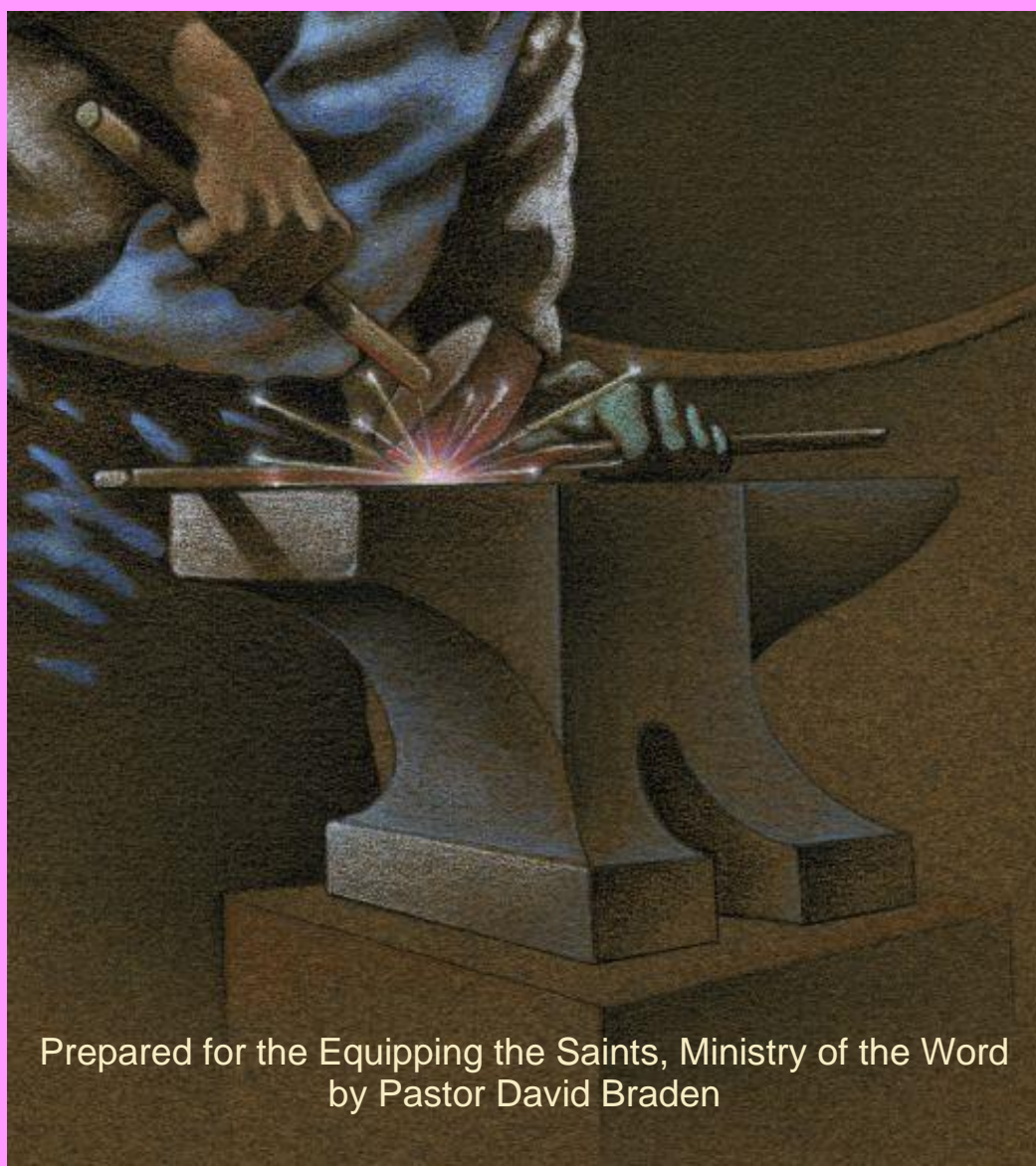


# A BIBLE SURVEY

## IMMANUEL (God with us) In Time and Space

With an emphasis on Christian Formation

## Old Testament



Prepared for the Equipping the Saints, Ministry of the Word  
by Pastor David Braden

Foundations of the Faith 201

*"...Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." | Timothy 4:7*

# **A Bible Survey**

Including

## **IMMANUEL (God with us) in Time and Space:**

**With an emphasis on Christian Formation**

Plus: A Bible Study Aid

Foundations of the Faith 201  
Part 1  
The Old Testament

*“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”  
I Tim 1:7b*

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Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Pastor David S. Braden  
7pastordavid7@gmail.com

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## ABOUT THIS COURSE

In Genesis 3, man chose to disobey God. This act of disobedience by the man and woman separated them from the perfect fellowship they enjoyed with God.

From Genesis 3:8 to the Omega of Revelation, we see the record of God's actions on the earth to restore man to the place of fellowship with Himself.

The record of God's actions is history because it records real events in real time.

But, it is not just history. It is theological history because every event and every person whose life experiences are recorded provide us, who would come later, a view of God's actions on behalf of mankind.

On the Cover: "Immanuel (God with us) in Time and Space" speaks of our God, in our world, reconciling man to Himself, in real life situations. God was with the heroes of faith in time and space, working out His plan for the ages.

In these records of God's actions, we will see God's men and women as they experience the Immanuel life and provide living illustrations to us of the life of faith and the formation of godly character in their lives over time as they walk with God. The lives they lived provide insight and instructions for us as we live our life with God, as each of us writes our own God-story.

As we study these individual accounts of "God with them," we will see the unfolding of God's plan. We will see the progressive actions taken by God within individual lives, a family, a tribe, a people, a nation and ultimately, to all of mankind.

These accounts of "God with us" will demonstrate His interactions to develop Christ-like character within us, Christian formation.

These interactions of love move mankind continually towards His aim in history: "the creation of a community of loving people with God Himself at the center as its source of life and sustainer/provider and as its most exalted and glorious inhabitant.

General Comment on Writing Style: These workbooks are intended for use in the Foundations 201 Course, Immanuel in Time and Space. My hope is that the information within this document will also be useful as a Bible study aid especially regarding the chapter introductory materials such as context, dispensations, literary background, era time charts and the summaries of the work of building God's community in each chapter.

This study, A Bible Survey, consists of two workbooks. The first addresses the period of time from the beginning through the end of the Old Testament, approximately 400 B.C. The second begins at the end of the Old Testament and continues through the New Testament and to the end of time.

# **IMMANUEL IN TIME AND SPACE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. Purpose/Goals:**

The objectives of this course of study are:

- A. to provide a panorama, a walk through the entire Bible, to give Christians a high level review of the primary actions of God with mankind during the period we call time. As such, we will focus principally on key persons and events of each era.
- B. to show some of the principle characters biblical history in their “Immanuel” (God with us) life and how God worked in the formation of their character.

This goal will be achieved in sections called “Character Studies” by an identification and emphasis on the spiritual disciplines embraced by individuals during the era being addressed.

- C. to show Christians both new and old how to walk the path to Christian maturity by embracing spiritual disciplines illustrated in the Bible.
- D. to learn more about the character of God (who He is) and what He does.
- E. to gain biblical insights for living a God-pleasing life.
- F. to provide a Bible study aid by presenting information such as:
  - context,
  - dispensation,
  - literary style considerations,
  - dates, and
  - key events and key events timetables.

The information provided should be helpful for background and context studies no matter where you are studying in the Bible.

### **II. Structure of the Study:**

In general, there are 5 parts to most sessions:

- A. Background material for the specific chapter era. This will include materials such as dispensation, literary style, date timelines and context.
- B. A summary of the major events in a given era. Also provided are time charts of these major events.
- C. God’s Actions and Man’s Responses
- D. Character Studies
- E. Homework assignments for each session

A note about dates: All dates are taken from the Reese Chronological Bible unless otherwise indicated.

### III. Spiritual Disciplines:

Jesus said He came that we might have a more abundant life. (John 10:10)

As a part of this life and in preparation for things to come, the Holy Spirit works within us to form Christ-like (Christian) character.

Christian character does not happen automatically nor will it occur apart from our participation. When I was a young Christian, I would, at times, pray that God would strike me, presumably with a lightening bolt or some sort of supernatural event, and make me a “super-Christian overnight. (Much to my disappointment, it never happened.)

Paul gave us one of the keys to Christ-like character formation in his letter to Timothy when he wrote:

*“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”* (I Tim. 4:7)

The purpose of embracing Biblical disciplines is the formation of Christ-like character. It is a part of our training in the spiritual life. This is how we “place ourselves before God as a living sacrifice.” (Rom. 12:1-2)

There are many spiritual disciplines: fasting, prayer, worship, silence, solitude, celebration, guidance, meditation, memorization, to name a few. These disciplines continually appear on the pages of scripture in the lives of God’s saints and also throughout history in the lives of godly men and women; e.g.

- The Psalms repeatedly extol the virtues of meditation. (Psalm 1; 119) (meditation)
- Jesus, throughout His earthly ministry, constantly sought a place of quiet and privacy to commune with His Father. (solitude and prayer)
- Paul, after his conversion experience, spent years in the desert in preparation for the things God had called him to do. (silence and solitude)
- David spent his early years in the hills alone with his father’s sheep. (solitude and silence)
- The Bereans studied God’s Word day after day to “see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) (studying the Word or Bible intake)
- Joseph consistently and effectively served those whom God has placed him under. (serving)

#### How does this work?

When we embrace a spiritual discipline, we are asking God to form Christ’s character in

us. But...we cannot actually transform ourselves. Only God, by His Holy Spirit, can do this.

For example, I cannot make myself to be more loving toward my enemies. I might force myself to perform outward duties toward them, but deep in my heart, the love God calls for is not there.

If someone treats me unfavorably, I can zip my lips...but the animosity of being treated with disrespect still exists, unless God makes the change.

Our action to embrace a discipline prepares us and sets us before God as a living sacrifice. He then takes my offering and produces something in me of far greater value than I could ever have imagined or achieved by my own efforts.

### What is a spiritual discipline?

*A spiritual discipline is a purposeful, repeatable action that we take, something we can do, in order to receive something from God which we cannot do.*

An example from our culture is “the weight room.” Athletes who are training for “the big game” will spend hours repetitively lifting weights and embracing other physical disciplines such as running to strengthen their bodies for the testing it will receive from the contest. These are purposeful, repeated actions that they embrace. The difference being that they can strengthen their bodies but we must rely on the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

We take up fasting to subdue the appetites of the flesh; but ultimately, it is God by the Holy Spirit that crucifies the old nature.

When we embrace silence and solitude, we become acutely aware of the things that displease God. Our innermost self is revealed. We then take these things to God and ask for His work of grace.

The spiritual disciplines do not contain any power or ability to change us. They contain no moral righteousness. Their purpose is solely to place us before God. When Jesus sought silence and solitude, His purpose was communion with His Father. The silence and solitude were the preparations for this to occur.

A parallel is the discipline of serving. When I serve using the gift of teaching, I am only an empty channel through which the water of life can flow. I prepare and discipline my studies, and then I teach. But it is only in being a channel of God’s grace to his people that I receive or impart life. (Even the channel receives cleansing and refreshing from the flow of life through it.) In effect, I place myself in the path of the flow of the Spirit.

In all of this, we acknowledge that it is God who is at work within us for His pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13) Further, this passage instructs us that it is God who is at work within us to will and to work...and that our effort is to be accompanied with fear and trembling.” This shows that our efforts are of a serious nature and merit our responsible action.

Even the fact that I am desiring God's grace and the work of His Spirit is an act of grace. (No one in his natural mind desires that the flesh be crucified.)

So, from where does this desire come? Grace alone, by the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

Every discipline we will ever embrace must be saturated with the grace of God.

And, we must remember, we have our part to do. Grace does not respond to inactivity or presumption. Laziness with regard to spiritual growth never appropriated the grace of God.

A final word from Peter, second book, first chapter:

“Make every effort to add to your faith goodness... knowledge...self-control... perseverance...godliness...brotherly love...agape love.” (vv. 5-7)

“Make every effort”...something I must do...utilizing every resource and energy I possess...but accompanied by the grace of God to form the character of Christ in me.

For further Study:

1. “Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth” by Richard J. Foster
2. “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life” by Donald S. Whitney
3. “The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible” by Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Walter Brueggemann, Eugene Peterson

Disciplines by Author:

1. “Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth” by Richard J. Foster

Meditation	Prayer	Fasting	Study
Simplicity	Solitude	Submission	Service
Confession	Worship	Guidance	Celebration

2. “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life” by Donald S. Whitney

Biblical Intake	Prayer	Worship	Evangelism
Serving	Stewardship	Fasting	Silence and Solitude
Journaling			

A further breakdown on Biblical Intake:

Reading...Studying...Memorization...Meditation



#### IV. Literary Overview:

The Bible is literature replete with a variety of literary styles.

Literature is a body of writings in prose or verse in which the authors choose words and forms to communicate what they are thinking or what they have experienced.

The Bible is an anthology, a collection of books. In fact, the name Bible comes from the Greek "Biblia" which means "little books."

The two principle literary forms in which the Bible is written are narrative and poetry.

There are a number of general literary styles utilized by the biblical authors in addition to narrative and poetry; e.g. prophecy, wisdom, apocalyptic, parables, allegories, figures of speech, doctrinal treatise, to mention a few.

It is important to recognize that the content of a literary work is communicated through its form and it is the form that provides the meaning. Without an accurate recognition of the literary form, the meaning cannot be properly determined.

For example, there is a great deal of difference between how one interprets the narratives of the Old Testament and the Apocalyptic writings of the book of Revelation.

A parable is interpreted differently than an allegory.

The wisdom literature of Proverbs is interpreted much differently than the lament Psalms.

Each literary style has its own guidelines for proper interpretation.

So, understanding the literary type of a passage and the guidelines for its interpretation become an important part of the biblical interpretation process, i.e. determining the meaning of a passage and the appropriate application.

Abstract versus real life experience:

Another important element in the literary field is that the Bible presents both abstract information in the form of principles and then seeks to demonstrate that information in the terms of real life human experience. For example, one of the 10 commandments is "You shall not commit adultery." This command is the abstract principle. The account of David and Bathsheba provides the same truth but in a real life situation. In this story, we see the physical actions and the verbal exchanges as David eventually is confronted with his sin and then accepts the consequences for breaking the law of God.

We see a similar illustration with the command: "You shall have no other gods before me." Idolatry is the abstract forbidden practice. And the Old Testament is filled with real life situations both on an individual and national level where idolatry was embraced. We then see the results of violating a precept of God.

### A goal of literature:

One of the goals of literature is to enable the reader to share in the experience of the story. The truths of scripture are not just ideas that are true but that they are true for human experience. We are not simply learning so as to store up “nice-to-know” facts of wisdom. The goal of the Biblical learning process is the application of the truths of scripture to our real-life experiences. And as we do, depending on our faithfulness to the biblical revelation, we will experience the fruitfulness and formation that true scriptural behavior promises.

### The uniqueness of biblical language:

One final area of comment: The Scriptures utilize distinct literary features that set it apart from the ordinary literature that we peruse; the use of images, figures of speech and idioms that are unique to the culture. Some of these figures of speech are metaphors, similes, hyperbole, irony and word play to mention a few.

A good example of hyperbole is used by Jesus in his sermon on the mount when he exhorts his listeners that “if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.” Obviously, cutting off my hand will not change my heart which is the root of the problem of sin. He is using exaggeration for effect to demonstrate the importance of getting sin out of your life.

So, it will be important for the Bible student to understand the meaning of the images, idioms and figures of speech used in the Bible before interpreting a passage.

## **V. Introduction to the Bible:**

The Bible: The Bible without a doubt, without a challenge, is the greatest, most significant work of literature, history and theology that has ever been written. In its initial formation, its preservation and transmittal, in its translation, proclamation and in its effects (impact on history and effect of life changes), it is the most profound and impactful document of all time.

Its remarkable unity with a diverse selection of authors, the time span over which it was recorded (~ 1500 years) and diverse literary forms blend smoothly to traverse time from the beginning of time to eternity.

In the pages of this book, we discover the roots of our past, we come to know and understand our present and our present dilemma (the problem of man), and we secure an immovable vision and hope for the future.

The Old Testament lays the foundation of God’s redemptive history bridging into the New Testament consummation of God’s plan in the work of Christ.

The principle theme of the Bible is: “Jesus Christ and the salvation that God offers through Him.”

It presents God's plan and His actions to restore "Immanuel" (God with us) in our lives. God shows us in advance, through prophecy, what He is doing in all of time.

### Looking inside:

God's Word is simply amazing.

more than 40 authors writing over 1500 years.

diverse backgrounds – a shepherd, kings, a statesman, farmers, warriors, a doctor, one was royalty turned slave, another a cupbearer to the king didn't talk to one another...didn't compare notes...didn't call a meeting to draw straws to see who would get the major prophets assignments simply gave the Word to those for whom it was spoken and wrote what God had directed.

a great variety of literary styles, one author identifies more than 100 styles of writing:

narratives, poetry, wisdom literature, hero stories, tragedies, good news pronouncements, doctrine and teaching, apocalyptic, letters of rebuke, prophecy, a love story, laments, drama, to name a few

1189 chapters, 774,746 words, 3,506,480 letters

over 200 distinct categories of figures of speech, e.g. similes, metaphors, hyperboles

And when you put it all together...seamless, it all fits precisely together like a 10,000 piece puzzle (but a much larger scale)

no contradictions, nothing false, no deceptions, no fantasy

perfect, unified wisdom for all ages in all of its parts

simply amazing.

And all of the words form a unified story of God's great love for mankind and his plan of redemption for mankind who has lost its way.

and all of the words show God at work in the world, in human hearts, making the Immanuel life available to whoever will call upon His name,

I hope that one of the fruits of this course for you will be an increasing appreciation and love for God's Word.

### Difficulties of the Bible:

In addition to the fact that it was written by many different authors over many centuries, in different languages, locations and cultures, the Bible, in most of its translations, is not provided chronologically.

For example, the prophets and writings are inserted after the historical accounts in which they occur and some of the prophetic writings do not indicate the situation to which they were speaking. (There are now a few chronological

Bibles available in which the authors have attempted to place all passages in their chronological sequence.

Additionally, there are many sub-plots and self-contained stories. (e.g. Abraham's trip to Egypt) making it difficult to follow the main themes of the Bible; e.g. What does the story of Dinah have to do with the main theme of God's salvation history?

### How to survey the Bible:

There are a number of different ways to sub-divide the Bible in order to conduct a survey of its contents:

1.     Genesis 1-3             Creation and Man's fall  
       Gen.4-Rev. 22         Restoration of man to fellowship with God
  
2.     Old Testament  
       New Testament
  
3.     Torah  
       History  
       Writings (Prophets, wisdom literature)  
       Gospels  
       Missions  
       Letters to churches  
       Revelation
  
4.     Dispensations: see Excel chart at the end of this chapter  
  
       Innocence  
       Conscience  
       Civil Government  
       Patriarchs  
       Law  
       Grace  
       Millenium
  
5.     Historical approach – trace the chronological sequence of all of the events recorded in the Bible
  
6.     Stages of God's revelation:  
       - communion:
  - a. with individuals
  - b. with a family
  - c. with tribes
  - d. with a people
  - e. with a nation
  - f. with Immanuel
  - g. in eternity

It is this sixth category that will be utilized in our review of God's "Immanuel" actions in time and space. Part of the reason in choosing this approach is that it is the least known by most Bible readers and therefore will provide a fresh approach to our high level review of time.

In addition, this approach provides a powerful tool for examining the "heroes of faith" as God was forming the character of Christ in them. We learn of Christian formation as we view the "with-God" characteristics of their lives and discover spiritual disciplines that they embraced in their adventures of life that enabled them to live a God-pleasing life while on the earth. We will also review the accounts of several persons who did not live "God-pleasing" lives and whose wayward steps led them down the paths of destruction and great loss. (e.g. Lot, Saul)

This approach also allows us to view the actions of God in time as he relates first of all to individuals, then to a family, to a tribe, a people, a nation and ultimately to all of mankind.

We will see the broad sweep of God's redemptive motions in time and space on behalf of His "crowning creation."

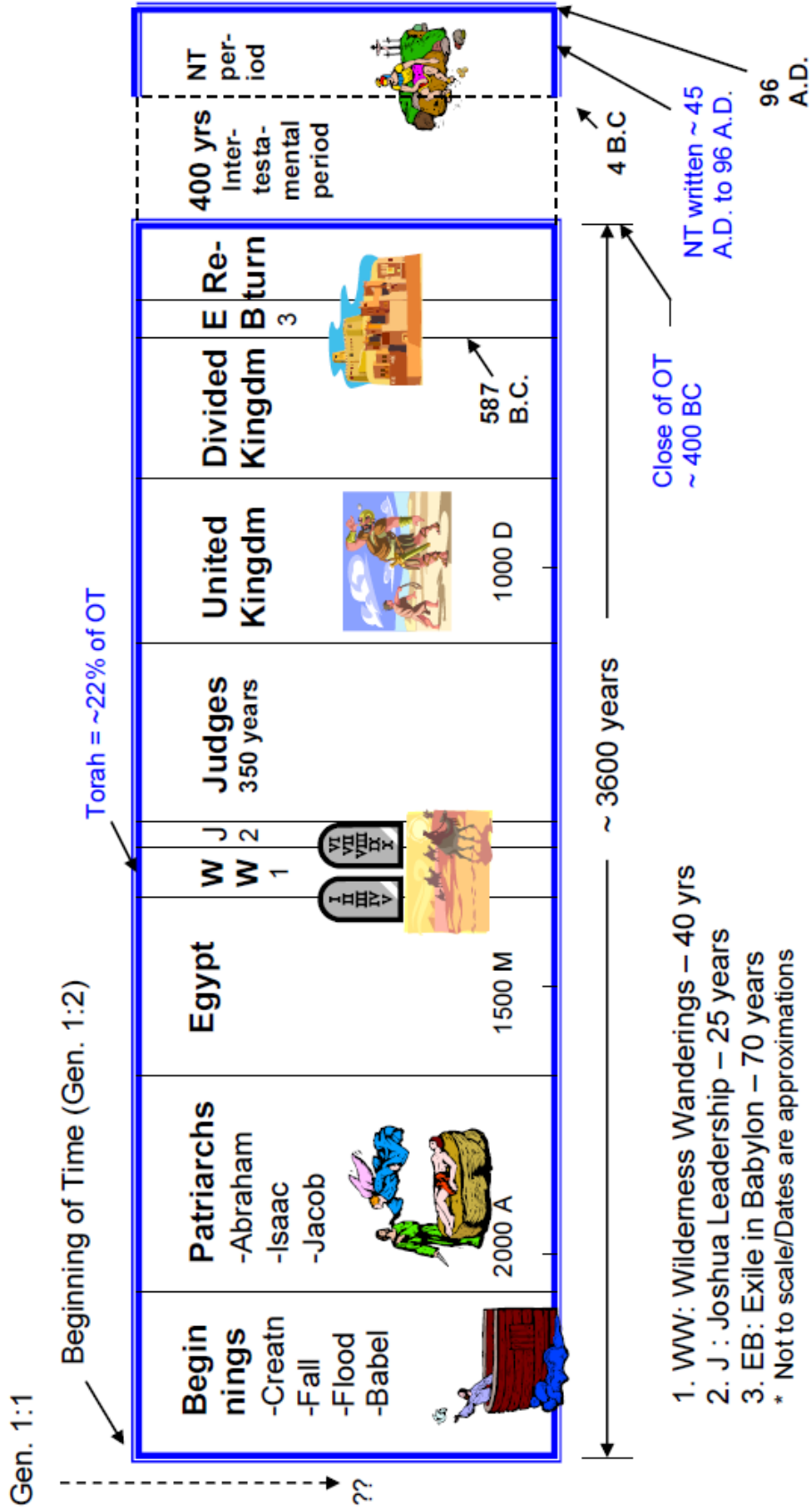
We will also learn much about the character and ways of God.

