaches us that human philosophy falls short (Job 16:2-3). The prophet Jeremiah tells us that man does not have the wisdom to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). It is God's wisdom that can teach us to do good works and set us on the path to perfection (I Cor. 2:6-13, II Tim. 3:16-17). So, Paul would tell us to cast down human wisdom and pride (II Cor. 10:5).

Total trust should be placed in God, as Job further demonstrates (Job 42:1-6). The wise man of old would also instruct us to rely on God (Prov. 3:5-7). Likewise, the singer of Israel points us to God for strength (Psa. 33:8-12). No wonder Paul asked the rhetorical question, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

The greatest lesson of the book of Job is that all of life's most perplexing questions are answered in Jesus Christ. Job desired an umpire between himself and God.

(Job 23:3; 9:33). We know that Jesus provides for that need (I Tim. 2:5; I John 2:1; Heb. 4:14-16). Job wondered if there was life beyond the grave (Job 14:14). Jesus has shown us that there is a resurrection by his teaching and by actually overcoming the tomb (John 11:25-26; 14:1-6; I Cor. 15:1-26; Col. 3:4). Like all of us, Job desired a place of rest (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-11). It is a place that will free us from all of this life's worries and cares, sorrows and pains (Rev. 21:4-7).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Great Lessons From Job”

1. How active is Satan in his efforts against us?
2. How many means does Satan employ against us?
3. What are some of these?
4. Does man, in his wisdom, find lasting answers?
5. What shows us the right way?
6. Who should man trust?
7. In whom is the answer to life's greatest problems?
8. Who will serve as an umpire between God and man?
9. Is there life after death?
10. Who will give us rest? What do we have to do to get it?

RUTH

The story of Ruth is written during the period of the judges in Israel (Ruth 1:1). Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, moved to Moab because of a famine in Israel.

Moab was the son of Lot who was conceived by an incestuous union with his elder daughter (Gen. 19:30-38). The Moabites settled in the land to the South of Israel and East of the Dead Sea. Elimelech died in Moab.

Despite God's attitude toward relationships between his people and the Moabites, Mahlon and Chilion married women from Moab, Ruth and Orpah (see Deut. 23:3-6; Neh. 13:1-3). Within ten years, both of Naomi's sons died. Naomi had heard the famine was over in Israel, so she set out for home with her two daughters-in-law. She then pleaded with them to return home, which Orpah did.

Just as Naomi did not want Ruth to follow her with any false hopes (1:12), Christ does not want us to follow without knowing the cost (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 14:25-33). Naomi's words must have caused Ruth to realize she was at one of life's important crossroads. Many people have reached these and chosen the wrong direction (Gen. 13:11-13; I Kings 11:4-10; Acts 24:25). Ruth chose to put her past life behind her and follow Naomi (1:16-17). We must choose to put our past behind and follow Christ (Luke 13:1-5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Gal. 2:20; I Pet. 2:21). After Ruth's determined resolution to follow, there was nothing more for Naomi to say. If we will resolve to

follow Christ with such conviction, the devil will flee from us and Christ will stand with us (James 4:7; I Pet. 5:6-9; Matt. 10:32).

In *Daughters of Eve*, Lottie Beth Hobbs points to the ingredients which made Ruth's life so lovely: 1) She was industrious (2:2). God commends people who work, commands people to work, while condemning the lazy (Prov. 31:10-31; I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:10-12). 2) She was grateful (2:10, 13). Ingratitude is a sin (II Tim. 3:2; Luke 17:11-19). 3) She was kind (1:8; 2:12). We should also be kind (Eph. 4:32). 4) She had faith in God (1:16; 2:12), as we must have faith if we are to please him (Heb. 11:6). 5) Ruth was virtuous (2:11; 3:11). Such good works will cause God to be glorified and will follow after us (Matt. 5:13-16; Rev. 14:13). 6) She was a devoted daughter-in-law (1:16; 2:11, 18; 4:13-17).

Ruth was rewarded with a place in Christ's lineage. We can be a part of Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). We can be in his family (I Tim. 3:15; Matt. 19:46-50).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Ruth"

1. When was this book written?
2. Who was Ruth's mother-in-law?
3. Who were the Moabites?
4. Where did they live?
5. What happened to Ruth's husband, his father and his brother?
6. What did Ruth do when Orpah returned home?
7. What does Christ want us to know before we follow him?
8. What must we do to follow Christ?
9. Name 4 things that made Ruth's life lovely.

PSALMS ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED

There are 150 different Psalms, with 101 being ascribed to specific authors, namely: 1) David, 74; 2) Asaph, 12; 3) the sons of Korah, 11; 4) Solomon, 2; 5) Moses, 1; and 6) Ethan, 1.

A number of the Psalms are written about the righteous and wicked and the contrast between their rewards. These would include: 1, 5, 7, 9-12, 14-15, 17, 24-25, 32, 34, 36-37, 50, 52-53, 58, 75, 79, 84, 91-92, 94, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127-128, and 133.

The first Psalm deals with the results of being righteous and wicked. There would seem to be three steps into evil which are outlined in verse 1. It starts with simply passing by questionable places (Rom. 12:9; I Thess. 5:22). Next comes standing or loitering around evil (Heb. 5:11-14 dulls senses because of lack of use; Heb. 6:11-12; I Cor. 15:33). Then, one finally sits down and becomes a part of evil (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-27). The righteous man avoids this course and spends his days reading and studying God's law (Psa. 119:97-100, 105; II Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 3:15). The Psalmist then assures us that God will bless such righteous ones. They will be rooted like a tree by water (Eph. 4:14-15). They will produce fruit (John 15:8). They will be like an evergreen (Psa. 34:6-8). They will prosper in their works (Matt. 19:29). In contrast, the wicked, or those who choose to live according to their own will, are like the dry worthless chaff which the wind blows away. They will not withstand the test of judgment. This will include

some who believe they are actively seeking God and those unwilling to exert themselves in the master's service (see Matt. 7:21-28; 25:24-30).

Psalm 15 tells us who shall dwell with God: 1) He that walketh uprightly (see Titus 2:12; Phil. 2:15-16; Eph. 5:11). 2) He that worketh righteousness (see Psa. 119:172; Matt. 7:21; I John 2:4; Rev. 22:14). 3) He that speaketh the truth in his heart. Notice that the truth is in the heart, which would eliminate deception in action or word (see Rom. 12:9; Gal. 2:11-13; Rev. 21:8).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Psalms About the Righteous and Wicked”

1. How many different Psalms are there?
2. What does the first Psalm deal with?
3. What are the three steps into evil?
4. How does one who is righteous spend his time?
5. How will God bless the righteous?
6. What are the wicked compared to?
7. Who does Psalm 15 say shall dwell with God?

PSALMS OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

A good number of the Psalms are written to praise God or express feelings of adoration for him. They include: 23, 34, 36, 91, 100, 103, 107, 117, 121, 145, and 146 which acknowledge God's goodness and mercy. Also included are: 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95-97, 99, 104, 111, 113-115, 134, 139, 147, 148 and 150 which recognize God's power, glory and attributes.

The 23rd Psalm is perhaps the most beautiful and oft-quoted of this group. The author first says the Lord is his shepherd because he continually watches over us (Psa. 121:4). His great care for us should cause us to place our burdens on him (I Pet. 5:7; Psa. 55:22; Matt. 6:31-34; 11:28-30). Verses 2 and 3 show he chooses the best possible path for us (I John 5:3; John 12:49-50; Isa. 26:3-4; Phil. 4:6-7). Verse 4 tells us that when a dark, difficult, dangerous path must be followed, he will protect us (Psa. 139:7-11; I Cor. 10:13). Verses 5 and 6 turn again to remind us of the provision for our needs that will be continuous as long as he is our shepherd.

Psalms 103 also expresses an idea of praise and adoration for a loving, caring God. Verses 1-5 show forth praise for the God who cares for our needs. Notice that a negative outlook could have been brought about, but the singer sees it in a positive light (see Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:8; Psa. 130:7-8; Ex. 15:26). David goes from God's provision for the individual to his care for all God's people as a body (vss. 6-12). In Luke 4:16-21, we see that Jesus came to make

provision for the needy. He also will punish wrongs at the proper time (II Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 12:17-21), but his great mercy causes him to wait and give us a chance (II Pet. 3:9, 15). Like a loving father, God looks on us tenderly and keeps in mind our weaknesses (vss. 13-18; Heb. 4:14-16). Since God has greatly blessed us all, we ought to give him praise (vss. 19-22; I Tim. 6:13-16; Phil. 2:9-11; Psa. 148).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Psalms of Praise and Adoration”

1. Who should be our shepherd?
2. Why should we place our burdens on him?
3. Will he choose the best path?
4. What is the valley of the shadow of death?
5. How long will our needs be cared for?
6. What does Psalm 103 express?
7. What did Jesus come to do for the needy?
8. Why does he wait to punish wrongs?
9. What is God like to his people?
10. Why should we praise God?

PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING

Several Psalms express gratitude to God for the mercies shown to individuals (9, 18, 22, 30, 34, 75, 103, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144). Others are written in thanksgiving for the mercies shown to the people of Israel in general (46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 75, 81, 85, 98, 105, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149). These are closely tied to the Psalms of praise and adoration.

In Psalm 9, while thanking God for supporting him, David points us to certain facts about God. Verse 7 tells us God will endure forever, which should be contrasted with the fact that other things will end (Psa. 102:12, 26; Heb. 1:10-12). God will be a high place (refuge) for the oppressed, so they will be out of reach and sight of their enemies (vss. 9, 12, 18; Prov. 23:17-18; Psa. 32:7; 37:39-40). Likewise, we have the assurance that God will punish the wicked (vs. 17; Psa. 50:21-22, Rom. 12:19-21; II Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:8).

Psalm 105 is written in thanksgiving for God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. In verse 8, it is noted that God remembers his covenant. Verse 45 tells us God delivered them to serve (Luke 1:68-75).

Psalm 124 is likewise written to give thanks for God's deliverance. It reminds us that we cannot succeed without God on our side (Prov. 1:10-19; Rom. 8:31-39).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Psalms of Thanksgiving”

1. How long will God live?
2. What will happen to the earth?
3. What will God be for the oppressed?
4. What will God do to the wicked?
5. Why was Psalm 105 written?
6. Will God remember his covenant?
7. Can we succeed? Who must be on our side?

DEVOTIONAL PSALMS

A good number of the Psalms are written with the purpose of expressing devotion to God or attempting to renew and redouble one's efforts at service. These include Psalms of repentance (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Others express trust in time of affliction (3, 16, 27, 31, 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 71, 86). Still others express feelings of extreme dejection, without loss of all hope (13, 22, 69, 77, 88, 143). Some are prayers in time of extreme distress (4, 5, 11, 28, 41, 55, 59, 64, 70, 109, 120, 140, 141, 143). A few are prayers written when the writer was deprived of public worship (42, 43, 63, 84). There are those that are prayers for help for a man walking uprightly (7, 17, 26, 35). Prayers in times of affliction and persecution are also recorded (44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 94, 102, 129, 137). Finally, there are prayers for God's intercession (20, 67, 122, 132, 144). All of these can be referred to when we face similar problems.

Psalm 51 is one of David's songs of penitence. He uses three different words to say that he has disobeyed God's law. Whether you call it transgression, iniquity, or sin, we are all guilty and need a way to escape its consequences (Rom. 3:10, 23; 6:23; I John 1:8, 10; Isa. 59:1-2). In three different ways he asked God to free him from the guilt of sin. He asked God to blot out (Isa. 43:25; Acts 3:19), to wash (vs. 7; Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5; Isa. 1:18-20), and to cleanse him (II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:25-26; James 4:8; I John 1:9). He recognized his sins and turned

from them (vss. 3-4, 10; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 17:30). After God has cleansed him, David says he will tell others the way to be cleansed (vs. 13).

Psalm 51:5 has been used to prove children are born with sin. I see the passage as saying that David's mother acted wickedly when he was conceived. If a wife said, "In drunkenness my husband beat me," surely we would not attribute the drunkenness to the wife. There are passages that demonstrate children are not born with sin (Luke 18:15-16; I John 3:4; Ezek. 18:4).

Notice the great desire the Psalm writers had for a chance to worship God (Psa. 42, 43, 63, 84).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Devotional Psalms"

1. What are some reasons for writing devotional Psalms?
2. What is Psalm 51?
3. What three words does David use to say he disobeyed God's law?
4. Have we done the same?
5. How many ways did David use to ask God's forgiveness?
6. What words did he use?
7. What did David plan to do after being cleansed?
8. Are children born in sin?
9. What does Psalm 51:5 mean?
10. Did the Psalm writers desire to worship God?

HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL PSALMS

Three Psalms are historical (78, 105, 106). Several are prophetic (2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 97, 110, 118), with most of those being Messianic.

Psalm 2 is used by New Testament spokesmen as proof that Jesus was the Christ. David wrote the Psalm originally, probably after he had conquered Jerusalem and then the combined forces of the heathen kings (II Sam. 5:6-25). The apostles tell us that David here typified Christ (Acts 4:25-30). Verse 7 is quoted as referring to Christ's resurrection and his superiority over the angels (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5).

