

# Old Testament Survey : 4

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Author:

Eileen Crowhurst

# The Books of Prophecy

## Lesson 1

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### The purpose of a Prophet:

1. **To call God's people back to Him.** The prophets raised their voices to call the nation back to God.
2. **They often did not understand the full meaning of their message** – and often there were two parts to their message – one for the day in which they were living and another for a future time.
3. **They were "forth-tellers"** – that is, people who declared or proclaimed God's message. They spoke fearlessly to kings and to the people.
4. **The period of the Old Testament prophets covered about 500 years,** from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century before Christ's birth. After 400 BC, there were no prophets – until John the Baptist.
5. **The prophets spoke not only to Israel and Judah, but to the Gentile nations as well:**

Obadiah prophesied to Edom

Jonah prophesied to Nineveh

Nahum prophesied to Nineveh also

Isaiah prophesied to eleven nations: Edom, Philistia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Arabia, Tyre, Moab, Assyria and Babylon, as well as Israel and Judah.

### 6. **The Prophetic Books:**

5 Major

12 Minor

} According to the *length of the book.*

Whether the book is classified as "major" or "minor" is according to its *length* and not according to its importance, or according to the prophet's anointing.

*With this in mind, let us return to our study of:*

## **THE KINGS OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM – ISRAEL ... continued**

### **JEROBOAM II.**

**Read 2 Kings 14:23-26**

**Notice** "...according to the word of the Lord ... which He spoke through His servant *Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher*".

**Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria.**

## **JONAH – The Book of Mercy on the Gentiles**

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**Some time between 790 and 755 BC**

Jonah is known as "The reluctant prophet" because he did not want to go. If we remember that Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, a very hostile nation, we can perhaps understand his reluctance to go.

**AUTHOR**      **Read 2 Kings 14:23-29**

**NB verse 25** – “Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher”.

**Read Jonah 1:1**

Jonah lived in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, but was sent to a Gentile city.

**THE TIME**      Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, after the time of Elisha and just before Amos and Hosea. It was a time of prosperity.

Assyria was growing in power and Assyrian cruelty and ruthlessness in war was well known.

**KEY VERSE**    **Read Jonah 3:10**

**PURPOSE**      1.    **To show the compassion of God to all mankind.**

“God is not one to show partiality; but in every nation the man that fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him”. Acts 10:34-35.

2.    **To show that disobedience brings God’s discipline.**

Jonah mistakenly put his country ahead of God in importance.

**OUTLINE**      1.    **Jonah’s first commission – Chapters 1 – 2.**

Nineveh is one of the most wicked cities in the whole world. So, when God tells Jonah to go there and tell the people God will save them from their enemies if they repent, Jonah runs the other way.

However, God teaches Jonah a lesson ... and then Jonah obeys, travelling “by fish” instead of by boat!

2.    **Jonah’s second commission – Chapters 3 – 4.**

The city repents, but Jonah is angry that God does not destroy them.

However, Jonah came to see the foolishness of being sorrier for a dying plant than for a nation of people.

## **AMOS – The Book of Judgment for the Northern Kingdom**

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### **About 767 – 753 BC**

**TIME** Amos prophesied just after Joel and just before Isaiah and Micah, who spoke to Judah in the South.

Uzziah was king of Judah. Jeroboam II ruled in Israel. Amos 1:1.

Uzziah ruled over a prosperous and militarily strong Judah. He had fought and subdued the Philistines, the Ammonites and Edomites.

King Jeroboam II of Israel was capable and brought the Northern Kingdom into a time of prosperity – however, as prosperity increased, so did their love of material things. Immorality flourished. Injustice was everywhere.

Jeroboam II had a cavalry which no other nation could compare to. Israel's archers were renowned for pressing forward and never giving in, therefore what Amos said in 2:15 seemed ridiculous – “He who grasps the bow will not stand his ground, the swift of foot will not escape, nor will he who rides the horse save his life”.

Because of their strength, the people found it very difficult to believe that disaster could come upon them ... but it was only 30 years to their downfall.

**AUTHOR** Amos was from Tekoa, a small town about 10 kilometres south of Bethlehem and 20 kilometres from Jerusalem. He was not a priest or a member of the royal family: Amos was a shepherd, or “herdsman”, and a grower of figs.

Although he lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and addressed part of his prophecy to them, he was sent to announce God's judgment on the Northern Kingdom (Israel).

Amos went to Bethel (7:10-13) because it was one of the centres of Israel's worship (1 Kings 12:28).

**KEY VERSES** **Read Amos 4:11-12 and then Amos 7:11**

**Read Amos 8:11-12**

**PURPOSE** 1. God is gracious and kind, but He will not allow sin to go unpunished indefinitely.

But Amos' message against Israel's sins is not received.

2. Amos ends his book with a promise – God's promise to reinstate David's line, to renew the land and to restore His people.

**MESSAGE** It was a time in Israel of idolatry, extravagant, luxurious living, and oppression of the poor. Amos declared that God was going to judge His unfaithful, disobedient, immoral, corrupt, covenant-breaking people.

Israel thought that performance of the rituals and ceremonies the Lord had decreed was all He required and, once they had completed those, they could do whatever they pleased.

However, with no commitment to God or His Law, they had no basis for standards of conduct. Amos declared that God's approaching judgment on Israel would not be a warning blow, but almost total destruction for the nation.

The unbelievable was about to happen – God would uproot His people, using the hands of a foreign, ungodly nation.

However, if Israel truly repented, then there would be restoration for the remnant. Amos 5:4-6, 14-15.

## OUTLINE

### 1. Coming judgment to Israel and surrounding nations – Chapters 1 – 2.

Syria (Damascus) (1:3)

Edom (1:10)

Moab (2:1)

Gaza, Philistia and Tyre (1:6-9)

Ammon (1:13)

It must have seemed like good news to hear that God was going to destroy all these nations. They were Israel's enemies!

*But then Amos continues .... "Judah (2:4) and Israel!" (2:6)*

**Note:** The use of "three ... and four" indicates a full measure of sin.

### 2. Three short sermons – Chapters 3 – 6. ("Hear the word ... *Therefore*")

**Read Amos 3:7**

### 3. Five visions – Chapters 7 – 9.

a) Grasshoppers

a plague is avoided.

b) Fire

judgment is restrained.

c) The plumb line

judgment is deserved – A crooked wall must be pulled down before a new one can be built.

d) Basket of summer fruit

judgment is imminent.

e) False altar

judgement is carried out.

### 4. Restoration of David's Tabernacle.

**Read Amos 9:11-12**

**What is "David's fallen tent"?**

**Read 1 Chronicles 15:1-3**

To "restore" means "to put back into place something that has been lost, misplaced or stolen".

Remember, the Ark symbolizes the presence of God.

At Zion, David established a new way of worship and of ministering to God. He set a new company of Levites to minister before the Ark.

David invented new musical instruments; thousands of people sang happy, joyful praises to God. There were teams of priests and new songs of thanksgiving. People clapped and lifted their hands. They shouted, danced, spun around, bowed down and said “Amen!” All this began during David’s time.

### Read Acts 15:16-18

James quoted Amos 9 and understood that salvation was also for all the Gentile nations, without them having to become Jews first.

Amos saw a spiritual restoration or revival of true and proper worship as it was during the time of David.

**Important Note**

Solomon’s beautiful temple was still standing in Jerusalem when Amos prophesied that God would restore David’s *tent*! It seemed impossible.

## HOSEA – The Book of God’s Love

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752 – 721 BC

**Note:** Israel is also called “Ephraim” which was the largest tribe in Israel.

**AUTHOR** Hosea The names Hosea, Hoshea, Joshua and Jesus are all forms of the same Hebrew name.

Hoshea or Hosea	means “salvation”
Joshua and Jesus	mean “Jehovah is salvation”

Hosea is the only prophet from the northern kingdom who wrote a book, and his prophecy is directed at the people of Israel. However, he most likely wrote it while living in Judah, after the fall of the northern kingdom.

**TIME**

Hosea’s ministry covers a period of about 40 years, beginning towards the final years of Jeroboam II and continuing through the reigns of Zechariah (the king, not the prophet), Shallum, Menahem, Pekah and Hoshea (Israel’s last king), and ending after Assyria conquered Israel.

Pay attention to names!

Life was even worse than in the time of Amos. Now kings gained the throne by *murdering* the present king! *Child sacrifice* and *sexual perversion* had increased to the point that adultery was consecrated as part of the normal religious ceremony connected with calf worship. Hosea 4:14.

Assyria had grown in power. In about 800 BC Assyria assaulted Syria, capturing the capital, Damascus, and imposed an enormous tribute (payment). However, the Assyrian king died and the Assyrian empire was plunged into about fifty years of unrest that neutralized their vision of world conquest.

At this critical moment in time, two outstanding kings appeared: **Jeroboam II**, son of Jehoash of Israel, and he ruled for 40 years beginning in 786 BC, and **Uzziah** (also called Azariah) in Judah, who succeeded his father, Amaziah, in 783 BC and ruled for 41 years.

Jeroboam II moved quickly to take advantage of Syria's defeat and succeeded in pushing Israel's borders almost to the extent it had enjoyed under David and Solomon. The threat from Syria was removed. Assyria was in turmoil. Tribute poured in from conquered peoples and Israel enjoyed a prosperity it had scarcely known since becoming a separate kingdom.

**IN JUDAH** **King Uzziah** restored Judah to the glory of Solomon's reign. An extra-ordinary administrator, Uzziah systematically utilized Judah's resources – he had new cisterns dug, encouraged agriculture, placed military-agricultural settlements in the Negeb to secure control over trade routes.

**However, Assyria did not remain in confusion forever.** Soon there was unease in Israel as the Assyrian giant began to stir once again.

**KEY VERSES** **Read Hosea 1:9-11**

**Read Hosea 11:7-9**

Hear God's heart as He cries, "How can I give you up, O Ehpraim?"