One of the primary goals of this course of studies is to provide new Christians with an overview of the entire Bible. To accomplish this objective, we will review the major characters and events of the Bible in the light of God's redemptive plan and in the light of character formation.

Several charts are provided at the end of this lesson which demonstrate ways of reviewing the history of God's actions in time.

## God's Plan of the Ages – Creation to the End of the NT Period\*

Note: Vertical lines separate distinguishable eras in Israel's History.



# God's Plan for the Ages – Creation to the End of Time

<b>Beginnings</b> Gen. 1-11	<b>Patriarchs</b> Gen 12-50	<b>Egypt-Exodus</b> Ex.- Deut.	<b>Conquest Judges</b> Jos.- I Sa.	<b>United Kingdom</b> Sam., Kgs. Chron.	<b>Divided Kingdom</b> Kgs. Chron. Prophets	<b>Exile</b> Kgs. Chron., Prophets	<b>Return</b> Ez., Neh., Esther
God in communion directly with individuals Creation – Sin – Flood- Babel	God mediates His plan thru a family Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Joseph Covenants	The people of God on the march Moses – Egypt Exodus 10 Commandments Wilderness	The tribes of Israel in the land Joshua Judges	God's people become a nation Saul – David – Solomon	God's people in rebellion – in difficult times – in daily living – in prayer and worship	God's people in captivity Assyria 722 B.C. (Israel) Babylon 586 B.C. (Judah)	God's people in restoration temple/wall rebuilt revival

Completion of Old Testament →

← Beginning of Time

<b>Intertental period</b> 400 – 4 B.C.	<b>The Gospels</b> Matt.- John	<b>Acts of the Apostles</b> Book of Acts	<b>Letters to the Churches</b> Romans- Jude	<b>The Church Age</b> (from Extra-biblical sources)	<b>Book of Revelation</b> God's People With Him Forever
preparation for the coming king Silence "2nd temple" Persia Greece – Alexander Egypt (Ptolemy) Syria (Seleucid) Macabbean Rome – Herod language - roads	the people of God with Immanuel The birth, life/ministry, death/resurrection of the Christ Salvation WON!	"the gospel to the world" Day of Pentecost- birth of the church Paul's 3 missionary journeys Martyrs for the gospel	Nurturing the church New Testament Oral Period Writing Period Collecting Period Interpretation and Application of the Gospel events to churches	The Spirit of God within His people Pentecost Constantine Church Fathers Dark Ages Reformation The Rapture of the Church Marriage Supper of the Lamb	7-Year Tribulation 2nd Coming of Christ Judgment of nations "The Millenium" Gog and Magog The Great White Throne Judgment Lake of Fire Eternal doom of Satan The New Jerusalem "IT IS DONE!!"

← Begin New Testament Period

End of Time →

CHART of the DISPENSATIONS of GOD									
DISPENSATION	4000 BC	3000BC	2000 BC	1000BC	0 B.C	Main Character	Test	Covenant	Result
<b>Innocence</b>						Adam	tree of knowledge of good and evil	Edenic	disobeyed God's command
3975 B.C. - 3975 B.C.									
Gen. 1:28 - 3:8									
<b>Conscience</b>						Adam	appropriate blood sacrifice for sins	Adamic	murder wickedness spreads throughout the earth
3975 B.C. - 2319 B.C.									
Gen. 3:9 - 8:14									
<b>Civil Government</b>						Noah	replenish and fill the earth	Noahic	tower of babel - astrology, polytheism
2319 B.C. - 1892 B.C.									
Gen. 8:15 - 11:32									
<b>Patriarchs</b>						Abraham	stay in the land	Abrahamic	propensity to leave the land
1892 B.C. - 1462 B.C.									
Gen. 12:1 - Ex. 18:27									
<b>Law</b>						Moses	keep the Law	Mosaic	didn't keep the Law rejected the Messiah
1462 B.C. - A.D. 29									
Ex. 19:1 - Acts 1:26									
<b>Grace</b>						Jesus	accept God's gracious gift	New	most men will not accept God's gift of grace
A.D. 29- A.D. 96						Paul			men will fail to accept the Messiah
Acts 2:1 - Rev. 19:21									
<b>Millenium</b>						Messiah	obedience to the new covenant and new king	New	
1000 years									
Rev. 20:1-10									



# LESSON #1

## Stage 1: Genesis 1-11

### Creation through the tower of Babel

Community Focus: God in communion directly with individuals

“The goal of God in history is the creation of a community of loving persons with God at the very center as its primary Sustainer and most-glorious Inhabitant.”<sup>1</sup>

### I. Background Information

Context: The beginning of time, God (plural) existing  
Earth not yet created.  
It is probable that angels were created and had fallen prior to Genesis 1:2.

Date: Adam and Eve have been dated to about 4000 B.C. although some modern scholars believe that this date may be more ancient, say 6000 – 10,000 B.C.

Also, there is no indication in Scripture as to how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before sin entered into the world.

Definitions: “Dispensation”- A dispensation is an administration, an economy, or a responsibility, a giving out of something which occurs during a specific era of time.

Biblically speaking, a dispensation is a period of time in which God dispenses His will in a specific and unique way. This dispensing of His will is based upon covenant conditions which He has initiated with mankind; e.g. Adam and Eve – covenant of obedience to one command.

“Narrative” - A narrative is a story which consists of a sequence of events, a character or characters, a setting and a plot.

“Hero story”- A hero story is a narrative built around the character and experiences of a central character (protagonist) who is a representative of a community or culture and exemplifies heroic character or ideals of the culture or community.

In Scripture, hero stories are utilized to provide an example of a person on a quest, such as walking with God, thereby demonstrating the struggles that might be encountered in a similar quest by the reader.

Our culture provides us with heroic characters such as superman or Walker, Texas Ranger, who encounter villains or difficult and dangerous situations where human life is at stake, and most often arrive at the point in the story of highest risk, do what is right and somehow, are always triumphant.

The biblical characters are not always triumphant and don't always do "the right thing." (We will look at one of them in this lesson.)

Nevertheless, they provide examples to us of people with whom God dwells and they demonstrate the struggles of the Immanuel (God with us) life.

"Protagonist" – the main character in a story  
comes from the Greek word for "first struggler."  
(opposite of antagonist)

"Adventure" – A narrated story in which the style of writing creates an atmosphere of excitement and the unusual accompanied by suspense.

Adventure stories include such elements as danger, conflict, risk, suspense, struggles between good and evil, chase scenes, storms, and the like.

In our culture, the movie industries employ many of these schemes at heightened levels to satisfy the desire for adventure. Bigger, better, faster, more bizarre seem to be the bywords of this present-day industry.

Literary Type<sup>1</sup>: Genesis is a narrative with interspersed genealogies.

Dispensations: Gen. 1:1- 3:8 Innocence or Freedom

Innocent of any sin or sin nature  
Freedom because they were not slaves to sin

Gen. 3:9- 8:14 Conscience or Self-determination

It was by conscience that God governed mankind at this time. (see Rom. 2:15) God dealt with mankind for a period of time on the basis of their conscience until it became so defiled that it was no longer able to govern God's economy in the world.

Self-determination because man was given the freedom to follow his own conscience.

Gen. 8:15 – 11:32 Civil government

Man was given the right of life and death and authority to rule over others.

## Main Events:

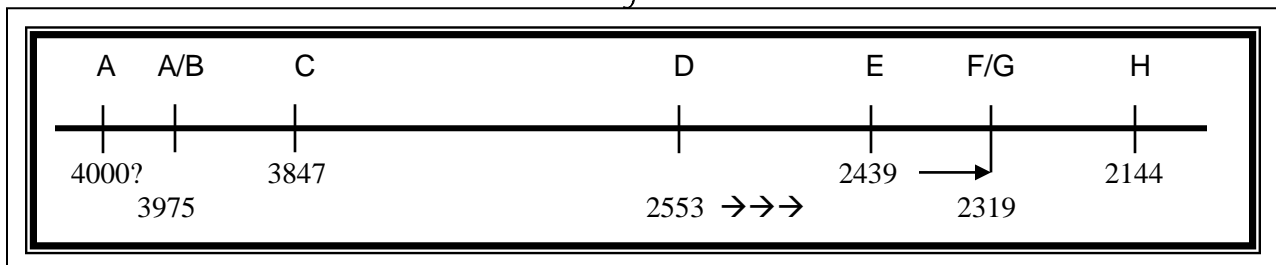
God revealed Himself as Creator of the cosmos in which mankind, the crowning act of creation, was made in His image. His creation of the earth was to prepare it as a dwelling for the man he would form out of the dust of the earth.

The major events in this era were\*:

- A. creation ~ 4000 (Reese = 3975 B.C.) Some modern-day scholars believe there is evidence to support a much earlier time frame for the creation of the earth ~ 6,000 – 10,000 years earlier.
- B. man's sin and fall (but with the promise of redemption) 3975 B.C. (Reese)
- C. Cain's murder of his brother Abel 3847 B.C.
- D. the rapid deterioration of mankind leading to the flood judgment beginning approximately 2553 B.C.
- E. building the ark begins 2439 B.C.
- F. Methuselah dies. 2319 B.C.
- G. the flood 2319 B.C.
- H. the tower of Babel judgment and dispersion 2144 B.C.

In this era, we also see the beginnings of crafts, e.g. musicians, metalworkers, and the beginnings of different languages and therefore, nations.

### Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)\*



- \* Dates are taken from Reese's Chronological Bible.  
Charts are not to scale.

## A Walk Through the Bible: Genesis 1-11

- Gen. 1 In the first chapter of the Bible, we see God creating the heavens and the earth and all that is within them. His creative acts (calling things into existence from the things not seen) were over a period of 6 days. He rested on the seventh day.
- Gen. 2 The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter provides a more detailed account of the creation of mankind and the man's initial life in the garden (fellowship with God.) Eve, his wife, is created from a part of Adam taken from his side.

- Gen. 3      The temptation and the fall of man are recorded including the divine judgments that are pronounced on each of the participants. Even in the midst of judgment, God provides the hope of redemption. The man and woman are banished from the garden. Sin, deterioration and death have now entered the world. Later, in one of the prophetic books, we will learn of the origin of sin...that it was first found in Lucifer now known as Satan.
- Gen. 4      The first brothers, Cain and Abel, offer sacrifices to God from the harvest of their work. Abel's sacrifice is acceptable to God but Cain's is not. In jealousy and anger, Cain rises up against his brother in the field and kills him. (the first recorded murder in the Bible.)
- Gen. 5      This chapter provides a listing (genealogy) of the descendants of Adam and Eve.
- Gen. 6      The wickedness of mankind on the earth becomes so great that God determines to destroy all of mankind. However, one righteous man, Noah, found favor in God's eyes.
- Gen. 7-9    Noah builds an ark according to the specifications given to him by God. The work of construction takes 120 years and then the cataclysm of the flood comes. All of mankind, except Noah and his family (8 persons in all), are destroyed. God gives Noah the sign of the rainbow to assure him that He will not again devastate the earth with a flood.
- Gen. 10     Chapter 10 provides a listing of the descendants of Noah and his sons.
- Gen. 11     The people on the earth have one language. They decide to build a tower in the area of Shinar (ancient Babylon) to dwell there and to make a name for themselves.
- This is contrary to God's instruction to populate the earth. He confuses their language such that they are now people with many different languages. They stop building the tower and move to many different places on the earth.

## II. **Genesis 1-11 Discussion**

Building God's Community: God in communion directly with individuals

Mankind was created for God's glory and it has been His intention from the very beginning to develop a community of people who are committed to Him in love, faith and obedience. One of His earliest commands to the man was to fill the earth indicating His desire to be glorified throughout the earth.

During this, the first stage of His actions, we see God relating directly to individuals. He speaks with them and walks with them in the garden. He gives the man authority to name animals and teaches him how to take care of the garden. There is no mediator between God and man at this point in time. Man can fellowship directly with God because sin has not yet worked its wickedness in the heart of man.

However, man disobeyed God's one command and sin entered in. Man could no longer walk with God in the garden because unrighteousness had invaded his being.

God did, however, continue to interface directly with man. Cain and Abel were given instructions for atoning for sin through sacrifice. The Scriptures reveal that God continued to interface with mankind on an individual basis as is evidenced in the early chapters by references to Seth, Enoch and Noah. Genesis 4:26 says that, at this time, men began to call upon the Lord.

In the next chapter, we will see the focus of God's community action shifting from individuals to a single family on the earth. Through one family, all of the earth is to be blessed.

Today, we're going to take a brief look at the first 11 chapters of Genesis. As we do, we'll see the main events of this era which lasted about 2000 years and examine some of the ways of God during this period.

Imagine a person who has never heard about God. He or she knows nothing about the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

Your task is to introduce them to Him. Where do you begin? What would you do?

I understand that this God wanted us to know about Himself and that He gave us a book which we could read to learn about Him.

Why not start at the beginning of this book and walk them through the first chapters of the book within the book entitled Genesis which means "beginning."

In the very first words of the Bible, God begins to reveal Himself to mankind:

Gen. 1:1

*"Bereshith"* – In beginning (God already existing)  
period of time with a beginning and an end.

'bara' – the verb "to create ex nihilo" which means out of nothing  
He spoke and the power of His voice called things into  
existence that had no prior existence.

When you look at objects in creation, from this verse we understand that these were initially birthed within the chambers of His voice.

“Elohim” - plural god acting in unison (verb is singular)  
From subsequent passages we will learn that this Elohim “baras” everything that exists in time and space.

We also see an orderly progression in His creative activity.

As we move through the pages of the first chapter, we see Him creating:

light, waters, an expanse, dry land, plants with seeds, stars, sun and moon, fish and birds, living creatures, things that crawl on the ground – a sequence in which one object necessarily precedes the subsequent ones. (had to have seas before the fish, land before plants, dry ground for man to stand on, and all these to support the life He would create.)

On the final day of His “bara” activities, He creates two beings that, in some ways, are like Himself. These two creatures are similar but are also very different as time will tell.

This final creative activity is the climax of His creative activities.

If we would stop and look at what’s been happening, it would seem that He has something specific in mind, perhaps even a “grand purpose” to all of these creative activities.

What could it be? Why is He going to all of this effort?

Have you ever read a mystery and couldn’t wait to get to the end of the book to see “whodunit?”

Well...let’s take a look at the end of the book and see if there is a clue about His grand purpose.”

Read Rev. 21:1-3

So...we now have a glimpse of what God is working towards:

God’s goal in history is a community of people with Him at the center.

“The goal of God in time and space is the creation of a community of loving persons with God at the very center as its primary Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.”

As we study through the Bible, keep this perspective in mind knowing that God's actions are always moving forward toward this specific purpose.

Now, Let's go back to the beginning.

He places the man and woman on the earth and communes with them.

commune meaning to converse intimately,  
to have a relationship,  
to exchange thoughts and feelings.

Then, in Gen. 1:28, He says something very significant to the man and woman:

“multiply and fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion over it“

This is an important scripture for us because it shows us that, from the beginning, it was God's plan that we should rule over and, therefore, take responsibility for the earth.

Together with God, mankind would bring about the purposes God had envisioned for the earth. We would be co-regents with God.

### **III. God's Actions:**

In the early chapters of Genesis, we begin to see how God interacts with the people He has created. I call this their “with God” life.

It is characterized by 3 elements: conversational, direct, intermittent

- conversational – because He speaks with them and they speak with Him.

He doesn't reveal the form He assumed but the Scripture is very clear that personal conversations were taking place.

Their conversations were specific, practical and propositional.  
(propositional because He enters into an agreement with them)

They interact with Him – obeying, disobeying, questioning, objecting, rationalizing.

Also...in these first days of man on earth, we see that God has given them quite bit of freedom. In fact, there is only one limitation: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (They are not to eat the fruit of it.)

Freedom to choose is an important element in God's plan. Apart from the freedom to choose, their obedience and worship would be mechanical, like a robot going through the motions. God understands that true worship and true glory for Himself will occur as man faces a real choice to obey or disobey.

It also becomes apparent that the responsibility of freedom requires character. And, from chapter 5 of Romans, we learn that the formation of godly character occurs as we make wise choices in response to God's purposes in our lives. (suffering – endurance – character - hope)

However, the freedom to choose does not mean that they are free from the consequences of their choices.

So God placed a single opportunity for character formation in their lives, the forbidden tree. This causes me to believe that, even though the creative acts that brought them into existence were good, it's just that they were not complete. There was still some character formation that was needed. This would be accomplished through the personal choices they would make.

- direct - 2<sup>nd</sup> element of their interaction with God

They speak directly with God. They hear His voice. He is shown to be physically present with them. They walk with Him. They hear the sound of Him walking in the garden. They hide from His presence.

When they choose to disobey and act independently from God, separation occurs. They hide from God (or so they think.) This initial encounter shows us that man's response to his own sin is to hide from God. No one had to tell Adam and Eve that they had "done wrong." Their consciences did.

Fellowship with God was broken.

And, even though interaction with God begins to diminish on the earth, there were still a few people on the earth who walked with God and Him with them. God had not abandoned His creation.

- intermittent - the third element of their interaction with God

It's important for us to realize that, even in the beginning, God was not always with them. He gave them space to make their own decisions and choices. And He wasn't hiding behind a tree waiting and watching to catch them doing wrong.

The tragedy that occurs when we choose not to obey God is that we take on an identity that focuses on ourselves and then we're left with trying to survive in the world under the direction of our own wisdom.



This is what happened in Gen. 3 and the deterioration of mankind had begun.

There is a parallel in the NT in the book of Romans, first chapter, starting with verse 18. In it, Paul catalogs the decline of man through 7 steps resulting in a people who are totally depraved and debased.

As we follow the Scriptures through chapter 6, we see that, in the short space of slightly more than a millennia (~ 1200 years) man has become so wicked that God determines to destroy him.

God decides to eliminate all of mankind but finds one righteous man among the wicked hoards. The world-wide flood is His judgment on the disobedient of the earth but the righteous man and His family are saved. Here we learn that the effects of a righteous life can have an effect on the lives of their families.

After the flood judgment, mankind continues on its downward spiral. This even though Noah, a righteous man, was now the head of the human race.

In disobedience to God, mankind gathers together to build a high tower to make a name for themselves and for the purposes of consulting the stars. This is in direct disobedience to God's command to populate the earth.

All are judged with the "confusion of tongues."  
As a result, people separated according to their languages.  
Thus, we have the origin of the diversity of languages on the earth.

#### **IV. Man's Response:**

Mankind's response to God's creative activity and the freedoms He allowed were to disobey the loving Creator and to seek their own interests and guide their own lives. (They didn't want God to rule over them.)

The selfishness of humanity ignores God's directives and leads to the depravity of mankind.

Nevertheless, a few individuals of character (e.g. Noah, Enoch), responded to God and found favor in His sight.

That's the way it was then and still is today, those who seek Him can find favor in His sight.

## **V. Formation Benefits:**

The major benefit to our Christian formation in individual communion with God is the good and beneficial effect of His direct presence. Those who walked with Him were blessed with His favor. Those who didn't became evil in all their ways. Gen. 6:6

We find direction for our lives when he is present.  
Without Him, we are without direction and purpose.

Recall God's ultimate goal: He is our sustainer and provider.

Without His good influence, we will deteriorate into the Romans 1 debased and immoral person living according to our own natural desires.

In order to successfully complete our journey on earth, we simply must live in fellowship with Him.

## **VI. Limits to our Formation**

In the midst of our "with-God" life, we need to recognize its limitations:

"The conscious, direct, conversational relationship with God cannot be our whole life." (like a man living with his wife, always connected but not always present)

If it were, we would never grow. We would remain babes constantly looking for Him to "spoon-feed" us.

Remember Peter in Matt. 17:2 Moses, Jesus, Elijah: "Let's make some tents and we'll all just dwell here together." He wanted to stay in the presence of these 3 godly men.

We need the interactions of the world, the trials and temptations. In these, as we make right choices according to divine purposes, formation occurs.

In these first 11 chapters of the Bible, humanity's progress and development is limited to individual lives and specifically, for only those who are in direct fellowship with Him.

It becomes apparent from the 3 judgments and the deterioration of mankind in the space of a couple of millennia, that the process of individual communion with God needs to be amended. It simply isn't happening. (see Gen. 6:6)

Beginning in Chapter 12, God begins to institute a new phase of His development of the human race which embraces the concept of mediation.

He chooses a man, Abram, who will become a family, a people and a nation through whom God will ultimately institute the element of mediation of His presence to the whole world. It reaches its ultimate perfection and completion in Christ Jesus.

## **VII. What can we learn?**

1. It is God's plan and desire for cooperative efforts with us in our oversight of the world and for communion with us. God has not abandoned this method of His presence even though humanity consistently fails in their obedience to Him.
2. God's presence with us in mediated forms is needed because of the condition of mankind.
3. Because of our finiteness and personal limitations, we cannot successfully overcome by the immediate presence of God.

(Note that Adam and Eve fell even though they had direct access to God and did not have a sin nature.)

What we need are gradual, obedient, humble steps towards God in which Christian formation occurs.

## **VIII. Character Studies:**

### Adam and Eve:

Adam and Eve were created as adult persons. They had no childhood and hence no early childhood training in obedience or in relationships. They did not experience the disciplines of parenting.

They are representative of all of mankind and illustrate what each of us will do when presented with a choice to obey or disobey.

They were presented with a deceptive choice in which Satan questioned God's truthfulness. This illustrates to us the principle way that he works against us: "Did God say...?" (unbelief) His method is to create doubt and self-government. And so it is today, man wants to be his own boss. And he does not want God in his life to tell him what to do. The devil plants seeds of doubt as to the character of God, who He is and what He does.

Sin entered into the world through this one man's sin; but we all, when faced with similar choices, choose to disobey God. (see Romans 1)

What God is looking for in His creation is faith and trust which are followed by obedience and worship.

Can we believe God's Word and can we trust Him that He has our best interests in mind in all of His actions for us? Scripture certainly indicates that He is involved in the details of our lives in positive ways even though we may not perceive his actions that way. (e.g. Ps. 121)

Can you think of situations where you have been tempted to doubt God's love and character and His actions for you?

Has God ever "failed" you?