Psalm 16 is another of David's songs, which was written when he was forced to flee from Saul. Verses 8-11 are a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-36).

Another Psalm of David, 22, also foreshadows some of the events surrounding our Lord's final hours. The first verse is quoted by our Lord in the minutes just prior to his death (Matt. 27:46). Matt. 27:39-44 is clearly a fulfillment of vss. 6-8. Verse 18 is the prophecy concerning the dividing of his garments and casting lots for his coat (John 19:23-24). Verse 22 is also quoted by the Hebrew writer as a reference to Christ (Heb. 2:12). Verse 16 clearly refers to the act of crucifying him.

Jesus twice quoted Psalm 40 to show the Jews their lack of understanding God's ways (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). The writer of Hebrews shows us that this Psalm shows God's

lack of satisfaction with the offering of the blood of bulls and goats and the need for a perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:4-10; Psa. 40:6-8). Thus, the first covenant must come to an end and a new one be established.

Psalm 45:6-7 is quoted in Heb. 1:8-9 as the Father's words about Christ. Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Acts 2:34 and Heb. 1:13 as a reference to Christ's reign as king (see also I Cor. 15:25). Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; and 7:17, 21 show that Psa. 110:4 has reference to Christ's reign as high priest and king in the new covenant.

Psalm 69:21 is fulfilled in John 19:28-29. Psalm 68:18 is fulfilled in Luke 24:51.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Historical and Prophetical Psalms”

1. How many Psalms are historical?
2. What are most of the prophetical Psalms about?
3. What do New Testament writers use Psalm 2 to prove?
4. When did David probably write it?
5. What do the apostles tell us about David in this Psalm?
6. What does verse 7 tell us about Christ?
7. When was Psalm 16 written?
8. What do verses 8-11 foretell?
9. What does Psalm 22 foreshadow?
10. What particular events are pictured?
11. Why did Jesus quote Psalm 40?
12. Why does the Hebrew writer quote it?
13. Who does the Hebrew writer say is speaking in Psalm 45:6-7? About whom?

LEARNING FROM THE FOOL

Words written to or about the fool are very potent teachers in the Proverbs. Often they show us what to do by exploring the mistakes of the foolish.

For instance, the foolish do not listen to instruction, especially from God. God is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Psa. 111:10; Job 28:28). The foolish do not fear Jehovah and therefore “despise wisdom and instruction” (II Pet. 2:10). Because of this, there are admonitions in the scripture concerning the teaching of such foolish people (Prov. 23:9; Matt. 7:6; Acts 13:46; 18:5-6). Those who are righteous and would be wise bow to God’s word and heed his instruction (Jer. 10:23; Eccl. 12:13).

Instead of listening to God, the foolish man will substitute his own way (Prov. 1:29-31; Hosea 4:6; II Kings 5:11-12). He will let prosperity and ease lull him into a state of total disregard for God’s law (Prov. 1:32; Job 21:13-15; Luke 12:19, 20). While those who practice such will be destroyed, the righteous, who have listened to wisdom, will be sustained by God (Prov. 1:33; I John 2:17; Psa. 25:12-13; 112:6-7).

The tongue of a fool can be a brutal instrument (Prov. 14:3; Psa. 64:2-4). Learning to hold that tongue and be quiet can even make him appear wise (Prov. 17:28; I Thess. 4:11). The fool opens his mouth without thinking or listening (Prov. 18:6-7, 13; James 1:19; 3:3-9).

So, the fool would teach us to heed God’s instruction, accept God’s way, watch for the dangers of ease, and

guard our tongue. Will we let the fool teach us?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Learning From the Fool”

1. How do the foolish react to instruction?
2. Who is the source of wisdom?
3. How should we react to a fool’s teaching?
4. How do the righteous react to God’ word?
5. What way does the foolish man choose?
6. What does he let prosperity and ease do to him?
7. When does the fool open his mouth?

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SLUGGARD

The Proverbs contain several bits of wisdom about and for the sluggard. The word sluggard means “lazy one,” so these are words to the lazy.

Proverbs 6:6-11 is the longest statement, in the book, to the lazy. The wise man would here advise his lazy son (see vs. 3) to consider the ambitious ant. The ant does not need a boss to make it work and ants are constantly at work. In Israel, the most common kinds of ants are seed-feeders, who lay up grain in the summer to consume during the winter. Verse 9 is warning against too much sleep, which some young people are guilty of (Prov. 20:13; 26:14). Some stay in bed, if they are not called, until very late and do not have anything to show in the way of accomplishments. The emphasis in verse 10 should be on the word “little.” An appeal is made to be allowed to sleep a “little” longer, but it almost always becomes a lot. The lazy man’s poverty (vs. 11 “thy poverty”) comes out of his own inaction (Prov. 10:4; II Thess. 3:10). It should be kept in mind that God has always called the busy people (Ex. 3:1-4; Judges 6:11, 12; I Kings 19:19-21; Matt. 4: 18-22; 9:9; 11:28-30; Acts 26:9, 18).

The lazy man sees the good things others possess and would like similar things for himself, but does not have the will or ambition to obtain them (Prov. 13:4; 19:24; 12:27; 21:25). He will always find excuses for why it can’t be done (Prov. 20:4; 22:13; 26:13). Because he works so little at a time, he produces nothing and becomes kin to

the destroyer of that which is produced (Prov. 18:9). Proverbs 15:19 describes his work and ambition like walking down a path of thorns, very slowly.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Instructions to the Sluggard”

1. What creature should the sluggard observe?
2. What is a sluggard?
3. What could he observe about the ant?
4. What is said about too much sleep?
5. What word should be emphasized in verse 10?
6. What causes the poverty of the sluggard?
7. What kind of people does God call?
8. Why does the sluggard fail to possess good things?
9. Who is he kin to?
10. What is his ambition like?

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN **(From a Sermon by John Waddey)**

In writing Ecclesiastes, Solomon tries to teach us that the things of this world can never give us the happiness we long for. This is the inspired record of what a preacher observed in his human wisdom. It shocks us into the realization that even the wisest of men will be led astray if he tries to substitute man's wisdom for God's. We also understand that in man's search for happiness, all things of this world are vanity, emptiness, futility, a striving after the wind. In fact, the theme of the book is the vanity of everything under the sun (1:2-3). True happiness comes when we set our sights on things above the sun, or spiritual ideas.

First, we learn that happiness is not found in worldly wisdom (1:16-18). Solomon was the wisest of all men (I Kings 3:9-12). Worldly knowledge without God is empty and destructive (I Cor. 1:20-21). Even the wise will die, which is no less than you can say for the fool (2:12-17; Heb. 9:27).

Second, the preacher says happiness is not in riches. Solomon earned 666 talents in one year, with a talent being worth about \$29,374.50, so he knew what riches bring. However, he concluded it cannot satisfy (4:7-8; 2:18-20; 5:10-16; 6:1-2; I Tim. 6:10).

Third, worldly pleasure will not satisfy (2:1-11). We live in a society that will do anything for kicks. Hedonism, the doctrine that pleasure is life's sole goal, is running rampant in our "playboy world." Many are assuming the

“eat, drink and be merry” lifestyle, unconcerned, or unaware, of its consequences (Luke 12:19-21).

Finally, Solomon concludes, true happiness is found in obedience to God (12:13-14). Such is also our conclusion when we recognize the rewards of life’s two masters (Rom. 6:16-18, 23).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“The Whole of Man”

1. What is Solomon trying to teach us in Ecclesiastes?
2. This is the inspired record of what a preacher observed in his _____.
3. What is the book’s theme?
4. Is happiness found in worldly wisdom?
5. What is worldly wisdom without God?
6. Can riches buy one happiness?
7. Can riches satisfy?
8. What are the consequences of seeking only selfish pleasure?
9. Where, or in what, is true happiness found?

GOD'S MANUAL FOR MARRIAGE

by
Ray Hawk

Sandwiched between the books of Ecclesiastes and Isaiah is the book, Song of Solomon. It contains eight chapters, one hundred seventeen verses, and two thousand six hundred sixty-six words. According to one commentator, the Jews thought the book symbolized the love of Jehovah for Israel and his dealings with his people throughout their history. To the Christian the book expresses the love of Christ for his church, or the mystical union between the individual soul and his Lord (G. Henton Davies, Alan Richardson, and Charles L. Wallis, editors, *The Twentieth Century Bible Commentary*, Donald Southard, "The Song of Solomon" New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1932, 1955, pp. 262-263). Another writer stated that the book told about Solomon trying to win a maiden away from her shepherd lover or husband.

It is this writer's conviction that the Song of Solomon is God's manual for sex in marriage. We know from Gen. 1:28 that God provided sex as a means to propagate the human race. I Cor. 7:1, 2 tells us each man should have a wife and each woman a husband to keep themselves from fornication. But, what does God allow the husband and wife to do in their relationship with one another? Gen. 26: 8, 9 shows Isaac and Rebekah were "sporting" so that Abimelech understood that they were husband and wife. But, what is "sporting?" The same word is found in Genesis

39:14, 17 when Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of "mocking" her.

Often two people marry and then one or both have guilt feelings about their desires for one another's body. God stated, "Marriage is honorable in all, and **the bed undefiled**" (Heb. 13:4). One should also read I Cor. 7:1-5 in several different translations. The Song of Solomon shows that intimate contact between husband and wife is not wrong. It points out that husband and wife should desire the other's body. The book describes the kiss, 1:2; 8:1; neck, 1:10; 4:4, 9; 7:4; cheeks, 1:10; 5:13; her breasts, 1:13; 4:5; 7:3, 7, 8; 8:1, 10; eyes, 1:15; 4:1; 5:12; 6:5; 7:4; hugs and embraces, 2:6; 8:3; lovely face, 2:14; 5:15; bed, 1:16; 3:1; hair, 4:1; 5:11; 6:5; 7:5; teeth, 4:2; 6:5; lips, 4:3, 11; temples, 4:3; 6:7; tongue, 4:11; belly, 5:14; 7:2 (here it may also mean womb, *Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964 7th p. 113); legs, 5:15; mouth, 5:16; 7:9 (literally, both Solomon and his bride talk about the taste of the other's mouth); feet, 7:1; thigh, 7:1; navel, 7:2; and nose, 7:4.

If two young people who are thinking of marriage would sit down and read this book, it might help to rid them of erroneous ideas which will hinder their marriage and cause unhappiness later. If Jim Jones' followers had read the book and understood it, he could not have used their rightful desires for one another against them as he did. When a man lusts after a woman who is not his wife, it is an act of sin (Matt. 5:28). It is not wrong for him to desire his wife or she him! Remember, God said that the bed is undefiled (Heb. 13:4).

One writer spoke of Solomon as a "dirty old man." That is not so! Solomon wrote the book by inspiration.

God wanted it in the canon of scriptures called the Old Testament. It is there for a purpose. If it embarrasses or upsets people to read it, that is their problem. They are the ones with the sinful hangups, not Solomon. God made sex for two people married to one another. He meant for us to enjoy one another's physical presence. All of this is seen in Song of Solomon.

In the book we see not only Solomon's desires for his bride, but her's for him (5:10-16; 7:10 - 8:3; her desires for him, 4:12-14; 7:1-9; his desire for her). If one takes each of the words found in these passages and looks them up in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, he will discover some interesting root meanings. For instance, in 7:4 when Solomon says to his bride, "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory" he means he wants to lay siege to the back of her neck. When she says, "There will I give thee my loves" she is saying I will give you my boiling love or passion (7:12).

One of the problems in reading Song of Solomon in the King James, American Standard, Revised Standard, or several other English translations is the failure of one to understand several people are speaking at different times. Although I never recommend the New English Bible or The Living Bible (Paraphrase), these two do point out when the groom, bride, or the bride's companions are speaking. One needs to know this to keep up with the dialogue.

The Song of Solomon is seldom read by most members of the church. One reason is because few read the Old Testament. Another reason is because few understand it to be a love drama between husband and wife. I hope married couples and those planning to marry will read it and recognize that God made sex for two people married

to one another. He meant for us to enjoy one another (Gen. 26:8).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“God’s Manual for Marriage”

1. What book is God’s sex manual for marriage?
2. What does Gen. 1:28 tell us sex is for?
3. Why should each man have a wife and each woman have a husband?
4. What does “sporting” mean in Gen. 26:8-9?
5. Should one be ashamed of his sexual desires toward his marriage partner?
6. Is intimate contact between husband and wife wrong?
7. Should husband and wife desire one another’s bodies?
8. Name 7 things found desirable by this book’s characters about one another.
9. Is it wrong for a man to lust after a woman who is not his wife?

JONAH AND RUNNING

The book of Jonah shows us a man running away from God, to God, with God, and ahead of God.