## **PURPOSE**

### **1. To call Israel to repentance.**

Hosea loved his wife Gomer very much. *God knew Gomer would be unfaithful*, and one day she does run away. Hosea is broken-hearted.

Suddenly Hosea sees that the people of Israel have treated God exactly the way Gomer had treated him. God loved His people, but they had turned away from Him to worship idols.

Can God forgive them? Will He? The answer is, "Yes!" Hosea searches for Gomer, eventually finding her in the slave market, offering herself for sale. He buys her, brings her home and loves her.

**Hosea's domestic life mirrors Israel's spiritual life.**  
**Hosea had an adulterous wife, Israel was spiritually adulterous.**  
**Hosea was a faithful husband, and God is faithful.**

Like a one-sided love affair, Hosea's marriage allows him to see through the heartbreak of his own marriage to Israel's sin against God in its deepest and worst significance, spiritual adultery.

### **Hosea's children:**

Lo-ruhamah "not loved, or one who never knew a father's love"

Lo-ammi "not belonging to me"

Can you imagine calling these children to come in for lunch? ○○○  
“Not loved, time to eat!” “Not mine, you need to come in now!”  
Or, imagine saying goodnight, “Sleep well, Not Mine ...”



Just an  
interesting  
thought ...

Later their names are changed, to “Ruhamah” which means, “loved, or, knowing a father’s love” and “Ammi” – “mine, belonging to me”.

2. **To prophecy the cause of Israel’s captivity – unfaithfulness.**

3. **To prophecy restoration – which would come through the Messiah.**

- OUTLINE**
1. The adulterous wife and faithful husband – Chapters 1 – 3.  
Hosea’s personal story.
  2. Adulterous Israel and faithful Lord – Chapters 4 – 14.  
Israel’s national story.

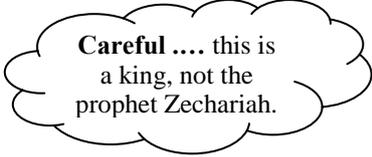
# The end of the Northern Kingdom and the start of the Southern Kingdom

## Lesson 2

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On the death of Jeroboam II, Israel plunged into political chaos.

Three kings, one after another, ruled in a single year.



Careful .... this is a king, not the prophet Zechariah.

1. **ZECHARIAH.** ○ ○ ○

He was the son of Jeroboam II, and reigned only six months. He was assassinated, and with him ended the line of kings from Jehu.

2. **SHALLUM.**

Shallum was the one who murdered Zechariah. He held power for only one month before being killed by Menahem.

3. **MENAHM.**

Menahem killed Shallum and then held the country in a merciless reign of terror. Listen to what it says in 2 Kings 15:16:

“At that time (that is, when Shallum was killed) Menahem started out from the town of Tirzah, and attacked the town of Tiphshah and everyone in the city and in its vicinity, because they refused to open their gates. He sacked Tiphshah *and ripped open all the pregnant women*”.

Menahem gained control of Israel by force and continued to rule for the next 10 years. However, the prosperity Israel had enjoyed was now seriously weakened.

The same year Menahem became king of Israel, **Tiglath-Pileser III (also called “Pul” in the Bible) became king of Assyria.** Tiglath-Pileser made a tremendous change to the way Assyria waged war – no longer were battles fought just to bring tribute, slaves and materials – now newly conquered areas were incorporated into the Assyrian Empire.

Peoples native to conquered lands were to be deported and settled elsewhere throughout the Assyrian Empire, and conquered peoples from other lands were brought in to settle in newly captured areas.

Assyria threatened Israel and Menahem paid an enormous bribe to keep them away – 1000 talents of silver, which he obtained by taxing the people.

4. **PEKAHIAH.**

Menahem’s son, Pekahiah, became king but only ruled for two years before being murdered by Pekah, an army officer.

5. **PEKAH**

Pekah reigned over Israel for 20 years. During his reign, Assyria once again threatened

them and in an attempt to combine their strength, Israel and Syria formed a coalition. They then came to Ahaz of Judah to ask the southern kingdom to join them, but Ahaz would not join. On hearing of his refusal, Syria (also called “Aram”) and Israel attempted to invade Judah, but Ahaz learned of the plot, and “his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind”, Isaiah 7:1-2.

Ahaz was confronted by **Isaiah**, the prophet, who told him to “Pay attention and be quiet. Be calm, have no fear and do not be faint-hearted because of these two smouldering pieces of wood from a fire ... it shall not stand nor shall it come to pass”.

God Himself gave a sign that a righteous remnant would survive, “a young virgin will bear a son and will call His name Immanuel, God with us”.

However, Ahaz panicked and appealed to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria for help! This appeal had immediate and far-reaching consequences. Assyria swept through Syria, Israel, Philistia and Egypt. (734 – 732 BC)

Pekah was murdered in a conspiracy led by Hoshea.

## 6. **HOSHEA.**

By this time the whole northern part of Israel was part of the Assyrian Empire, but a coup that put Hoshea on the throne, gave the people a new sense of independence, although it should have been clear that the northern state was not going to survive.

Israel’s resources were exhausted and anything that remained had to be used to pay the tax levied on them by Assyria. No fortifications remained between their borders and the capital city, Samaria.

Tiglath-Pileser, the ruler of Assyria, died in 727 BC, and Shalmaneser became king. As so often happens when a strong king dies, the conquered nation took the opportunity to rebel.

While still pretending to be loyal to Assyria, King Hoshea of Israel asked Egypt for help to break free of Assyrian domination. Egypt agreed. Hoshea then withheld the tax he was required to pay – an open declaration of rebellion.

Shalmaneser of Assyria responded instantly, sending an army against Israel, taking Hoshea prisoner and laying siege to the city of Samaria. The siege lasted *for three years*. Supplies ran out, suffering increased daily.

**In 721 BC Assyria broke through the walls of Samaria and took the city.**

**The surviving inhabitants were exiled to other lands Assyria had conquered and peoples from those distant lands were settled in Samaria.**

**IT WAS THE END OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.**

(2 Kings 17:24-29; 40-41)

**THE EXILE OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM**

## **THE HISTORY OF JUDAH – THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM**

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David and his son, Solomon, had ruled a united kingdom for more than 70 years, but following Solomon's death (about 921 BC) the kingdom split in two: the northern tribes chose the rebel Jeroboam to rule them; Judah confirmed Solomon's son, Rehoboam, as their king.

The Lord promised David that his throne would last forever. We will see David's line of kings lasting through 19 generations, until Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 BC.

(There was a six-year break during this time, when Athaliah ruled as queen in Judah. Athaliah was the daughter of King Omri of Israel and wife of Jehoram of Judah.)

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### **2 CHRONICLES – A Spiritual View of Judah**

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1 and 2 Chronicles cover the same period of history as the books of 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, but from a different perspective. The books of Samuel and Kings give a *political history* of Israel and Judah, Chronicles presents a *religious history of Judah only*.

2 Chronicles virtually ignores the northern kingdom of Israel because of its false worship and refusal to acknowledge the true God, and the true temple in Jerusalem.

**AUTHOR** Ezra

Ezra looks back through the history of his people for a specific purpose: what had happened? Where was God in all that had happened? What was going to become of His "Covenant People"?

**TIME** From the reign of Solomon (971 – 931 BC) through the reign of the kings of Judah, the captivity of Judah and fall of Jerusalem when conquered by Babylon in 586 BC, and the conquest of Babylon by Persia in 539 BC – a period of about 400 years.

**KEY VERSES** **Read 2 Chronicles 7:14**

**Read 2 Chronicles 16:9**

**PURPOSE**

1. To record the reign of those kings who patterned their lives and rule after the life of Godly King David: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah.
2. To record the history of God's people from the building of Solomon's Temple to Cyrus's command to rebuild the Temple more than 400 years later.

**OUTLINE**

1. **The Temple is built – Reign of Solomon – Chapters 1 – 9.**  
**A time of splendour – 40 years.**
2. **The Temple is destroyed – Reign of the Kings of Judah – Chapters 10 – 36.**  
**A time of disaster – 393 years.**

## JUDAH'S KINGS:

### 1. REHOBOAM.

Rehoboam was Solomon's son and recognized as next in line for the throne, but the elders of Judah refused to confirm his rule unless he abandoned his father's repressive policies.

Rehoboam refused and so the elders anointed their own king, Jeroboam. The powerful state created by Saul, David and Solomon divided. Conquered nations broke away from both kingdoms – Damascus Syria, Ammon and Moab; Edom gained some of its territory back and Philistia reasserted itself.

Shishak, the king of Egypt, took advantage of the chaos and attacked Jerusalem, carrying away the treasures of the king's house as well as all the shields of gold Solomon had made.

Rehoboam reigned for 17 years and "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually". (2 Chronicles 12:15)

### 2. ABIJAM.

**Careful** – one of *Jeroboam's* sons is also called "Abijah" and there is a prophet named Abijah too!

Rehoboam's son Abijam (also known as Abijah) ruled the southern kingdom for 3 years. He continued in all the sins of his father.

### 3. ASA.

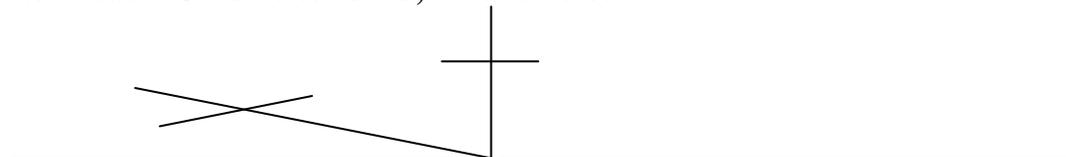
Asa, Abijam's son, began his reign during the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam's reign in the north.