When sin entered into the world, death became the lot of every man and woman. Even this was an act of God's mercy because He did not want us to live forever in a "fallen" state.

And even though judgment was necessary, God provided the hope of redemption and restoration in the judgment pronounced on the woman.

Cain - "the conflict of sin with the holiness of God"

Cain illustrates the conflict of sin with God in an individual's life.

Cain and Abel brought offerings to God from their labor. Cain's offering was not acceptable to God. His response to God's displeasure revealed the condition of his heart.

He had two courses of action he could take:

1. humble himself, ask God as to why his offering was not acceptable and provide an acceptable offering, or
2. give in to the sin which was "lurking nearby." (Crouching at the door" – depicts a predator animal preparing to leap on its prey.)

God warned Cain when he perceived his anger. At this point, Cain could have confessed his anger, repented and asked God about the appropriate sacrifice.

However, Cain, in his anger, gave in to sin and killed his brother. As a result, the ground would no longer yield its harvest to him and he would be a fugitive all of his days. When he complained to God that people would kill him, God, in mercy, placed a mark on him so people would not take his life.

Richard Foster's book "Celebration of Discipline" lists confession as a discipline of the Christian life. He describes it as a deep sorrow over having offended the heart of God. This sorrow over sin should be followed by open confession and a forsaking of the sin involved.

One of the keys to negotiating the terrain of confession is a quick response to the internal symptoms that "something is wrong" in our relationship with God. The

longer the turmoil seethes within, the more likely the “way of Cain” will find its way into our footsteps.

Since the body of flesh is not yet dead, we will continue to sin. However, God has made a way for us to crucify the old man and its desires or when stumbling to regain fellowship by repentance and confession. (see I John 1:9)

Noah – “the first (and longest) marathon”

Noah was a godly man who lived many years in communion with God. He knew God.

When God gave him the instruction to build a boat unlike any he had ever seen (and not near any large body of water) for a flood unlike any he had ever seen, Noah obeyed. Pretty amazing, wouldn't you say?

It took him 120 years to build the ark. No power tools, no Home Depot to get his lumber and supplies, no large corporation to fund his work and provide positive advertising. Just him and his family... cutting down trees and shaping the lumber the old-fashioned way (by hand). The task he was to complete was the longest task ever undertaken by a single man on the face of the earth.

And...there was no promise of converts or positive press reviews.

Because Noah knew God, He trusted him and he also knew His commands. And because he trusted Him, he would obey His commands. Today, religious communities market “religious experience.” But God still ask us to sign up for a long life of obedience cultivating the radical life-heart of holiness.

True knowledge of God is learned in a life of obedience.

Noah's obedience reaped its reward; but it was some time coming. We can also learn about Noah's perseverance from the flood story and the fact that we don't often receive or perceive the rewards of our obedience immediately.

Our calling is to obey the instructions that God gives us and to leave the outcome and its effects in God's hands.

## **IX. Homework:**

Adam and Eve:

1. How would you answer the question: “Why am I being held accountable for the sin of Adam? He disobeyed and now I'm suffering the judgment of sin because of his disobedience.”

2. God told Adam that: "In the day you eat thereof (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you will die."

Did Adam die on the day that he ate the forbidden fruit?

3. Why did God drive Adam and Eve out of the garden?
4. Does the garden of Eden still exist today? Explain your answer.

Cain:

1. What did God mean when He said "sin is crouching at the door?" (Gen. 4:7)
2. Both Cain and Abel were offering up sacrifices to God. Is it fair to assume that they had been informed of the appropriate offerings that God would accept?
3. Cain and Abel were the first persons born on the earth by natural birth. What can we learn from the great difference in the way they approached their sacrifice to God?
4. Was Cain, because of the way he was born, already predestined to sin against God? Or did he have a choice?

Noah:

1. How did Noah get all of the animals on the ark?
2. Were there dinosaurs on the ark?
3. How would the ark accommodate both "flesh" eaters and "plant" eaters?
4. Why did God decide to destroy mankind which He had created?

### Spiritual Disciplines:

Adam and Eve: doubted God's Word instead of the obedience God expected

This account also shows us that we have a real enemy who is working against us.

And...it shows us how he works.

Cain: confession

Noah: obedience, perseverance, serving (completing a task no matter)

**A. Creation Time Model**  
(from God's Word)

**CREATION/EVOLUTION TIME MODEL**



Before Time	Creation Week	Adam/Eve to sin	Sin to Flood	Flood to Christ's Return	Millenium	New Creation
God existed "I AM"	"7 days" "ex nihilo" Earth called into existence Earth placed into orbit & rotation Stars in place Sun & moon created Vegetation All animals created according to distinct "kinds" Creation of man from the dust "It was good"	Fellowship with God No sin No death or decay No disease No rain – mist from the ground Canopy Man & animals eat plants Temperature of earth same throughout Long lives (~ 900 years) No thorns, thistles (weeds) Dinosaurs	Fellowship with God broken Sin Death Decay Disease No rain – mist from the ground Canopy Vegetarians  Temperature of the earth same throughout Long lives  Thorns/thistles  Dinosaurs Physical changes: - serpent - woman - ground cursed	Fellowship can be restored Sin in all men Death Decay continues Disease Rain World-wide Flood Canopy destroyed Meat added to diet Man subject to cosmic radiation Diverse temperatures Ice at polar regions Life span shortened Fossil record (from flood) Some dinosaurs becoming extinct	1000 years Satan chained Christ rules on earth No deception	End of time No night No sun/moon No death No curse No sorrow No pain Satan banished Redemption complete God dwelling with His people

**B. Evolution Time Model**

Beginnings??....."all processes continue as they have from the beginning".....??

Lifeless	"Natural Selection"	purpose???
Chaos	"Survival of the fittest"	hope??
Mass	"Mutation"	
Forces	"Hopeful Monsters"??	

Age of the earth ~ 4,500,000,000 years

Date: Aug. 15, 2007

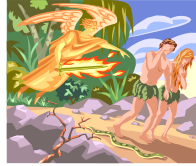


## The Condition of Man



#	Before Sin	After Sin/Before Christ Applies to all persons at birth	After Christ Those in Christ	After Resurrection Those in Christ
1	Kingdom of God Dwelted in garden of Eden (Paradise)	Kingdom of this world Driven from Garden of Eden	Kingdom of God Earth dwellers, looking ahead to the new Jerusalem	Kingdom of God New Jerusalem (Rev. 21)
2	In fellowship with God	<b>Fellowship broken/hiding</b>	Fellowship can be restored	Perfect fellowship with
3	Created in the image of God	Image of God in man marred	Image of God is progressively restored	A new creation (I Jn. 3:2)
4	Man is whole-hearted	Due to sin, the heart of man can be broken into parts.	A divided heart can be reunited in Christ.	Whole, complete
5	Destiny – undecided	Destiny determined by faith	Destiny determined by faith	<b>Destiny decided.</b>
6	Adam and Eve in fellowship	Fellowship with each other is marred/competitive.	Their fellowship can grow with God's help.	Fellowship not marred...no sin.
7	Had the ability to sin or not to sin.	"Don't have to, but can't help it."	Don't have to, have ability to resist sin. Can be delivered from the power of sin.	No sinful nature. Made new
8	Morally free/innocent, no guilt, shame, condemnation	Guilt, shame, condemnation, judgment	Guilt, shame, judgment condemnation can be removed.	No guilt, shame for those in Christ. Eternal judgment for those not in Christ.
9	Pure, no sinful nature	Sinful nature	Sinful nature can be subdued, out to death	New creation, old order has passed away.
10	No sickness, death or mourning	Sickness, death, mourning	Sickness, death, mourning continue but with grace from	No sickness, death, mourning
11	Peace	Strife, warfare, fighting	Peace with God; warfare among men can be diminished.	Peace for those I Christ
12	Free will	Free will but tarnished, distorted, ability to choose goodness	Free will can be instructed by the Holy Spirit to do right.	A new creation





## The Condition of Man

(page 2 of 2)



13	God established as ruler.	God is still the ruler over all of creation, man in rebellion	God is still ruler over all of creation, man is growing in submission (God's children)	God is ruler over all. Harmony, peace, perfect submission.
14	Dominion over and peace with all of	Dominion and peace not complete, a struggle	Dominion and peace not complete, still a struggle	A new creation
15	Man and woman were partners	Still partners, but now a rivalry exists.	Their relationship can grow in Christ.	No marriage in heaven.
16	Man and woman – no authority relationship established	Woman in subjection to man but still equal partners.	Woman still in subjection to man,	No authority relationship.
17	Childbearing not difficult or painful	Pain in childbirth, a change to the woman	Pain in childbirth continues.	No childbearing
18	Food easily obtainable.	Food obtained by hard work.	Food obtained by hard work but man has grace to carry	Food provided by God.
19	Man was perfect but not complete. (His life was not eternal.)	Man has become defective.	In Christ, man has begun the process of restoration.	A new creation
20	Period of probation (trial period)	<b>Mankind fails the test.</b>	Man tested by trials.	Man's destiny is determined.
21	Creation is good.	Creation is subjected to frustration, futility (Rom. 8:19)	Creation still in bondage to decay, not yet restored but	A new creation
22	No weeds thorns or thistles	Weeds, thorns, thistles	Weeds, thorns, thistles	No weeds, thorns, thistles
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## LESSON #2

### Stage 2: Genesis 12-50

#### The Period of the Patriarchs

Community Focus: God begins to mediate His plan of redemption through a family

#### I. Background

Building God's Community: God begins to mediate his plan of redemption through a family.

The second stage in God's action to develop a loving community with Him at the center began with His selection of a single family on the earth to be His representative.

In Genesis 12, God selects Abram who will be the patriarch of the family. Through him and his family, all the nations will be blessed.

Through a series of encounters with Abram, God enters into binding covenants with him and gives him many promises. The covenants with Abram (later renamed Abraham by God) are passed on from Abraham to his son Isaac and then to Jacob.

Each one in turn has difficulties in their relationships with God. Abraham institutes his own program to produce a son rather than waiting for God; Isaac lies about his wife; Jacob, using deceit, tricks his older brother into selling him the birthright of the first-born. Later, he deceives Isaac into giving him the patriarchal blessing that was due to Esau.

This stage of God's actions with a family, is completed when Joseph takes the whole family, seventy in all, into Egypt where they will prosper for a time but then be forced into slave labor for many painful years.

#### Dispensation:

This is referred to as the dispensation of promise or of Patriarchal Rule.

God enters into covenant with Abraham who becomes the "Patriarch (father) of the family that God will use to bless all nations.

#### Context:

In the beginning, God began to reveal himself to mankind on an individual basis.

We saw in Lesson #2 that God interfaced directly with the people he had created. There was no mediator such as we have in Christ today.

God revealed Himself as Creator of the universe of which mankind, created in His image, was the crowning act of His creation. His creation of

the earth was to prepare it as a dwelling for the man he would form out of the dust of the earth.

The major events in this era were:

- creation
- man's sin and fall (but with the promise of redemption 3:15)
- Cain's murder of his brother Abel
- the rapid moral deterioration of mankind resulting in the judgment of the flood.
- the tower of Babel judgment in which God confused the tongues of men causing them to disperse throughout the earth.

Now, beginning in chapter 12, God will begin to reveal Himself in a family. The whole earth (all of mankind) is eventually to be blessed by this family. God's plan of redemption of mankind now shifts to one man from the line of Shem...Abram.

Date: The recorded events in the life of Abraham begin in approximately 1967 B.C. The period of the Patriarchs recorded in Genesis 12-50 continues to 1606 B.C., the time of Joseph in Egypt.

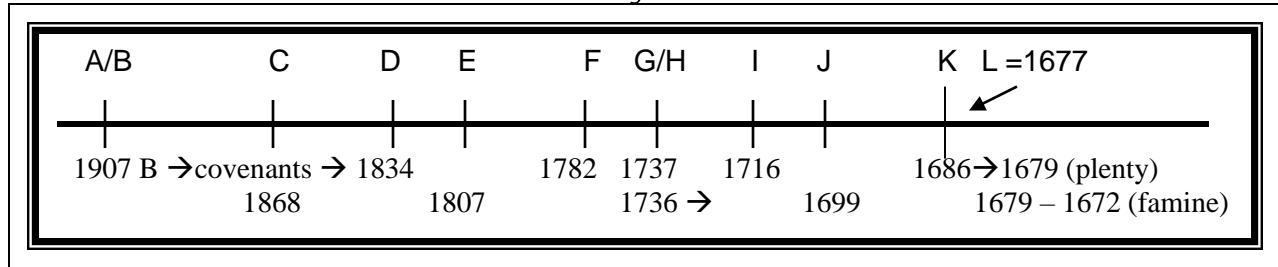
Literary Type: The major literary type in this era is a "hero story" (a narrative) in which much of what the author wants to say is embodied in the person and experiences of his main characters, i.e. Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. (See definition of "hero story" in lesson #2.)

## **II. Summary of this era**

### Major Events:

- A. The calling of Abraham to leave his homeland 1907 B.C.
- B. The covenants between God and Abraham 1907 - 1834
- C. The miraculous birth of Isaac 1868 B.C.
- D. The "offering" of Isaac as a sacrifice 1834 B.C.
- E. The births of Jacob and Esau 1807 B.C.
- F. Jacob (through deception) secures the birthright of the first born
- G. 1782 B.C. and the blessing from Esau. 1737 B.C.
- H. Jacob in the land of Haran – 2 wives, 2 concubines and the birth of 12 sons who will eventually become the 12 tribes of Israel. 1736 B.C. →
- I. Jacob wrestles with God. 1716 B.C.
- J. Joseph is sold into slavery, 1699 B.C.
- K. The famine throughout the land  
Years of plenty 1686 – 1679 B.C.  
Famine 1679 – 1672 B.C.
- L. Israel moves to Egypt where they will become a great nation. 1677 B.C.

## Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### Dispensation Theme:

The major theme of the Patriarchal period is the calling of a family from which the Messiah will ultimately arise.

The primary focus of the history of Abraham is the covenants of God's promises. There are four major elements within the covenants God makes with Abraham: (See chart at the end of this chapter.)

1. Abram's descendants would become a great nation;
2. His descendants would possess the promised land;
3. His descendants would be God's own people; and
4. All of the nations of the earth would be blessed through this family.

The family of Abraham will give birth to a nation through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. "In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed..." Gen. 22:18

In Genesis 1-11, we saw God revealing Himself to individuals. But, in spite of God's gracious actions towards them, little progress was made towards the development of a faithful people to carry God's name. God begins a new era of mediation through a single family in which He charges Abraham to instruct his children and his household to keep the ways of the Lord.

### A Walk through the Bible from Genesis 12 through 50:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Gen. 12    | Abram is called by God to leave his country, relatives and father's household. He does, but not exactly as God has specified. (His father and Lot (relatives) go with him.) |
| Gen. 13    | Abram and Lot separate.   |
| Gen. 15-16 | God reaffirms the covenant with Abram and gives additional provisions.  |

Abraham and Sarah are still without a child so Sarah offers her handmaid to produce an heir, a culturally acceptable thing to do. Abraham accepts her offer and Ishmael is conceived.

Gen. 17–21 The covenant is reaffirmed. Circumcision is initiated as the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. Abraham is promised a son through Sarah. A year later, the promise is fulfilled.

Gen. 22 Abraham is commanded by God to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice. As he raises his knife to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, God provides a substitute sacrifice, a ram caught in a bush. (This typifies the substitutionary death Christ would suffer for us centuries later.)

Abraham's faith is tested and proven.

Gen. 26 The covenant with Abraham is established with Isaac.

Gen. 27 The covenant (because of Jacob's deception) is conferred upon Jacob and not Esau.

Gen. 28 Because Esau is planning to kill Jacob for his deception, Jacob leaves for Haran supposedly to find a wife.

As he is on his way to Haran, Jacob has a vision of a ladder stretching from the earth to the heavens. Angels are ascending and descending on the ladder. The Lord, who is standing at the top of the ladder, affirms the covenant of Abraham and Isaac to Jacob.

Jacob has now become the family link through which God's plan to redeem the world will be fulfilled.

Gen. 29-30 Jacob takes two wives and, with them and 2 concubines, will have 12 sons. These sons will become the heads of the tribes of Israel.

Gen. 31-33 Jacob returns to Canaan. He has a happy reunion with Esau who bears him no grudge for his deceit in stealing the blessing and the birthright.

Gen. 37-39 Joseph, the 11<sup>th</sup> son and Jacob's favorite, is sold into slavery by his angry, jealous brothers. The brothers deceive Jacob into believing that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal. (Note: There is no scriptural evidence that, even when Joseph was reunited with Jacob, the sons ever told Jacob what they had done to Joseph.)

Joseph has success in his new owner's home in Egypt and is promoted to overseer of his household.

All is going well until his owner's wife, angered because Joseph refuses her amorous approaches, falsely accuses him and he is sent off to prison.

Gen. 41-45 Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream (which none of his magicians and wise men can do) and is promptly promoted to the number two position over all of Egypt. The dream foretells 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine.

When the famine arrives, it effects Canaan where Jacob and his sons are living. They travel to Egypt to get grain but Joseph does not yet reveal his identity to them.

They return a second time and his identity is disclosed. He is greatly impacted emotionally by the reunion and is very gracious towards those who had betrayed him. He has learned that: "what they had meant for evil, God had planned for good."

Gen. 46-50 Joseph brings the entire family of Jacob (70 persons total) to Egypt. Jacob initially fears to go to Egypt but God tells him not to fear and that he will make Israel into a great nation there and bring them back to Canaan.

God's Action: He gives promises, establishes covenant and begins the work of making a great nation.

Man's Response: Abraham - faith and obedience (Although his obedience is incomplete, God did not abandon him.)

Lot – a divided heart, compromises with evil, loses his wife and wealth

Jacob - perseverance in times of adversity

Joseph – held on to the revelation of God  
faithful service (discipline of serving)  
forgiving spirit  
chastity

### III. Class Discussion:

Key elements: 1. God moves from individual communion to a family.  
2. Institution of the covenant

The covenant is passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob.

Background: In Genesis 1-11, several major events are interspersed over 2000 years.

Genesis 12-50 is a series of connected family narratives over a period of 230 years.

Note the significant difference between chapters 1-11 and 12-50.

And...from the rest of the Bible to Revelation is ~ 1700 years

As we travel through our survey of the Bible, it will be important for us to allow God's Word to speak to our hearts.

For example, in the story of Cain, the principle issue was Cain's heart towards God in the sacrifice. The text focuses on Cain and his heart attitude and not on the correctness of the sacrifice.

How do we discover his heart? by his words and actions: He was angry, killed, lied, and was unrepentant.

I think it's interesting to note what the Scriptures don't tell you, i.e. what was wrong with his sacrifice since grain offerings were acceptable offerings within the OT sacrificial system. see Gen. 4:4

An important key to biblical interpretation is OBSERVATION. What does the text say?

For us, the point of application is: "What are my heart attitudes when giving to the Lord?" When giving, am I giving grudgingly, out of compulsion, wishing I didn't have to give so much, or is my heart glad to give what I can in each circumstance?

### **Context:**

Last week, we looked at the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

In these chapters, we saw that:

1. God began to reveal Himself to individuals.
  - He revealed Himself as powerful in His acts of creation.
  - He worked with intelligent design and order
  - He gave responsibilities to mankind.
  - He is the maker, sustainer and possessor of everything that exists in time and space.
2. He interfaced with people individually. This was conversational, direct, intermittent, propositional
3. Adam and Eve disobeyed the one limitation they were given thus allowing sin to enter the world. (This is huge!! This is the problem of man today.)
4. Man's response to God was one of continuing disobedience and man continued to deteriorate.

5. God brought judgments to mankind because of their disobedience.

**And we need to ask:** What was God's purpose in all of this?

“the creation of a community of loving persons with God Himself at the center as its prime Sustainer and most glorious inhabitant.”

**Genesis 12-50:** God chooses a man to head a family.

When you read the “with-God” stories of the patriarchs, you might wonder how all of this relates to God's overall plan for time and space.

These accounts relate because God is now shifting his interaction from an individual basis to a specific family basis. **The redemption of mankind from sin and restoration to God will come from one of the descendants of this family.**

We saw in our last study that God's efforts to form a community of people with Him at the center is mostly unsuccessful. God has given mankind the freedom of choice and He does not force anyone to trust or obey Him.

But...only a few seek Him. And most disobey and go their own way.

He now directs His efforts to establish His community with a specific family. He will give Abram a charge to walk in the ways of the Lord and he will become a blessing to all of mankind. Abraham's family is the first family called by God to be the means of redeeming grace to all families.

But if this family is to be a blessing to all families that will live on the earth, it will need to survive the lifetimes of the initial families. And they will need a permanent home. They would need more secure roots than a wandering Bedouin's tent could provide.

They will need a place to stay.

So...in Gen. 15:18-20, God gives them the land where they are currently residing.

It's important to note that Abraham's calling was not due to any special merit he may have had, but solely to the grace and choice of God. God initiated the calling upon Abraham, not Abraham himself.

Likewise with us, God calls us and chooses us but not on the basis of any personal merit that we might have.

The physical descendants of Abraham and Sarah will provide the bloodline for the coming Messiah which would be God's blessing to all peoples.

#### **IV. Man's Reaction:**

Abraham: What can we say about Abraham?



Abram responds to God's call in faith and trust, leaving his homeland for a place "that God will show him."

Because he believes what God has said, God counts him as righteous. (righteous being defined as having a right relationship with God)

But the road he travels is not a smooth road.

What happened to Abraham?

- A famine occurs in the land and he travels to Egypt where he calls Sarah his sister because he feared that the men of the land would take a liking to her and plot to kill him so as to have her. (an action that was not uncommon in this culture)
- Sarah's apparent infertility causes him concern and he initiates a human process to father a "child of promise."
- tension between him and Lot
- the test of sacrificing Isaac.

How do these incidents connect?

Why did God include them in the canon of Scripture?

This shows us that the way of righteousness will be a way of testing.

Who orchestrated these events? And why?

God - so we can learn that, for the called of God, there will be bumps in the road.

Lesson for us today

Even though he has personal failures, Abraham is still accounted righteous by God.

Another encouraging lesson for us – the faithfulness of God

His descendants: How did Abraham's descendants respond in this new approach with a family as the mediator to God?

Abraham's descendants respond in different ways but most reveal doubts and uncertainties.

**Isaac** leaves the land during a famine and also lies about his wife. (sins of the father visiting his family)

He trusts his family too much and is deceived into believing Jacob is Esau. He couldn't see with his physical eyes but he could still pray and see with spiritual eyes.

What can we say about **Jacob** the deceiver. He gives me hope because, in Jacob, I can see very clearly that God doesn't use perfect people.

Jacob had one of the most dysfunctional families recorded in Scripture. 2 wives, 2 concubines...What would you expect?

Yet, he wrestled with God and obtained the blessing.

This shows me the necessity of persevering in the faith.

Jacob's sons sell **Joseph** into slavery. But Joseph becomes an example of one who has properly placed his trust in the living God. Several times the Scriptures tell us that "God was with him."