Jonah first tried to run away from God. Thus, he shows us a spiritual rottenness. His works denied that he even knew God (Titus 1:6; compare James 2:19; II Tim. 3:4-5). Even a heathen captain was amazed at the prayerless sleeper (Jonah 1:6). By running away from God, Jonah endangered others (Jonah 1:4, 7, 11-12; Rom. 14:7). We are able to clearly see that one cannot hide from God, since God is everywhere (Jer. 23:24; Psa. 139:7-12). He has all authority and everyone will one day recognize it (Matt. 28:18-20; Phil. 2:9-11). It should be noted that God has told us to go preach, just as he told Jonah (Matt. 28:18-20).

Jonah next had to run to God to escape the trouble he had gotten himself into (Jonah 2:7). This enables us to see that God is the only true hiding place (Psa. 32:7; 121:1-8).

After prayerful repentance, Jonah starts to run with God. It should be noted that God's message to Jonah has not changed (Jonah 3:2). God's message to Nineveh is revealed in 3:4 and the response is in vss. 5-6. Because they repented, the people were spared (Matt. 12:41; compare Jer. 18:7-8; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30).

Disappointed because God had not done as he thought best, Jonah tries to run ahead of God (Jonah 4:2). He had more concern for a gourd than for lost souls (Jonah

4:4, 9). The rich young ruler similarly ran with God until the instructions did not suit his thinking (Mark 10:17-22). We are warned not to change God's word (Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:6-9).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Jonah and Running”

1. What does trying to run away from God show?
2. What did Jonah's works deny?
3. What was the heathen captain's reaction to the prayerless sleeper in the storm?
4. Who was endangered by Jonah's attempt to run away from God?
5. Can one hide from God? Why?
6. How are we like Jonah?
7. Where is the true hiding place?
8. Did God's message change because of Jonah's running?
9. What was God's message to Nineveh?
10. How did the people respond to that message?
11. Why did Jonah run ahead of God?
12. Did Jonah have more concern for a gourd than lost souls?

HOSEA

Hosea's name means "salvation." He prophesied to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) from about 750-725 B. C. Hosea has been called the prophet of love. His theme was: because Israel, like an unfaithful wife, has been untrue to God, she must be punished, but God will take her back. Through his own experience with unfaithful Gomer, Hosea came to know the heartbreak that was God's, due to Israel's unfaithfulness.

Hosea makes it clear that Israel will soon be taken captive by Assyria (7:11; 11:5, 11; 12:1; 14:3). This was an unstable period when kings were given in anger and taken away in wrath (13:11). A summary of this period appears in II Kings 15:8-20. Israel had six kings, four of whom were murdered in office by their successors and one was captured in battle. Only one was succeeded on the throne by his son. One term of office was as short as a month and three kings ruled within the space of one year. By II Kings 17:24, or 721 B. C., Sargon, the king of Assyria, took Israel captive and put foreigners in the land of Samaria.

Hosea was instructed to take "a wife of whoredoms," which Homer Hailey (*A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*) says is "a daughter of the age, one brought up under the influence of idolatry and in whose character have been planted the seeds of immorality." Later, the fruit of that seed is brought forth. This is a perfect parallel to Israel and her relationship with God (1:2). She had

been raised around Egyptian idolatry when God took her and later prostituted herself (4:15-18; 5:4; 9:1). Gomer bore Hosea a son who was named Jezreel, which meant "God will scatter," or "God will sow." God was planning to scatter the people for their sins and would later sow them back to himself. Also, God was going to avenge the death of seventy sons of Ahab which was commissioned by Jehu, with the heads being brought to him at Jezreel (II Kings 10:1-8). Gomer then bore a daughter which God had Hosea name Loruhamah, meaning "no pity," or "no mercy." God no longer planned to show mercy on Israel (1:6-7). A third child, a son, was born and named Loammi, meaning "not my people" (1:9). This indicates the covenant relationship has been broken (Lev. 26:12). Notice that the first son was born to Hosea (1:3) while the last two are simply said to be born (1:6-8). These may be children of whoredom and certainly are the result of such in Israel's case.

In 1:10 - 2:1, we find hope of God's people being returned to him and united. This is quoted by Paul in Rom. 9:25-26 to show that Jew and Gentile will be equal, since the Jews were called "not my people." Now, they all shall be joined in one body. The language is also used by Peter in I Pet. 1:1 and 2:10. In the church, the Jews should again be called "my people" (ammi) "who have obtained mercy" (Ruhamah).

Israel will be punished for forgetting God (2:13; Gal. 6:7-8). If we are in a proper relationship to God, we know him intimately by living with and for him like a wife (6:3; 2:19-20; compare Gen. 4:1). Without such knowledge, there is killing, stealing, and adultery (4:1-2) and the people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge (4:6; 13:4; John 17:3). God demands such knowledge coupled with

mercy more than sacrifice (6:6). Israel will have to go back to the wilderness to learn again who the true God is (2:14-17). It was not God who deserted Israel, but Israel who deserted God.

According to Hailey, Hosea bought Gomer back for the price of a wounded slave (3:2; Ex. 21:32). She had to remain faithful for a period of days before the relationship would be renewed (3:3).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Hosea”

1. What does Hosea’s name mean?
2. To what kingdom and when did he prophesy?
3. What has he been called?
4. What was his theme?
5. How did Hosea learn of God’s heartbreak over Israel’s unfaithfulness?
6. What will soon happen to Israel?
7. What kind of wife was Hosea to take?
8. What does this mean?
9. What was Gomer’s first son’s name and its meaning?
10. What was her daughter’s name and its meaning?
11. What was the third child’s name and its meaning?
12. What does that name mean in Israel’s relation to God?
13. How does Paul use 1:10 - 2:1 in Romans?
14. Why was Israel to be punished?
15. What price did Hosea give for Gomer?

AMOS

Amos' name means "burden bearer." His theme was the announcement of coming doom because of the sinfulness of the people of the Northern Kingdom (7:11). Amos evidently records God's call for him to be a prophet in 7:10-17. He has been called the prophet of justice.

The book of Amos is divided into three parts. There are oracles against the nations, oracles of doom for Israel, and oracles of hope. This is not uncommon for a prophetic book.

The first two chapters are the oracles against the nations. God will punish Israel's neighbors for their transgressions (3 or 4). He will punish Damascus, the people of Gaza (the Philistines), Tyre, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and Judah. We can see from this that God is not just a god of the hills (I Kings 20:23, 28), but that he is everywhere and is concerned with sin and the punishment of it wherever it occurs.

Now, with the people nodding their heads in approval, Amos lists Israel's sins and calls for the waters of justice to roll down (2:6-7; 2:12; 5:7, 11; 5:10; 5:12; 8:5-6; 5:24). They must learn to hate evil and love good (5:15). The people had not neglected religious forms. Rather, they had zeal for the festivals and offerings (4:4-5). They were confident of their own righteousness (5:14; 9:10). But, they had rejected God's messengers and refused to repent (2:11-12; 4:7-11; see also Zech. 3:2). Israel must prepare to meet God (4:12). Their sin was in having

an outward form without a true spiritual commitment (5: 21-27; 6:1; Prov. 28:9; John 4:24; Rev. 2:1-7).

Thus, Amos 2:6; 9:10 covers the sins of Israel and coming punishment. Amos 9:11-15 turns to announcements of hope. He promises that David's tent, or the house of David's rule will one day be restored. This descendant would rule "as in the days of old," or over Israel and Judah combined, which is used to prove the Gentiles would be accepted (Acts 15:14-18; see also Acts 3:18, 21, 24-27; Luke 1:67-79). The planting and harvest would overtake one another and good would flow to God's people (John 4:34-38; Phil. 3:20; Eph. 1:3).

Amos makes us realize that God is everywhere (9:2-4) and will surely punish the wicked (5:19). We come to realize the futility of wickedness (Psa. 9:17; Prov. 14:34; 16:12). The surety of our judgment seems more vivid (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10; Luke 8:17).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Amos"

1. What does Amos' name mean?
2. What was his theme?
3. What has he been called?
4. What do the first two chapters cover?
5. What does Amos deal with next?
6. What must the people learn?
7. What had they done wrong?
8. What does 9:11-15 turn to?
9. What was to happen?
10. How does Amos make us feel about judgment?

JOEL

Joel's name means "Jehovah is God," or "the Lord is God." We do not know when he prophesied. Hailey says the book divides naturally into two parts. In the first (1:1-2:17), the prophet tells of the locust invasion and calls for repentance demonstrated by a rending of the heart. Otherwise, the locusts will only be a forerunner of greater punishment to follow. In the second (2:18 - 3:21), the Lord speaks. He tells the people material and spiritual blessings are to follow their repentance and foretells his judgment of the nations that have oppressed Israel. Joel 2:15-17 may indicate that the prophecy was delivered in or around Jerusalem. The whole message does appear to be written to Judah.

This locust plague was so devastating that there was not one like it in memory, nor would there be another for years to come (1:2; 2:2). It should stand as a lesson to pass from generation to generation (1:3). Verse 4 of chapter one may describe various stages in the life of locusts, while 5-12 describes the cutting off of all kinds of fruit, leaving the nation without wine, olive oil or anything for a meat and drink offering. The priests and elders are called upon to lead the way in repenting in sackcloth and fasting (1:13-14). Man and beast suffered and this should serve as adequate warning against the "day of the Lord" (1:15-20). "The day of the Lord" is used to describe a judgment the Lord is going to bring on the people.

Joel 2:1-11 again describes the locust invasion and

the trembling it ought to bring. Joel 2:12-17 call in even stronger terms for repentance to avoid God's coming judgment. Instead of tearing the garments, which could be a false show of repentance, God demanded a torn heart (Psa. 51:17). Apparently the people would repent, as God now destroys the locusts and provides plenty of goods for the people's needs (2:18-27). Notice, the people were made ashamed when they turned from God and their shame was removed when they returned to God.

After the material blessing, God would pour out a spiritual blessing (2:28-32). In Acts 2:16-21, Peter says this is fulfilled on Pentecost. That marked the beginning of the "last days," according to the inspired apostle (see John 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). Peter indicates that which they saw and heard (Acts 2:1-4) was the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:33). The outpouring of God's Spirit would be on "all flesh" (Acts 2:17), indicating that the whole world would receive the benefits of this covenant (Acts 2; Acts 10; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). When Peter says the promise is to those "afar off" (Acts 2:39), he is talking about the Gentiles (see Acts 15:6-11; Gal. 3:13-14). That this is the final dispensation can further be seen as Peter says Christ is now reigning (Acts 2:34-35). This reign will continue until all enemies are conquered, the last one being death (I Cor. 15:24-28). When death is conquered, Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father and the last days will end. The spiritual blessings of this age would not be limited by age (young men and old), sex (sons and daughters), or social class (servants also), Acts 2:17-18; see also Acts 21:9; I Cor. 11:5; Gal. 3:28. Joel 2:30-31 tells us of the forerunner of judgment before the Lord comes to do his accounting. In the middle of such, God always provides a way of escape (Joel 2:32). "Whosoever"

indicates anyone. Calling “on the name of the Lord” was accomplished on Pentecost and later by others (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-17). Hailey says “The ‘mount Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ are used to indicate the spiritual dwelling place of God among His people.”

Chapter 3 tells God’s people that judgment will be passed on the nations, while God’s people enjoy blessings. Each nation will be dealt with according to how it dealt with God’s people.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Joel”

1. What does Joel’s name mean?
2. What does the first part of the book deal with?
3. How was the plague compared to others?
4. Who was called upon to lead in repenting?
5. What were they being warned against?
6. What does “the day of the Lord” mean?
7. What did Joel say God asked for as a sign of repentance?
8. When were the people made ashamed and when was the shame removed?
9. When was 2:28-32 fulfilled?
10. Who were those “afar off” Peter said this promise would be to?
11. What does Chapter 3 deal with?

OBADIAH

This book is the shortest in the Old Testament. The first sixteen verses prophesy the destruction of Edom and the last five foretell the restoration of Israel. The book is said to be “the vision of Obadiah,” whose name means “servant of the Lord.” The prophet mentions an attack on Jerusalem, which may have been when the Philistines and Arabians attacked the city (c. 848-844 B. C., see II Chron. 21:8-10, 16-17), or the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (c. 586 B. C.). Thus, we have either an early or late date.

The history of Edom and its relations with Israel begin with Jacob and Esau still in the womb (Gen. 25: 22-26). Jacob bought Esau’s birthright for a mess of pottage, which shows Esau’s worldliness and lack of respect for God (Gen. 25:27-34; Heb. 12:16). A true conflict developed when Jacob received the blessing that goes with the birthright, which Esau felt was still his (Gen. 27). In later years, this conflict is resolved between the brethren (Gen. 32-33), but their descendants do not live in such harmony. During the time of the Exodus, the Edomites were not to be abhorred or their land taken (Deut. 23:7; 2:5-8). However, Edom, which is on Israel’s eastern side, would not allow Israel to pass through during its wilderness journey (Num. 20:14-21).

God has sent out a messenger to stir up the nations against Edom. One reason she will be brought down is because of her false pride (Prov. 11:2; 16:18; 30:29-33).