Asa was a good king, although he did not rid the country entirely of idol worship. He reigned for 41 years, during the reigns of Jeroboam and Baasha in Israel.

**Read 2 Chronicles 14:8-12**

**Read 2 Chronicles 15:1-2 ... and then verses 8-12**

**Now read 2 Chronicles 16:1-3, 7-9 and verse 12**



#### **Old Testament**

Asa "became diseased in his feet".

"He did not first rely on God", but only sought help from man.

It is not wrong to go to a doctor, but at the same time we know it is God who is the "Great Physician". We look to Him to guide the doctors and nurses who help us.

#### **New Testament**

A problem in our "Christian walk".

We can do the same today, ignoring God, finding answers that seem right to us.

### 4. JEHOSHAPHAT.

Jehoshaphat was Asa's son. He defeated Edom. He also won back some of the land which was lost to Egypt when Israel and Judah divided.

In the early part of his reign Jehoshaphat followed God, and the Lord was with him and established the kingdom under his control so that he had great riches and honour.

However, Jehoshaphat made peace with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, marrying his daughter and agreeing to fight Syria alongside him. During the battle Ahab disguised himself, hoping to avoid the Syrian army recognizing him and thereby making him a target. However, he was struck “at random, in a joint of his armour” and died.

Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem, and then both Ammon and Moab attacked. Jehoshaphat was very afraid ...

**Read 2 Chronicles 20:14-17**

**Now read verses 21-22**

Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years and was a good king. *However, he did not completely wipe out false worship and, in the latter years of his rule, he again allied himself with the king of Israel (now Ahab’s son, Ahaziah).*

## 5. **JEHORAM.** (Also called Joram)

In a curious coincidence, Israel also had a king named Jehoram who ruled during this time! These two men were related because Jehoram of Judah was married to Jehoram of Israel’s sister, a woman named Athaliah. In other words, these two kings were brothers-in-law. (Athaliah was another of Ahab’s daughters) (Jehoram is also called “Joram”)

As soon as Jehoram gained the throne of Judah, he murdered all his brothers.

He was a wicked king and worshipped false gods. He lived in the same way Ahab of Israel lived. (Remember, he married one of Ahab’s daughters.)

**Read 2 Chronicles 21:12-19**

## **OBADIAH – The Book of Repayment – “Pride Goes Before a Fall”**

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**848 – 841 BC**

**AUTHOR** Obadiah

**TIME** There is widespread disagreement regarding *the time* this book was written – some place it very early, during the time of Elisha; others place it later, during the time of Jeremiah.

However, whether earlier or later, Obadiah’s message remains the same: although Edom rejoiced at the destruction of Israel and the disaster of Judah, God’s people will be delivered and God’s kingdom will triumph. Edom, however, will be shattered.

**KEY VERSES** Obadiah only has one chapter, **read verse 4 ... and verse 15.**

**PURPOSE** 1. God’s judgment is always preceded by His mercy, but when His mercy is rejected, when a person or a nation continues in stubborn refusal to repent, then sooner or later God’s judgment will follow.

2. To show that “as a man sows, so shall he reap”. Galatians 6:7-9.

**SUMMARY** Edom’s hostility towards God’s people stretched over centuries of history, and Obadiah prophesied that what Edom had sewn, Edom would reap.

The Edomites felt secure in the mountains where they lived. Petra, the capital, was a “rock city” and virtually impossible to conquer, but Edom had not reckoned on God!

“You cheered”, Obadiah says, “when the enemy destroyed Jerusalem. You helped to rob the city of its treasures. You captured people as they tried to escape and turned them over to the enemy. You think you are safe because your city is protected by rocky cliffs, but you are wrong! It will be destroyed! And so will every nation that disobeys God”.

**Read verse 4 again**

**JUDAH’S KINGS CONTINUED:**

6. **AHAZIAH.**

This was Jehoram’s youngest son.

(Now, in case you are not confused enough, this man was also known as “Jehoahaz”... and as “Azariah”!)

The king of Israel, Jehoram, had been wounded in a battle with Syria. Ahaziah went to visit his uncle just after the time when Elisha had anointed Jehu to replace Jehoram. As Jehoram turned to flee from Jehu, he was struck by an arrow which pierced his heart.

Jehu and his men pursued Ahaziah, the young king of Judah, wounding him badly. King Ahaziah managed to get to Meggido, but died there. He only reigned for one year

7. **ATHALIAH (Ahaziah’s mother, a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel) 842 – 837 BC.**

In Jerusalem, Athaliah, on hearing of her son’s death, seized the throne for herself and ruled from 842 – 837 BC.

She killed all Ahaziah’s sons, (her own grandsons!), to ensure her reign would not be opposed. However, Ahaziah’s youngest son, little Joash, was hidden and brought to the High Priest where he lived until he was seven years old.

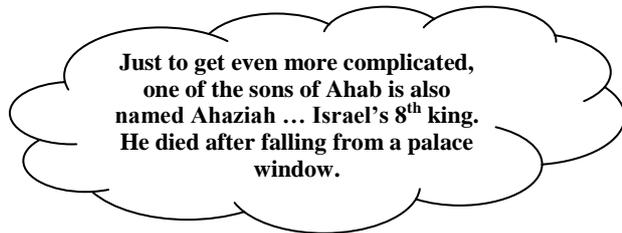
8. **JOASH (837 – 797 BC).**

The High Priest, Jehoiada, led a successful coup to overthrow Queen Athaliah.

2 Chronicles 24:2 says this, “Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord *all the days of Jehoiada the priest*”.

Joash restored the house of the Lord and gathered the priests and Levites together, instructing them to collect a tax from all the people for the house of God. The people gave willingly, rejoicing as they brought their gifts.

*Now read 2 Chronicles 24:17-22 ...*



The prophet “Zechariah” referred to here is not the same person as the prophet who wrote one of the books of the Old Testament. This man referred to in 2 Chronicles is Jehoiada’s son! Think about that ... this is the son of the man who raised young Joash, who kept him hidden and safe from wicked Queen Athaliah.

Well, the king of Syria (Aram) attacked Jerusalem. Joash sent a tribute of gifts – “all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and of the king’s house”, 2 Kings 12:18.

However, it was not enough to avert God’s judgment.

**Read 2 Chronicles 24:23-25**

While recovering from the wounds of battle, Joash was assassinated.

# Joel – Isaiah

## Lesson 3

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### JOEL – The Book of “The Day of the Lord”

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A plague of locusts gave Joel an illustration of God’s impending judgment on his country. Like a mighty army, destroying everything in its path, millions and millions of locusts swarmed over the nation of Judah.

The people cried, “Help! What will we do”?  
“Repent of all your sins”, Joel answered. “Seek God and He will save you”.

**AUTHOR** Joel

Although there are several other men named Joel in the Bible, this man – the prophet – is known only from this book.

In Chapter 1:1, he identifies himself as the son of Pethuel, and his frequent references to Zion and the house of the Lord suggest that he probably lived close to Jerusalem.

Joel is a clear, definite and uncompromising preacher of repentance.

**TIME** The book is not dated and there is some uncertainty as to when it was written, but his prophecy was definitely directed to Judah and most Biblical scholars place Joel about the time of Athaliah, the Queen who claimed the throne after her son Ahaziah’s death.

**KEY VERSES** Read Joel 2:28-32

***But, these verses are preceded by:***

**Joel 2:1-2**

**And 12-13,** Note verse 12 ... “Repent”

**And read verse 18** “then”

**Now read verse 28** “it will come about ...”

- PURPOSE**
1. **Locally**, to call the Kingdom of Judah to repentance.
  2. **Prophetically**, to point to the last days of judgment, repentance, revival and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
  3. **Finally**, to point to “The Day”, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

### **JUDAH’S KINGS CONTINUED:**

#### 9. **AMAZIAH.**

**Read 2 Chronicles 25:1-2**

For a time both Israel and Syria were distracted by the powerful Assyrian threat. Amaziah moved to reclaim Edom, and won the battle.

### **Read 2 Chronicles 25:14-16**

Excited by his success against Edom, Amaziah now sent messengers to Israel, suggesting a meeting and also a marriage – between the king of Israel’s daughter and Amaziah’s son.

However, the king of Israel replied that Amaziah should be satisfied with his victory over Edom, calling Judah a “thistle” (like a weed), and Israel a “cedar” (a tall tree). When Amaziah pressed the matter, war broke out.

### **Read 2 Chronicles 25:22**

Israel won the war, Amaziah was captured, and Jerusalem fell. The Israelites pulled down great portions of the northern wall and took all the gold and silver and treasure from the Temple, and the king’s house, as well as hostages.

Amaziah was released and reigned a few more years from his ruined capital, Jerusalem, and was eventually assassinated.

## **10. UZZIAH (Also called Azariah) 783 – 731 BC.**

Amaziah’s son, Uzziah, came to the throne in 783 BC. Very few people would ever have guessed that this young man, only 16 years old, would restore the Southern Kingdom to a position of power and prestige. (2 Kings 15:1-5)

Uzziah reigned for 52 years. (786 – 734 BC)

He was a gifted administrator, who took full advantage of the economic resources of his kingdom. He had new cisterns dug to support large herds, encouraged agriculture and placed military-agricultural settlements in the Negeb to secure control over trade routes. He strengthened the defences of Jerusalem and re-equipped the army and he chose an elite group of “mighty men of valour” just as David had done.

He waged successful wars until his fame “spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong”. (2 Chronicles 26:8)

### **Read 2 Chronicles 26:16-21**

In 746 BC, the king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam 2<sup>nd</sup>, died and Israel plunged into political chaos. Three kings gained the throne in one single year: Zechariah, Shallum and Menahem. Assyria took full advantage of the Northern Kingdom’s confusion.

Uzziah, now leprous and old, tried to bring his fellow kings together against the potentially fatal strength of Assyria, but failed.