An encouraging element in the stories of Abraham's descendants is that, in the midst of their dysfunctional and unformed character, God maintains his commitment to the covenant. This is "chesed" – a big word in the Bible which means covenant faithfulness.

God is continuing to reveal something about Himself.

They live as transients until Jacob takes his family to Egypt. There they become the 12 tribes of Israel, heirs of the Abrahamic covenant which will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

God has now moved from individuals, to a family, to tribes which will eventually become a nation.

## **V. Benefits for our Formation:**

In the action of selecting a single family, God sets His seal of approval on the importance of a family's continuance. It is bigger than any one person's life.

The family now becomes the repository for the teachings it has received about God and has the responsibility of transmitting them to the next generation.

In this action, God also puts His stamp of approval on the reproductive process and family relationships.

Through the basic constitution of the family, God's love and grace are revealed.

We also see in the family constructed by God, the support through teachings and prayers of the individual members.

In these stories, we see that God keeps His promises in spite of our failings and weaknesses.

## **VI. Insights for our Formation:**

Abraham: the importance of trusting in the promise of God  
initiation of the covenant

the importance of faith  
Isaac: obedience (as he submits to being offered as a sacrifice)  
Jacob: perseverance in times of adversity  
Joseph: persistence in hope, the discipline of serving and generosity in the midst of ill treatment

In these accounts of the “with God” life, we see the frailties of human life as contrasted with the steadfast faithfulness of our God.

## VII. Character Studies

Character Studies: (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

### 1. Abraham – “faith, obedience and sacrifice”

In addition to the focus on Abraham as a man of faith, several themes emerge in the narrative of the events of his life;

1. the progressive revelation of God’s covenant with Abraham
2. Abraham’s quest for a son and a land
3. the struggle between faith and “the ways of man”

God spoke to Abraham. Abraham believed God and so he left his home, not knowing where he was going or what kind of future lay before him.

His obedience meant leaving his natural family, its relationships, its culture and surroundings for the unknown.

Later, this same God would call him to offer up the son of promise. Scripture records that the very next day (after receiving the instruction from God), he set out to fulfill the word of God.

Faith and obedience often bring uncertainties into our lives. Faith can mean taking an initial voluntary step from the known into the unknown in response to the Word of God. God didn’t tell Abraham what lay ahead; He merely said: “Go.” He would be led by God as he obeyed the commands he was given.

Abraham, of course, was not perfect (none of us are) and that’s part of the beauty of the literature of God. He shows us the “life with God” as lived out by a person much like us, complete with defects and deficiencies.

We often elevate the characters of God’s record to “superhuman” status, but that is not the “stuff of scripture.” God, in Abraham, shows us, in simplicity, the kind of faith that pleases Him, a faith which He also looks for in us. Abraham’s faith did not require that he be strong, mighty, wise, good looking, well-bred, well-educated (although he was some of these things), but simply that he believe God.

He was a man such as us with similar desires, hopes and motivations.

He believed and his belief was followed with obedience and subsequently, the obedience to sacrifice.

Abraham stumbled at times. He took a trip south to Egypt without God's direction. He lied to Pharaoh about his wife because of fear. He submitted to his wife's suggestion and fathered a child that would be a thorn in the side of his descendants for generations. (It is important to note that scripture records that God recognized Isaac as Abraham's only son.)

But, underlying it all, he believed God and God attributed it to him as righteousness.

Even two thousand years later, another hero of the faith, would quote the story of Abraham's faith leaving it indelibly etched on the pages of the New Testament text. (Paul)

Another important element in the story of Abraham is that God dealt with him step by step. As Abraham took each step of faith, God revealed more of His plan and promises to Abraham. This is a "way of God" that we can expect to see in our own lives.

The first step was the beginning but it did not guarantee a successful ending. Many have taken the first steps of faith only to later end up choked by thorns, the cares of the world or the deceitfulness of riches." (see Jesus parable of the 4 seeds in Matt. 13)

Abraham's perseverance in his faith led him to faithful steps along the way of life and ultimately richer blessing.

Disciplines to embrace: obedience, sacrifice, perseverance

If we were to write this in the terms of the New Testament present tense verb, we would say: continuing obedience,  
continuing sacrifice, and  
continuing perseverance, until the finish line of our race is reached.

This is a snapshot of some of the key elements of the life of faith.

## 2. Lot – "the compromise of a divided heart"

Lot is declared by Peter (II Pet. 2:7-9) to have been a righteous and godly man. Nevertheless, he made serious mistakes that almost cost him his life and did indeed cost him his wife and wealth. He made choices that brought him too close to evil such that his life became interwoven with the people of a wicked, idolatrous city.

His initial mistake recorded in biblical history was his choice of the best land and then pitching his tent near the city of Sodom. (Gen. 13)

Abraham and Lot had grown so wealthy that there was not sufficient space for all of their flocks and herds. When Abraham offered him first choice of lands, he looked toward the “round of the Jordon” and saw that it was well-watered and excellent for herding, never mind the fact that it was the land of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked, debased cities.

In tracing his steps, we see him moving among the cities of the plain as far as Sodom. Later we see that he is dwelling in the city. He has also arranged marriages for his daughters with men of the city. (His trail follows the steps of Psalm 1:1: first walking, then standing, now sitting in the presence of the ungodly.)

Although he did not embrace the gods of the city, he lived among them and in so doing, his affections became entangled with them. II Pet. 2:7 records that Lot’s soul was tormented daily by their filthy deeds. His compromising attitude caused him and his wife to become attached to a wicked city and its culture.

Even after receiving a stern warning from the angelic visitors, he still lingered within the city. The angels forcefully removed him from the city to save his life. In the process, his wife, with her entangled heart, looked longingly back in disobedience towards the city and lost her life.

Why did Lot fail? What caused him to become entangled with the world and also lead his family in their ways? Lot was a true follower of God.

In a word...he had a divided, compromising heart. His pursuit of righteousness was not wholehearted. His heart had become entangled with a culture of unrighteousness.

He evidently thought it was acceptable to live within a wicked city and enjoy the benefits of its prosperity. (Important lesson: Be careful where you choose to live.)

Additionally, he did not understand or underestimated the power of wealth, of goods, of material comforts to draw even the godly into sinful affections and relationships. Jesus taught the parable of the four seeds (Luke 8:4-15) in which the third seed represented those who fell among thorns and became choked with the cares, riches and pleasures of life and bringing no fruit from a mature life. Was not this Lot?

Lot’s slipping into compromise began when he chose the prospect of wealth (the lush pasturelands) and prosperity over the avoidance of evil.

Our responsibilities regarding the world are:

- not to misuse the things of the world. (I Cor. 7:31)
- to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. (Eph. 5:11)

- to keep ourselves unspotted (blameless) from the world. (James 1:27)
- not to love the world. (I John 2:15-17)

According to Martin Luther: "There are three conversions that are necessary within the Christian life: the heart, the mind and the purse."

Lot lost his wife, his home, his wealth and eventually the purity of his family as his daughters later seduced him leading him into moral impurity with them, all of this coming to pass because of his misguided choices.

### 3. Joseph – 3 trials:

The story of Joseph is one of the outstanding stories of the Scriptures. It contains the adventure elements of treachery and betrayal, temptation and lust, disappointment and being forgotten.

A young man, born into wealth and position, a favorite of his father, is betrayed by his jealous brothers and sold into slavery, a slavery that would last for 13 very long years.

He served faithfully in the house of his owner but was eventually betrayed by his owner's wife for refusing her affections. His chastity led to a trip to prison. (We can't always expect our good deeds to receive a positive reward.)

While in prison, he again served faithfully and was rewarded with increasing responsibilities.

At one point, he interpreted dreams for the king's wine taster and baker. But, he received no reward and was a "forgotten" man. Two years later he would be remembered and promoted to the number two position in the land.

#### Some thoughts about Joseph:

Initially, when betrayed by his brothers, he lost everything except the thing most important. Scripture records on several occasions that "God was with him." And with this, he could go on in life, accepting the "hand that was dealt to him."

Taking a brief look at Joseph's early childhood with an eye to the future 13 years away, we can understand that Joseph was not, at the age of 17, prepared to be Pharaoh's number two man. He didn't know the language of Egypt, he was not humble, he didn't know how to relate to people, he didn't know the culture of Egypt, he didn't know the land of Egypt, he wasn't a skilled administrator, he was not a skilled leader, etc. There was much to learn and much character to form in preparation for his great assignment of rescuing Israel and the land during the time of famine.

He was not aware of it, but God also had other purposes in bringing him, and subsequently the "seventy," into Egypt. Israel was slowly being assimilated by the inhabitants of the land and would subsequently lose their identity as a "set-

apart” people if they stayed in the land. In addition, their faith was being polluted by their idolatrous relationships with the people of the land.

In Egypt, they would not be embraced by the Egyptian culture but would be relegated to a separate district where God would begin forging them into a great nation. (Egyptians despised Hebrews.)

So God took Joseph into his furnace of affliction to remove the dross and prepare His chosen vessel for a great work.

But...Joseph didn't know or understand what God was doing.

He did know, however, that God was with him and that enabled him to embrace this imposed position of life (riches to rags), do the best job he could, behave in a God-honoring way and wait for the unfolding of God's plan.

Two spiritual disciplines that stand out in Joseph's life are:

Chastity, he kept himself pure. (when tempted over a prolonged period of time by his master's wife)

Serving – Every place he went, he was successful as a servant.

In addition, he had a forgiving spirit. God had revealed to him that the whole “time of slavery” was His doing in order to save the family. So, when being reunited with the brothers who had betrayed him, he was not only forgiving but showed a magnanimous spirit towards them in generosity and in encouraging them not to blame themselves.

#### Spiritual discipline summary:

Abraham: Obedience  
Sacrifice  
Perseverance

Lot: Lacking wholeheartedness  
Compromise versus avoidance of evil  
His example is a strong warning of the responsibility of being whole-hearted.

His decision-making process was defective. He chose his “place” based upon the potential for wealth, not on the basis of spiritual considerations. Would these neighborly relations promote a godly life? Our decisions in life such as where to work or live will have a significant impact on our spiritual lives.

Joseph: Chastity – He resisted the fleshly temptation to embrace his masters wife.

Serving – In his father’s home, he was served. Now he would learn to be a servant. And in his service, he was blessed.

### The Ways of God:

In Genesis 1-11, God interacts with mankind on an individual basis.

In Genesis 12-50, God begins to establish his community by calling a single family upon the earth into fellowship with Him. Through this family, all of the nations of the earth are to be blessed.

Much space in scripture is given to the recording of “generations” (genealogies) so that there will be a written record that documents God’s faithfulness to the promises he has made with Abraham. (See first chapters of Matthew and Luke)

Abraham, the patriarch of the family, is accounted righteous by God not because of what he achieved but solely because he believed God. So also, is it with us.

Upon reading the records of this family, we learn that God is faithful in spite of our faults or weaknesses.

### Insights from Gen. 12-50 for spiritual formation:

1. God calls us to a faith life which will include a degree of uncertainty and unknowing.
2. God reveals to us what we need to know for the moment. He seldom shows us the whole picture of where we’re going and what we will be doing.
3. God’s timing is not man’s timing. (see Abraham’s story) God answers prayer; but often not as quickly as man desires. (We want it right now...a mark of our culture) The delay in receiving our answers is a time of formation and testing of the individual.

Our need: to learn to trust God.

In Abraham’s example, we see the importance of waiting for the fulfillment of God’s purposes.

4. Sins will impede our progress in the faith and sometimes leave a residue of judgment that lasts for a time. (e.g. Abraham - Esau)
5. From Lot’s story, we see the importance of avoiding evil company and the wages of compromise.



We also see in Lot's story the importance of godly principles in making choices.

6. God is at work in each individual's life to prepare them for the callings He has for them. (e.g. Joseph)

Often, we are not aware or cognizant of what God is doing or even that He is doing anything.

## VIII. Homework assignments:

### Abraham:

1. What did Abraham know about the place to which God would lead him?
2. What was the result of Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's plan by a method of his own choosing?
3. What character quality did Abraham show to his nephew Lot when giving him the opportunity to make the first choice of land?

### Lot:

1. What environments do you dwell within...at home, the neighborhood... your work, etc. What in your dwelling places encourages you to be faithful and what lures you away from a righteous life?

Do you have positive role models for living for God while living in the world?

Are you a role model?

2. How are you affected when your bank account, your goods or your comforts are threatened?
3. What level of success do you have using the monies you receive for the glory of God's kingdom?
4. Summarize why God included the story of Lot in the Scriptures.
5. What knowledge did Lot have of the wickedness of the cities in which he chose to dwell?

How far was their position from Sodom and Gomorrah when Abraham and Lot looked over the "round of the Jordan?"

Should he have explored the territory before choosing to live there?  
What was defective in his decision-making process?

How do we/you determine where to live?

Joseph:

1. Describe the radical change in life style Joseph encountered when his brothers sold him into slavery.
2. At the age of 17, what was Joseph's "state of preparation" for the task of saving Egypt in the time of famine which would come?
3. What areas of training would be necessary before he could assume the position of #2 in the land?
4. What disciplines did Joseph embrace during his time of slavery that enabled him to "come out on the other side" successfully?
5. Read Gen. 39:2. Why was Joseph successful?



Abram's call

# Dispensation of the Patriarchs Genesis 12-50

"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."



Haran



Canaan

Abraham



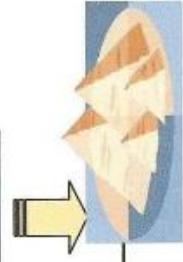
Isaac



Jacob



Joseph



Egypt

1891 B.C.

1867 B.C.

Dateline 1892 B.C.

1834 B.C.

1737 B.C.

1699 B.C.

1606 B.C.

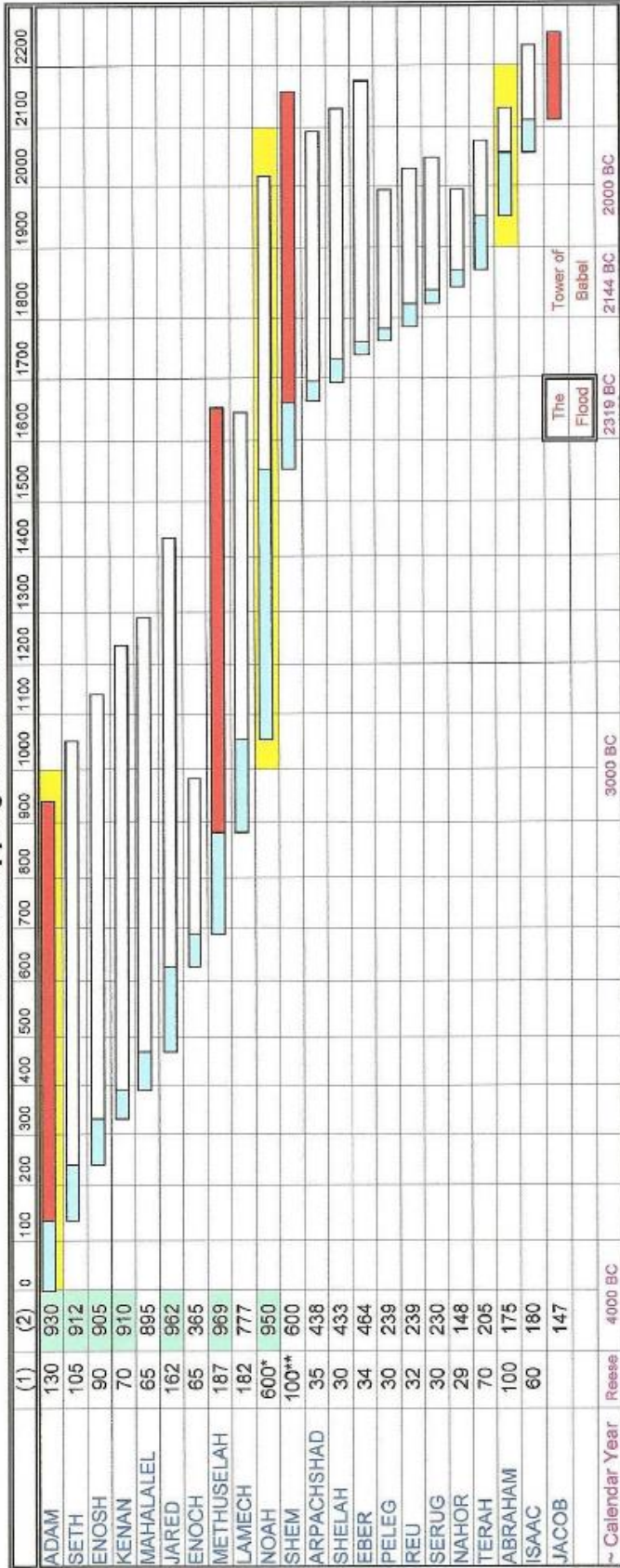


sacrifice of Isaac

Jacob's ladder



### The Overlapping of the Patriarch's Lives



File: Ages at the Beginning of Time.xls

Facts: Noah lived 58 years after the birth of Abraham.  
 Adam was alive at the time of Lamech's birth.  
 Shem died when Jacob was 48.  
 Shem and Eber outlived Abraham.  
 Adam to Jacob - 3 links

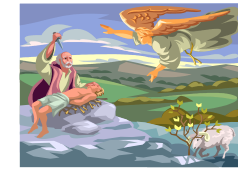
(1) Age at birth of son  
 (2) Years lived  
 \* 600 at beginning of the flood  
 \*\* 98 at end of the flood

Names:	Definitions:
NOAH	rest
SHEM	name
ARPACHSHAD	stronghold of the Chaldees
SHELAH	be still/rest
EBER	"the man across"/"the opposite side"
PELEG	division
REU	friend/companion
SERUG	branch (district in Mesopotamia)
NAHOR	snore/snort
TERAH	type of mountain goat/bex
ABRAHAM	father of a multitude
ISAAC	laughter
JACOB	supplanter

It appears that some of them gave their names to the districts or areas which they or their descendants occupied.



## The Covenants of Abraham



#	Reference	The Promise	The Instruction	Response
1	12:1-3	Make you a great nation, bless you, make your name great, all the families of the earth to be blessed.	Leave your country, your family, your father's house	Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him (12:4)
2	13:14-18	All the land...I give to you and your descendants forever; His descendants...as the dust of the earth	Arise, walk in the land.	Abram moved his tent to Hebron and built an altar (for worship)
3	15:1-21	One from your own body shall be your heir; Descendants as numerous as the stars; His descendants will be in a foreign land for 400 years, they shall come out with great possessions; you shall be buried at a good, old age. smoking oven and burning torch that passed through the sacrificial animals	Count the stars (if you can)	Abram believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness
4	17:1-27	Multiply him exceedingly; a father of many nations, name changed to Abraham, exceedingly fruitful, Many nations from him, an everlasting covenant, The land given as an everlasting possession; Sarah shall bear a son. He will establish his covenant with Isaac.	Walk before me and be blameless, Keep my covenant, Circumcise all male children	Abraham circumcised all of the male children in his household.
5	18:1-18	Sarah shall have a son, a great nation, all nations		Sarah laughed, then lied about it.
6	22:1-19	Descendants multiplied, possess the gates of their enemies, In his seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed	Sacrifice your son, but God provided a ram instead.	Abraham obeyed God's instructions.
7	26:23-25	Promise to bless <b>Isaac's</b> descendants	"Do not fear."	Isaac built an altar and called on
8	35:9-15	The covenant extended to <b>Jacob</b> , promise to multiply his descendants and give them the land; Name changed to Israel.	Be fruitful and multiply.	Jacob sets up a pillar of stone and poured a drink offering of oil on it, calling the place Bethel.

\* References are from the book of Genesis

## LESSON #3

### Stage 3: Exodus through Deuteronomy

#### The Exodus from Egypt through the wilderness wanderings

Community Focus: The people of God on the march

#### I. Background

Building God's Community: the people of God on the march (an epic)

The family of God has become 12 tribes while in Egypt with the sons of Jacob becoming the heads of each tribe.

They become enslaved in Egypt because they were becoming too numerous and too strong for the Egyptians. They cry out to God in their slavery and He sends Moses to lead them out of Egypt and into the promised land.

During their journey to the land God has promised them, God gives them the Law of Moses, the tabernacle and the ark which is His dwelling place in the midst of the camp, within the holy of holies of the tabernacle. The Law shows them how they are to live within their covenant relationship with God.

Dispensation:

This period of time begins in the 4<sup>th</sup> dispensation of Promise or Patriarchal rule. In this dispensation, new divine revelation was given to the key person in this dispensation, Abraham. His responsibility in this dispensation was to believe God's word and to dwell in the land. We saw several instances where Abraham and his offspring left the land and troubles came upon them.

In Exodus 19, the dispensation of Law begins. This is a lengthy dispensation lasting throughout the rest of the Old Testament and ending with the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah which ushers in the dispensation of grace.

This dispensation gets its name from the giving of the Law through Moses in which 613 specific commands were given to Israel.

This dispensation involved two criteria: keeping the 613 commandments and obeying the prophets God would send to them.

Context:

The early chapters of Exodus find the family of Israel in Egypt.

They enjoy prosperity and the blessings of the womb for a season, as long as Joseph is still alive. After he died, a ruler eventually ascended to the throne of Egypt who did not know Joseph.

He became concerned for his nation because the people of Israel were becoming more numerous and more powerful than his people. As a result of these concerns, he put the people of Israel into a forced bondage.

Dates:

1580 to 1423 B.C. (see Time Chart of Major Events below)

Definitions:

“Epic”

The American Heritage Dictionary defines epic as: “an extended narrative poem celebrating episodes of a people’s heroic tradition, typically developed by oral composition and a final version being transcribed after the introduction of writing.”

An epic generally sums up what a culture or people want to communicate about themselves during a particular period of their history.

Literary Type:

The primary literary form of this stage of our journey through the Bible is that of “narrative.” However, each book in this segment contains variations on the narrative theme plus other literary genres as discussed below.

Exodus: The principle literary form of the book of Exodus is that of an epic. In this case, it is a narrative of the life of the nation of Israel as led by God through his main character, Moses.

Leviticus: The literary style of this book is that of “utopian literature.” Utopia comes from the Greek language for “a good place” which in turn indicates “a good society.” A utopian society not only portrays a good society but also provides the rules and regulations for such a society.

Leviticus contains a manual for worship, a law code, a guide for community health regulations and a liturgical calendar.

Numbers: The book of Numbers is partly a book of historical narrative and also a manual of laws and regulations.

Deuteronomy: This book is a farewell discourse in which Moses speaks to the people of Israel. In these discourses, Moses revisits the past and gives instructions and regulations for living in the promised land.