Edom is sometimes called Seir, in the Bible, because of the mountain range that runs through her whole 100 mile length. She trusted in these high mountains for her defense, instead of trusting God. Usually a thief will only take certain items until he has enough. Similarly, harvesters will not pull back every leaf to see that no grapes are left hidden. But, God was going to see to it that even Edom's hidden things were sought and taken. Their allies would withhold support and those who had profited by trade with her would now lay a trap to plunder her. The wise men's counsel would fail and the mighty be made helpless.

A second reason for Edom's defeat was the treatment of its brother, Israel. Instead of feeling sympathy for Israel's calamity, Edom joined in the oppression. Rejoicing at others' calamity is a sin (Prov. 17:5; Job 31:28-29; I Cor. 13:6). Edom joined in the looting (vs. 13) and prevented refugees from fleeing to safety (vs. 14; see also Amos 1:6-9). Thus, the "day of the Lord," or the day of judgment, would fall upon Edom as God came in the person of their enemies. Edom would reap as she had sown (Gal. 6:7-8).

God planned to establish his kingdom in Zion as a refuge (Luke 1:33). God's redeemed and united people would destroy Edom. As Israel would become the victor, Edom would become the conquered. God's people would be triumphant.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Obadiah"

1. What does Obadiah's name mean?
2. What do the first 16 verses deal with?

3. What man is the father of Edom?
4. What did Edom do to Israel when she was on her wilderness journey?
5. What did Edom trust in instead of God?
6. What was God going to do with Edom's hidden things?
7. How had Edom treated Israel?
8. Where did God plan to establish a refuge?

MICAH

“Who is like Jehovah?” is the meaning of Micah’s name. He prophesied to Judah about 730 B. C. One can get a background of that time by reading II Kings 15:32-20:21 and II Chron. 27:1 - 32:33. His theme was the punishment of Israel and Judah. Micah and Isaiah are contemporaries. Micah has been called the prophet of the countryside, while Isaiah was a prophet of the city and temple. Micah credits God as his source of power and claims inspiration (1:1; 3:8; see II Peter 1:20-21).

Prophecies of punishment for Judah and Israel occupy chapters 1-3. First, Samaria would be punished because of her service to idols (1:6-7). She believed that her wealth came from playing the harlot in service to Baal (Ex. 20:2-6). God was going to see that wealth destroyed and offered again in another nation in thanks to Baal. Second, destruction will come because of covetousness (2:1-5; I Kings 21:1-24). The wicked rich had lain awake all night plotting what they could do against the poor and got up in the morning to use their power to accomplish it (Ex. 20:17). Verse 4 shows that the wicked rich will be made to take up the same cry of those they oppressed. Verse 5 tells us there will be no one to measure their inheritance (3:1-4). Third, they would rather listen to a false prophet than to God’s true message (2:6-11). Micah indicates in verse 6 that such prophecy of destruction does not have to be made against those who walk uprightly. God will punish the false prophets (3:5-7, 11-12). God will darken

their day and when they most desire to know what will happen, there will be no vision. The covering of the lip (vs. 7) was done by the leper to show he was unclean (Lev. 13:45) and as an expression of mourning (Ezek. 24:17).

Chapters 4 and 5 are prophetic of the coming Prince of Peace and the great age of peace he would establish. In contrast to the coming destruction, we have a picture of the last days, which Peter says began at Pentecost (Acts 2:17). This new kingdom would include people of all nations (see Luke 24:47; Acts 15:13-18). Isaiah 40 and Micah 4:5-8 tell us that the great Shepherd will gather the once driven flock into a kingdom with no earthly king but God as head. Micah 5:2-4 tells that the new ruler would come out of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:10-11).

Chapters 6 and 7 return to a rebuke of the people and contain a great description of true religion. Micah 6:8 shows God's three great requirements. God first wants us "to do justly," which means to treat God and man as scripture directs. This would include sacrifice. Next, God desires that they "love mercy," or, don't just do what the law says, but have love as the basis for those actions. Finally, God says, "to walk humbly with thy God." In other words, recognize our helplessness without God and submit to his absolutely good and holy nature.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Micah"

1. What does Micah's name mean?
2. To whom did he prophesy?
3. What was his theme?
4. Who prophesied during the same period and to

- whom?
5. Why would Samaria be punished?
 6. What source did she credit for her wealth?
 7. What was a second reason for Samaria's punishment?
 8. What would happen to the wicked rich?
 9. What response did Samaria have to the false prophet?
 10. Who covered the lip?
 11. What do chapters 4 and 5 prophesy?
 12. Who would be included in the new kingdom?
 13. Where would the new ruler be born?
 14. What are God's three great requirements?

ISAIAH

Isaiah's name means "the Lord is salvation." His name also becomes part of one of his great themes as he tells of the coming Messiah. Isaiah prophesied under four kings (1:1). They were Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Uzziah is called Azariah in II Kings (see II Kings 15: 1-7). His son, Jotham, was the next king (II Kings 15: 32-38; II Chron. 27). Jotham's son, Ahaz, was the next king and proved to be a wicked one (II Kings 16; II Chron. 28). His son, Hezekiah, served next as a good king in contrast to his father (II Kings 18-20; II Chron. 29-32).

ISRAEL ON TRIAL (1:2-31)

Isaiah calls upon heaven and earth to witness the words of God against his people, much as Moses had called upon them as witnesses against them in their wickedness (1:2; Deut. 31:28 - 32:6). God had taken Israel as his son and the people of Israel as his children (Ex. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; 32:6, 18, 20). God had brought them through the period of Egyptian bondage, wilderness wandering, and development as a great nation, as a father would lovingly guide a child to a high position and one of greatness. Yet, Israel used violent self-will to break away from God.

In verse 3, God complains that his children not only reward him with inhumane treatment, but even treat him lower than beasts. The ox submits to its owner, while the ass at least recognizes the one who fills its crib with food.

Israel did not have such knowledge of the one who cared for her, either by instinct or reflection.

Verse 4 turns from the words of a sad father to the words of a prophet who deeply feels an injury to God, who is like a friend. They were in apostasy in the heart (“they have forsaken the Lord”), in words (“they have provoked the Holy One of Israel”), and in action (“they are gone away backward”). The prophet then asks, in verse 5, why they are so foolish as to heap apostasy upon apostasy and continue to call down God’s judgment. He wants to know if it is so bad that not one head or heart is not sick. Indeed, verse 6, the whole nation is sick from head to toe.

The people might object that they still sacrificed abundantly to God (1:10-15). However, God wants to know who required their vain sacrifices that wore out the floor with constant walking (vss. 12-13). Even their prayer was unacceptable because God could see human blood dripping from their guilty hands (vs. 15). God calls them to repent and replace evil deeds with good (vss. 16-17). He calls them to a trial, in which their sins will be made plain, and promises to cleanse them when they recognize their wrongs (vss. 18-20).

Jerusalem had been faithful to God and righteously dealt with evil within (vs. 21). Dross shines like silver and watered wine retains the color, but both are useless (vs. 22). The leaders are rebellious, associating with thieves by accepting stolen goods as bribes, while failing to protect the fatherless and widows (vs. 23). God will right all wrongs and restore his order (vss. 24-31).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Isaiah”

1. What does Isaiah’s name mean?
2. How many kings did he prophesy under?
3. What kind of king was Hezekiah?
4. Who did Isaiah call as witnesses?
5. How had God treated Israel?
6. What was Israel’s response to this treatment?
7. In verse 4, Isaiah writes like a _____ of God.
8. What condition, verse 6, was the nation in?
9. Did they sacrifice? What kind of sacrifices were they?
10. Why was their prayer unacceptable?
11. What does God call them to?
12. What will happen at the trial God calls them to?
13. How had Jerusalem treated God?
14. How had the leaders acted?

ISAIAH

PREDICTIONS OF CHRIST'S REIGN (11:1-16)

Chapter 10 is used to foretell the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians. While Assyria and the worldly forces are pictured as the great cedar forest of Lebanon, Israel is like the stump of a fallen tree (11:1). The end of chapter 10 shows that God will bring down the forest. Instead of the punishment of Israel being permanent and complete, the stock of the tree of Jesse will send forth a tender branch (11:1). That branch is Christ, who was a descendant of David, Jesse's son. He started insignificant, like a sprig, thus Isaiah mentions Jesse instead of David. Of course, he was born in little Bethlehem and raised in despised Nazareth (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1, 23).

Jesus had the "spirit of the Lord." That is, he had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Col. 1:19; 2:9). This Spirit would aid him in every facet of his teaching and kingdom. Chapter 11, verse 3, is easier to understand when rendered, "And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (RSV). Christ does not judge man by outward appearance, what others say about him, or what he says about himself. Instead, verses 4 and 5 picture Christ as a judge whose clothes are held up by divine will and an immovable holding to it. He will judge the oppressors of those who are bowed down by misfortune and free from pride in self. (Poor and meek; Matt. 5:3-12; Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

Christ's reign is now described as a peaceful one (vss. 6-9). Isaiah draws a picture of peace by describing natural enemies, such as the wolf and lamb, living in perfect harmony with one another. Beasts that could not be controlled by the strongest man are depicted as submitting to the leadership of a little child. All of this change will come because of the "knowledge of the Lord." Christ emphasized the words of God (John 17:8) and a peaceful, loving, relationship between the bitterest of enemies (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 13:8-14; Eph. 4:31 - 5:2; 2:14-16; Gal. 3:26-29).

Romans 15:12 quotes verse 10 to show that the Gentiles would be welcome in this kingdom (compare Isa. 2:1-4). Out of Christ's small beginning would come a banner for the world to rally around (John 12:32-33). God will recover his people from foreign lands (vss. 11-12) and friendship will be restored between Israel and Judah (vs. 13). All obstacles, to those returning to God, will be removed. Enemies (vs. 14) will be defeated, a dry passage will be made through the Red Sea and the rivers (vs. 15), and there will be a road to God (vs. 16).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Isaiah - Prediction of Christ's Reign"

1. What does chapter 10 foretell?
2. What will happen to the stump of Israel?
3. How did Christ start?
4. What did Jesus possess without measure?
5. What kind of judge is Christ?
6. What kind of reign will Christ's be?
7. What will bring about such a unique reign?

8. What does Paul say, in Rom. 15:12, verse 10, indicates?
9. What three things will come out of Christ's small beginning?
10. What will happen to Christ's enemies?

ISAIAH

CHRIST - THE SUFFERING SAVIOR (53:1-12)

The Ethiopian eunuch read from this chapter (Acts 8:26-35). Philip used the passage as a springboard into preaching about Christ. God had, in the long ago, planned for Christ to suffer so that sin's debt might be paid and we might be saved (Gen. 3:15; Eph. 1:9-10; 2:15-16).

Delitzsch says that a "we" introduced suddenly in prophecy, as in vs. 2, is always Israel speaking, along with the prophet. So, verse 1 wants to know "who hath believed our report," or "who hath believed the report that was common among us?" This is parallel with the second question, "and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The word "arm" is used to designate power and might. For instance, one who made flesh his arm trusted in man's power instead of God's (Jer. 17:5). God's arm is strong and will break the arms of his enemies (Deut. 4:34; 5:15; Ezek. 30:21). Israel should have seen God's power in the works of Jesus (John 20:30-31; Acts 2:22; Matt. 12:22-30; Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 15:1-8). Those who reject Jesus today have simply closed their eyes to the truth as revealed through that powerful display (II Cor. 4:3-4).

Jesus grew up under God's watchful and protective eye (Matt. 2:1-23; esp. 12-13). Jesus had a lowly beginning in a land of conquered people and from a house as good as dead, thus he sprang up like a tender plant from the root of a tree cut down and now in dry ground. Yet, God had

promised a savior from the house of David (Acts 2:29-31). The people looked for someone with a special background and attractive appearance (see I Sam. 9:2; 10:24; 16:12). Instead, as Delitzsch translates, "We saw Him, and there was nothing in His appearance to make us desire Him, or feel attracted by Him." Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a feed box for animals (Luke 2:1-7). Joseph was a carpenter, not a king (Matt. 13:55). He was not born in Jerusalem, but was born in lowly Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:23; John 1:46; 7:52). His teaching was contrary to that which was desirable to man (John 3:19-21; I Cor. 2:4). Ultimately, Christ was crucified, which was not an end most had in mind for a ruler (I Cor. 1:21-24; Luke 24:21). Jesus asks his followers to admit they are sinners, which is a blow to pride, and put self last, which is contrary to man's normal selfishness (Luke 13:3; 9:23).

Christ was looked down upon and held in contempt (meaning of despised), even by the very people he came to save (John 1:11; Heb. 12:3). He experienced all forms of sorrow, such as, the death of a close friend, betrayal and desertion by his closest companions, and, at last, separation from God (Heb. 2:9-10; 5:8-9; John 11:1-38; Matt. 26:47-50, 56; 27:46). The idea at the end of the verse is that Jesus' face was repulsive, so we turned away and refused to look at him. Also, we counted him as being worth nothing.

"Griefs" were illnesses or diseases and "sorrows" were pain and mental stress. Jesus did spend considerable time helping the people with these and his miraculous healings are said by Matthew to be a fulfillment of this (Matt. 8:16-17). Remember, Isaiah 53 is Israel looking back at the proofs of Christ's messiahship and bemoaning the fact

that she ignored them. Miracles were a proof of Christ's deity (Heb. 2:1-4). They counted him as a sinner being punished by God because he endured such hardships.