### **Read 2 Chronicles 26:22**

## **ISAIAH – The “Miniature Bible”**

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**750 – 680 BC**

**Isaiah is called the “Miniature Bible” because:**

It has 66 chapters and there are 66 Books in the Bible  
 39 chapters speak of Judgment 39 Books of the Old Testament  
 27 chapters full of God's grace 27 Books in the New Testament

**AUTHOR** Isaiah

He was of high social standing and documented the history of the nation of Judah for the king.

His wife was a prophetess (Isaiah 8:3), and his two sons, Shear Jashub (“a remnant shall return”) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (“Make haste to the spoil”), are once again good examples of prophetic names.

**TIME** Isaiah prophesies for about 50 years – from halfway through Uzziah’s reign, through the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, and ending in Hezekiah’s reign.

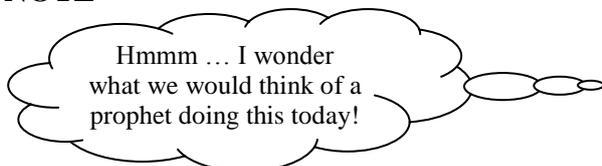
During Jotham’s reign, Assyria was growing in power. They conquered the small nations near the Mediterranean coast, including Israel and much of Judah. Isaiah lived during a time of great military threat to Judah and warns Judah’s kings *against trusting in political alliances rather than trusting in God.*

Isaiah ministers to the Northern Kingdom of Israel for a short time and then warns Judah that they will also experience defeat if they do not repent.

**A VERY INTERESTING NOTE**

**Read Isaiah 20:1-6**

Again we see a *prophetic sign*, and what an amazing one at that!



Isaiah went barefoot and naked for three years, a sign that the nations of Egypt and Cush would go into captivity, naked and barefoot.

**KEY VERSES**

**Read Isaiah 9:6-7**

**Read Isaiah 53:6**

**KEY CHAPTER**

**Chapter 53 – Describing the Messiah**

**PURPOSE**

1. **To warn Israel and Judah of their sin.**

Both nations had sinned, as well as the nations surrounding them. Judgment must come, for God will not ignore such sin. Isaiah’s warnings about Babylon are very interesting since Babylon was not a great power when Isaiah was prophesying these things.

2. **To declare a message of hope.**

The Messiah is coming as a Saviour, a Servant and a King. He will suffer, and bear a cross, but also wear a crown.

**OUTLINE**

1. **Assyria is the World Power – Chapters 1 – 35.**

**Prophecies of Judgment:**

Prophecies against Judah	Chapters 1 – 8	} Warning of Disaster
Restoration Israel	Chapters 9 – 10	
Prophecies against the nations	Chapters 11 – 12	
	Chapters 13 – 23	

2. **Transition – Chapters 36 – 39 (Change).**

Hezekiah’s illness and sin.  
 Prophecies that Assyria will weaken and Babylon will rise.

3. **Babylon is the World Power – Chapters 40 – 48.**

4. **Prophecies of comfort and deliverance – Chapters 49 – 59.**

**The Deliverer – Isaiah 53**

From a lowly social position (“root from dry ground”)	} Hope for the future
Despised and rejected of men	
Suffered for the sins of others	
Treated as if He deserved God’s punishment	
Afflicted yet did not open His mouth	
Would die as a criminal	
Would be sinless	
After suffering He would die	
God would prosper Him	
He would turn His death into a mighty victory	
He would justify many in His death	

5. **The Glorious Future – Chapters 60 – 66.**

**JUDAH’S KINGS CONTINUED:**

11. **JOTHAM.**

The next king of Judah was Jotham, Uzziah’s son.

Jotham refused to join Israel and Syria in their attempt to throw off Assyria’s attacks. Judah was somewhat isolated because of the high hills which surrounded their country and Jotham hoped it would be enough defence to withstand attack.

12. **AHAZ.**

Ahaz was Jotham’s son.

**Read 2 Chronicles 28:1-4**

**Now read Isaiah 7:1-2**

**And verses 10-16**

**Do you understand the importance of these verses?**

Judah’s hope of salvation lay in trusting the Lord. The promise God had made to David would hold true, God would always have a people of faith.

One from David's line – a young girl – would bear a son whose name was to be "Immanuel", which means "God with us".

That young lady's name? Yes! Mary. Her son? Jesus, the Messiah, God with us!

The Israelites and Syrians pressed hard against Jerusalem ... and at that critical moment, under pressure from every area, Ahaz appealed to Assyria.

We know the result – Syria and Israel were defeated and taken into captivity.

Assyria also attacked Jerusalem.

**Read 2 Chronicles 28:20-25**

**13. HEZEKIAH.**

**Read 2 Chronicles 29:1-4**

**Now read 2 Chronicles 32:1-8, and then verses 20-21**

**Hezekiah's illness:**

**Read verses 23-25**

"... he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him and gave him a *sign*".

Let us see what this sign was ....

**Read Isaiah 38:1-8**

**Now go back to 2 Chronicles again, and read chapter 32:25-26**

**Read verses 27-31**

**What happened with the "envoys of the rulers of Babylon"?**

(An "envoy" is a messenger or a representative)

**Read Isaiah 39:1-8**

Hezekiah, so proud of his huge victory over Assyria, easily fell victim to Babylon's flattery. Whilst pretending to admire Hezekiah's military genius, Babylon spied out exactly how strong Judah was. Hezekiah was so caught up in his own importance that he did not see through Babylon's flattery and he foolishly showed all his riches to a nation that was growing in power daily – a nation that had dreams of an empire.

Can you see a little of Hezekiah's character? He is not very concerned that "everything that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon", and it does not seem to worry him in the least that "some of your sons ... shall be taken away and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon".

 **Now read Isaiah 40:1**

Do you see the change in Isaiah's ministry?

From chapter 40 to chapter 66 God speaks comfort and promises restoration.

# Micah - Nahum - Zephaniah - Habakkuk

## Lesson 4

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### MICAH – The Book of Conviction

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742 – 687 BC

**AUTHOR** Micah came from a small town about 20 miles south of Jerusalem. He ministered to both Israel and Judah.

*Micah lived at the same time as Isaiah*, although Micah was younger in age, and prophesied during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.

#### **Read Micah 1:8**

Micah lived to see the terrible judgment of God which he spoke of actually come to pass. His message helped to bring about a great spiritual awakening which took place during the days of Hezekiah.

**KEY VERSES** **Read Micah 6:8**

**Read Micah 7:18-20**

#### **MESSAGE**

1. Micah addressed his message to people of all social classes.
2. He spoke against the false prophets who prophesied for money and who even gave themselves to evil spirits and demons to gain knowledge of the future.
3. He accused the princes of violence, oppression and corruption.
4. He denounced the priests, accusing them of corruption.

But the people did not really care what was going on. They believed they were “special” to God and that He was still in their midst. They thought that all was well and they would never come to any harm. Micah plainly told them otherwise.

5. Micah prophesied not only in the context of his day, but far into the future. He spoke of the last days and described things which are even in the future for us today. For example, Micah prophesied about *both* comings of the Messiah.

#### **PURPOSE**

1. To convict Israel and Judah of their sin and to warn them of captivity in Assyria and Babylon.
2. To give the few people who remained faithful to God hope and a promise of restoration in Messiah’s time, Micah 5:3.
3. **To pinpoint the Messiah’s place of birth.** The only prophet to do so.

**Read Micah 5:2 ... and then Matthew 2:5**

## **JUDAH'S KINGS CONTINUED:**

### **14. MANASSEH.**

Hezekiah's son ruled for 55 years, the longest in Judah's history. Death spared Hezekiah from further humiliation at the hands of the Assyrians, but Manasseh reaped the harvest his father had sown.

Manasseh's policy toward Assyria was one of total submission. He paid tribute and even provided troops to assist their attacks against Egypt, and worshipped their false gods in Jerusalem.

He is considered to be the worst king Judah ever had.

Although later in his life he repented, it was a case of "too little, too late".

### **15. AMON.**

Amon, Manasseh's son, continued the same policy of total submission. He was struck down by assassins and was succeeded by his eight-year-old son, Josiah.

## **NAHUM – The Judgment of Nineveh**

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**Between 663 and 612 BC**

**AUTHOR** Nahum

He ministered to the house of Judah and to the city of Nineveh.

**TIME** Remember, Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria.

Do you remember Nineveh's response to Jonah's message?

The city had repented of their wickedness then, but that was about 150 years previously. Their repentance was short-lived. Now the Assyrians had returned to their evil practices.

Assyria reached their peak of power under a king named Ashurbanipal (669 – 633 BC) and Nineveh had become the *mightiest city on earth*.

### **Nineveh's Defences:**

The city had three massive walls 100 feet high and wide enough for seven cars to drive side by side! Around the top of the outer wall were towers that rose another 100 feet above the wall.

A 100 foot wall is about the height of a ten storey building! Towers which rose 200 feet would be as high as a 20 storey building!

On one side of the city was the River Tigris which had been diverted so that water surrounded the city on all sides – 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

It seemed Nineveh could withstand any attack. Twenty *years* worth of food and supplies were stored inside the walls of the city ... but the city fell in just *three months!*

- PROPHECY**
1. Nahum 1:8 The city would be destroyed in an overflowing flood.
  2. Nahum 1:10 The people would be drunk.
  3. Nahum 3:3 The city would be burned.
  4. Nahum 3:12 It would fall like a ripe fig (i.e. just a touch and it falls).
  5. Nahum 3:19 It would be totally destroyed.
  6. Nahum 3:12 The city would be “hidden”.

**Note:** The ruins of Nineveh were not discovered until 1842 AD! – Which is about 2,500 years after its destruction.

- PURPOSE**
1. To show that God is patient and gracious to all who respond to Him, but those who rebel against Him will be overthrown.
  2. To show that what He says, He means – even when it looks impossible.