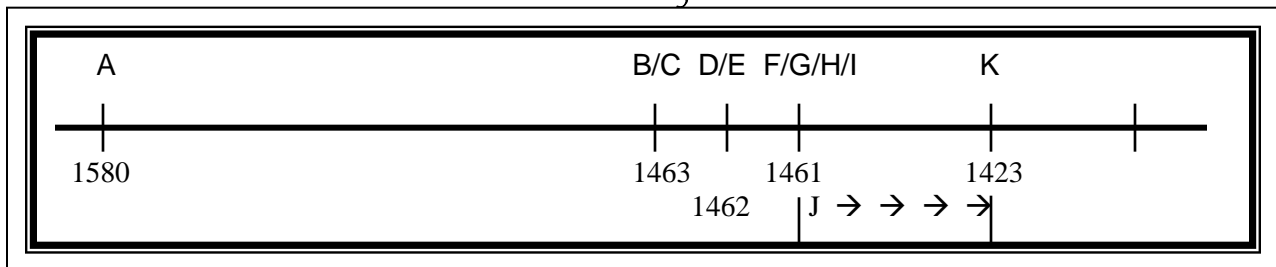
**II. Summary of this era:**

Main events:

- A. Israel bondage in Egypt begins 1580

- B. Moses calling by God 1463 B.C.
- C. Moses and the plagues 1463 B.C.
- D. Exodus from Egypt begins 1462
- E. Giving of the law at Mt. Sinai 1462 B.C.
- F. The Tabernacle is built 1461 B.C.
- G. Israel travels to the promised land 1461 B.C.
- H. The spies and the resulting rebellion 1461 B.C.
- I. Defeat by Amalekites 1461 B.C.
- J. 38 Years of wandering in the desert 1461 – 1423 B.C.
- K. Final speeches of Moses, Moses death 1423 B.C.

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



A Walk through the Bible from Exodus through Deuteronomy:

Exodus:

After Joseph’s death, the Hebrew people are subjected to cruel bondage.

God raises up Moses who, after a series of 10 plagues visited upon Egypt, secures their release from Pharaoh.

They journey through the wilderness and eventually reach the foot of Mt. Sinai where God gives them “the Law.”

The Tabernacle is built and God’s glory fills it.

Leviticus:

Israel has entered into covenant with God and He now gives them rules and regulations as to how He wants them to live.

There are 4 major sections in Leviticus dealing with sacrifice, worship, purity and holiness.

Numbers:

Israel has received the Law at Mt. Sinai and now travels to the promised land.

Upon arriving at the promised land (Canaan), 12 spies are sent to spy out the land. 10 of the spies are adamant that the inhabitants are too numerous and too



large for them to defeat. Only two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, encourage Israel that victory can be won.

Israel follows the recommendation of the 10 spies and the nation is judged by God for their disobedience.

38 years of wandering in the desert occur until all of the adults from the previous generation have died (except Caleb and Joshua).

Moses, because of a disobedience, is not allowed to enter the land, only to see it from a distance.

Deuteronomy:

Moses presents his final sermons in which he repeats and expands the initial law given to Israel. Deuteronomy means: "second giving of the Law."

Moses, shortly thereafter, dies and is buried by God. His place of burial is unknown. Scripture records that: "God buried him."

God's Actions:

He listens to His people and hears their cries for deliverance.

He delivers His people from cruel bondage.

He displays His mighty power in the plagues of Egypt.

He destroys their enemy.

He establishes a theocracy (God ruling) and gives rules and regulations for living in covenant with God.

He guides the people through the desert and provides the coverings of a cloud and fiery pillar to protect His people. He gives them food every day, manna, which means: "what is it?".

He forgives their rebellion and provides food and drink for them. Their clothes do not wear out.

He shows great patience and longsuffering towards His complaining, rebellious people.

He pronounces judgment for disobedience.

He raises up a new generation to be His people.

Man's Responses:

God's people cry out for deliverance.



But God has not left them without hope. There is hope in the midst of tribulation: Each time a baby was born to Israel, it would be a constant reminder to Israel of God's covenant promise.

An important question that is often asked is:

“Why did God allow this to happen to His people?”  
Why was this intense suffering being permitted?  
Is Israel being punished for sin?”

God had told Jacob that it was okay to go to Egypt. Gen. 46:1-4

People will live their whole lives and die under this bondage.

**Multiple Choice Test to class:** Choose the correct answers to the question above.

- A. God tests His people to see if they will follow Him no matter the cost. They need to see own hearts.
- B. He is forming and shaping His community of people much as a potter shapes the clay he is molding. The fires of affliction remove the dross/impurities.  
  
(Rom. 5: suffering produces endurance which produces character)
- C. In these desperate times, people will call upon God who alone is able to provide deliverance. Through His deliverances His name is glorified and people learn about God.
- D. The people were so stubborn that their formation into a community of God took a lot of shaping by the potter.

All answers are correct. Something of this magnitude in the life of Israel must surely have had more than one purpose.

So what did the people do? They cried out to God for deliverance from their oppressors.

B. The birth and calling of Moses

God listened to them and answered their cries showing that He is not deaf nor insensitive to their cries for help.

And Moses was born into this furnace of affliction.

But deliverance wasn't immediate. God's servant must be prepared...and that takes time.

- Moses - 40 years in Egypt
- 40 years in the wilderness before he was prepared to lead the people.

This reminds us that the servant of God isn't prepared for service over night.

We see that Moses did respond to God's call but with some reluctance.

If you were Moses' counselor, how would you have instructed him?

My answer: God does not call us to work without equipping us for the task.

### C. Israel's deliverance from Egypt

Moses and Aaron speak to Pharaoh and ask him to let the people go into the wilderness to worship God.

Was this a ruse just to get Israel out of Egypt? (an action meant to deceive or mislead)  
Or...was God preparing to do something?

When Pharaoh refuses to let them leave, God visits them with plagues.

What was the significance of the plagues?

They fall on areas of life that were supposedly under the protection of Egypt's gods. Further, some plagues were allowed to fall on the Egyptians and not Israel further demonstrating God's power.

Read Ex. 5:2

These plagues answered Pharaoh's question: "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?" (Ex. 5:2)

Finally, at the expense of his first-born son, Pharaoh releases the people.

One other sidelight: Josh. 2:8-10 the news of what was going on in Egypt spread rapidly.

What was the population of Israel at this time?

How could we estimate an approximate number? see book of Numbers – the first census.

The exodus from Egypt is one of the great epics of all time. ~ 3 million people + their livestock + as much of their possessions as they could carry

Try to imagine 3 Million people gathering as much of their goods and livestock as they could and exiting from Egypt as quickly as they could.

Imagine: A hurricane is moving quickly towards Wilmington and we have to quickly evacuate 100,000 people. Can you imagine the panic, chaos and stress of such an operation?

Multiply it by 30 and you have Israel leaving Egypt.

#### D. The Red Sea

Then they come to the red (or reed) sea.

They see Pharaoh's army coming and figured that they are "goners."

How long did it take them to cross through the Red Sea? overnight  
(I would like to have been a "fly on the wall" to observe this event.)

How could they see their way? the light of God's pillar of fire

God had called them out and had not deserted them.

They cross over and Pharaoh's army is drowned.

What a rollercoaster of emotions they have been on:

- pits – harsh bondage in Egypt
- heights – Moses comes from the wilderness to tell them God has called him to deliver them from bondage,
- pits – Pharaoh refuses to let them leave and increases the severity of their bondage,
- heights – 10 plagues and Pharaoh releases them to worship God in the wilderness
- depths – Pharaoh pursues them and has them cornered against the sea
- heights – the sea open, they cross on dry ground, Pharaoh's army is drowned

What lessons did they learn? That God could part the sea in an emergency.

What could they have learned that would have been useful to them in their wilderness wanderings? God is Lord over nature.

Read Ex. 15:22-25 just 3 days into the march

#### E. The 10 Commandments/Giving of the Law

Next, Moses leads them to Mt. Sinai where God gives them the 10 commandments and the moral codes for living together in a community. In this, He binds them to Himself in covenant.

The giving of the Law installs the moral code and religious practices that are designed to keep God always before the people.

The 613 laws provided the code for governing civil life in Israel.

It identifies God's expectations for relating to one another in community and in their worship of God.

Discuss laws as representative: If a man steals an ox or sheep...Ex. 22:1  
Don't get drunk on wine...  
You shall not covet your neighbor's house...Ex. 21:17

Discuss : the 20,509 laws of the U.S. congress.  
Were the 613 Laws burdensome to Israel?

The active presence of God: On the mountain, they are now brought into the active presence of God as He appears to them in the cloud, the pillar of fire and as the glory of the Lord fills the temple.

Ex. 3:10 "that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

Ex. 3:12 "you shall serve God on this mountain."

Ex. 3:18 "...3 days into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God."

What was happening here?

On the mountain: Ex. 20:18ff "When all the people saw the thunder and flashes of lightning, the trumpet and the cloud covering the mountain, the people were afraid and trembled and stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us lest we die."

Clue: What was one of the functions of the trumpet during these times? announce a coming dignitary

Long trumpet blast... (the king heralded)

The presence of the king...thunder, lightnings:

The King of the universe was being announced!

**Moses was introducing God to the people.**

In Egypt, they didn't know God.

If Moses had taken them to the promised land not knowing God, they would have instituted the religious worship of the gods of Egypt.

God is revealing Himself to them so they will love and trust Him.

Why did they think they would die? They were a sinful people who still had much of Egypt within them. (plus, they didn't know God.)

Every time there was a difficulty, what was their response? complaint and longing for the leeks (a member of the onion family) and onions of Egypt.

They lacked faith in the power of God to conquer the promised land even though He has told them that he will drive out their enemies. Ex. 34:11 This coming after they

have seen the 10 plagues on Egypt, the red sea part for them, its return to drown the army of Pharaoh and the mighty manifestations of God on the mountain.

Through all of this, God is displaying His might, His Sovereignty and His love for His people.

F. The building of the Tabernacle

Next is the building of the tabernacle – the moveable tent where God’s presence will dwell. Now we see a physical picture of God’s ultimate plan. (Rev. 21:1-3)

He will dwell with His people.

G. Disobedience at the border of the promised land

These are the people who have seen the plagues, the red sea parted, the army drowned, the glory of God in thunder, lightning and the cloud.

How can they not trust God after all of this?

1. The 10 spies saw with natural eyes.
2. Caleb Num. 14:24 had a different spirit
3. self-focused, much of Egypt left within them

H. Desert Wanderings – book of Numbers (named after 2 censuses that were taken)

Hebrew: “In the Wilderness”

Ex. 16 Bread from heaven: each day equivalent of 2 trains of 110 box cars daily to feed the hosts of Israel.

The Journey: 10 times complaints – no water, we want meat, etc....

I. Moses: 3 Final Speeches – Deuteronomy – “2<sup>nd</sup> Law”

Moses final words – rehearses the events and teachings of Exodus  
“a call to love and obey God”

**IV. Benefits for our formation:**

In the beginning of this process, God manifested His presence in spectacular ways.

The new birth is often attended with signs, evidences and feelings.  
But...it is not God’s intention that we depend on the feelings and signs for our walk.

As we progress through this time in Israel's history, once the tabernacle is installed, God's presence becomes more localized and focuses on the tabernacle.

Through the priesthoods of the tabernacle, God makes Himself available and accessible.

Every action, every piece of furniture, every ritual provides a connection between heaven and earth – the altar of incense, the bronze altar for burnt offerings, the bread of the presence - are all physical pictures of spiritual realities.

The laws of the covenant also provide a way to deal with misconduct.

## **V. Limitations:**

The Law has no ability to save us.

Merely obeying the laws has no ability to change us inwardly.

## **VI. Insights for Our Formation:**

1. Although we are a called-out people and members of the body of Christ, we each stand individually before God to give an account of our deeds.
2. The Law provides clear moral guidelines to assist us in a God-pleasing life style. Repeated, right choices form character just as repeated physical exercises builds strong muscles and endurance. (Note: physical fitness trainers are careful to design exercises that will build the right type of body strength. (e.g. a runner doesn't want to bulk up.)
3. God appoints individuals in every community to be the leaders of His people to preside at rituals and liturgies to instruct the people and assist them in the formation of their faith. (e.g. pastors interpreting the Word)  
  
e.g. "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God"
4. We see the importance for each community to have an institutional structure.
5. We also see the need for a new spirit and spiritual eyes.
6. Another significant lesson in this era is that God has a plan and He accomplishes it according to His timetable. This, at times, means we will have to wait for His answers.

## **VII. Character Studies**

Character Studies: (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

- Moses



Given the circumstances of his birth (Pharaoh killing all of the Hebrew male children), Moses should have died as a baby. But his mother, in faith, put him in a basket and set it in the reeds by the river. Her daughter Miriam watched from a distance to see what would happen to the child.

He was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and trained in the house of Pharaoh.

He spent the first 40 years of his life in the luxury of the royal family.

Once he learned of his true origin, he identified with the Israelites, a people in bondage and cruel slavery. (another riches to rags story)

He fled Egypt when it was discovered that he had killed an Egyptian in retaliation for his brutality towards an Israelite.

The next 40 years of his life were spent as a shepherd in the land of Midian.

God spoke to him through a burning bush in the wilderness calling him to deliver His people. During this encounter, God revealed His name to Moses, "I AM That I AM."

Moses was humbled and fearful upon receiving this command. He did agree to do as God had commanded, but not before raising God's ire by his reticence to be God's spokesperson. In response to his complaints, God appointed his brother Aaron to be Moses' spokesperson.

Moses confronted Pharaoh with the request to "let God's people go." Pharaoh refused until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the plagues, the death of firstborns, took his own firstborn son's life.

Moses' difficulties were not yet complete.

It is estimated that the company of Israelites traveling through the desert were in the neighborhood of 3 million people plus their flocks, herds and household possessions. These thankless, unbelieving and rebellious people gave numerous trials to the character of Moses. (10 are recorded in the book of Numbers.)

Moses would not measure up to corporate standards today for leadership. He was humble and even expressed his weakness at speech. He appeared to lack self-confidence. On the other hand, there is no evidence that he aspired to greatness in the sight of man. He was proclaimed as "more humble than any other person on the face of the earth."

Yet, he persevered in his calling to lead the people of Israel. He was faithful in that which God had called him to.

One of the outstanding examples of his life was that of “intimacy with God.” Intimacy with God, faithfulness to his responsibilities and his humility...unusual companions in the character of a man who would lead millions.

He accepted responsibility for his actions. When confronted with God’s judgment that he would not enter the land due to his disobedience, he showed no bitterness or anger.

He had achieved a true balance between the privilege of his position and the responsibility of his actions. “He didn’t think more highly of himself than he ought to think.”

Another sterling quality about Moses was his compassion. When his sister Miriam and brother Aaron challenged his leadership position and Miriam became leprous, he felt compassion towards her and cried out to God for her. He did not hold a grudge towards her.

His compassion was also seen when God determined to wipe out the whole nation for their sin, but Moses interceded with him and secured their pardon from destruction. If not for his intercession, there may have been no Israelites today but a nation of Mosesites instead.

#### - Caleb

In Numbers 14, God declared that Caleb had a different spirit, he followed God wholeheartedly. Quite a testimony for a man whose name means “dog.” (But anyone who has ever had a dog as a pet recognizes that one of the sterling qualities of a dog is faithfulness.)

Even when the majority of the 12 spies spoke out of fear, Caleb remained confident and trusting.

This God who was known as the creator of the heavens and earth had demonstrated his supremacy over nature. How could He fail to deliver His own people from an idolatrous people no matter their numbers or size. His faithful and trusting spirit set him (and Joshua) apart from the others and ultimately led to his being able to enter the promised land when all of the others, except Joshua, had failed and died in the desert.

Caleb had seen the miracles of the plagues in Egypt, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, the parting of the sea for the Israelites to cross and then the sea charging back to its boundaries to take the army of Pharaoh to their watery grave.

His ability to stand alone against the odds stemmed from his heart which God had declared to be “a different spirit.”

His life is a demonstration of a faithful man in whom was another spirit, a spirit fashioned after the heart of God. This gave him different eyes and different ears to see and hear with a godward perspective and response.

His life illustrates to us the importance of the new birth, an event in which God gives man a new spirit, a spirit that is different from that possessed by natural man. With it, we will be able to do and accomplish the things of God, the things the natural man sees as impossibilities.

- Miriam

Miriam was faithful and caring in watching her baby brother Moses when he was placed in a basket into the river.

She showed an unusual boldness for a child to speak with the queen when the baby was discovered by the queen's maid servant.

She was resourceful in suggesting to the queen that she could find a nurse for the baby from the women of Israel.

She was caring and creative in finding Moses' mother so that she could nurse her own child and receive wages for it (an added bonus for a poor slave).

She exhibited great joy and leadership when rejoicing over the display of God's greatness over nature and drowning the army of Pharaoh. Was not this the climax of the story, God receiving glory through the songs of Moses and Miriam for the great things he had done.

Miriam was His chosen vessel to lead the women with a parade of triumphant song and dancing.

This also shows that she knew where glory was due and did not seek glory for herself but for God.

She is identified as a prophetess which indicates her close relationship with God. She too was a spokesperson for God.

However, pride did slip in when she and her brother Aaron confronted Moses about his Cushite wife. The controversy was most likely due to her aspirations to a higher leadership role. (God never answers her accusations about Moses' wife.) She is visited with leprosy.

Her jealousy over Moses' relationship with God caused the entire community to wait an entire week in the desert until her period of judgment was completed.

She had been given a high position of leadership within Israel thus illustrating that we should never lose sight of the fact that all positions, callings and giftings are from God.

We need to learn the lesson of contentment, to be content and happy with the gifts and callings God has given to us, not being jealous of another's gifts or achievements.

## VIII. Final Summaries

### The Ways of God :

1. He does not, for the most part, answer our cries for help immediately. When the Israelites cried out to God in their despair in Egypt, it was many years before He commissioned Moses to deliver them from their bondage.
2. He tells us what is expected of us. At Mt. Sinai, He gave his rules and regulations for the "covenant with God" life.
3. He provides for our needs. He met the daily needs of Israel for 38 years when they were in the desert. (Think of 3 million people in the desert and the daily provisions they must have needed just to survive.)
4. He does listen to our cries for mercy. He listened to Moses when he interceded with God for the lives of all of Israel.
5. He will bring judgment for sin and unbelief. He condemned the adults of Israel to death in the desert because they refused to believe He would give them the land He had promised. He judged Miriam with leprosy when she questioned His chosen leader.
6. He is angry over sin. He was angry with Israel to the point of destroying them when they constructed the golden calf in the wilderness.
7. He holds those in high positions to a greater accountability. He would not allow Moses to enter the promised land because of his disobedience before the people.\
8. He is great in mercy and grace. The history of Israel in the desert wanderings is one of complaint, unbelief and rebellion. Numerous times God demonstrated His mercy, grace and longsuffering towards them.

### Insights from this lesson for spiritual formation:

Moses: humility, faithfulness, perseverance, intimacy with God

Caleb: wholeheartedness, a heart to stand alone against the odds, a different spirit, faithfulness

Miriam: watchfulness, leadership, joy, resourcefulness  
beware the enemy of pride and desiring what another is given  
by God.

## **IX. Homework assignments**

1. Try to visualize what the parade of people and animals must have looked like when leaving their bondage in Egypt.
2. Try to visualize what it must have been like if you were in the traveling party of Israelites going through the desert and there were 1 million people in the line ahead of you. (We get impatient when 5 or 6 people are in line ahead of us at the bank.)
3. Why were the Israelites so quick to complain when anything went wrong or their needs were not being met?
4. How long did it take the entire company of Israelites to cross the sea when it was parted?
5. How many different ways did the Israelites prepare manna for eating?
6. Why could Moses, after leading the people in the desert for 38 years, not be mad at God when God told him he couldn't enter the land?
7. The exodus from Egypt and the 38 years in the desert were accompanied by miracles all along the way. How could the Israelites not believe, trust and love such a God as was taking care of them with such miraculous signs and wonders?

## LESSON #4

### Stage 4: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel 1-12

From conquering the land through the history of the judges  
Community Focus: The tribes of Israel in the land God promised them

#### I. Background

Building God's Community: the tribes of Israel in the land God promised to them

God's community of people enter the promised land after 40 years of wandering in the desert due to their disobedience. Joshua has become their leader replacing Moses when he died. Even though they rebelled and complained against God many times, God has remained faithful to them.

The 12 tribes fight many battles over a period of 7 years but do not drive out all of the inhabitants of the land.

After Joshua's death, the people begin to embrace the people and customs, the idolatries of the land. When they "go away from the Lord," God raises up people from the surrounding areas to attack and subdue them.

Since there is no political establishment to deliver them from their oppressors, they call out to God and He rises up "judges" to deliver them and lead them back to God. They go through many cycles of rebellion, punishment, repentance and crying out to God and restoration. (7 in 350 years)

Judges 21:25 gives a good summary of the people's behavior during this period: "They did what was right in their own eyes."

Dispensation:

This segment occurs during the dispensation of the Law which had its beginning with the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. The dispensation of the law continues until Christ' death and resurrection which ushers in the dispensation of grace.

Date: Joshua begins the conquest of the promised land (Jericho) ~ 1422 B.C. (Reese), 1405 B.C. (Nelson)  
Saul began to reign (I Sam. 13) ~ 1065 B.C. (Reese)


Literary Types:

Joshua: The overriding literary style is that of a narrative, and more specifically, that of an "epic." (See lesson 4 for definition of an epic.)

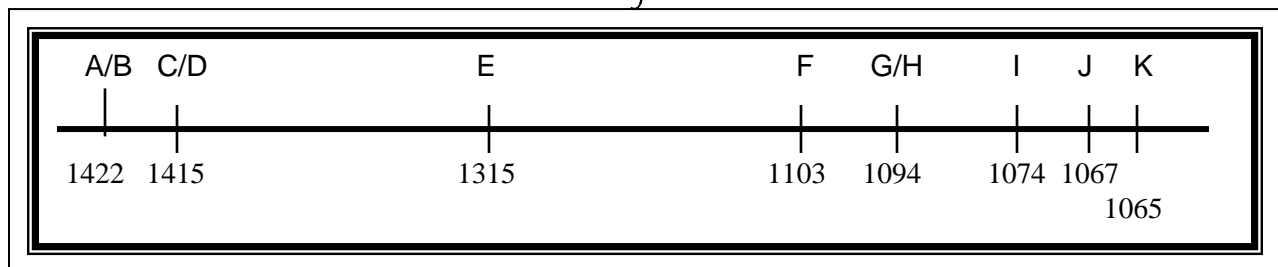
- Judges: The pervading literary style is that of a hero story. In these stories, the judges appointed by God are the heroes.
- Ruth: The story of Ruth is a love story which can also be classified as a hero story. It includes both a heroine (Ruth) and a hero (Boaz). They exemplify the best and most faithful qualities of their culture.
- I Samuel: The author employs “hero story” as his primary literary style. In our segment for this era (chapters 1-12), Samuel is the hero who exemplifies the godly qualities of an “Immanuel” man.