Verse 5 says, literally, he was pierced and crushed on account of our iniquities. This describes the horrible death he suffered. He suffered the chastisement, or discipline, which leads us to peace with God. The scourging he endured forms the healing medicine for our sin-sick bodies (I Pet. 2:21-25; 3:18). Israel, in verse 6, is described as a scattered flock of sheep without a shepherd. They had come to their exile because of selfish rebellion against God. The punishment for their guilt fell upon Christ (Matt. 20:28; I Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14). As Bales says, "Through His sacrifice for our sins, through His suffering love, Christ calls men from their own ways to God's way" (see again I Pet. 3:18).

Jesus endured the suffering voluntarily, like a sheep led to the slaughter. He made no defense at his trial, but stood like a lamb dumb before its shearers. Jesus had already proved who he was by his actions, so said nothing in his own defense at the trials (Matt. 26:57-68; 27:11-14; Luke 23:1-11; John 19:1-13). He was carried out of the unjust judicial system by a death for the angry mob's sin (II Cor. 5:21).

Christ should have been buried with the wicked since he was crucified between two thieves and was accused of blasphemy, which called for a disgraceful burial. However, the Romans let Joseph of Arimathea have the body (Matt. 27:57; John 19:21). Man intended to bury him with the wicked, but God wouldn't allow it because of his innocence.

Though man wickedly put Jesus to death, God was using it to his purposes (Acts 2:23). Jesus was an offering for sin (I Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:10; 12:24; 13:10;

I Pet. 1:23). God's "pleasure" is to save man (John 3:16-17; II Pet. 3:9), and Jesus would see that purpose prosper because of his work, says Isaiah. Because of his sacrifice, verse 11, Jesus will see God's purpose fulfilled and be satisfied. Those who learn from Christ and do his will, will be saved (John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16-17; Col. 1:13-14).

Verse 12 describes a conqueror who will receive the spoils (Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus' death stood as a part of his exaltation (Luke 24:25-27). In fact, his suffering and death had to come for him to triumph (Acts 2:36-42). He was a great conqueror in that he bore the sins of many (Heb. 9:28) and made intercession for those who transgressed in crucifying him (Luke 23:34). But, they had to repent and turn to him to receive his help (Acts 3:12-19).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Isaiah: Christ - The Suffering Savior"

1. What does "arm" designate?
2. Where should Israel have seen God's power?
3. How did Jesus grow up?
4. What did the people look for?
5. Instead, how does Isaiah describe Christ?
6. What facts would make such a description true?
7. How did people look upon Jesus?
8. What sorrows did Jesus experience?
9. What were "griefs?"
10. What does verse 5 describe?
11. What is "chastisement?"
12. How does verse 6 describe Israel?
13. How did Jesus suffer?
14. Who was Christ crucified with?

15. Where was he buried?
16. What was man's purpose in crucifying Christ?
17. How did God use it?
18. How does verse 12 describe Christ?

NAHUM

This book, like that of Jonah, is directed to the people of Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire. While Jonah's message was an appeal to repentance, Nahum's is a prophecy of the coming fall because they had passed the point of repentance. Since it is believed Nineveh fell in 612 B. C., we will place the date of this book sometime just before that. Nahum's name means "consolation," which would certainly come to God's people at the destruction of such a wicked and brutal empire.

The importance of his message can be seen by Nahum's five-fold description of God (1:2, 3). First, God is "jealous" (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; Josh. 24:19). That is, God will not transfer honor that is due him to another (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Second, God "revengeeth and is furious." He will cause wrongdoers to pay for their deeds (Deut. 6:15). Third, God "will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." Those who are the adversaries of God's people will find God wanting to vent the heat of his wrath against them. Fourth, "the Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." God is longsuffering, but that should not be taken as a sign of weakness. Instead, it shows his mercy (Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; II Pet. 3:9-10). Fifth, God has "his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." This is a poetic description of God's power, which will pour down on sinners like a mighty storm. Hailey says, "In the storm of His presence

the clouds are as the fine dust of his feet, boiling up as He strides on His way.”

God’s power is further evidenced in nature itself. God can cause the rivers and seas to be dry, as he did the Jordan river and Red Sea. He can cause fruitful places like Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon to suddenly wither. Hailey says the people of old considered the mountains to be the earth’s pillars, yet they shake and fall at his presence while the hills melt like wax. No one can stand before such power. God will use that same power to protect those who trust in him. Verse 8 describes a flood that will totally wash away Assyria and the memory of its inhabitants will be made as darkness (Psa. 34:16).

Chapter 1, verse 9, tells us God is going to keep his promise and bring Assyria to an end and there will be no need for a second destruction (Isa. 10:24-27). The yoke of bondage will be loosed (1:13). God has already sent out a messenger to bear the tidings of Assyria’s destruction (1:14-15). Assyria was like a twisted thornhedge, thought be be impregnable. She was so sure of her invincibility that her people got drunk, but God was going to burn her like dry grass (1:10).

Chapters 2 and 3 describe the frenzied and futile preparations for Nineveh’s defense. The national symbol of Assyria was the lion. God asks where the place is that the lion dwelt without fear (2:11-12). There is no safety now for her because God is against Nineveh (2:13; 3:5). Lewis says, “The book ends with an epitaph to Nineveh” (3:18f).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Nahum”

1. To whom is this book directed?
2. What does Nahum’s name mean?
3. What does it mean when it says God is jealous?
4. What will God make wrongdoers do?
5. What will happen to those who are enemies of God’s people?
6. How is God’s power pictured?
7. What can God do with his power?
8. What does 1:9 tell us will happen to Assyria?
9. What do Chapters 2 and 3 describe?
10. How does the book end?

HABAKKUK

The supposed meaning of this prophet's name is "ardent embrace." Some think that the wrongs described by Habakkuk are like those suffered under Jehoiachim, 608-597 B. C. (Jer. 22:13-19). This would make him a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah and just a little later than Nahum. He has been called the prophet of providence.

The book describes a righteous man questioning the providence of God. First, he wants to know how long God will allow wickedness to go unpunished (1:2-4). The prophet had, evidently, been crying for a long time and had seen no response in the form of action. As we read on in the book, it is plain that the violence being done was by the prophet's own people against their brethren. Habakkuk does not understand why he has to watch the wicked people, who were in power, sin against the poor righteous by making spoil of their goods and the violent and wicked conduct which such spoiling stirred up. Because of all this, the law was made slack and the wicked went unpunished. They encircled the righteous man so that truth could not prevail and righteous judgment was perverted.

In verses 5-11 of chapter one, God answers that his providence is already at work among the heathen nations. God intended to use a wicked nation to punish his disobedient children (see Dan. 4:17). The Chaldeans had already conquered some nations and would, by God's direction, conquer Judah. They determined what was

right by the might they possessed. Panthers are extremely quick in moving against their prey and wolves of the evening are ravenous because they fast all day. The likening of this army to an eagle coming from afar would seem to be a fulfillment of God's warning delivered by Moses (Deut. 28:15, 47-51). Their captives will be innumerable, like the sand. Leaders and rulers of the people who would try to oppose this army would be laughed at. Strongholds would present no problem, as the army would just pile up dirt and go over the top. Just as God used wicked Assyria to punish Israel and then brought her down for her wickedness and boastful pride (Isa. 10:5-20), God would also use the Chaldeans to conquer Judea and then let them blow out like a spent storm because they worshipped their own power as a god.

Now, Habakkuk has a second question about God's providence. How can God punish a wicked people by using a more wicked people as their conqueror? (1:12-17). The prophet decides to set a watch and wait for God's answer when God deems it time to respond. In verse 12, the prophet asks questions whose answer he already has. God is eternal and totally pure, so the prophet knows God will not allow a heathen nation to completely destroy his people. He says, "we shall not die." Instead, he knew that God had appointed a nation to discipline his people. Though he knows all this, vs. 13 still brings out the problem of how God can use such wicked people to do his good. The prophet wonders if such wicked people will continue to plunder the nations like a fisherman emptying the sea of fish.

Habakkuk is instructed by God to write the revelation of his will plainly, so it could be read even at a glance (chapter 2). It would not happen soon, but the message would come to pass. The man lifted up with pride does

not walk upright, as God would have him. The just will act in accord with God's direction. This fourth verse is used by Paul to show that works of the law do not save (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17; also Heb. 10:37-39). The Chaldeans got drunk on the wine of their own pride. Their lust for conquest was no more filled than the place of the dead. The people the Chaldeans conquered would in their turn rise up against them.

God then pronounces five woes against conquering people who are like the Chaldeans (2:6-23). First, those who plundered will be plundered. Second, those who selfishly pushed others aside to gain their own advantage will find the blood of those crushed calling for God's vengeance. Third, those who build their cities by murder and the use of enslaved people who sweat and bleed for another's gain, will find those cities destroyed because the enslaved people's labor built up the judgment fire against those cities. Fourth, those who degrade people and cause them, by force, to be involved in shameful actions will find themselves shamed. Fifth, those who worship idols will find them worthless. They needed to realize that the one true God was enthroned in his divine glory and they should quietly await his just judgment.

Chapter 3 is a prayer, or song, of unshakable faith in this God who so well orders his works. The prophet closes by saying he will rely on God no matter what happened because God could give him the strength to run and lift him above his troubles.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Habakkuk”

1. What does Habakkuk’s name mean?
2. What had he been called?
3. What is the prophet’s first question?
4. Who was doing what to whom?
5. What did this do to the law?
6. How does God plan to solve this problem?
7. To what animals were the Chaldeans compared?
Why?
8. What is Habakkuk’s second question?
9. What does he already know about this question?
10. What would happen to the Chaldeans?
11. What five woes does God pronounce on conquerors like Chaldea?
12. What is chapter 3?

ZEPHANIAH

“Hidden by God” is evidently the meaning of Zephaniah’s name. Zephaniah traces his ancestry back to Hezekiah, seemingly the king who reigned during Isaiah’s prophecy. The book is written during the reign of Josiah, which would place it somewhere from 640 to 609 B. C. Manasseh and Amon, the grandfather and father of Josiah, had practiced great evils (II Chron. 33:1-25; II Kings 21:1-26). Josiah became king at age eight. At age eighteen, he conducted sweeping reforms based on the discovery of a copy of the law. However, from Zephaniah’s writings we get the impression that the people remained wicked.

Chapter one foretells the destruction of Judah because of her idolatry. They worshipped Baal (vs. 4), the host of heaven, and Malcham, while bowing to God at the same time (vs. 5). Worship of the heavenly host had been forbidden in Deut. 4:19. Malcham was one of the Baalim, who the people thought to be king of the deities. The people divided their hearts in worship of the true God and this false god. Others, vs. 6, had turned away from God and did not care whether he was pleased or unhappy. Because Judah had refused to repent, God had prepared them like a sacrifice and would invite the Babylonians as guests (vs. 7). God planned to punish the princes and king’s children who should have led the way in righteousness, but were wicked. God would also punish those who wore foreign clothing, indicating with whom their allegiance lay, and those who stole by violent acts (vss. 8-9). God

promised to diligently search for those who, like wine allowed to sit too long and become harsh and too syrupy, sat back believing God would do nothing. These would not enjoy the things they had prepared for tomorrow (vss. 12-13).

Chapter 2:1-3 is a call to repentance before they are swept away like chaff before God's fury. Zephaniah, like many of the other prophets, now foretells the punishment of the enemies of the people: the cities of Philistia (2:4-7), Moab and Ammon (2:8-11), and Ethiopia to the South (including Egypt, 2:12), and Assyria to the North (2:13-15).

Chapter 3 is again directed to Judah, especially Jerusalem. Verse 2 gives four reasons for her punishment. Verses 3-4 list four classes of leaders the people turned to for guidance and were misled by. The righteous are urged, in vs. 8, to patiently wait because God will bring down judgment upon the wicked of all nations. After the judgment, God would turn to people with pure lips, that is, unsoiled by idol worship (vs. 9). Keil sees vs. 10 as a parallel with Isa. 66:20. He says it means, "The most remote of the heathen nations will prove that they are worshippers of Jehovah, by bringing to Him the scattered members of His nation, or by converting them to the living God." The people who then worship God will not be proud, but humble (3:11-12). Verses 14-17 indicate that with the enemy gone and the changed nature of worship, the people will rejoice and God will be in their midst.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Zephaniah”

1. What does Zephaniah’s name mean?
2. When is the book written?
3. What will happen to Judah? Why?
4. What does Deut. 4:19 forbid?
5. What does the wearing of foreign clothing indicate?
6. What does 2:1-3 call for?
7. Who does 2:4-15 say will be punished?
8. What are the four seasons for Jerusalem’s punishment?
9. Who would God turn to after judgment?
10. What will the new worshippers of God be like?