**Note:** Nahum’s prophecy seemed very unlikely. However, in 612 BC, Babylon invaded Assyria and entered Nineveh through part of the wall which had been destroyed when the Tigris River flooded.

The Babylonians burned the city.

*From the height of power as the mightiest nation on earth, Assyria fell into oblivion in just 51 years, never to be heard from again.*

A city that was equipped to withstand a 20 year siege fell in just three months.

Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC.

## **JUDAH’S KINGS CONTINUED:**

### **16. JOSIAH.**

Assyria had by now over-extended their resources and could no longer govern the distant countries they had conquered.

Egypt broke away and Babylon rebelled with the help of another nation called Media.

Judah enjoyed this brief period of liberty and prosperity.

Josiah pressed for religious reform, and was supported in this by the prophet Zephaniah, who condemned the religious practices that had started under Manasseh’s rule.

However, when Egypt came near Judah on the way to fight a battle with Assyria, Josiah did not ask God what he should do, but instead went out to fight Egypt.

**Read 2 Chronicles 35:20-25**

## **ZEPHANIAH – The Book of Judgment**

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**Between 640 – 612 BC**

**AUTHOR** Zephaniah

**Read Zephaniah 1:1.** Zephaniah is King Hezekiah’s great-great grandson, and therefore related to King Josiah, during whose reign he prophesied.

He is a contemporary of Jeremiah (that is, they lived at the same time) and probably a leading figure in the religious revival of Josiah’s day.

**KEY VERSES** **Read Zephaniah 1:14 and then verse 18**

**Read Zephaniah 2:3**

- PURPOSE**
1. To warn Judah of the coming day of wrath – of their destruction at the hands of Babylon.
  2. To warn Philistia, Moab, Ammon and Ethiopia of the coming day of wrath.
  3. To comfort the few people who were faithful to God, with promises of restoration.

## **HABAKKUK – The Prophet who asked God questions**

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**Between 640 and 607 BC**

**Habakkuk is also called “The Book of Faith”**

**AUTHOR** Habakkuk, who also lived at the same time as Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

**The key to understanding Habakkuk is in Chapter 1:1-4**

Habakkuk addresses his statements to *God alone!*

**KEY VERSES** **Read Habakkuk 2:2-4**

- PURPOSE**
1. To set out the reasons why God would use the wicked nation of Babylon to judge Judah.
  2. To show His plan to also judge Babylon.
  3. To show that ultimately God’s loving purpose for His people will be fulfilled.

- OUTLINE**
1. **Habakkuk’s first problem – Chapter 1:1-4.**  
“God, do You not see the wickedness of Judah? How long will You let this continue?”  
**God’s reply – Chapter 1:5-11**  
“I see and am bringing Babylon against Judah”.

2. **Habakkuk's second problem – Chapters 1:12 – 2:1.**  
“You will use a nation like wicked Babylon to judge Your people?”

**God's reply – Chapter 2:2-20**

“I look for lifestyles that reflect a true relationship with Me”.

3. **Habakkuk's prayer of praise – Chapter 3.**

**Read Habakkuk 3:2 and then verses 17-19**

**JUDAH'S KINGS CONTINUED:**

17. **JEHOAHAZ.**

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:1-4**

18. **JEHOIAKIM.** (Also called “Eliakim”)

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:5-8**

By pledging himself to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Jehoiakim spared Judah from direct attack but, when Pharaoh Neco of Egypt resisted an attack from Babylon, Jehoiakim chose what he thought was the perfect time to rebel.

Under Jehoiakim, the religious reforms of Josiah totally collapsed. There was widespread immorality and corruption, but the king was far more concerned with the building of his own house than in what was happening with his people.

**Read Jeremiah 26:1-11**

Standing in the temple, Jeremiah tried to call his people back to God. He said that the temple and the city would be destroyed. Those who heard him were shocked. They called his words “blasphemy” (cursing God, irreverence).

They believed they were “God's special people – His children”, and therefore He would not let them be destroyed. (Let us not make the same mistake!)

Jehoiakim ignored Jeremiah's warnings and personally destroyed all the scrolls containing his prophecies of coming judgment, but Jeremiah simply took more scrolls and had his secretary, Baruch, write them again.

**Note: In the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah. This is when the royal family and the aristocracy were carried into captivity in Babylon – among them Daniel and his friends. Jehoiakim was put in chains. **606-605 BC****

19. **JEHOIACHIN.** (Also called “Coniah”)

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:9-10**

This was the eighteen-year-old son of Jehoiakim. He came to the throne in a time of crisis – Babylon was marching south to Judah *again*. He was only king for three months and ten days before he surrendered Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken captive to Babylon, along with ten thousand others, *including Ezekiel.* **597 BC**

# Jeremiah – Lamentations

## Lesson 5

### JEREMIAH – The Weeping Prophet

About 627 – 580 BC

**AUTHOR** Jeremiah (He also wrote the Book of Lamentations)

Jeremiah lived at the same time as Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel.

This book tells the story of a very young, timid, sensitive youth whom God called at a critical time in his nation’s history. Jeremiah was between 9 and 14 years old when God first called him.

**Read Jeremiah 1:1-8**

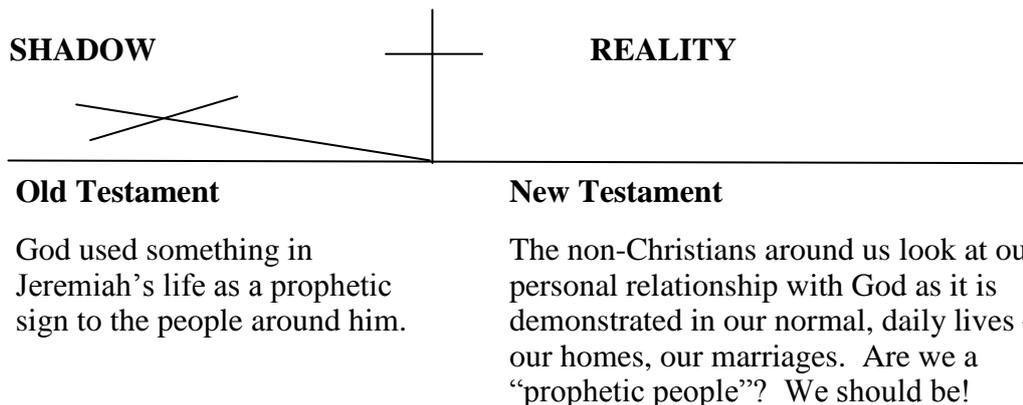
**Now read Ephesians 2:10**

Jeremiah lived a life of conflict – he was threatened with death, surrounded by false prophets, put in stocks, forced to flee, publicly humiliated, and even thrown into a cistern (well).

His counsel was ignored, his writings were scorned as false and were destroyed, his name was blackened, he was hunted like a criminal, and his worst predictions were fulfilled before his eyes.

**Read Jeremiah 16:2**

God asked Jeremiah not to marry as a prophetic sign to Judah, because the people of Jerusalem, men, women and children, would die.



**TIME**

**627-586 BC**

Jeremiah’s ministry covered about forty years, from the reign of King Josiah through the reign of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Judah’s last king, Zedekiah.

Judah’s politicians were busy explaining that all the problems were due to the situation with Egypt and the surrounding nations.

Jeremiah said that Judah’s problems were due to disobedience.

**KEY VERSES** Read Jeremiah 2:19-20 and Jeremiah 3:22

Now read Jeremiah 7:22-24

And Jeremiah 8:11-12

- PURPOSE**
1. After calling to repentance, God will forsake those who forsake Him.
  2. All sin is certain to lead to captivity.

## **OUTLINE**

### **1. Before the fall of Jerusalem.**

- a) Jeremiah's call and commission. Chapter 1
- b) Prophecies before captivity. Chapters 2 – 25

**Read Jeremiah 25:8-12**

**How long would the nation serve Babylon? 70 years – Jeremiah 29:10.**

- c) Jeremiah's conflicts and sufferings. Chapters 26 – 29

**Read Jeremiah 29:10-14**

- d) The future restoration of Jerusalem.

**Read Jeremiah 31:38-40**

**This is God's promise of a New Covenant! Jeremiah 31:33-34.**

### **2. The fall of Jerusalem.** Chapters 34 – 45

**Read Jeremiah 34:1-3**

## **JUDAH'S KINGS CONTINUED:**

### **20. ZEDEKIAH.**

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:11-12**

Nebuchadnezzar installed Jehoiachin's son, Zedekiah, onto the throne of a reduced Southern Kingdom. The people of Judah hated their Babylonian rulers and Zedekiah proved to be a weak king, who had no courage to make decisions.

Although he repeatedly sought Jeremiah's advice, he rejected most of it. False prophets prophesied that Babylon's power would be quickly broken, but Jeremiah counselled that Judah would definitely be in captivity for 70 years.

**Read Jeremiah 29:10-14**

In 589 BC, supported by promises of assistance from Egypt, Zedekiah openly rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was quick to respond and sealed off Jerusalem. The attack lasted over *two years*, until 587 BC, when the city's food supply ran out.

Zedekiah's sons were killed before his own eyes; he was blinded, put in chains and taken to Babylon.

**586 BC**

**The city of Jerusalem and the magnificent Temple of Solomon were completely destroyed and burnt. Thousands died in defence of the city and others died from starvation and disease.**

About one month later, Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguard, arrived in Jerusalem and rounded up thousands upon thousands of people, taking them to Babylon, only leaving "some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and ploughmen".

### OUTLINE, continued

#### 3. After the fall of Jerusalem. Chapters 46 – 52

Nebuchadnezzar installed **Gedaliah as Governor of Judah**, and told the people who remained to "Stay on this land, and I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I shall relent concerning the calamity that I have inflicted on you". Jeremiah 40:10-11.