## II. Summary of this era

The main events of this era are:

- A. Joshua is appointed as the replacement for Moses. 1422 B.C.
- B. The first conquest in Canaan, Jericho. 1422 B.C.
- C. After 7 years of conquest, Joshua rested from war. 1415 B.C.
- D. The period of the judges – cycles of backsliding, chastisement, repentance and restoration. During this period, God raised up “judges” who would lead the people back to God. 1415 B.C. 
- E. The saving of the tribe of Benjamin 1315 B.C.
- F. The call and appointment of Samuel 1103 B.C.
- G. The capture of the ark of God 1094 B.C.
- H. The failures of Eli the priest and his sons. Eli dies. 1094 B.C.
- I. Death of Samson 1074 B.C.
- J. Israel demands a king. 1067 B.C.
- K. Saul is chosen, anointed and proclaimed king. 1065 B.C.

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### A Walk through the Bible from Joshua through I Samuel 12:

- Josh. 1-12 Israel begins the conquest of the land. Jericho is the first city to fall (by the miraculous hand of God – whoever won a war in this way, by blowing trumpets and shouting.) Many victories are accomplished but the total eradication of the Canaanites is not completed. Major cities of the Philistines remain and will later become a thorn in the side of

Israel. (Note the giants of Gath esp. Goliath who were Philistines)

- Josh. 13-21 The land is divided among the tribes of Israel. 2 ½ tribes (Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh) have accepted their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan river, having chosen the lush pasturelands on the east side of the Jordan rather than go into the land of promise.
- Josh. 22-24 Farewells: The 2 ½ eastern tribes return to their lands and construct an altar of remembrance by the river. After a brief altercation with the other 9 1/2 tribes, due to a misunderstanding of the purpose of the altar, peace is restored.
- Joshua gives his farewell address.
- Jud. 1-2:5 The conquest of Canaan is stalled and is incomplete.
- Jud. 2:6-16:31 The period of the judges. (14)
- During this period, Israel goes through numerous cycles of backsliding, chastisement, repentance and restoration. God raised up “judges” who would execute His judgments, deliver them from their oppressors and restore them to God.
- Israel would stay faithful to God as long as the judge was alive. After the death of a judge, they would return to their idolatrous ways.
- Jud. 17-21 The Danites appoint a priest from the tribe of Levi.
- Jud. 21:25 “In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
- Ruth 1-4 This is the story of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.
- I Sam. 1 – 7 These chapters tell of the birth of Samuel and the beginning of his ministries as a prophet to Israel.
- I Sam. 8-12 Israel demands a king. Saul is chosen, anointed and proclaimed king.
- God's Actions: God has led them to the promised land. He has put the fear of Israel into the hearts of the inhabitants of the land. He has given Israel miraculous victories. He: judges their rebellion and backsliding;



hears their cries of repentance,  
raises up a judge to deliver them from their  
oppressors; and  
restores them.

He gives them what they clamor for (a human king) even  
though it is not His will for them.

He raises up a prophet (Samuel) to judge and guide them in  
the ways of God.

Man's Responses: They do not completely fulfill God's instructions.  
They go through cycles of rebellion, backsliding, repenting  
and crying out to God.  
The cycle repeats itself when the previous judge is no longer  
with them.  
They continue to deteriorate in their moral lives until every  
one is a law unto themselves.  
A man (Samson) uses his special gift of strength in pursuit of  
his own desires.

### III. Context and typology:

Exodus: Israel in Egypt: bondage, poverty, imminent death corresponds to a soul before regeneration – our bondage = sin

The Scripture paints a very gruesome picture  
of life without God. Servitude to the world  
(Egypt) is harsh, demanding, unrelenting.

Deliverance from Egypt: deliverance of a soul bringing salvation  
Note: not yet in the promised land

Numbers: Journey to Canaan: Israel's condition in the wilderness: unbelief,  
disobedient, wandering without direction,  
discontent, weakness  
Pictures a saved (regenerated) soul but not yet  
fully yielded to God.

Deuteronomy: Preparation to enter Canaan – Moses' final words.

Joshua: Conquering Canaan – It illustrates how a Christian may overcome  
his spiritual foes and possess what God has for  
him in Christ.

Judges: Living in Canaan - "The Apostasies of God's People" (1375 B.C.  
to 1050 B.C.)

Ruth: The Kinsman Redeemer

A community living in the land in accordance with God's instructions; a godly community

I Samuel 1-12: Rise of Samuel  
The Capture and Return of the Ark of God  
The Judgeship of Samuel

#### **IV. Exposition:**

In session #4: God has bound Israel to Himself in covenant.  
613 Laws were given to guide the theocracy.  
He reveals Himself to the nation on the mountain.  
The Tabernacle is constructed  
Disobedience at the border of the promised land  
38 years of wandering in the desert.

Some numbers:

manna - 2 trains/110 boxcars/2 quarts of manna /person  
deaths - est. 1M persons died in the wilderness, longest funeral procession in history  
Over 38 years, that's 72 person (on average) per day although the number would have been lower at first and higher towards the end of the 38 years.

Deuteronomy – Moses' final addresses

What happened to Moses?  
Why did God conceal his burial place?

What happened to the cross on which Jesus was crucified?  
(equivalent of 7 crosses in people's possession today)

#### **V. Book Summaries:**

In our section today, we see God continuing the process of forming His community of people through conquest and occupation of the land of promise.

This occupation lays the foundation for the formation of the 12 tribes of Israel into a holy nation. In Joshua 3:17, first time Israel is referred to as a nation. Prior to this, they were "a people."

By obeying the Laws given to them by God and by celebrating the festivals specified by God, they become a community that keeps alive God's historical acts and nurtures their destiny to become a nation that is a blessing to all nations.

God has, in the temple rituals, made elaborate provision to jog their memories of who He is and what He has done for them. (much like what we do in our services today)

Lesson: God brings to our remembrance His past acts on our behalf.

## 1. Joshua:

The leadership has passed from Moses to Joshua who leads the nation across the Jordan into the promised land. Their crossing of the Jordan is a reminder of the earlier crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of pharaoh's army. By it, the people have a new regard for Joshua. Josh. 4:14. They would need this because he was going to lead them for the next 25 years.

One of Joshua's first acts is to call the people to remember the words of Moses. (Josh. 1:10-12).

In this era, Joshua leads the military campaign in the power of God (e.g. Jericho).

- Lesson of Jericho:
1. God has many ways of defeating our enemies, some of which we know nothing.
  2. Obedience brings success.
  3. God's battles bring His supernatural power into the war zone.

Many victories are won, but some cities of the Philistines remain unconquered resulting in an unwanted legacy that they could have avoided. (e.g. Gath – Goliath)

Lesson: We need to continue the battle until all of our enemies are defeated.

Joshua, at God's command, assigns geographical areas to each tribe. Importance of knowing your genealogy: You didn't get a portion of the land unless you could demonstrate your belonging to a tribe.

An amazing record about Joshua: "He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses."

- ## 2. Judges: At Joshua's death, God appoints the tribe of Judah to lead the fighting against the Canaanites.

This is the beginning of the period of the Judges.

Their primary duties were: administering justice, confronting sin, tearing down centers of idolatry, and leading military campaigns.

The tent of meeting is set up at Shiloh where the disciplines of prayer, celebration, worship and sacrifice develop to help preserve the memory of God's deliverance from Egypt.

These visible reminders are needed to help the people remember who they are (slaves rescued by the grace of God). Without these visible reminders the people will neglect the Law and its instructions.

Lesson: parallel today: the church – a constant reminder of our deliverance and the laws and instructions of God to His covenant people.

God gives us visible reminders of who He is and what He has done:

- the tabernacle in the wilderness: God with us (in our midst – His ultimate goal)
- the visible body, celebration, worship and sacrifice – reminders of our covenant relationship with God.

A rhetorical question: If you stopped coming to church, how well would you remember the lessons of God's Word and succeed in your walk with God?

As Israel expands and begins to fill the land, the distance to the center of worship increases making it difficult for the people to participate in the temple activities.

Their faith in God begins to falter and they begin to intermingle with the people of the land.

They go through 7 cycles of rebellion – punishment – repentance - restoration

The period of the Judges ends with the sad commentary that: "*all the people did what was right in their own eyes.*" Jud. 21:25

3. Ruth is a "breath of fresh air in the midst of the repulsive odors of idolatry and rebellion. In it, there is no hint of the sword or shield or battle. It appears to occur in a quiet corner of Judah in the atmosphere of simple piety.

This book relates one story of the brighter years of this period of time reminding us that there were godly people living and happy events occurring during this period of time. (reminds me that, even during Jesus' declining popularity and crucifixion by the Jewish religious leaders, there were godly Jews, even in the temple service, that believed in Him.)

Four purposes of the book of Ruth:

- introduce some of the ancestors of David, the royal lineage of the Messiah;
- typology: "kinsman-redeemer" (Boaz) is a type of Christ and Ruth, the church.
- Theology: This book provides a revelation of God's character, His Sovereignty, grace, providence and holiness.
- It provides a picture of a Godly family in a community living in accordance with God's instructions (note the behavior of Boaz towards his workers)

4. I Samuel 1-12 provides the call and ministry of Samuel which closes out the period of the Judges and ushers us into the period of the monarchies.

## **VI. Benefits for Our Formation**

1. After all of their wanderings, Israel has entered a land, their new home, where they can become the united community of God.

They have a place where they can live out their faithfulness to God.

Divisions that existed since they sold Joseph into slavery can be put aside.

We, too, need a place where we are free to worship God and become the community of faith that He has designed us to be.

We need a place of rest. Heb. 4:11 “let us make every effort to enter this rest.”

2. The examples of Joshua and the Judges show us that, as individuals, we can be used by God to bring grace, peace, love and justice to our communities.
3. The blessings and freedoms of God are not accomplished without difficulties (e.g.warfare)
4. Gaining the blessings of the Lord and spiritual formation require our active pursuit. (e.g. God gave them the land but they had to put on their sword and take it.)

## **VII. Limits and Liabilities**

For the theocracy to have worked during the period of the judges,

- a. the Law had to be obeyed,
- b. the rituals practiced, and
- c. the leaders obeyed.

Joshua warned the people on more than one occasion “to be careful to observe the commandments that Moses had given them.”

There is no indication that this happened.

Why didn't this happen?

1. Perhaps because most Israelites did not have a copy of the 613 laws, they were soon forgotten in daily life.
2. A corollary to item 1: The disciplines of study and meditation on God's Word were absent in this phase of Israel's life.

This should make us very grateful for the written Word which we have in abundance, the Word that *is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. II Tim. 3:16-17*

3. Or...some people may not have desired a relationship with God.
4. Another aspect of their community at this time was the fact that there was no central government or authority to enforce compliance with the requirements.

The judges performed this function based upon the strength of their leadership but it was only sporadic and, for the most part, they were unable to force the people to obey the laws and practice the rituals.

This limitation was further complicated by the fact that the people were scattered throughout the land and the influence of the judges was confined mostly to local regions.

5. In addition, alternative local shrines and altars to idols were built on the hills to satisfy the peoples yearnings for religious ritual as well as satisfy their “foreign” spouses.

## **VIII. Insights and Instructions for Our Formation**

1. God is forming a community that is to be as intimately related to each other as the hand is to the foot and ear and eye, to the other parts of the body.

How does this formation occur:

- by spending time together building relationships.
- through shared trials

Apart from family relationships, who, on earth, are the most committed to each other? War veterans. Through shared, difficult experiences, peoples’ hearts are knit together.

One reason God allowed Canaanites to remain in the land was for Israel to learn how to do warfare.

2. Often, as is the case with Samson, charisma outruns character. The danger of gifts is that they take us places where our character cannot sustain us.

We need to be careful with the handling of gifts and authority. Gifts and authority can be and are, at times, abused much to the disrepute of the church. Godly kingdom gifts and authority blesses, heals encourages and enlightens.

We see this in our own time as numerous gifted ministers fall by the way of impropriety and improper behaviors. (e.g. greed and lust)

3. The example of infighting among the 12 tribes should motivate us to overcome the modern example of tribalism...denominationalism.

Although most factions start out with good intentions, in the end, sectarianism alienates faith-filled brothers and sisters and brings disrepute on the body of Christ. (God has no denominations.)

4. We reap what we sow. The Israelites repetitive history of replacing God with idols always resulted in the judgment and punishment of the nation.
5. Ruth provides us a beautiful account of personal faithfulness. Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi preserves the family line through which the Messiah is born.

Another key lesson of Ruth is that she was faithful to Naomi even though the prospects of a future and prosperity were virtually non-existent.

## IX. **Character Studies** (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

- Joshua

Two striking features of God's instructions to Joshua are contained in the first chapter:

- o "be strong and of good courage" (v.6), and
- o "This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." (v.8)

From this second command, we learn that Joshua was to spend his life in meditation and obedience to God's Word. Meditation can be interpreted "to mumble" or "to speak to oneself." Joshua was to speak the Word, think upon the Word and then to do it. If he did, he would prosper. The testimony of Joshua's life from scripture is "that he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses (Josh. 11:15) As a result of his obedience, all of the promises that God had made to Israel were fulfilled. (see Josh. 21:45)

His life illustrates to us the way of continuous fellowship with God and prosperity in accordance with God's definition of what prosperity in an individual life can be.

This promise of prosperity is repeated in Psalm 1.

The successful person will be the one who delights in God's Word and meditates on it day and night.

He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water that :

- produces fruit in its season,

- his leaf will not wither. (I interpret this to mean that he will still bear fruit in old age.)
- Whatever he does will prosper.

The prosperity of Joshua confirms to us that his life was one of daily meditation on and obedience to God's Word.

Key thoughts from the Joshua's final address:

Joshua 22: 5

Joshua's last address calls the people to renew their covenant with God, an action that each subsequent generation must do for themselves.

He repeats the commandments given by Moses:

- to love God,
- to walk in His ways,
- to obey His commands,
- to hold fast to Him, and
- to serve Him with all your heart and soul

Joshua 24:15: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:23: "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.  
(Note: These are actions they must take.)"

- Samuel

Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother before he was born. Yet, it was still necessary that he respond to God's call

This he did and He became a prophet to Israel. He was the prophet who anointed the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

As a young boy, when hearing God's voice, he responded "Speak, for your servant is listening." Already, at a young age, he had a heart of obedience towards the Lord.

Samuel's message to idolatrous Israel was to serve God wholeheartedly and put away their foreign gods.

The scriptures of this man's life are filled with instances of his life of prayer:

- o Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord heard and answered him. He walked in fellowship with God.



o At one time, He cried out to God for thunder and rain during a season when none was expected. And God responded.

o When king Saul defeated the Amalekites but disobeyed God's instructions, Samuel prayed all night, grieved because of Saul's offense against God.

He was Israel's prayer warrior. Samuel's own words indicate that he would have considered it a sin to cease to pray for Israel.

Samuel lived and illustrated a life of prayer and fellowship with God. He was no stranger to the "secret place."

- Ruth/Naomi

Ruth:

The book of Ruth is a remarkable story of a woman who left everything she had known to follow after the God of Israel.

She had no knowledge as to what lay ahead for her. Nevertheless, she did not waver in her commitment to her mother-in-law and subsequently followed her to Bethlehem.

She entered the land as a foreigner and worked as a gleaner of fields in order to provide bread for her mother-in-law.

She allowed herself to be guided by Naomi. (submission)

She exhibited the godly qualities of humility, submission, patience and perseverance.

She was a living demonstration of a lesson from a great teacher to come later, that of being willing to leave everything for the sake of Christ.

She had left everything and yet, there was no hint or indication of remorse over the things left behind.

She illustrates to us the godly disciplines of submission and servicing.

Naomi:

Naomi illustrates the discipline of evangelism, sharing her faith. How did Ruth come to make such an all-encompassing decision? Where did she come by the knowledge of Yahweh that would lead her to forsake all that she knew to follow after Him?

Let's take a look at the physical evidence:

- Naomi's husband had died.
- Her two sons, puny and pining (that's what their names mean) had died.
- She was returning to Bethlehem because of the news that God had given them bread. (She was poor.)  
When she returns, she said she had left full, but was now empty. She had lost everything.
- She tells her relatives to call her Mara which means "bitter."

So...what was it about Naomi that led Ruth to make such a commitment? Naomi had suffered great loss. She was bitter. She was poor.

There was most definitely nothing within the physical circumstances of Naomi's life that would draw Ruth to Yahweh.

Naomi must have shared her faith with her and instructed her in the things of the one, true God. (see her comments in chapter 1: "May the Lord deal kindly with you.")

The Psalmists, at times, pray that the beauty of the Lord will be upon His people. It is not the things of the physical world that attracted Ruth to Yahweh. (There were none.)

So, in spite of the dire straits Naomi was in, Ruth must have seen something of "the beauty of the Lord" in her and that's what gave her the courage and determination that "Yahweh shall be my God."

Even for us today, evangelism is a matter of us sharing about our God, about our faith, and leaving the results up to Him. God used Naomi to bring her to Himself for He had great plans for her. She would be one of the women in "the line of the Messiah. From her would issue forth the "seed of the house of Jesse."

## - Samson

I have included Samson in the character studies of this session because there is an important lesson from his life to be learned; i.e. a person can be physically gifted but morally or spiritually weak. A gift from God may be misused and actually become a stumbling block to a righteous life.

Samson was noted for his great strength...he tore a lion apart with his bare hands, he singlehandedly tore a city gate from its hinges and carried it up a hill, he pulled down the pillars of a great house, etc. However, he allowed the lusts of the flesh to guide him on many occasions. He went in to a prostitute, took a pagan woman for a wife, allowed his passion for Delilah to put him into the hands of the enemies of Israel.

He broke each of the Nazirite vows (3) to which he was committed.

He did not possess an inner strength of character to match his outer strength.

His story reminds us of the limitations of special God-given abilities that we may have. Relying on gifts and ignoring God's call to walk in the ways of holiness can leave us far short of who God intends us to be and what He has called us to do.

Often, the areas in which a person is most gifted, prove to be their downfall. Great strength or giftings can mask our weaknesses.

A gift to teach might mask a life that is inconsistent with what one teaches. Having the skills as an excellent communicator might cover over the inability to relate intimately with people.  
How many gifted Christian orators have failed in their personal lives?

Many people in high and important leadership positions in today's biggest and most prosperous companies have come up very short in their family lives.

A man can lead a brigade of soldiers but not have a working relationship with his wife.

Samson is a story of a very gifted man. Yet, his life was a failure and ended in disgrace.

His gift of strength became a stumbling block to him.

The gifts and callings of God are important, but they are to be used for others, not to promote or achieve things for ourselves.

The primary focus of our lives should be to walk in holiness with God, to please and glorify Him.

## **X. Final Summaries**

### The Ways of God:

God guides the armies of Israel and gives them victories as they trust and obey Him.

He does not tolerate or overlook acts of disobedience.  
He brings judgments but not without warnings.

He is merciful and longsuffering towards His people. Note the number of times the Israelites went through the cycle of rebellion, judgment, repentance and restoration. Recall His patient endurance with the

constantly complaining Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. (see the book of Numbers.)

His arm is not too short to save His people.

He may even give a people what they ask for even though knowing it is not best for them.

He provides judges and prophets to direct His people.

Insights from this lesson for spiritual formation:

- Joshua        meditation
- Samuel        prayer
- Samson        the danger of gifts  
                  He was physically gifted but morally and spiritually weak,  
                  Instead of servicing God with his gift, he used God's gift to  
                  serve his own desires and interests.
- Ruth:            submission, serving
- Naomi:          evangelism

**XI. Homework assignments**

Joshua:

1. God, in Numbers 14, said that Caleb had a different spirit. What did He mean by this?
2. What was the key to the successes of Joshua's life?
3. Why was he prosperous?
4. Have you experienced the benefits of meditation in your life?

Judges:

1. Why did the people need judges?
2. What was the responsibility of the judges?
3. Why didn't the people of Israel learn from their predecessors that forsaking God and serving idols would result in a harsh judgment?
4. Why were the judgments of God severe?

Ruth:

1. What did Ruth see or know about Naomi's God that would motivate her to leave everything she had known to follow after Naomi's God?
2. Would you have wanted Naomi's God?  
Why or why not?
3. Why are you seeking God?
4. What character qualities would you ascribe to Ruth? (e.g. humility, loyalty)

Samuel:

1. Samuel was sensitive to God even as a child.  
Reflect for a moment on your childhood.  
If God had called to you when you were a child, how would you have responded?
2. What were the keys to Samuel's success in life?
3. What were Saul's responses when confronted with his sin at Gilgal when he had offered up sacrifices which he was not qualified to offer?
4. What appropriate responses can a person make when confronted with a sin?

## LESSON #5

Stage 5: Historical books—I & II Samuel, I Kings 1 -12, I Chronicles to II Chronicles 9

Community Focus: God's people have become a nation

### I. Background

Building God's Community: God's people have become a nation

The people want a king. They want to be like the nations around them. So, they ask to be ruled by a king. Their request shows that they do not want God to be their king. And even though God warns them of the danger of a king, they persist, and He grants them their request.

The first king, Saul, fails miserably and is killed in battle. His successor, David, consolidates and unites the nation. He brings the ark to Jerusalem and makes it his capital city. Under Solomon, the third king, the nation rises to lofty heights, becomes a center of commerce, and builds the temple that God would not allow David to build.

Upon Solomon's death, the kingdom is divided into two parts; the northern kingdom has a continuous run of wicked kings. The southern kingdom, which centered in Judah and Jerusalem, alternately had good and bad kings.

Ultimately, God allows both kingdoms to be taken into captivity and the temple destroyed in 586 B.C.

God's presence, His Shekinah Glory, which had been with them since they left Egypt, has left the temple.

Dispensation: Law as begun at Mt. Sinai

Context: Joshua has led the people in conquering the land (although all nations were not destroyed nor subdued).  
The era of the Judges has concluded.  
Israel has demanded a human king.

Date: 1065 B.C. - 945 B.C.

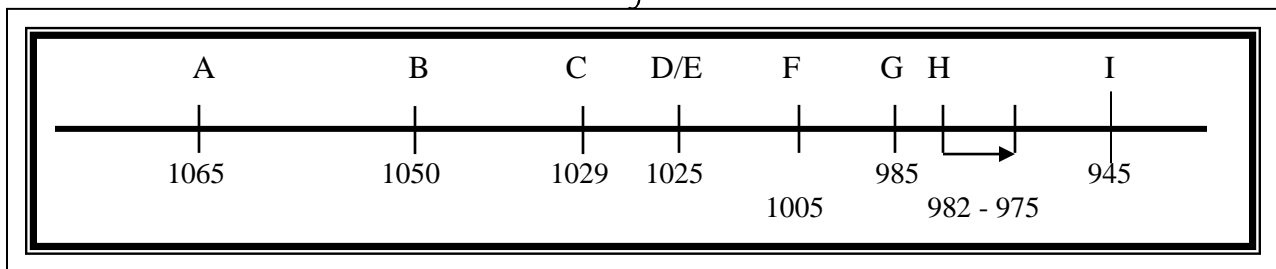
Literary Type: I Samuel - hero story  
II Samuel – the epic of David, telling the story of Israel which is led by a heroic leader  
I & II Kings - a historical narrative  
I Chronicles- a historical chronicle  
II Chronicles-a court history of a nation as described in the actions of its kings

## II. Summary of this era

### Major Events:

- A. Saul becomes the first king of Israel. 1065 B.C.
- B. Saul's disobedience with the Amalekites 1050 B.C.
- C. David and Goliath 1029 B.C.
- D. Death of Saul 1025 B.C.
- E. David becomes king of Israel 1025 B.C.
- F. David and Bathsheba 1005 B.C.
- G. David dies.  
Solomon anointed king. 985 B.C.
- H. Building of the temple – 7 years 982 – 975 B.C.
- I. Solomon dies. 945 B.C.