JEREMIAH'S CALL AND PLEA

This prophet was active from the reign of Josiah to the carrying away of Jerusalem into captivity (1:1-3). His name, Jeremiah, means "whom Jehovah appointed." Anathoth, his home, was one of the cities of refuge which were set aside for the priests (Josh. 21:13-19, esp. 18). It is thought that Josiah reigned from 637 to 608 B. C., so Jeremiah's prophecy would begin somewhere in that time. Josiah was succeeded by Jehoahaz, his son, who reigned only a short while before Pharaoh-necho removed him and placed his brother Eliakim on the throne. Jehoiakim, which was the name Pharaoh-necho gave Eliakim, reigned eleven years. By that time Babylon was in power and Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, was placed on the throne by the king of Babylon. After three months, Nebuchadnezzar carried him into captivity and placed his uncle Mattaniah on the throne and called him Zedekiah. This broke the lineage of David, so Coniah was said to be childless, since none of his children reigned (22:24-30).

The call of the prophet is recorded in 1:4-8. Verse 5 indicates that God knew Jeremiah would exist before he was born and planned for him to be a prophet to the nations. God knew Samson before he was born (Judges 13:3-5), as well as John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-17). Jeremiah would not just prophesy to Judah, but also to the nations. Jeremiah objects that he is young and inexperienced (1:6). God tells him that he will only go where instructed and will only say what God commands him (1:7).

God also tells him he has no need to fear the enraged faces and angry threats of his listeners since He would protect him (1:8, 19).

Chapter 1:9-10 gives us a symbolic proof of Jeremiah's inspiration (see also II Pet. 1:21). His message was to begin with a destroying and continue mainly with that (1:13-16), but would also include a building up. It is God's message (31:28). Thomas reminds us, in the *Teachers Annual Lesson Commentary 1964*, that prophet means "one who speaks for another."

In chapter 7, God instructs Jeremiah to stand in the temple gate, where people would be most likely to listen, and plead for them to repent (7:1-3). False prophets were lying to them in saying that God's house being in their land would cause him to keep it secure (7:4). The people offered sacrifices to false gods and committed wrongs and then expected the mere ritual of temple worship to save them (7:8-10). God assures them that the land will be theirs only if good lives back up their worship (7:5-7). To prove that a sanctuary stood as no security when men had profaned it, Jeremiah refers to Shiloh (7:12). The tabernacle was erected at Shiloh after Canaan was conquered (Josh. 18:1). We have no historical record of what happened. However, Jeremiah's words cause us to sense that the place stood in ruins. Some today trust in a heartless, spiritless worship to save them. Such should read this call to repentance. God warned the people that he would now destroy Jerusalem just as he had Shiloh (7:13-15).

Jeremiah laments over the sinfulness of the people and wishes to flee to a little building in the wilderness erected along the caravan routes for temporary shelter (9:1-2; comp. Rom. 9:1-3). The people bent their tongues like bows to fire the arrows of lies. They went from one

sin to another and refused to know God (9:3; comp. Rom. 1:28-32). In God's mind, the land is already destroyed and Jeremiah weeps for it (9:9-10). Wise men who know God and his law should see that punishment is inevitable and proclaim it. Unfortunately there are no wise men to be found (9:11-13). The wrongs are repeated as is the promise of judgment (9:14-16). The bitterness of what is to come is represented by feeding with wormwood and drinking gall.

The truly wise man will not be proud of his wisdom but will seek to know and understand God (9:23-24).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Jeremiah's Call and Plea”

1. When was Jeremiah active?
2. What does his name mean?
3. What was special about Anathoth, Jeremiah's home?
4. Why is Coniah said to be childless?
5. What was Jeremiah's objection to his call? What did God answer?
6. Who should Jeremiah fear? Why?
7. What is a prophet?
8. What does Jeremiah's message include?
9. What was Jeremiah to plead for in the temple gate?
10. Name two reasons for such a plea.
11. How does Jeremiah prove the temple's presence does not insure safety?
12. Name four things that caused Jeremiah to weep and desire to flee to a temporary shelter in the wilderness.
13. What will the truly wise man do?

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Jeremiah 18 - 19

God sends Jeremiah to the potter's house to learn of the comparison between man and the clay and God and the potter (18:2). The Hebrew nation had, for many years, been being molded by God through their experiences and covenant relationship with Him (18:6). Despite the best efforts of the potter, his first vessel was marred so he mashed it back into a lump and started again (18:3-4). Notice that the potter had a particular use for the pot and knew what that pot must look like. In the same sense, God knows exactly what he intends to do with a nation and will do to them what is necessary to reach that end (18:7-10). God acts in accord with his purpose, not arbitrarily. The actions of the people would determine what method he would use in dealing with them.

The vessel of Israel was marred. God wanted them to repent to correct that marred place (18:11). Because they refused to correct it, God determined to turn his back while they were taken captive and mashed into a new lump (18:12-17). The people respond by plotting evil against the preacher of repentance (18:18). They have teachers, priests, and prophets who do not call for repentance as he does and they would rather accept them. Chapter 18:19-23 is Jeremiah's prayer to God for help.

Jeremiah is told to buy an earthen vessel (19:1). As we have seen, this represents the hard-hearted nature of the people and their unwillingness to change. The message

of punishment Jeremiah would this time deliver would so stun the people that their ears would tingle (19:3). They were guilty of disowning God by sacrificing to strange gods; shedding innocent blood by unjust judgments; and sacrificing their children to Baal (19:4-5). Probably Moloch; see Psa. 106:37-41. Because of this, God planned to punish the people (19:6-9). The breaking of the pitcher symbolizes the breaking of unrepentant Israel into slivers as a shattered earthen vessel that cannot be restored (19:10-13). Jerusalem would become a city of uncleanness, like the unclean places of Tophet.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“The Potter and the Clay”

1. What does Jeremiah see in the potter's house and to what can they be compared?
2. How was Israel molded by God?
3. What does God act in accord with?
4. What had happened to the vessel of Israel and what did God want them to do about it?
5. Because Israel refused, what was God going to do?
6. How do the people respond?
7. Where is Jeremiah's prayer for help found?
8. In what three ways did Israel disown God?
9. What does the breaking of the pitcher symbolize?

LAMENTATIONS

Like several other Old Testament books, Lamentations has no Hebrew name other than the first word of the first chapter, which is “How!”, or “Alas!” Leslie G. Thomas says that it is the only Old Testament book which could properly be called an “elegy.” He says an elegy is a poem or song of mourning and is generally for the dead or an unrequited love. Conservative scholars believe the book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The book actually consists of five poems. The first four are alphabetic, using a word at the first of each stanza that begins with the letter next in order (like: ate, boy, cow, etc.). In the 2nd through 4th poems, the 16th and 17th letters are reversed, which indicates, to me, that the author was not willing to ruin the thought just to follow an exact pattern. The 5th poem has 22 stanzas, like the others, but is not alphabetic, probably because it is a prayer and comes out of the heart’s overflow.

The first chapter is filled with weeping over Jerusalem’s present condition, especially when compared with her past. She acknowledges her sin and prays God will bring an end to her misery, while asking that her enemies will be judged for their evil. Verses 1 and 2 describe her continual weeping. Isaiah 3:26 had foretold the fall of Jerusalem and of her sitting down with elbows upon her knees and head supported by hands, alone (see also Lam. 2:10). Verses 3-6 sound like the punishment Moses warned of if the people failed to obey God (Deut. 28:47-48, 65-66;

compare Gal. 6:7-8). It is the Lord who causes her to suffer (vss. 5, 12) for her deliberate sins (vs. 8).

Chapter two is a picture of God's displeasure over the sins of the people. His anger is aroused because of them and he is become as an enemy. Time was when God defended them, but now he will tear down her defenses (2:5-9). The elders who used to sit upon thrones now sit on the ground and wear sackcloth in place of robes of state (vs. 10). Jeremiah has cried so much, he has no more tears (vs. 11). Human comfort is worthless. Jerusalem's enemies laugh and make fun of her (vss. 11-16). She must take her complaint to God, since he alone can comfort (vss. 17-19). Finally, she does go to God (vss. 20-22).

Chapter three finds each letter used in three verses composing one long stanza. Verses 1-18 are a lamentation over terrible suffering. Verses 19-39 are given to leave God's people with some hope. Verses 40-54 are a confession of sins, complaint against the enemies and a description of the deep misery the people have sunk to. Verses 55-66 form a prayer for deliverance and a confident expression of hope that God will perform it.

In chapter four, there is again a picture of suffering, but it is recognized that it was a result of the people's sins (vss. 1-11). The punishment is brought on because of the sins of the prophets and priests (vss. 12-16). The people had vainly looked for a nation that could save them (vss. 17-20). The prophet concludes this chapter with the thought that her punishment will be finished and then her enemies will receive their rightful reward (vss. 21-22).

Chapter five is a prayer to God describing the people's misery and an appeal to God to restore his mercy. They recognize their helpless position and finally pray with a proper humility. Sometimes suffering is necessary to

bring us to a right relationship with God (Heb. 12:5-6, 11). Joy is turned to sorrow when people sin (vss. 15-18). They repent and appeal to God for an end to his just wrath (vss. 19-22).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Lamentations”

1. What is the Hebrew name for this book and where does it come from?
2. What is an elegy?
3. What does the book consist of?
4. What does chapter one deal with?
5. What do verses 3 through 6 sound like?
6. Who causes Jerusalem’s suffering?
7. Name two changes time has wrought.
8. What does each of the four parts of chapter 3 deal with?
9. What caused Israel to be punished?
10. Why is suffering sometimes necessary?

EZEKIEL

“God has strengthened me” is the meaning of Ezekiel’s name. From 1:1-3, it is evident that he was one of the people led away captive with King Jehoiachin in 599 B. C. (II Kings 24:8-16). He received his call to be a prophet in his fifth year of exile (595 B. C.) and continued for at least twenty-two years (29:17). He was a contemporary of Daniel and prophesied during the last of Jeremiah’s life as a prophet. Jeremiah and, at the first of his book, Ezekiel had to combat the false prophets who were saying the Babylonian captivity would come to a speedy end (Jer. 28:1-4). The last hope of such release was crushed when Nebuchadnezzar, after a siege of one and a half years, captured Jerusalem and burnt it and the temple to the ground. Thus, the natural division of the book, as Clyde Woods gives it, is: (I) Call and Commission, chapters 1-3; (II) Prophecies Before the Fall of Jerusalem, chapters 4-24; (III) Prophecies Against the Nations, chapters 25-32; and (IV) Prophecies of Hope, chapters 33-48.

Chapter one records three visions Ezekiel saw in connection with his prophetic call. They are: (1) the four creatures; (2) the four wheels; and (3) the likeness of the glory of the Lord. In these visions, there is an awe-inspiring picture of God’s rule in the heavens, on earth, and on the throne. Before these visions, Ezekiel fell down (1:28). God calls him “son of man,” likely indicating man’s frailty as opposed to God’s power, and directs him to stand, which the spirit helps him do (2:1-2). He is directed to speak to

the children of Israel who have become heathens in their rebellion (2:3-7). They have become so rebellious that they do not hide their faces in shame and are a hard-hearted people. The prophet was not to fear them since God assured him the message was from Him and when it came to pass the people would know they had heard a prophet (compare Matt. 10:16; Acts 18:9-10; Luke 12:4-5). Ezekiel is given a roll, scroll, or book to eat and digest (2:8 - 3:3). This is symbolic of his inspiration and the fact that it was God's word he was to present. The announcement would be full of mournful words about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Its sweet taste would come from the joy of presenting God's word (see Jer. 15:16).

Notice that Ezekiel would be in rebellion against God's will if he did not speak (2:8). In 3:4-9, God tells Ezekiel that he is to carry the message to the house of Israel, who can understand him, but they will not listen. God promised to provide his messenger with a hard determination that would help him preach anyway. Then Ezekiel is transported to the place he will speak in (3:10-15). At the time he was transported, the prophet felt a deep bitterness and was aroused to anger. For seven days he sat motionless and dumb. Seven days was the period of time used for mourning (Gen. 50:10; Job 2:11-13) and for consecration (Lev. 8:31-33). The text does not tell us which this might be. At the end of that period, God comes to Ezekiel and tells him he has been set up as a watchman for the house of Israel (3:16-19). He was accountable to God for delivering the warning, even at the risk of his own life. However, he was not responsible for the response to that warning. Neither are we responsible for the way the gospel is received (Mark 16:15-16). The obligation to warn extends to those righteous who fall from God's favor

(3:20-21; compare II Pet. 2:20-22). God permits people to be tried, which can be a stumblingblock (James 1:13-15; Rom. 1:28).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Ezekiel”

1. What does Ezekiel’s name mean?
2. What group of people was he a part of?
3. What did he combat in the first part of his book?
4. What three visions are in chapter 1 and what are they in connection with?
5. How does God say the people will know they have heard a prophet?
6. What is used as a symbol of Ezekiel’s inspiration?
7. In what state would Ezekiel be if he failed to preach?
8. What did God set Ezekiel up as?
9. How are we like him?

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES OF HOPE

Chapter 37 of Ezekiel presents two interesting cases of the use of figurative language. As with all figurative language, the first attempt at an understanding should be made by reading the whole context and letting the writer, or speaker, give his own interpretation.