**Read Jeremiah 43:5-7**

**Read Jeremiah 44:1**

Many Jews, driven by fear, fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them! However, they still did not repent of their sins, but in fact added to them by worshipping the "queen of heaven" and making sacrifices to this false god. In fact, they believed the reason for their suffering was because they had not sacrificed enough to this false god!

**Read Jeremiah 44:26-27**

- a) Condemnation of nine nations. Chapters 46 – 51
- b) Conclusion. Chapter 52  
Obviously this chapter was not written by Jeremiah, but may have been added by Baruch.

### PERIOD OF JUDAH'S CAPTIVITY

**Read 2 Chronicles 36:17-21**

### LAMENTATIONS – The Book of Mourning

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**AUTHOR** Jeremiah

**TIME** Lamentations is in fact a **Book of Poetry**, but we have included it here because it is a "lament" or "sorrowful poem of mourning" for Judah. Jeremiah weeps

over the sins of his people and for Jerusalem, the beautiful city, now reduced to ashes.

Beginning in Chapter 1 with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (aleph), Jeremiah begins each section (each chapter) of his lament with the next letter, going through the Hebrew alphabet as we would go from “A to Z”.

**KEY VERSES Read Lamentations 1:12 and Lamentations 2:17**

- PURPOSE**
1. Although God loves His people and has compassion for them, He will punish determined, stubborn disobedience.
  2. To express, through Jeremiah, the sorrow of God’s heart.
  3. To offer hope; a prayer for restoration for a repentant nation. (Chapter 5)

**400 YEARS AFTER DAVID’S WONDERFUL REIGN AS KING, JUDAH NO LONGER EXISTED.**

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem for two years.

The city fell on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 586 BC and the city and temple were burned on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 586 BC.

# Daniel – The Book of the Kingdom

## Lesson 6

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**605 – 536 BC**

**AUTHOR** Daniel

This young man was only about 16 years old when he was taken to Babylon and he lived to be over 90, spending 69 years in ungodly surroundings.

**Read Daniel 1:3-4**

Outstanding among these young men was Daniel, who dared to refuse the luxuries offered to him, and kept his heart free.

**Read Daniel 1:8**

God chose him to carry His message to the Gentile nations of the world.

**Daniel was in the palace at Babylon. Eight years later, Ezekiel was taken captive in the second invasion. He went to the common people, living along the River Chebar in Babylon. We also saw Jeremiah ministering to the people in Judah and later in Egypt. God had a prophetic voice among every group. We will see that Ezekiel’s task was to explain the real meaning of the troubles that had befallen Judah, but Daniel’s task was to share in the actual government of Babylon.**

Daniel was given three years training in the best Babylonian schools, (Daniel 1:5), and he was given a new Babylonian name, Belteshazzar – “Bel protects his life”. His three friends were also given new names – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – but only Daniel retained his original Hebrew name – Daniel – “God is my judge”.

He ministered as a prophet and a government official for the full duration of his Babylonian captivity and continued on even after Babylon was defeated by the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. He must therefore truly have been a man in whom God’s wisdom could be seen.

**Note:** The Book of Daniel is written in Aramaic, or “Chaldee” – the language of Babylon – and also in Hebrew.

**TIME** 2 Kings 24:1 to 25:30  
2 Chronicles 36:5-23

Babylon defeated Assyria in 612 BC and then defeated Egypt and Jerusalem in 606 – 605 BC. Daniel was among those taken captive during this time – the reign of Jehoiakim.

**KEY VERSES** Read Daniel 2:21-22 and then verse 44

Read Daniel 7:13-14 and then verse 18

- PURPOSE**
1. To show that God’s purposes are higher than any earthly kingdom.
  2. To illustrate God’s care for His people even in their captivity.
  3. To show how God controls and directs the history of nations.

- OUTLINE**
1. **A Book of HISTORY (written in Aramaic). Chapters 1 – 6**
    - The personal life of Daniel Chapter 1
    - Daniel interprets dreams:
    - Visions of Nebuchadnezzar Chapters 2 – 4
    - Visions of Belshazzar Chapter 5
    - Decree of Darius Chapter 6
  2. **A Book of PROPHECY (written in Hebrew). Chapters 7 – 12**
    - Daniel’s visions:
    - Four beasts Chapter 7
    - Ram and he goat Chapter 8
    - 70 “weeks” Chapter 9
    - The future of “Israel”, God’s people Chapters 10 – 12

**Note:** In just one chapter of Daniel, Chapter 11, Daniel mentions over 100 specific prophecies about historical events that literally came true.

**THE KING’S DREAM**

**Read Daniel 2:1-9**

**Now read verses 17-19 and verse 28**

**Note:** The Bible tells us what the dream was ... and what it meant.

**The king saw a large statue – this represents the different world kingdoms right up to the return of Christ, when He will introduce the Millennium Kingdom which is the stone which smashes the world kingdoms.**

<b>The Head of Gold</b>	<b>Babylon</b>
<b>The Chest and Arms of Silver</b>	<b>Medes and Persians</b>
<b>The Belly and Thighs of Bronze</b>	<b>Greece</b>
<b>The Legs of Iron</b>	<b>Roman</b>
<b>The Feet partly of Iron and partly of Clay</b>	<b>10 Kingdom Empire</b>

**THE FIERY FURNACE**

The wonderful revelation God gave Nebuchadnezzar regarding the statue had little effect on him. In fact, he set up a golden image of himself and commanded all the people to worship it.

Three young men refused to obey the king – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

**Read Daniel 3:17-18 and then verses 24-29**

**THE KING DREAMS AGAIN**

A great tree was cut down. This was a warning to Nebuchadnezzar that God would remove him from the throne because of his pride.

**Read Daniel 4:31-37**

**Nebuchadnezzar's reign ended in 562 BC**

**THE LIONS' DEN**    **Read Daniel 6:1-10 and verses 16-22 and also verses 25-28**

**THE HAND-  
WRITING**            **Belshazzar was now king of Babylon.**

**ON THE WALL**    **Read Daniel 5:1-5 and then read verses 25-31**

**"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN"**

History tells us that the Persian army took Babylon without a battle.

**FOUR BEASTS**    **Daniel 7**

**Read Daniel 7:17**

- |    |  |                   |
|----|--|-------------------|
| 1. | Lion/eagle                             | Babylon           |
| 2. | Bear                                   | Persia            |
| 3. | Leopard                                | Greece            |
| 4. | A beast with 10 horns and a small horn | A kingdom to come |

**A RAM**                    With two horns            Media and Persia

**A GOAT**                **Read Daniel 8:21**        Greece (Alexander the Great)

Four horns                    Four kingdoms – when Alexander died, he left no heirs and so his kingdom was divided between the four generals of his army.

**70 "WEEKS"**    **Read Daniel 9:24-27**

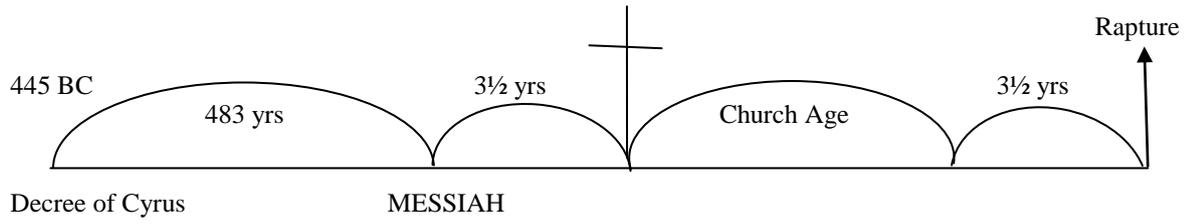
When was "transgression finished?"	At the Cross!
When was an end made of sin?	At the Cross!
When was iniquity atoned for?	At the Cross!
When did "everlasting righteousness" begin?	At the Cross!
When was the Messianic prophecy sealed?	At the Cross!
When was the most holy place anointed?	With the blood of Jesus!

Daniel's vision pinpoints the coming Messiah.

The first 69 weeks (verse 25) were fulfilled at Christ's first coming. We know the Decree of Cyrus was issued on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 444 BC. We need to take into consideration the Jewish calendar, which had only 360 days in it ... making a 13<sup>th</sup> month necessary every few years. All of this leads to a date of March 29, 33 AD – which would be the date Jesus was crucified.

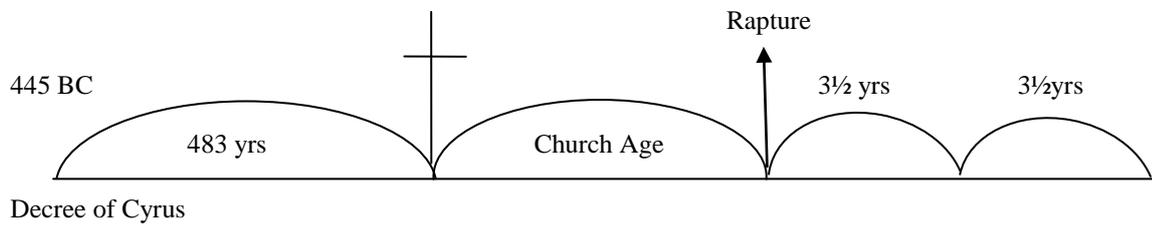
The remaining "week", or 7 years, is interpreted in three ways:

**I. Post-Tribulation Rapture.**



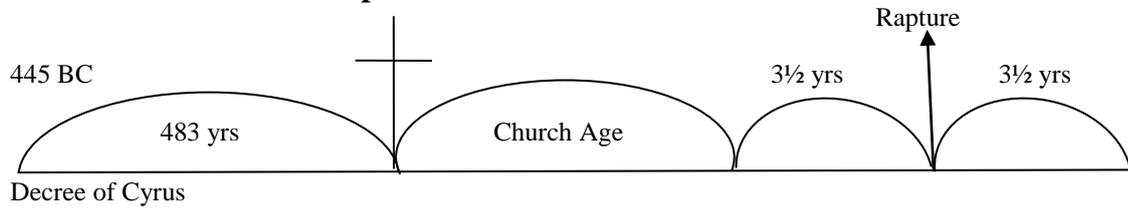
**OR**

**II. Pre-Tribulation Rapture.**



**OR**

**III. Mid-Tribulation Rapture.**



# Ezekiel – The Book of Visions

## Lesson 7

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597 – 570 BC

**AUTHOR** Ezekiel

**Read Ezekiel 1:3** – Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet and had probably been taken captive when he was about 25 years old.