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### I & II Samuel, I Kings 1–11, I Chronicles through II Chronicles 9

I Samuel: This book begins with the birth of Samuel and his subsequent ministry as a prophet to Israel.

In chapter 4, the ark of God is captured by the Philistines. God visits the Philistines with the humiliation of their god, Dagon, and then with small and great tumors. They quickly return the ark to Israel noting the adverse effect it has on the people and places where it is stored.

In ch-7, Israel demands a king. God listens to them and gives them Saul.

Saul has some initial success in battle but quickly reveals that he is weak in moral character. He offers sacrifices that only the priest is allowed to offer and his obedience is incomplete about which he lies to Samuel.

God judges him and removes him from the throne.

Ch-16: David is anointed as king.

Ch-17: the account of David and Goliath

Ch-18: Saul becomes envious of David and tries to kill him.  
Ch-28: Saul consults a medium and finally dies in battle with his son Jonathan.

II Samuel: This book begins with the report of Saul's death.

A long war continued between the families of Saul and David.

Ch-5: All the elders of Israel come to David and make a covenant with him that he will be their king.

Ch-6: David brings the ark to Jerusalem.

Ch-7: God makes a covenant with David: his seed after him will sit on David's throne forever. (see also Ps. 132:11ff)

Ch-11-12: the account of David and Bathsheba.

Chs. 15-19 David's son, Absalom rebels against David but is eventually killed by Joab when his hair is caught in the boughs of a tree and he is left suspended in air.

Ch-23 records David's last words.

I Kings: Ch-1: Solomon is crowned king.

Ch-2: David dies.

Ch-3-4: Beginnings of Solomon's reign

Ch-5-7 The building of the temple

Ch-8: The ark brought into the temple and Solomon's prayer of dedication

Ch-10: The queen of Sheba visits Solomon and is amazed at his wisdom and wealth.

Ch-12: Solomon dies.

I Chronicles 1-9 These chapters provide the genealogies of the tribes of Israel. They are important because owning property in Israel was dependent upon one's tribal records and certifications.

The Chronicles provide a second, parallel record of the kings of Israel.

Ch-10: Solomon's death.



Ch-11-12:	David's ascends to the throne
Ch-13:	The ark is transferred to the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite. (death of Uzzah for touching the ark occurs)
Ch-15-16	The ark brought to Jerusalem and installed in the temple.
Ch-17:	God's covenant with David
Ch-18-29	These chapters record accounts of David's reign and his preparations for the building of the temple. He would not be allowed to build the temple because he was a man of much bloodshed; but his son, Solomon, would build the temple instead. Solomon is anointed king. David dies.
II Chronicles 1-5	The temple is built.
Ch-6-7	Solomon's speech and dedication of the temple
Ch-8	Solomon's achievements
Ch-9	The visit of the queen of Sheba Solomon dies.

It is important to note the central place of the temple in the life of the community of Israel.

#### God's Actions:

God allows the people to have their choice (of a king) knowing that this is not a good choice. He allows mankind the freedom of choice.

He judges the disobedience of his people. Receiving a position or calling in God's kingdom has with it the attendant responsibility of faithful performance.

God shows great patience in dealing with his leaders.

He raises up prophets to speak for Him to His people. These prophets have a continuing job of calling the people to repentance and putting away false gods.

He makes covenants and promises with people on the earth.

He visits physical judgments on idolatrous people. (e.g. Philistines with tumors)

He makes His dwelling with men. (the temple)

### Man's Responses:

#### Rebellion

The people embrace the kings appointed by God.

Saul uses his position for personal gain.

Saul looks for guidance from the wrong source.

David gives in to the desires of the flesh and then commits murder.

Saul is more concerned for his reputation among men than a godly repentance.

David seeks God wholeheartedly.

Solomon makes a good beginning but gets caught up in personal pursuits and wives and becomes distant from God. Life without God becomes vanity.

The nation builds a temple to be God's dwelling place.

People are generous towards God in offering up gold, jewelry, etc. for the work of the temple.

### **III. Discussion**

The Scriptures for today, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles give us the historical accounts of the first 3 human kings of Israel – Saul, David and Solomon.

In Joshua 3, when the people, under Joshua's leadership crossed the Jordan, the Scriptures referred to the people as a nation for the first time.

In this segment, God continues His formation of His community with the central location of worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Songs of praise and worship and liturgies are written to facilitate the worship of Yahweh and bring to remembrance who He is and what He has done.

As we saw in Exodus when God came near, the people withdrew in fear and asked Moses to be their mediator.

Now, after numerous cycles of rebellion in which foreign kings enslaved them, the people show their true heart by asking for a human king.

Why would they do this?

- A. They wanted a king to mobilize their army and protect them, they wanted national security.
- B. As in the wilderness, they were afraid of God but not in a good way.
- C. They didn't want to be different.

In essence, they are rejecting the kingship of God. They want a monarchy, not a theocracy. They want to be like the other nations, the opposite of what God wants. They don't like the yoke of separateness.

What does God want from them? holy, set apart, separate

Today, Christians face the same issue. Many don't want to be considered different. So they adopt worldly practices, methods and customs until it becomes difficult to distinguish Christians from the world.

God doesn't want us to be like other people, but like Christ.

Now continuing with our review of this era: Samuel is the key person during this transition from a theocracy to a monarchy and he is displeased with their request because he recognizes God as the king over them.

He talks with God about this request but ultimately God tells him "to listen to the voice of the people."

Even in the midst of stern warnings and descriptions of how the human king would behave, the people persist in their request and God grants them their desire.

I believe this is one of the key events of this era. This decision has far-reaching effects on all generations to come. What if they had chosen to "go with God?"

This is amazing, God's willingness to work with the political, military and social structures of this primitive nation but He will only do it on the condition that the covenant is reaffirmed: they are to be a holy people, set apart for God.

Saul:

Samuel anoints Saul as king.

I find God's choice of Saul is interesting.

He is an unknown man from one of the smallest tribes.

He has no charisma such as the judges had nor does he have the prophetic insight of a Samuel.

He has no political or military credentials but is merely tall and handsome.

Why did God choose Saul?

God gave them what they wanted...a king like the other nations around them.

Saul will be and do exactly what God describes.

READ: I Sam. 8:11-18

How can they complain? They got what they asked for.

Lesson: Be careful what you ask for.

Without the necessary character credentials, Saul falters under the weight of jealousy and suspicion. His character deficiencies are most pronounced when he defeats the Amalekites but spares the king and the best of the sheep and cattle. In this scenario,

he disobeys God, lies, blames the men, exhibits false repentance, feared and obeyed the voice of the people and begged Samuel to appear before the men with him in an attempt to protect his own reputation. (1 Sam. 15)

Ultimately, his character weaknesses cost his family the throne and Saul and his sons their lives.

### David:

Once Saul is gone, David quickly ascends to the throne of Israel.

David is blessed by God and achieves amazing military successes.

An amazing thing about David: In the midst of Saul's paranoid misconceptions, he remained faithful to him. He continued to recognize God's authority in Saul even though Saul was trying to kill him.

He, like Samuel, knew that the kingdom belonged to God.

Even though, like all of us, he is plagued by significant character flaws, God allows him to usher in the "golden age of Israel."

In spite of his human failings, David is still known as "a man who seeks God wholeheartedly.

David reigns for 40 years and upon his death, the scepter of Israel is passed to his son, Solomon, his son by Bathsheba.

### Solomon:

Solomon brings Israel's glory to its peak.

He builds the temple and people throughout the world come to hear his wisdom.

During Solomon's reign, God gives Israel a national identity.

God's communion with mankind has now gone from:

individual – family – tribes – people - nation

And again, as on the mountain, we see a picture of God's ultimate plan, the goal He is working towards:

God surrounded by His worshipping community, He being the sustainer and provider for His people and being its most glorious inhabitant.

Consequences of the Monarchy :

Now, let's back up a little and survey this entire period by looking at the issue of ruling and the consequences of the choice Israel made.

At the end of the period of the judges, against Samuel's counsel, the people demand a king and get one.

When they were new to the land, they were content to be led by the judges, people with a special anointing from God.

But, when they became oppressed by their neighbors who had kings, the prospect of a leader who could muster and lead an army against their foes and protect their land, became very attractive.

Now they become like their neighbors and install a king who leads their armies, but who also exercises his rights as king to extract taxes, conscript their young men, and take their daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

Earlier we read I Sam. 8:11-17.

This is not a pretty picture.

Israel traded their independence, their sons and daughters, their wealth for national security. (which they would have had under God)

The kings maintain treasuries to support the royal household.

Solomon conscripts forced labor to build the temple, his palace, elaborate gardens and numerous other construction projects. (70,000 laborers, 80,000 stone cutters II Chron. 1:14-2:2)

The royal household supports 1000 wives and concubines with funds collected from the people.

They have given their king unlimited and uncontrolled power. Solomon, for example, had no human accountability.

And there is no record that anyone ever complains or objects to the actions of the king.

And by the end of his reign, he had a people who were primed for rebellion. They were tired of his heavy yoke and hard service.

Lesson: The danger of unaccountable power and authority

And a strong part of the danger is that the person who has the power begins to think that their position and authority somehow authenticate their words and actions.

Israel learns what it means to be ruled by a human king.

#### **IV. Insights and Instructions for Our Formation:**

1. Although we can clearly see the importance of a strong national presence to maintain peace and promote justice, it is not the answer to the human problem of character development.

e.g. The U.S. is rich and powerful beyond all other nations on the earth, but the citizens are mired in a downward spiral of moral decay.

A quick look at the increased severity of problems in the school systems gives an adequate picture of this demise. (When I was in school, we got in trouble for running in the halls or chewing gum. Today, the problems in the school system are guns, drugs, gang violence.)

Prosperity and political might do not build character.

Power may also work against us as there is a tendency to believe that we can solve problems by coercion or force.

Trusting God and obeying His instructions develops character.

2. A unified and well-defined system of law and religion does not guarantee that people will be faithful to God.
3. Positions of power and authority are subject to abuse.

examples:

- Saul: decided he could offer a sacrifice that only the priest was authorized to offer.
- David: (used his authority to have a faithful officer killed)
- Solomon: became unfaithful to God and built altars and worshipped the gods of his foreign wives.
- Samuel – used his position to install his undeserving, unqualified sons into priestly offices

## **V. Character Studies** (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

3 Kings:

Saul: A major turning point in the history of Israel occurs with the anointing of Saul as king. Prior to this time, Israel had been a theocracy, ruled by God. Now they would be a monarchy, ruled by man.

Saul, chosen from the least of the tribes, Benjamin, was physically suited to the role of a military leader. He was not, however, endowed with great wisdom or mental acuity and was seriously deficient in moral character.

He made a good beginning exhibiting the quality of humility and gained victories over the enemies of Israel.

Later, however, he became jealous, impulsive (his rash vow – I Sam. 14:24ff), stubborn, expedient, impatient, fearful, disobedient and unbelieving. When

confronted with his sin, he was compromising, unrepentant and showed more zeal for his own honor than that of God's. He eventually sought wisdom and direction from the wrong source (witch of Endor I Sam. 28: 4ff).

Saul had lost sight of the fact that God had promoted him. His high position was a trust and responsibility from God, not a stepping stone to personal greatness, honor or wealth.

One of the great ironies of scripture is that Israel asked for a king, not choosing to trust in God's leadership. God gave them a king, one like themselves trusting in his own wisdom and inclinations.

Saul did not place God's glory and honor above his own. And even when judgment was pronounced, he did not seek forgiveness but sought to recover his lost image.

Saul's story is a sad reminder of the futility of human wisdom and the need for each person to humble himself before God.

David: David's life illustrates several of the spiritual disciplines:

1. Solitude and silence – His early life was spent in the fields and hills tending sheep where his days and nights were mostly in solitude and silence. Here, he learned to commune with God.
2. Prayer, praise and worship: As a shepherd boy, he played and sang to God – praise and worship. Approximately half of the Psalms recorded in the book of Psalms are accredited to him. These Psalms are petitions, praise and worship. The Psalms have been used by many Christians throughout the ages as vehicles of prayer and praise. (It would be impossible to count the number of songs that have been written using the book of Psalms.)
3. Meditation: The Psalms of David have numerous references to meditation, e.g. Ps. 19:14, 63:6, 143:5 This could only be written by one who had first-hand knowledge of the benefits of meditation.
4. Submission: He exhibited the discipline of submission when he refused to attack or take Saul's life because he was "the anointed of God." He recognized godly authority.

David also exhibited many godly qualities:

- He was repentant when confronted with his sin with Bathsheba.
- Even though his son rebelled against him, he was sorrowful over his death. He had no bitterness, nor desire for revenge, nor unforgiveness towards him.

- He was jealous for God's glory and courageous as was exemplified in his encounter and defeat of Goliath.
- He was identified as one who was "wholehearted" towards God. His commitment to God was founded on a solid rock which could not be moved by trials or even his own weaknesses.
- He trusted God in all of the circumstances of his life. This was clearly demonstrated when he refused to retaliate when Shemei, of the house of Saul, threw stones at him and cursed him. His response was that God may have instructed him to do so.

Solomon: Solomon made a good beginning. As he ascended to the throne, his prayer was for wisdom to govern God's people. He recognized his inability to rule wisely without God's help. (humility)

His early kingship was filled with much success as he became the most exalted and honored ruler of that era in that place.

His energies seemed tireless as he built the temple, his own palace of residence, the wall of Jerusalem, beautiful gardens, wrote many Proverbs, studied the sciences, and entertained his many wives and concubines. (1000 in all)

Eventually, his occupation with his many interests moved his heart away from the one, true God. His desire and dedication to God was almost smothered in his personal pursuits.

Solomon came to the place of violating God's Word which he knew to be true: e.g.

- He married foreign wives. God had forbidden it, instructing Israel that foreign wives would move their hearts away to idolatry. (I Kgs. 11)
- God had instructed kings not to increase their gold, cavalry or chariots (Deut. 17)

In his great wisdom, Solomon became a law to himself, doing what was right in his own eyes.

He had lost the quality of humility which he exhibited in the beginning. He was not successful in his war against the world (riches and fame), the flesh (sex) and the devil (self-rule, excluding God).

Early church leaders have recognized these 3 areas of warfare and have looked for ways to help Christians to overcome them. One of their courses of action were to embrace vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.



These vows correspond with the 3 areas of warfare that we face.

- chastity: vs. sex (the flesh)
- poverty: vs. wealth/possessions/fame (the world)
- obedience: vs. self-rule, self-government, rejecting God's rule (the devil)

Answers to these issues can be rooted in the spiritual disciplines:

- The world - simplicity (not seeking to amass riches, fame or the things of the world)
- The flesh - fidelity (faithfulness in marriage relationships)
- The devil - serving - embracing the Lordship of Christ and submitting our lives to the plans and purposes that God has for us. (serving and submission)

Samuel: "The prayer warrior"

Samuel's life was surrounded by prayer from the beginning. His birth was a direct answer to a desperate plea from his mother, Hannah, for a male child. She was faithful to her agreement and dedicated him to the Lord as a Nazirite. An early experience in his life records his first calling and conversation with God. His would be a life of communion with God, dwelling with Him in the secret place.

When Samuel cried out to the Lord on behalf of Israel, God heard him and delivered Israel out of the hands of their enemy. (I Sam. 7)

Samuel instructed the people of Israel to seek God wholeheartedly and to get rid of their idols.

A key verse regarding Samuel's calling and ministry to Israel is recorded in I Sam. 12:23: "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you;..."

When Saul disobeyed God in the matter of the Amalekites, Samuel "cried out to the Lord all night." (I Sam. 15:11).

Another prayer warrior of the New Testament was the apostle Paul. In I Thess. 5:16 he instructs the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing." In his letter to the Romans, a people he has never met, he says: "...without ceasing I make mention of you always, in my prayers,..."

Samuel lived a life of prayer. I believe it is appropriate to say that "prayer was the chief business of his life." What is the chief business of your life?

God was with Samuel from the very beginning and he maintained that relationship throughout his life providing us an example of one who lived the "Immanuel" life and was successful in God's kingdom work.

## VI. Final Summaries

### The Ways of God:

He allows mankind to make their own choices and will, at times, honor their request knowing it is not a good choice. (note also OT: multiple wives allowed)

He delights in those who make wise choices. (Solomon at the beginning of his reign.)

He will judge the disobedient. (Saul)

He is not fooled nor persuaded by the arguments of man. (Saul)

He calls some from their birth to special offices in His kingdom's work. (Samuel)

He answers prayer. (Hannah)

### Insights from this lesson for spiritual formation:

Saul:           Sought his own honor and not God's  
                  Used his calling to promote his own reputation  
                  Unbelieving, fearful, expedient, impatient  
                  Had not learned the need of repentance

David:           Solitude and silence  
                  Praise and worship  
                  Prayer  
                  Meditation  
                  Submission

Solomon:       Solomon became immersed in the busyness of the world.  
                  He entered into unrighteous relationships with foreign wives.  
                  His zeal for God became lost in his desire for accomplishment.  
                  He became a law unto himself, not having regard for the Law of God.

                  One way to be effective in our battles against the world, the flesh and the devil are to embrace spiritual disciplines such as simplicity, chastity, and servicing.

Samuel:       Prayer

## **VII. Homework assignments**

- Saul: 1.       How would you describe the character of Saul at different stages of his kingship?
2.       Why did God select Saul to be king?

3. Why or how did Saul lose the humility he exhibited at the beginning of his reign?

David: 1. How did David come to be whole-hearted towards God?

2. Why did he “fall into” the temptation with Bathsheba?
3. How could he have avoided his adulterous affair with Bathsheba?

Solomon:

1. How would you describe the “spiritual warfare” against Solomon? (world, flesh or devil)
2. Was it (the spiritual warfare) “in your face” or “hidden?”
3. Knowing God in the past, how could Solomon say that there was nothing but vanity under the sun?

## LESSON #6

Stage 6: **Job, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, 44 Psalms of Lament**

Community Focus: God's people in difficult times

### I. Background

Building God's Community: God's people in difficult times

God uses suffering, the difficulties of life, to shape and mold His people. The New Testament tells us that: "the son He loves, He disciplines."

James exhorts us to count it all joy when various trials come upon us because we know that the testing of our faith produces patience and that patience does a perfect work in us to make us complete, lacking nothing.

We also know that suffering (tribulations) produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope. (Romans 5:3)

These books provide us an anthology of God's people as they go through times of suffering. We are provided with a view into the inner man, their doubts, their complaints, petitions, their wrestlings with God to make sense of the trials they are embracing.

Dispensation: Job - Patriarch  
Ecclesiastes, Lamentation and Psalms of Lament - Law

Context:

Job: After the tower of Babel, Terah has given birth to three sons, Abram, Nahor and Haran. 1967 B.C.

Ecclesiastes During the final days of Solomon, when he had strayed from God, the judgment has come regarding the division of the kingdom. 10 tribes will be split off and will be ruled by Jeroboam.

Lamentations: Shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of most of the Israelites to Babylon

Psalms of Lament: various, depending on the Psalm and the situation in which it is written

Date:

Job - 1967 B.C.

Ecclesiastes - 947 B.C

Lamentations – 586 B.C.

Psalms of lament- the Psalms were written over a period of approximately 1000 years beginning with the time of Moses (15<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) to the time of Ezra (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)

Definitions:

“lament”/  
“psalm of  
lament”:

A psalm of lament is a poem in which the speaker identifies his specific (usually current) crisis and asks God for help.

The Psalms of lament usually contain several elements:

- o an initial call, cry or pleading to God for help
- o an identification of the crisis or complaint
- o a petition to God for relief from the distress
- o a statement of confidence in God’s ability to provide the assistance requested
- o a vow to praise God for His help

Literary Type:

Job: Hero story...a hero who goes through significant personal loss and difficulty but remains true to his Creator.

Job can also be classified as a drama since the reader is given the speeches of each of the actors.

Ecclesiastes:

Proverbs are the basic elements of the book.  
It has a narrative style embodied within the “quest motif.”

Lamentations: Lament – The author expresses deep, personal grief.

Psalms of Lament: poetry/lament

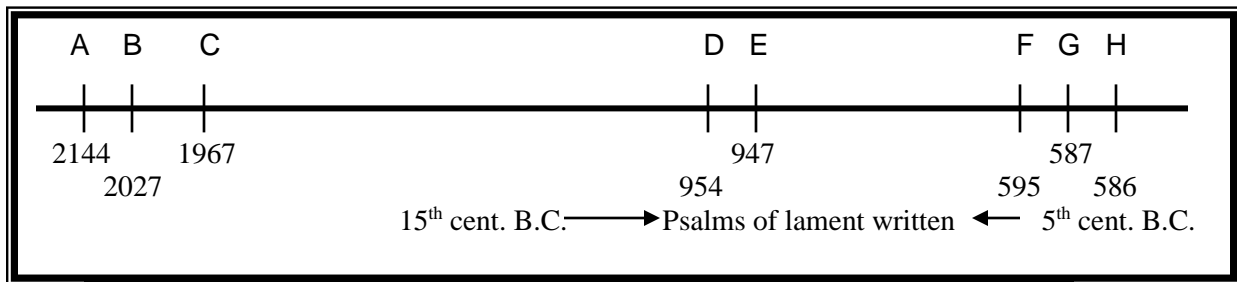
## II. Summary of this era

Major Events:

- A. The tower of Babel confusion of tongues 2144 B.C.
- B. The birth of Abram 2027 B.C.
- C. Book of Job written 1967 B.C.
- D. The judgment from God which will divide the kingdom between Jeroboam and Solomon’s son 954 B.C. (I Kgs. 11:29ff)
- E. Book of Ecclesiastes written 947 B.C.
- F. Book of Job written (Option 2) 595 – 588 B.C.

- G. Destruction of the temple and deportation to Babylon 587 B.C.
- H. Book of Lamentations written 586 B.C.

### Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



Job:

Satan accuses God that Job only worships Him because he has blessed him immensely. He maintains that if God were to remove His hand of blessing, like everyone else, Job would curse God.

God agrees to allow Job to be tested. He withdraws His hand of blessing from him.

In rapid succession, Job loses everything...his wife, family, home, flocks, herds and finally his health. He is left in the ash heap scraping the sores from his infected body.

Three friends of Job come to console him for his losses. While with him, they maintain principally that the reason he is suffering is that he has sinned:

Eliphaz – Job has sinned.

Bildad – Job should repent.

Zophar – Job's guilt deserves punishment

Job defends himself through a series of replies to their accusations.

There are three cycles of speeches by his "friends" with rebuttals from Job.

Ch-28 is a wisdom poem.

Ch-29-31 provide Job's concluding speeches.