The first prophecy is about the valley of dry bones (37:1-10). In verses 1-2, Ezekiel is taken to a valley of very dry bones. Verse 11 tells us these bones are a figure for the house of Israel and their dryness represents the lost hope. Indeed, there is nothing more hopeless in appearance than a valley full of separated and dry bones. Yet, this is a picture of Israel, separated from one another and without hope of becoming one nation again. In verse 3, God asks Ezekiel if the bones can live. His answer indicates to me that he knew it was humanly impossible, but he would not question God's power. God's word has power (Isa. 55: 10-11; Jer. 33:3; Heb. 4:12). We need to learn to depend upon God for the things we need (II Cor. 12:9-10).

The mission of raising up the bones is accomplished by the word of God, through Ezekiel (37:4-10). This shows the people that God has the power to do what he speaks.

His mission is to take a people as good as dead and bring them back together as one nation in their own land (vss. 12-14). Notice that it is the **whole** house of Israel (vs. 10), which would include both segments of the divided kingdom, that is raised up and made back into one body.

The second vision makes it clear that the kingdom is

to be united again. This vision is of two sticks (vss. 15-17). The first stick was to have the name of Judah and his companions, which would include Benjamin, Simeon and the tribe of Levi (see II Chron. 11:12-16; 15:9). The second stick was to be labeled "For Joseph" and all his companions. Keil suggests that Joseph stood for the two great tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which would form the solid base of the other ten tribes. The two sticks are to be joined together as one in Ezekiel's hand. God says that means the divided kingdom will again become one under his influence (vss. 18-19). They will be united in their return from captivity (vss. 20-21). They would only have one king to rule over them and would abandon the worship of idols (vss. 22-25). God promised that king would be his servant David. Coniah was the last king of the rightful lineage of David. This reference must refer to Christ (Matt. 1:1-17; Acts 2:29-36).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Ezekiel's Prophecies of Hope"

1. What kind of language is used in Ezekiel 37?
2. What is the best way to understand such language?
3. What are the dry bones representative of?
4. How could the bones live again?
5. Who should this teach us to rely on?
6. What is raised up?
7. What would this include?
8. How were the two sticks to be labeled?
9. What does God say the joining of the sticks means?
10. Who does God say will be king?

DANIEL

This prophet, whose name means "God has judged me," was among those taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B. C. (Dan. 1:1-7; II Kings 24:1-2). This event had been predicted by Isaiah some 100 years before. Hezekiah had been sick unto death but God granted his prayer that he might live (II Kings 20:1-7). After his recovery, the Babylonians sent a delegation to give him a gift to celebrate his recovery. In an apparent effort to impress them, Hezekiah showed them all the riches of Jerusalem. Isaiah then foretold the coming of the Babylonians and taking of the riches and certain captives from the king's own household (II Kings 20:12-19; Isa. 39:1-8). Daniel was among those taken. It was not until 536 B. C., or exactly 70 years later (see Jer. 25:11-12), that Cyrus, the Persian, released them from captivity.

The book well illustrates that God is the ruler of all the world and can bless his people wherever they are. One proof of this comes in chapter 1 as Daniel and his three friends are chosen to be trained as possible servants in the king's palace. Young men, who Keil says ranged from 15-20 years of age, were to be selected on the basis of their physical beauty and intelligence (1:3-4). Since they were put under the master of the eunuchs, we assume that they were made eunuchs. They were to be taught the tongue of the Chaldeans, which would here appear to be the wise men. This instruction was to last for three years (1:5). During this period of time, they were to eat and drink of that

which came from the king's table. Daniel felt that this would defile him either because it was forbidden meat (Lev. 11, esp. 46-47; Hosea 9:3-4) or because it might have been offered to idols (I Cor. 10:17-33). He knew that man does not live just by what he eats but also by what the Lord commands (Deut. 8:3). Therefore, he asked the prince of the eunuchs if he and his friends could refrain from eating that which was offered from the king's table. God caused his request to be well-received (1:8-14). Daniel arranged for them to eat pulp, or vegetables, and drink water for ten days. God blessed them because of their faith and they grew stronger during the ten day trial, so they could continue on a different diet (1:15-16). God also blessed their efforts to learn so that, at the end of the three years, they were smarter than their fellow-students and all the wise men of the land (1:17-21).

Chapter 2 offers further proof of God's provision for his faithful. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and then forgot what it was (2:1-13). He called for his wise men and asked them to tell him the dream and its meaning. If they did, great rewards would be theirs, but if not, death would be theirs. They could not do as the king asked and angered him by stalling for time. He commanded that all wise men be killed, which would include Daniel and his friends, even though they were obviously not present at the request for interpretation. When Daniel learned what had happened, he immediately went to get a delay so he might come to the king to interpret the dream (2:14-16). This had to be done on the basis of great faith, since he did not yet know the meaning of the dream. He and his friends prayed for God's help and Daniel had the meaning revealed to him (2:17-23). Daniel made arrangements to see the king and made it clear man could not tell of forgotten dreams and

their meaning, but God could (2:24-30). The dream was of a great image that stood for world empires: the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman. In the days of the Roman empire, God promised to raise up an empire that would never be destroyed (2:31-45). That last empire was the church and would fill all the earth. The king then recognized God's greatness and placed his servant, Daniel, in a high position along with his friends (2:46-49).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

"Daniel"

1. What does Daniel's name mean?
2. How did he get to Babylon?
3. What events surrounded Isaiah's foretelling of Babylonian captivity?
4. What does this book illustrate?
5. Why did Daniel not want to eat from the king's table?
6. What was their new diet and how did they do on it?
7. What happened to the king that caused Daniel to act on faith?
8. Who did Daniel say could tell forgotten things and meanings?
9. What was the dream and its meaning?

GOD USES ESTHER TO SAVE THE JEWS

That God had a hand in the saving of the Jews can be seen when one observes all that had to happen to save them. Keep in mind that the Jews were not in trouble when these events began to unfold.

- 1:10-11 The king had to send for Vashti.
- 1:12 She had to refuse.
- 1:12 He had to get angry.
- 1:13-15 He had to ask wise men's counsel.
- 1:19 Wise men had to recommend Vashti lose position and new queen chosen.
- 1:21 The king had to heed the counsel.
- 2:2-4 The fair virgins had to be sought.
- 2:8 Esther had to be chosen.
- 2:9 She had to please Hegai, keeper of the women.
- 2:15 She had to accept counsel from Hegai and please the people.
- 2:17 The king had to love her more than all the women and make her queen.
- 2:21-23 Mordecai had to reveal a plot through Esther and the deed recorded.
- 4:1 Mordecai had to learn of Haman's plot.
- 4:5 Esther had to send to know what was wrong.
- 4:7-8 Mordecai had to tell her and charge her to tell the king.
- 4:13-14 He had to convince her to go.
- 4:16-17 She had to risk her life.

- 5:2 The king had to favorably receive Esther's uninvited visit.
- 5:5 The king had to come to the banquet.
- 5:14 Haman had to receive counsel of his wife and friends.
- 6:1-3 The king had to be sleepless, read of Mordecai's deed and desire to honor him.
- 6:4 The king had to ask who was in the court.
- 6:6-9 Haman had to be there and had to think he was the man the king desired to honor.
- 7:1 The king and Haman had to come to the second banquet.
- 7:3-6 The king had to favor Esther's request.
- 7:7-9 Haman had to beg from the queen and the king misunderstand.
- 8:3-5 The king had to favor Esther and accept her appeal.
- 8:7-8 The king's decree was irreversible but he allowed the Jews to defend themselves.

Pride brought about the destruction of Haman (Esther 3:5-6). That wounded pride made him seek revenge and plot to commit murder. Though he had all the riches and honor he could desire, his pride blinded him and made him miserable (Esther 5:11-13). No wonder God repeatedly warns against pride and its evils in his word (Prov. 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 14:3; 16:18-19; Mark 7:20-23; I Tim. 3:6; I John 2:15-17; I Cor. 13:4).

Mordecai and Esther both turned to God (Esther 4:1, 16). They also did those things that were within their power and relied on God for deliverance (Esther 4:5 - 5:1). Esther used what God had given her, including her beauty and position. The Jews were given the right to defend

themselves, but had to exercise it (8:7-14).

The wicked, like Haman and those who intended to kill the Jews, received their reward, in that they were put to death (see Psa. 37:35-36 and Gal. 6:7-8).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“God Uses Esther to Save the Jews”

1. How was Esther chosen to be queen?
2. What happened to the queen before her?
3. Who was Mordecai?
4. Who was Haman?
5. How did Mordecai help save the king?
6. What did Haman desire of the king? Why?
7. What was Esther’s request?
8. What caused Haman’s destruction?
9. Name some things that show we must help ourselves if we expect God to help us.

EZRA

The book is named for a principal character and probable author, whose name means "aid," or "help." This book was joined to Nehemiah in the ancient Hebrew Bible to form one unit. It tells of the return from Babylon and the temple's reconstruction.

Chapters 1 and 2 tell of the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. Cyrus had been king of Persia some 20 years when we hear of him in the first year of his reign over Babylon (1:1). Isaiah had foretold 100 years before that it would be Cyrus that would release the people (see Isa. 44:28 - 45:7, 13). The Persian kings often began with a recognition of the fact that the God who made heaven and earth had given them their power. However, Cyrus uses the Hebrew name for God and acknowledges trying to please him (1:2). This is evidently a providential moving. Verse 3 tells us that any Jew could go, which would include those of both kingdoms (Israel and Judah). Those who did not go, including non-Israelites, were to give to support the work (1:4). Thus, while some could not go, they did give to support the work. We may not be able to do the job today, but we are commanded to give our support (Gal. 6:6; I Cor. 9:11, 13-14). Just as Cyrus commanded, some arose to go (1:5), while others gave their financial support (1:6). Verses 7-11 indicate that Cyrus gave back the temple items which were taken years before.

Chapters 3 through 6 tell of the restoration of worship in accord with God's will and the rebuilding of the

temple. Leslie G. Thomas suggests Psalm 84 as a possible representation of the people's feelings as they return to Jerusalem. They are surrounded by enemies and the temple is in a state of disrepair, unfit for worship, but they erected an altar and did their best to sacrifice as the law commanded (3:1-7). Verses 8-13 cover the beginning of work on the temple and the religious celebration over the laying of the foundation. Chapter 4 finds the Samaritans seeking to join the work, being rejected, and bringing a halt to the work by legal means. Chapter 5 covers the resumption of work on the temple. The people are challenged by the Persian governor and made to stop. Chapter 6 tells us that Darius found the decree of his predecessor, Cyrus, and commanded the work to begin again with assistance from government treasuries.

Chapters 7 through 10 tell us of the coming of Ezra and another band of people to the holy city. Ezra was a Levitical priest and a descendant from the family of the high priest (7:1-5). He was a scribe, or a person who had studied the law and was well-versed in God's commands (7:6). He was determined to do that which was pleasing in the sight of God (7:10). The letter sent with Ezra by king Artaxerxes tells of Ezra's purpose (7:11-26). Ezra thanks God for the king's actions, indicating they are brought about by God's providential care (7:27-28). Chapter 8 outlines those who went, including some Levites that had to be recruited, and their trip. Chapter 9 is a record of the degenerate state Ezra found the country in. Ezra prays to God and pleads on behalf of the people. His goal is to bring them back into a right relationship to God. Chapter 10 records the people's repentance and return to right living (10:1-7). It also lists those who had sinned against God by taking foreign wives.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Ezra”

1. What does Ezra’s name mean?
2. What does the book tell about?
3. Who was responsible for the Jews’ return home?
4. Who had said this would happen and when did he say it?
5. Who was to support the work?
6. Briefly tell what chapters 3 through 6 cover.
7. Who stopped the work and how?
8. Tell what you know about Ezra.
9. What was Ezra’s purpose?
10. How did Ezra find things in Israel?
11. What does chapter 10 tell about?

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was the king's cup-bearer in Persia (2:1). Once again we find a name that fittingly describes the man, as Nehemiah means "Jehovah comforts." Nehemiah's life reflects his belief in his name's meaning. He constantly turned to God for the help and comfort needed. He is a good example of those qualities of leadership that inspire men to action.

Nehemiah was concerned with the welfare of the people (1:2). He asked about his people who had returned to Jerusalem. Paul felt this same concern over the welfare of the people he strove to convert (I Thess. 2:8-13). The concern also extended to those brethren he converted (I Thess. 2:17 - 3:5). The elders of each congregation have to watch for the souls of that group and should feel the same type of concern (Heb. 13:17).

He was also compassionate (1:3-4). Nehemiah was moved to tears over the sad state of the people. Jesus was also compassionate, as we can see when he weeps over lost Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41). Paul wept over those who walked as enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18-19).

Nehemiah was a great leader because he took things to God in prayer before he tried to deal with them (1:4-11; 2:4). Our Lord constantly sought strength through prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; John 17; Matt. 26:38-39). Just as we are to follow our Lord (I Pet. 2:21; I Cor. 11:1), Paul imitated him by going to God in prayer about those he labored with (Rom. 1:9-10; Phil. 1:3-6; Col. 1:3;

I Thess. 1:2).