Daniel had been in Babylon for about nine years and was already well known. He is mentioned three times in Ezekiel’s prophecy – Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and 28:3.

During the first part of his ministry, Ezekiel tried to convince the disbelieving exiles that there was no hope of immediate deliverance, but it was not until they heard of Jerusalem’s destruction that their false hopes of returning were abandoned.

Ezekiel lived in Babylon with his wife, in his own house at Tel-abib, situated near the River Chebar.

**TIME** He lived during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar of Babylon, and Darius and Cyrus – kings of Persia.

This was during the time of Zedekiah’s reign through the Babylonian captivity ... making Ezekiel a contemporary (lived at the same time) of Jeremiah and Daniel. As Jeremiah was coming to the end of his ministry in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was starting his ministry in exile in Babylon.

### **Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in three stages:**

**606 BC** Babylon defeated Jehoiakim and carried off key hostages, including Daniel.

**597 BC** Jehoiachin rebelled and brought more punishment as Nebuchadnezzar made Jerusalem submit a second time. He carried off 10,000 families including Ezekiel.

**586 BC** Zedekiah rebels and the Temple and city are destroyed. More captives are taken, leaving only the poorest in the land. Jeremiah is forced to leave Jerusalem and travel to Egypt

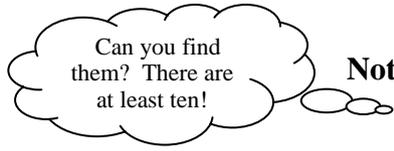
**The reason Babylon took 20 years to destroy Jerusalem is because they were receiving huge tribute from Judah.**

**KEY VERSES** Read Ezekiel 10:4 and verse 18

Read Ezekiel 36:24-28

And read Ezekiel 43:2-4

**KEY CHAPTER** Chapter 37 – “The Valley of Dry Bones”



**Note:** How many times does it say, “That the world might know ...” between Chapters 36 and 38?

- PURPOSE**
1. To show that God is not subject to the limitations of material things, or because of the failure of His people. In Chapters 16, 20 and 23 all the failures of Israel’s history and relationship with God are revealed.
  2. To show that the promise of restoration to come was not conditional on the prior repentance of the nation or their condition spiritually, but was purely an act of God’s grace.
  3. To record that ultimately God’s people did conform to His purpose and plan.

**OUTLINE** 1. **Ezekiel’s call – Chapters 1 – 3.**

In Chapter 1, as Ezekiel tries to describe the amazing vision he has, words fail him. If you count the number of times he says, “like” or “having the appearance of” or “as if” or “resembling” ... you will find the total surprising – about 23 times! He is trying to describe the indescribable!

2. **Judgment on Judah – Chapters 4 – 24.**

Ezekiel acts out many prophetic signs, as well as many parables:

- Laying siege to a brick
- Lying on his left side (for 390 days!)
- Then on his right side (40 days!)
- Eating filthy food
- Shaving his hair and beard
- Preparing baggage for leaving
- Trembling
- A drawn sword
- The double stroke of the sword

However, this still did not bring the nation back to God.

**Finally, there is the death of Ezekiel’s wife**

**Read Ezekiel 24:1-2**

**Read 2 Kings 25:1**

**Read Ezekiel 24:15-18**

**Now read verses 21-24**

**Read verses 25 and 26 ... then read Ezekiel 33:21**

**JEREMIAH**

Remember, Jeremiah wrote two letters to the captives in Babylon.

**Read Jeremiah 29:4-14** (The whole letter is from verse 1 - 23)

**And a second letter in Jeremiah 29:30-32. Read those verses.**

The whole of Ezekiel is filled with prophecies and examples for us today. We can look at just a few ...

Read Ezekiel 43:7-11

**SHADOW**

**REALITY**

**Old Testament**

**New Testament**

Verse 8, "Setting *their* threshold by *My* threshold".  
(A "threshold" is an entrance)

Are you and I "building according to God's pattern?" Do we see "ministers" as those who lay their lives down for the sheep ... or are we building according to our own or to our denomination's pattern?

Verse 11, "*The design of the house, its structures, exits ... etc*"

**Read Psalm 127:1**  
**Read Exodus 25:8-9**  
**Read Matthew 16:15-18**  
**Read Mark 7:13**

**SUMMARY** Ezekiel, as a priest, opens and closes his prophecy with *visions* of the Temple, as well as of the glory of God departing and returning.

He is the only prophet to describe Lucifer prior to his fall from heaven – Ezekiel 28:11-19.

## THE EXILE

### 1. People of Judah in Babylon.

Although the conquest of both Israel and Judah was the result of God's judgment for their sin and a period of great suffering, God worked it for the good of those who continued to love Him.

The people of the Southern Kingdom were nicknamed "**Jews**" (a short form of Judah) whilst in Babylon. After 70 years, they were allowed to return to Judah if they wanted to, and those who did return had undergone change for the better. They had not been totally absorbed into the pagan society of Babylon, as the Northern Kingdom apparently was. Judah's endurance was a testimony to the prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, whose ministry proved fruitful in the end.

While in Babylon Judah clung to their relationship with God and the promise, through Jeremiah, that they would return to their own land after 70 years. Ezekiel had prophesied glory to come, and given them hope to see them through the darkest days. Daniel's faith was a tremendous example of courage, and still is for us today.

While in Babylon they began to meet in worship groups, realizing that they did not need to reserve worship only for the Temple; they could worship God in their homes too.

They had the Law, which showed them how idolatrous the religions of the Babylonians were, and the holiness and purity of the one true God.

## 2. The Judeans in Egypt.

Babylon installed a governor, named Gedeliah, to oversee Judah. Despite Gedeliah's reassurances that those left in Judah would be well treated as long as they settled down and lived peaceably, a group of men murdered him.

### **Read 2 Kings 25:25-26**

In spite of the warnings of Jeremiah, the people fled to Egypt and, while there, began to worship an Egyptian goddess, "the queen of heaven". Jeremiah 43.

They blamed all the hardship, famine and loss of their land on the fact that they had not worshipped this "queen of heaven" faithfully enough. Jeremiah told them the real reason was because they and their fathers before them had forsaken the true God and refused to repent. Jeremiah speaks God's word to them that they will be destroyed.

### **Read Jeremiah 44:26-28**

## 3. Those left in Judah.

Only a very few of the poorest were left. The walls of the city of Jerusalem were broken down. Remember, the walls around a city provided safety and protection – therefore, there was nothing left of the security or the glory of their land.

### **PROPHETS TO JUDAH:**

Isaiah Micah Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk Jeremiah	} } } } } }	<b>"Pre-Exilic" (Before they were taken captive)</b>  (Jeremiah actually prophesied before, during and after)
Ezekiel Daniel	} }	<b>During the Exile (During their captivity in Babylon)</b>
Haggai Zechariah Malachi	} } }	<b>"Post Exilic" (After they returned from captivity)</b>

# Ezra – Haggai – Zechariah – Esther – Nehemiah – Malachi

## Lesson 8

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### EZRA – The Book of Restoration

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538 – 457 BC

**AUTHOR** Ezra

Ezra was a priest, a godly man of integrity and faith.

**TIME** The Book of Ezra relates the history of the return of Judah from captivity in Babylon. It is sometimes called the “*Second Exodus*”. However, their return is much less impressive than when God’s people left Egypt – then everyone left, this time only a remnant chose to leave.

Life had grown comfortable in Babylon. The return to Judah was full of dangers and discomforts. Only a few chose to leave and rebuild what they had lost.

#### **In 539 BC Persia defeated Babylon.**

The Persian leader, a man named **Cyrus**, abandoned the Assyrian and Babylonian policies of brutality and deportation of people they conquered, and instead adopted an attitude of toleration and restoration.

He made a declaration allowing Jews to return to their land and rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. The Temple was to be built, at least in part, with funds from the royal treasury, and the holy vessels taken from the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar were to be returned.

#### **It was an interesting time in world history.**

#### **During the time covered in the Book of Ezra:**

Gautama Buddha (560 – 480 BC) was living in India.

Confucius (551 – 479 BC) was alive in China.

Socrates (470 – 399 BC) was in Greece

**KEY VERSES** Read Ezra 1:2-3

Read Ezra 6:14

- PURPOSE**
1. **To show the return of the groups of people under Zerubbabel and later under Ezra** from Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of worship.
  2. **To show the fulfilment of the prophecies and promises of God** through Jeremiah and Isaiah concerning the fall of Babylon and the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem.

**Note:** God had cast them *out* but had not cast them *off*.

**OUTLINE** Ezra begins right where 2 Chronicles ends and shows how God's promise to bring His people back to their land is fulfilled.

**The Jews returned from Babylon in two groups:**

**The return of the FIRST group under ZERUBBABEL – Chapters 1 – 6.**

Zerubbabel was born in Babylon, of the line of David. 1 Chronicles 3:19.

**Their task was to build the Temple.**

About 50,000 people returned with Zerubbabel, mainly priests and Levites. It is only the very committed who were willing to leave a life of relative comfort and endure a long walk of almost 1,500 kilometres, then face further hardship by rebuilding what was destroyed.

When they set out, they were no doubt excited – but when they arrived in the hills of Judah and saw Jerusalem, their joy must have mixed with bitter sorrow at the awful sight before them. The city lay in ruins, its walls destroyed.

**Read Ezra 3:1-6**

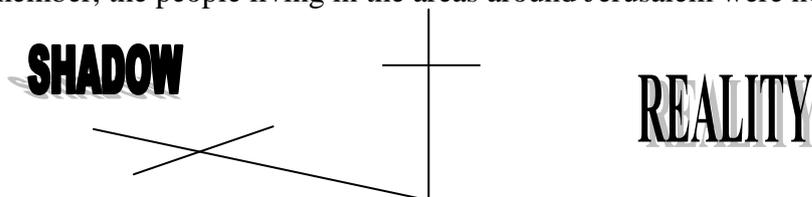
**Read verse 8 ...** it is *2 years after arriving in Jerusalem*, and the temple is still not built.

**Now read verses 10-13**

**Read Ezra 4:1-3**

**Read 2 Kings 17:28-29 and verse 41**

Remember, the people living in the areas around Jerusalem were not serving God.



**Old Testament**

The ungodly offer their assistance in building the temple ... but their offer was turned down!

**New Testament**

What if your local municipality offered to help you build a nice big building for your church? Or maybe a big company offered to help. It might seem like a wonderful gift from God! But ... what would happen if they later told you it was only fair to allow other religions to also use the hall? What seemed like such a good idea could cause you lots of trouble.

**Now read Ezra 4:4-5 ... and then verse 24**

**And read Ezra 5:1.** They stopped building the temple and began to build houses for themselves.

## **HAGGAI – The Book of Rebuilding the Temple**

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**September – December, 520 BC**

**AUTHOR** Haggai, who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel

He only prophesied for 4 months

**TIME** **From Ezra 5:1 to 6:2**

The first group to return to Judah was led by Zerubbabel. Work began on the temple in 536 BC, but there were many hardships and much opposition – from Samaritans and from those of Judah who had remained and laid claim to the land while the exiles were in Babylon.

The land was desolate, crops failed and discouragement set in. *It was easier to stop work than to continue against opposition*, so in 534 BC the work stopped and it remained that way for 16 years, with the excuse that because there was opposition, obviously rebuilding was for a later time. They began to build houses for themselves and God withdrew His blessing.

In 520 BC Haggai exhorted the people with strong words of rebuke. Work started again and the temple was finished in 516 BC. (By this time Cyrus had died and Darius was king of Persia.)

**KEY VERSES** **Read Haggai 2:6-9**

**Read Haggai 2:23**

**OUTLINE** 1. **The Temple of God – Chapters 1 – 2:9.**

**Read Haggai 1:7-9**

**Read verses 12-13**

**Now read Haggai 2:1-3 and verse 9**

2. **The Blessings of God – Chapter 2:10-23.**

**Read Haggai 2:21-23**

## **ZECHARIAH – The Book of The Messiah**

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**February 519 BC – December 518 BC**

**AUTHOR** Zechariah – (This was a very popular name in Old Testament times – there are 29 “Zechariah’s”)

**TIME** Zechariah was a young contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

Like Haggai, he encouraged the Jews to begin work on the Temple in Jerusalem again but, rather than using strong words of rebuke like Haggai did, Zechariah

encouraged them to action by reminding them of the future importance of the Temple – the glory of the Messiah would be there.

**KEY VERSE**    **Read Zechariah 4:6-7 and read Zechariah 9:9**

- PURPOSE**
1.    **To stir the remnant to complete the unfinished Temple.**
    - a)    Rebuke of empty ritualism.
    - b)    Reminder of past disobedience.
    - c)    Restoration and bringing together of God’s people.
    - d)    Recovery of joy in the kingdom.
  
  2.    **To prophesy of the Messiah in His first and second comings and the establishment of His Kingdom.**

<b>MESSIANIC PROPHECIES</b>	Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt	Zechariah 9:9
	The Good Shepherd	Zechariah 9:16 – 11:11
	30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:11-13
	His hands pierced	Zechariah 12:10
	He is coming again!	Zechariah 14:8-11

**Remember**

**DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE WE WERE IN EZRA?**

**Read Ezra 5:1-2**

**Read Ezra 6:14 and verses 19-22**

**BETWEEN THE END OF EZRA CHAPTER 6  
AND THE BEGINNING OF CHAPTER 7**

***58 YEARS PASS***

**DURING WHICH TIME THE EVENTS OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER TAKE PLACE**

**ESTHER – The Book of God’s Protection; The Book of Personal Destiny**

**479 BC**

**AUTHOR**        Unknown

**TIME**            Esther covers about 10 years, during the time between Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of Ezra.

This book provides the only clear picture of the Jews who chose to remain in Babylon (now conquered by Persia), rather than return to Palestine.

**Note:**    Ahasuerus is the Hebrew name and Xerxes the Greek name for the same king of Persia.

**KEY VERSE**    **Read Esther 4:14**

**MESSAGE**     1.    God guides, guards and protects our lives, regardless of circumstances.

2. Those who attempt to destroy the people of God will never succeed.

**Note: If Esther had not risked her life, all the Jews would have been put to death, including Ezra, Nehemiah and the rest.**

**Interesting** There are only two books in the Bible with women's names:  
The Book of Ruth – a Gentile, married to a Hebrew, who goes to live with the Hebrews in Palestine.  
And Esther – A Hebrew, married to a Gentile, living with Gentiles.

## **BACK TO THE BOOK OF EZRA**

### **OUTLINE, continued**

#### **The Return of the SECOND Group under EZRA – Chapters 7 – 10.**

About 2,000 people returned with Ezra. He brought back more of the sacred vessels for the Temple and also an understanding of the Law – its religious, social and civil applications.

The result was a renewed understanding of sin, repentance and reformation.

The Temple was dedicated to the Lord in 515 BC, with great joy – 72 years after its destruction.

With the death of Zerubbabel, hope of re-establishing the royal line of Judah also came to an end. For the next 70 years or thereabouts, until the arrival of Nehemiah, we know very little about the small community in Jerusalem.

## **NEHEMIAH – The Book of Reconstruction**

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**444 BC**

**NOTE** This is the last *historical* book of the Old Testament

**AUTHOR** Nehemiah. He was the cup bearer to the king of Persia.

**TIME** Esther was married to Xerxes. The present king of Persia was Artaxerxes, Esther's step-son.

Nehemiah leaves Persia in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes reign, returns to Persia in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign, and leaves again for Jerusalem "after some time". (Nehemiah 13:6)

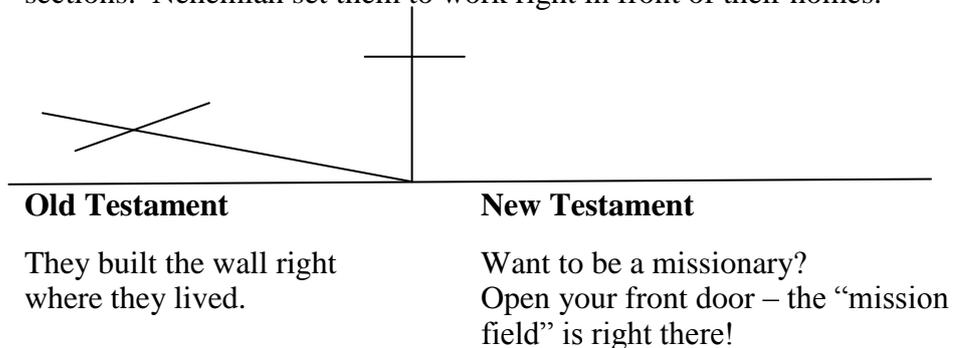
Nehemiah challenges his countrymen to arise and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. In spite of opposition from people around them, and abuse from within their own, the wall is completed in just **52 days**, because God is building with them. (The task of rebuilding God's *people* takes a lot longer!)

**KEY VERSES** Read Nehemiah 6:15-16 and Nehemiah 8:8

**KEY CHAPTER** Chapter 9

**PURPOSE** 1. To show how the walls and 12 gates of Jerusalem were repaired and rebuilt and the people revived.

All kinds of people rebuilt the walls – priests, perfumers, goldsmiths, merchants, administrators and women. Some even took on double sections. Nehemiah set them to work right in front of their homes.



2. To give God’s plan of revival and restoration for the church.

**MESSAGE** No winning without working and waging spiritual warfare.  
 No opportunities without opposition.  
 No open doors without adversaries.  
 As soon as you say, “Let us arise and build”, the enemy quickly says, “Let us arise and oppose!”

**OUTLINE** 1. Rebuilding the walls – Chapters 1 – 7.  
 2. Reforming the people – Chapters 8 – 13.

**SUMMARY** Ezra and Nehemiah together show the fulfilment of certain areas of the “Seventy Weeks” of Daniel.  
 “From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra), the city shall be built again and the wall, even in troubled times”. (Nehemiah) (Daniel 9:25)

**MALACHI – The Last Prophet of the Old Testament**

**Between 435 and 432 BC**

**AUTHOR** Malachi

He is the last prophet to minister to the people of Judah. The next prophet to appear in the Bible is John, the Baptist.

**TIME** Malachi’s ministry covered a period of about 25 years during the time when Nehemiah was governor.

Many years had passed since the Temple services had started and now the priests were tired of doing the same old thing. Corruption had crept into the system.

The Jews had a false sense of security, believing they had a privileged relationship with God. They became so sinful that God's words had absolutely no effect on them.

*For 400 years after Malachi's prophecies, God did not speak to the nation – that is, there was no prophetic voice heard.*

**KEY VERSES** Read Malachi 2:17 – 3:1

**Read Malachi 4:5-6**

**PURPOSE**

1. **To rebuke the people for their neglect of the Temple.**
2. **To rebuke the priests for their irreverence and ungodliness with regard to Temple worship.**
3. **To encourage the faithful few with promises of the coming Messiah.**