Good leadership is exhibited by Nehemiah as he observes before taking action (2:15-17). After observing, he appealed for helpers (2:17). By this appeal, he indicated his inability to do the work alone and unified the people in a common cause. Jesus appealed for helpers while in his earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36-38) and commands his followers to carry on with the work now (Matt. 28:18-20).

Nehemiah's actions were based on a desire to remove cause for reproach (2:17). Jesus and the first century church lived in such a way that their actions were favorable to men (Acts 2:47; Luke 2:52). Those who do not walk according to order, or are rebellious, are to be withdrawn from (II Thess. 3:6).

Being a great leader, he took God into his plans (2:20; 4:4). We likewise should rely upon God for strength (Rom. 8:31-32; Phil. 4:13). Notice also that he approached God in humility, using "we," instead of "I," (2:20; 4:6; 6:16). Peter and Paul encouraged humility (I Pet. 5:6; Phil. 2:3) and John warned against the dangers of seeking the preeminence (III John 9-10). He gave God credit for watching over them in his divine providence, even though he and the people took the actions based upon their own observations and the warnings of some other people (see 4:7-18, esp. 15).

Great leaders, like Nehemiah, are not stopped by opposition (4:1-13). Neither was he willing to compromise (6:1-4). Paul, by inspiration, tells us that such refusal to compromise is a required qualification for elders (Titus 1:9).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Nehemiah”

1. Who was Nehemiah?
2. What does his name mean?
3. What is he a good example of?
4. How was Paul like Nehemiah?
5. What trait did Nehemiah have in common with Christ?
6. How did Nehemiah approach problems?
7. What did he do before acting?
8. What were his actions based upon?
9. Who did he include in his plans?
10. Name two other characteristics Nehemiah had which made him a great leader.

HAGGAI

This prophet, whose name means “festival,” began his work in the second year of Darius’ reign, or about 520 B. C. He was a contemporary of Zechariah and worked closely with him in getting the people to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Haggai 1:1; Zech. 1:1). Chapters 5 and 6 of Ezra tell us about the work of rebuilding the temple. They stopped with the completion of the foundation and altar and this book records the finishing of that structure (Ezra 3:8; 4:24).

The book is actually divided into four distinct discourses given during the second year of Darius. The first (1:1-15) was delivered upon the first day of the sixth month, in what would be about our September. It was a plea to rebuild the temple. The message is directed to Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest (1:1). As leaders, these men should have seen to it that the work was carried on. The attitude of the people toward the work leads God to call them “this people,” instead of “my people” (1:2). The people did not believe the time had come to build God’s house (1:2), but they had built themselves luxurious houses with walls and ceilings of inlaid wood (1:3-4; comp. I Kings 7:7; Jer. 22:14). God tells them to “consider your ways,” which means to think about their actions and the rewards of them (1:5-6). They had sown a lot of seed, but had a poor harvest. They did not have enough to eat or drink and their clothes were not sufficient to keep them warm. The laborers felt like they

earned their money only to save it in a bag with a hole in the bottom. God challenges them a second time to think about their ways and the consequences (1:7). He then calls for the people to build his house and his pleasure will cause the blessings to flow, in stark contrast to the lack of blessings that had been (1:8-11). The sermon stirred the rulers and the people to action (1:12-15).

The second message was delivered on the 21st day of the seventh month, which is close to our October. This message was delivered to the leaders and the people on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 2:1-2; 23:39-44). There must have been some present who had seen Solomon's temple and were disappointed in the appearance of this one (2:3). Despite the fact that the original had been destroyed, it should be noted that God thought of it as "this house," for he only had one house in Jerusalem. God promised his help, but the people had to work (2:4). God had promised at Sinai to be with the people and would not now break his promise (2:5; Ex. 19:5-6; 24:8; 29:45). Hailey points out that this language, in vs. 6, is similar to other prophets' descriptions of nations being overthrown (Isa. 13:10, 13; 24:18-20; Joel 2:10). God intended to "shake all nations," or bring them down, and establish a new house with a greater glory, the church (2:7-9; I Tim. 3:15). God would provide all that was necessary for this house's glory and it would not be shaken (Heb. 12:26).

The third message came on the 24th day of the ninth month, or about our December (2:10). Two questions about what was clean and unclean are now directed to the priests because it was their job to answer such questions and teach the law (2:11-13; Lev. 10:8-10; Deut. 17:8-13). The first question is, can a garment made holy communicate

that holiness to any other thing? The answer is no (see Lev. 6:27). The second is, does one who is unclean by touching a dead body make unclean those things he touches? The answer is yes (Lev. 21:1, 11; Num. 6:6-8; 19:11-13, 22). The lesson is that cleanness cannot be transmitted while uncleanness can. The erection of an altar had not cleansed the people. Instead, the uncleanness of the people was transmitted to the land and their labors were not rewarded in accord with their expectations (2:14-19). Evidently, the people were now ready to turn to God for a cleansing, because God now promises his blessings will be restored (2:19).

The fourth message comes on the same day as the third (2:20). God told the governor that he was going to overthrow wicked nations by other wicked nations (2:21-22). Zerubbabel was the ruler in Judah. God says that when the wicked kingdoms have overthrown each other Zerubbabel will be made God's signet ring, which was a possession men would not let leave their person. This is fulfilled in Christ whose kingdom could not be overthrown, since he was a descendant of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Haggai”

1. What does Haggai's name mean?
2. What part of the rebuilding of the temple does this book deal with?
3. How is the book divided?
4. What is the first division about?
5. What does “consider your ways” mean?
6. What would they see when they did this?

7. When was the second message delivered?
8. How did God feel about the new structure?
9. What two questions are asked in the third discourse?
10. Of whom are they asked?
11. What was the point of the questions?
12. When was the fourth message given?
13. What does it foretell?

ZECHARIAH

Like so many of the books we have studied, this one is named for the prophet whose vision, or message, is recorded. His name means "The Lord has remembered me." Clyde Woods says, "The first half of the book, while containing several visions granted to Zechariah, is relatively easy to understand, consisting primarily of a call to Israel and encouragement for the responding people.

"The second half of the book, however, is difficult to interpret; it belongs to that category of writings known as apocalyptic literature. Its general theme is that the Lord will accomplish his purpose for Israel."

As 1:1 would indicate, Zechariah's work began just two months after Haggai. Evidently his work began as the work on the temple was again slowing. Hailey suggests Haggai moved the dedicated to action, while Zechariah called upon those lacking dedication to repent and join the work. His first call to repentance is based upon God's dealings with his people in the past (1:2-6). God was displeased with the fathers because they would not hear his words, and all around Jerusalem was the ruin that resulted. The fathers and the prophets that spoke to them were dead, but the Lord's word and the fulfillment of it obviously remained. Five times the prophet uses the words "saith the Lord," thus calling attention to his word and the fact that he keeps it. Through the prophet, God is now calling for the people to repent and turn to God so that he can turn to them, much as another prophet, by the same name, had earlier

charged (1:3; II Chron. 24:20).

Next comes the vision of the horsemen (1:7-17). The horsemen represent God's messengers that observe the actions of other nations (1:10). They declare that the earth is at rest (1:11), that is, Darius' kingdom now has control and there is peace. However, God had promised four months earlier that there would be unrest and glory would be restored to Jerusalem (Haggai 2:1-9, esp. 6-9). So, the people want to know how long they will have to wait (1:12). They knew that Jeremiah had promised they would return home after 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10) and this time of humiliation had passed. God still loves his people and will watch out for them, as his answer states (1:14). He is displeased greatly with the nations and is prepared to shake them as promised (1:15). The temple will be finished, Jerusalem restored, and the surrounding cities will prosper (1:16-17). Stretching forth a line is the measurement in construction work.

The second vision is one of four horns, which are symbols of strength (1:18-21; see Amos 6:13). They represent the powerful enemies that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Four carpenters, or craftsmen, who might well represent what we know as blacksmiths, also appear. They represent the powers God will use to scatter the horns.

Chapter 2 presents the third vision to us. A man, perhaps representative of the Jewish people who thought only in terms of physical Jerusalem, sets out to measure the city to see how big it is. An angel sends the angel the prophet has been talking to to tell the young man that this Jerusalem would grow as a city without walls. Its protector would be God who would dwell in her midst. This obviously represents spiritual Jerusalem and it comes as no surprise that God next calls for his people to come out of the world

and dwell in Zion.

Five other visions follow and then there is a discussion of fasting in chapters 7 and 8. Chapters 9-14 are, as has already been mentioned, apocalyptic. They cover the destruction of wicked powers and God's provision for his people.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Zechariah”

1. What does Zechariah's name mean?
2. Of what does the book's first half consist?
3. What is the general theme of part two?
4. What is the first call to repentance based on?
5. Why does the prophet use “saith the Lord” so often?
6. What figure is used to represent God's messengers and what do they see?
7. What three things are observed in 1:14-17?
8. What do the horns represent and what will happen to them?
9. What does Jerusalem represent in chapter two?

MALACHI

The name of the last prophet is Malachi, meaning "my messenger." The times and circumstances of his message are very similar to that of Nehemiah, so it seems likely that they wrote around the same period, or about 440 B. C. Leslie G. Thomas notes, in the *Teachers Annual Lesson Commentary, 1965*, some of the similarities: (1) "It was after the temple service had been restored; (2) it was during the time of unlawful marriages to foreign women; and (3) it was during the time when the tithes were being withheld" (see Neh. 13:1-31).

Malachi introduces us to a new style of delivery known as didactic-dialectic. This is a method wherein a statement is made, an imagined objection is stated, and a response is given to that objection. The prophet, like Haggai, makes an appeal to the Lord as the source of his message. Twenty-five times he writes "saith the Lord," or "saith the Lord of hosts" (see 1:2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, for some examples). The imagined response of the people begins with "ye say," "and ye say," and "yet ye say" (see 1:2, 6, 7, 12, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13).

Chapters 3 and 4 announce the coming of the day of the Lord and the true characteristics of that day. Chapter 2:17 shows the attitude of the people that God's messenger was responding to. The Lord says the people are wearying him (comp. Isa. 43:22-24). The people want to know how they have wearied God. He responds by saying that the people have questioned God's dealing with the wicked.

They have said God counts the wicked as good by allowing them to prosper and question where God's righteous judgment is. Such challenges are not new (see Psa. 73).

God responds by saying he will come in person (3:1). He will be preceded by a messenger who will prepare his way. This would be the coming Elijah of Isaiah's prophecy (40:3-5), or John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:19, 23; Luke 1:5-17, esp. 17; Matt. 11:7-15; 17:12-13). Keil tells us the idea of preparation is a clearing of obstructions in the way of the Lord's coming. He further suggests that this implies the people were not ready for the coming judgment because they would have to turn from their sins, as John called for them to do. After this preparation, the Lord will come "suddenly," or unexpectedly. Two things show that this Lord is God. First, he comes to the temple of Jehovah. Second, he is the one "whom ye seek," which points back to their question, "Where is the God of judgment?"

The Lord's judgment will not be limited to the heathen. He is going to use the refiner's fire to purify the silver by removing the dross and will cleanse the cloth with a strong lye soap (3:2; Matt. 3:10-12). Thomas tells us the refiner knew the metal was pure when he could see his own image reflected in it, and suggests God is similarly refining us and looking for a reflected image of himself (Job 23:10; Gal. 4:19). Remember that it takes the test of fire to destroy the dross and make the gold stand out (Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:5-11; James 1:2-8). God is especially going to purify the sons of Levi, who had been subjected to severe condemnation for their unfaithfulness (3:3; 1:6 - 2:9). The people will then be acceptable to him because all the wicked will have been removed (3:4-6).

God accuses the people and all their ancestors of

failing to obey his commands on offering, even back to those who left Egypt (Ezra 9:7; Jer. 7:25-26; Ezek. 20:1-26). Their response to God's call (3:7) indicates they are so hardened that they do not know what wrong they have done. So God says they have robbed him and the people want to know how (3:8). God says they have failed him in tithes and offerings. The tithe was an offering of one-tenth the yield in the harvest and was holy to God (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-32; Deut. 12:17-19). Lewis says the offerings are the annual contribution to the priests (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17). Failure to keep these offerings has brought a curse upon the land, evidently because this is a failure to recognize that the earth and all its blessings come from God (3:9). God issues a challenge to the people to do as he has commanded and see if he will not pour out the blessings (3:10-12). God still wants material offerings and promises rewards to the faithful (I Cor. 9:13-14; 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:6-11; Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5-6).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

“Malachi”

1. What does Malachi's name mean?
2. What three things make Thomas suggest Malachi wrote around the same time as Nehemiah?
3. What is involved in the didactic-dialectic style?
4. Who speaks and who objects?
5. What do chapters 3 and 4 announce?
6. How have the people wearied God?
7. Who will come before the Lord?
8. What will be his purpose?
9. What two things prove this refers to God?

10. Explain what God plans to do to his people.
11. How have the people reacted to God's commands on offering?
12. How did the people rob God?
13. What challenge does God issue to the people?