Ch-32-37 provide speeches by a 4<sup>th</sup> person, a youth, who believes that wisdom resides with him.

Ch-38-42 These chapters provide God's speeches and Job's responses.

Ch-42:1-6 is Job's final response.

Job's final response was: "Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

At the end, God rebukes Job's three friends (no response toward the young man) and restores Job to double what he had before.

Ecclesiastes:

This book asks penetrating questions regarding the meaning of life and ultimately declares the meaninglessness (vanity) of existence apart from a relationship with God.

Ch- 1:1-11 There is nothing new under the sun.

1:12-8:15 The preacher searches for meaning in:

- A. wisdom and pleasure
- B. business
- C. wealth

8:16 – 12:8 The conclusion of the matter:

- A. the futility of wisdom
- B. the futility of pleasure
- C. the futility of business
- D. the primary good in the wise use and enjoyment of this present life
- E. the chief good is faith in the life to come

12:9-14 the primary duty of man: "fear God and keep His commandments"

Lamentations:

The prophet Jeremiah expresses his grief over the national tragedy he has seen with his own eyes.

Due to the sinfulness of Israel, God has allowed the Babylonians to come into the city and raze it.

There was hope however, that God would not discipline His people forever. He would eventually restore those who waited on Him.

Ch-1 The prophet's grief over the destruction of Jerusalem

Ch-2 A description of the desolation of Jerusalem

Ch-3 A shining light of hope

Ch-4 The demise of the inhabitants

Ch-5 The prophet's prayer for restoration

Note the declarations of hope in the middle of the book.

Blue Letter Bible Fun facts dated March 24, 2010:

The book of Lamentations is made of five songs, each of which have 22 verses except for the third song, which has 66 (made of 22 triads). The first song is divided neatly in two stacks of 11 verses, the first stack from the perspective of someone looking at Jerusalem and the second stack from the perspective of Jerusalem herself. The book holds a chiastic structure common to Hebrew literature and therefore finds its climax in the central song. It is here that we find such passages of hope in the midst of despair such as "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" and "For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love."

Psalms of Lament:

There are 44 Psalms of lament (as categorized by J.H. Walton in his "Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament.")

Of the 44:

- 34 were written by David.
- 2 were written by the sons of Korah
- 2 were written by Asaph
- 1 was written by Heman, and
- 5 are of unknown authorship

Through a study of these books, we can learn how to approach God openly and honestly as we go through the various trials and difficulties of life.

God's Action: God allows difficulties, tribulations and distress to strengthen the faith and character of His people.

God brings judgment for rebellion, unbelief and idolatry.

Man's Response: Job: He gives surprisingly honest assessments of his feelings during the "great trial."

In the end, he justifies God.



Job's friends offer him counsel but it is without understanding. They steadfastly maintain that he is suffering because of sin not knowing that the trial originated in the heavens in a dialogue between God and Satan.

Ecclesiastes: The preacher, Solomon, has tried everything under the sun and has found that all is vanity. He sums up the purposeful life: "fear God and keep His commandments."

Lamentations: poetic complaints that are presented honestly before God.

Psalms of lament: various authors put pen to their difficult situations and grief and petition God for His intervention.

### **III. Lesson 6 Review:**

In lesson #6 we saw the "with-God" life of Israel being formed as the nation rose to its greatest days of glory during the reigns of David and Solomon.

Some of the primary sources of formation were the institutions of the temple, the sacrificial system, the liturgies, the psalms of praise and worship, the temple furnishings which were constant reminders of God's love and grace.

We briefly visited some of the positive and negative character flaws in each of the 3 kings, Saul, David and Solomon. We saw that David is remembered in the most favorable light because of his whole-hearted devotion to God (even though he sinned greatly with Bathsheba).

Saul failed miserably due to character weaknesses.

And, unfortunately for Israel, although Solomon made a good beginning, he was led astray by his many wives. (something which God Word had expressly forbidden)

Upon Solomon's death, Israel was a nation ready for rebellion because of his heavy yoke and hard service. Under Solomon their life situation in many ways resembled Egypt. (the result of a human king without accountability.)

One of the most significant events of this time was Israel's request for a human king and the profound effect it had on subsequent generations. In essence, they were rejecting God's rule over them. By the end of Solomon's reign, the people knew what it was like to have a human king.

In Job, Psalms of Lament, Ecclesiastes and Lamentations, we will see the formation of Israel that occurs in "the mystery of suffering."

One of the profound, truths of the Scriptures is that we have a loving God who is present with us no matter what we are going through. He does not abandon us during

our sufferings. In fact, we know from Scripture that He sees us and that no circumstance comes to us except that He has first carefully reviewed it. The Psalms tells us that He neither sleeps nor slumbers. He is always on the watch.

A question that we all have heard or asked at some time in our lives is: “Why does God allow suffering?”

The Psalms of Lament provide us with numerous examples of God’s people going through difficult times. In them, we get a glimpse into the heart of the sufferer.

These are words heavy with deep emotion:

- Ps 6: O Lord, heal me for my bones are shaking with terror.  
I am weary with my moaning, every night I flood my bed with weeping.
- Ps. 7: O Lord, my God...save me from all my pursuers and deliver me.
- Ps. 10: “Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?”  
Why do You hide yourself in times of trouble?”
- Ps.13: “How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?”  
“How long must I bear pain in my soul?”
- Ps. 22: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groanings?”

Job 3:1-3, 24-26 Job’s lament

Job’s friends attempt to understand and explain the reason for his suffering. His “friends” insist that his suffering is due to his sin.

Why didn’t Job’s friends know why Job was suffering?

They weren’t sitting in the audience of heaven when God and Satan had their discussion. Therefore, they didn’t have the mind of God. How could they ever truly know except God reveal it.

There are several reasons for suffering – sin, human evil, corporate unrighteousness as when Achan sinned and the whole community suffered.

## **Job**

Often, our suffering is beyond our comprehension and defies our understanding.

In Job’s case, we can say that there is no clear connection between righteousness and prosperity or misfortune and unrighteousness. Simply put, sometimes the wicked prosper and the righteous live on the edge of poverty.

Job discovered that the mystery of suffering can only be embraced as we trust and rely on God. He discovered that this mystery eluded both him and his friends’ easy answers and best explanations.

At times, we just don’t know why we are going through a difficult time.

One thing we do learn from suffering is to trust God. And, as the Proverbs state: “lean not on our own understanding.” Prov. 3:5

And we also learn that God is in control of our lives and all things can work for our good as we live in fellowship with Him.

This is not true for non-believers. This is a covenant promise from God to His children.

**Lament Psalms** The sheer number of lament Psalms (44) is an indicator of the pervasiveness of suffering in our lives.

In the lament Psalms (e.g. 3-7, 10, 12-14, 17, 22, 25-26, 28, 31, 35), we find the full range of people from kings to ordinary people reacting to suffering.

- They have anger in their hearts,
- They are planning revenge.
- They feel despair, discouragement, disappointment, moaning, confused...

And this even though they personally know that God is overseeing their lives.

Almost nothing else stirs the emotions like suffering.

In their state of trouble, they cry out to God for deliverance from their enemies, plead their case to a seemingly brass heavens, weep and flood their beds with tears.

One of the amazing things about many Psalms is that you can see the change of heart that occurs as the Psalmist is praying. (Formation occurs as we are in deep, honest, heart communication with God.)

One of the spiritual disciplines that I identified in the first session was prayer. This is how formation occurs in prayer.

How many times do we see the Psalmist begin with crying out to God (~ 30 “crying out chapters in the Psalms)?

Then the Psalmist tells God his complaint.  
He asks God for relief from his distress,  
He makes a statement of confidence as God reminds him of who He is or what He has previously done.  
The Psalmist ends up with a vow to praise God for His help and deliverance.

You can sense the change of emotion as the Psalm develops.

I encourage praying the Psalms not only as a tool for learning to pray but also as a matter of Christian formation.

Interesting information: The Psalms have an average of 15 verses per chapter.  
Most chapters can be read in 2 minutes or less.

## Ecclesiastes

Solomon's main theme in Ecclesiastes is the vanity or meaninglessness of a life that is not connected with God. Numerous times he uses the phrases: "under the sun," "vanity" (or meaningless) and "a chasing after the wind."

Understanding the meaning of life can be particularly troubling when God gives no apparent distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous.

- The sun rains on the just and the unjust,
- the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice
- "A righteous man perishes in his righteousness while the wicked lives long in his wickedness." Eccl. 7:15

Why should we even try to be good if there is no apparent reward in this life?

The conclusion of the matter: "Fear God and keep His commandments." (Eccl. 12:13)

This seems to be a strange answer to the question: Why do people suffer?

It appears to be far removed from a complete answer to the question.

How does Solomon's answer in 12:13 answer the question of suffering?

"For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." Eccl. 12:14

This tells me that one day we will know, but not, perhaps, in this life. But...until then... do the things you know to do...love God and obey Him.

Also: Eccl. 3:14 "whatever God does endures forever."

## Lamentations

The book of Lamentations reinforces the teachings of the Torah (e.g. disobedience brings a curse) by declaring that the sufferings being experienced by Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem are a result of their sin.

*"Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; The roads to Zion mourn... her gates are desolate...her foes have become her masters...because the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions (v.5); Jerusalem has sinned grievously." (v.8) Lam. 1:3-8a*

Here we see that the dissolving of a community or society is often a consequence of sin.

Even from the beginning with the first couple, we see that, when humans are separated from God, they become separated from each other. Intimate relationships suffer serious harm.

Tragedies do happen and the consequences of turning away from God are real and troubling. And in their troubles, (1:16, 17), “a comforter is far from me” and “Zion stretches out her hand and there is no one to comfort her.”

#### **IV. Benefits for our formation:**

What can we learn from the four books we are reviewing today?

Although sufferings appear to disrupt our life, the Scriptures also point us to many ways that it helps us find God and increase in our understanding of His ways.

What is a primary lesson from Job?

1. Job’s experiences bring to light an important fact of the spiritual life:

We can’t cite the physical blessings or curses as proof of God’s approval or disapproval. (If you’re going through a difficult time, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’ve sinned or lost the blessing of God.)

2. Suffering helps us to see that God is with us in good times and in bad. He is with us even though we have no external evidence of His presence. (“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5) and Jesus: I am with you always... Matt. 28:20

3. Suffering teaches us that we can only be fulfilled in a life with God. We miss this fulfillment when we give our love to things in the world. Through suffering we become aware of a deeper dimension of our life with God, a dimension that cannot be perceived apart from fellowship with Him.

4. Suffering causes us to think more clearly about the “shortness of life” and the importance of true and worthy goals. (We are like a shadow and we fade like grass.” Eccl. 8:13; Ps. 37:2 “How quickly time flies.”

5. Suffering teaches us to trust and depend daily on our God who loves us and cares for us. It teaches us to constantly be in touch with God and to petition Him for our true needs. We need to hear from Him and be directed by Him. (I would prefer that my sufferings would come from Him and not from my stupidity and wrong choices.)

6. Sufferings teach us that we don’t need an answer to our every question. e.g. Why did God allow this to happen? (God never did tell Job why he was suffering – see Satan’s accusations in Job 1)

#### **V. Limits of our formation:**

The randomness and the uncertainty as to why something difficult has come upon us can challenge our faith. (Our culture teaches us that good things are a result of right living and bad things come from bad deeds.)

Why do good people get cancer?

Why were those teenagers killed by a deranged student?  
Why did my friend die in combat?

There are no easy answers to these difficult questions.

And the same answer doesn't work for every similar situation. e.g. We may both be badly injured in an accident – my injury coming because of sin and yours due to a drunk driver” “We live in a society that is plagued with the disease of sin.”

These sufferings remind us that this life is not the end of all things.  
And that they are only one aspect of our experience in life.

One of the most remarkable lives recorded in Scripture (aside from Jesus) is that of the apostle Paul. I have been amazed at his response to some of the most difficult life situations – shipwrecked, 39 stripes, stoned, constantly in danger for his life, etc.

Even while in chains, he wrote letters of encouragement to “his children.” In these letters, he constantly exhorts them to “rejoice” (be extremely glad) for the trials that come upon them. His constant attitude, no matter his circumstance, was to rejoice. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. (Phil. 4:4)

Excerpt from Renovare” Bible: Joy, the fruit of life in Christ

“In response to the Philippians concern and kindnesses, Paul send them a letter full of joy. Paul not only remembers them joyfully in prayer (1:4), but rejoices at the proclamation of the gospel, whatever their motive (1:18). Paul identifies the aim of his ministry as their “progress and joy in faith.” (1:25) He appeals to their tenderheartedness, essentially telling them that if they really want him to be fully joyful, they must get along with each other. (2:2) He is grateful for, and rejoices at, their concern for him. (4:10) Paul encourages them to rejoice over each other (2:17-18) and even to rejoice for no particular reason at all. (3:1, 4:4) Late in his ministry – having endured hardships and opposition from all sides – Paul expresses joy. Here is spiritual maturity: when Paul had every reason to be tired and bitter, he responded to life with joy.”

joy – 10 times in 10 sentences...you can see how much this was on his mind

## **VI. Insights and Instruction for our Formation:**

1. Suffering can challenge our beliefs to the core of our being.
2. Suffering works the formation of perseverance, proven character and hope in our lives. Rom. 5:3-4
3. Suffering can teach us to trust in God rather than despairing about our external circumstances.
4. In God's economy, all suffering is purposeful. There are no random acts or events. “All things do work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.” (Rom. 8:28)

5. Suffering that is embraced in faith has a transforming effect on our character.

As we work our way through our difficult circumstances, we can begin to see that God's reality and purposes are beyond the boundaries of our limited vision for our lives. (What ultimate goals is God working towards in our lives?)

6. We come to realize that our ultimate destiny lies beyond suffering where God will *"wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."* (Rev. 21:4 (same passage we get God's ultimate goal of a community Rev. 21:3))

**Final Questions:** What can we say about suffering when "we don't know why?"

- a. Rejoice!
- b. God knows what is going on.
- c. This is not a random act.
- d. Do what you know to do.
- e. "This too shall pass."
- f. Ask yourself: Will I, by my responses, gain the benefits God has designed for me in this difficult situation or circumstance?

## VII. Character Studies

Character Studies: (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

- Job

The story of Job is another "riches to rags" story (see also Joseph and Moses) and illustrates the work and ways of God in the human heart.

The trials of Job began when Satan did what he does, bring accusation against God. "Job only worships you because you have blessed him. Take away the blessings and he will curse you." (Job 1)

God allowed Job to be tested but with a further goal in mind, the maturing and purification of Job's heart and the weaning of him from dependence on the things of the world.

The story begins with Job in a period of great wealth and family.

Not one by one, but "all at once" these things are taken from him. Further, his physical body is visited with painful sores.

"Never a man sank so low."

His testimony at the end of these trials was: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and, that at the last, He will stand upon the earth...then in my flesh I shall see God."

He had learned to justify God in every situation. He had learned to "embrace the now."

Because God loves us, He will not allow us to remain in immaturity, as children who can only take milk. He is not content to leave us as “infant Christians” but weans us from dependence on the things in the world by withdrawing them from us for a season.

From Job’s experience we learn that God allows a “dark night of the soul” to come to his children. Job had it all, but God allowed all of it to be taken away so that his dependence would be on God alone. Through difficult times of testing, pride becomes humility, love of the pleasures of the world becomes simplicity, our hearts learn to trust in God alone.

#### - Jeremiah

Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office during the darkest hours of Israel’s existence, a time which no one ever conceived could occur...the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple and the people being taken into captivity. (Surely, they thought, since God is invincible, God’s city was impregnable.)

His task was unenviable. God described the people to whom Jeremiah would speak in chapter 8: “Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding? They have held fast to deceit, they have refused to return.” (return in the sense of repentance)

The heart of Jeremiah was deeply grieved because of the sins of the people against God.

Jeremiah was given the task of being a prophet to an unbelieving, unrepentant people. His message regarding the destruction of Jerusalem was not only not believed or received but it was used against him. He was accused of being a traitor and inciting the people against the Israelite rulers.

For his faithful words he was:

- o beaten,
- o put in stocks,
- o put into prison and, on one occasion,
- o put into a muddy cistern

But, no matter the opposition, he could not refrain from speaking: “There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

He remained faithful to the calling God had placed on his life enduring the suffering and disappointments. No matter that there was no evidence of a single repentant soul.



A key to Jeremiah's successful life began in his relationship with God. He fellowshiped with God and heard God's voice. There was no question as to what he was to do. He had heard from God, Himself.

A key lesson for us is to dwell in the secret place of fellowship with God. (see Ps. 91) There we will receive strength for the work but also our instructions and the understanding of our task will be made firm. He could stand firm because he knew what God required of Him and what he was called to do.

Two biblical disciplines of his personal life enabled him to persevere in his work:

1. Guidance: experiencing an interactive friendship with God that gives direction and purpose to daily life.<sup>1</sup>
2. Prayer: Interactive conversation with God about what we and God are thinking.<sup>1</sup>

### **VIII. Final Summaries**

#### The Ways of God:

There is a limit to sin after which judgment will come.

His judgments can be very severe.

He allows testings and difficulties to come into our lives to bring repentance and to bring about growth in faith and in character.

#### Insights from this lesson for spiritual formation:

Job: "the dark night of the soul"

submission- subordination to the counsel and actions of God

prayer – honesty in his communications with God

Jeremiah: guidance, prayer

Solomon (from Ecclesiastes): guidance (see definition above)

If Solomon had maintained an interactive friendship with God, it would have given direction and purpose to his daily life.

### **IX. Homework assignments**

- Job:
1. Have people ever made false accusations against you?
  2. What was your response?

3. It has been said that “the measure of a man is revealed when he is down on his luck.” How did Job “measure up?”

Jeremiah (Lamentations):

1. Do you have situations in your life where you may need to “stand alone?”
2. What will you need to know in order to stand alone successfully?
3. What was the key for Jeremiah in standing alone?

Ecclesiastes:

1. How did Solomon sum up the realities of life “under the sun?”
2. What spiritual discipline was he missing? (simplicity)
3. What makes our “time under the sun” worthwhile?

Psalms of Lament: Read 3 of the Psalms of lament and observe the manner of the authors communications with God.

Do they hide the truth?  
 Do they communicate openly?  
 What kind of communication does God expect from us?

The following table summarizes the authorship of the Psalms of Lament:

<b>Author</b>	<b>Book I</b>	<b>Book II</b>	<b>Book III</b>	<b>Book IV</b>	<b>Book V</b>
	1-41	42-72	73-89	90-106	107-150
Individual Lament					
David	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 39	51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69,70	86		109, 140, 141, 142, 143
Sons of Korah		42	88		
Asaph			76, 77		
Heman			88		
Ethan			89		
Unknown		43, 71		102	120, 130
National Lament					
Sons of Korah		44			
Asaph			74, 79, 80,83		
Moses				90	

# LESSON #7

## Stage 7: Psalms 1-150

Community Focus: God's people in prayer and worship

### I. Background

Building God's Community: God's people in prayer and worship.

God established the format for worship during the exodus from Egypt when He gave the people the temple and His Law on Mt. Sinai.

When David became king, he moved the ark, and therefore, the worship to Jerusalem. It became the center for all of their religious activities.

The Psalms became the liturgy for public worship. This included the system for offering sacrifices, the annual festivals, and the pilgrimages (see Psalms 120-134).

The temple community included the priests, those who worked within the temple (Levites) and numerous musicians.

At this stage, God's community consists of a nation of people with instructions for living in community with God, a liturgy, a prayer and praise book and annual feasts, festivals and pilgrimages to guide the people in their with-God life. These instructions will also bring to their remembrance on a regular basis who God is and what He has done for them.

Dispensation: Law

Context: varies with each Psalm from the extremes of joyful celebration, thanksgiving and worship to mourning and travail in the midst of difficult life situations such as the destruction of Jerusalem and the people being taken captive to Babylon.

Date: The Psalms were collected and compiled over a period of approximately 1000 years beginning with Moses in the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and concluding in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

Literary Type: Poetry

#### Characteristics of the Psalms:

1. Psalms is both a prayer and song book. The Psalms were written for singing, for public worship in the temple.
2. The Psalms are written in the language of the human spirit. They are not reasoned prose but deeply emotional responses filled with heart rending

cries of anguish, exuberant expressions of praise and thanksgiving, dramatic language and numerous figures of speech.

3. The writings of the Psalms were spontaneous expressions of the life of the Israelites. They were written in the language of response. An individual surveys the wreckage of Jerusalem and pours out his heart in sorrow before God. Another witnesses the miraculous crossing of the sea and the drowning of the army of Pharaoh and breaks out into a song of celebration and great rejoicing.
  - In Ex. 15, Moses sings a song to the Lord.
  - Deborah, Hannah, David and Mary were others who also composed spontaneous songs to express their devotion and thankfulness to God or to celebrate a significant event in their life or the life of Israel.
4. Individual psalms were written for different purposes. Some were written for use in private devotions while others were intended for corporate worship from the beginning.
5. The Psalms revolve around two vastly different poles: on one side is the desperate, human condition, fallen man, unable to help himself, unable to achieve redemption and life by his own abilities.

The opposite pole is the greatness, glory and majesty of the all-sufficient God who has no limit to his abilities. And...He has a willing heart that "none should perish."

The Psalms are a magnet in that their poetic forms coupled with their profound insight into the human condition draw them even to unbelievers.

The unparalleled way in which the psalms put into words the experiences of praise and worship, thanksgiving and adoration, grief over dire circumstances or happenings, repentance and sorrow over sin, make them available to everyone. The psalms give us words and expressions which we might never think of but can utilize given circumstances similar to that of a psalm.

6. The Psalms provide us a window into the heart of a person experiencing the Immanuel life. As such, they are useful for us as we make our way along the tortuous (twisting, bending) paths of life.

It has been said that there is a Psalm for every occasion. No matter what you are going through, there is a psalm that will help you express the emotion, the grief, the joy, the thankfulness or the concerns of the moment.

Some illustrations:

- when you are fearful – Ps. 23
- when you feel like God doesn't see you – Ps. 139
- when you are discouraged by the apparent prosperity of the wicked – Ps. 73
- when you need wisdom to live a godly life – Ps 1, 119
- when you want to praise God – Ps. 145-150
- when you are going on a trip – Ps 121
- when you are fearful that you might make a fatal, wrong choice – Ps. 121
- when you face issues related to death – Ps. 23
- when you feel betrayed by friends – Ps. 55
- when you are convicted by your sin – Ps. 51
- when you are preparing to go to church to worship – Ps. 100
- when you don't feel thankful – Ps. 107
- when you want to express your longings for God – Ps. 84
- when you have lost sight of the goodness of God – Ps. 103
- when you are wondering what God expects – Ps. 15, 24

## 7. The Poetry of the Psalms

The Psalms are Hebrew poetry, but not in the manner that we are accustomed to. When we think of poetry, we think of rhythm and rhyme.

When the Hebrews wrote poetry, they utilized repetition and restatement of a theme. One line of a verse is followed by another line or sometimes two in which the theme of the first verse is restated but with the same idea. In some cases the restated theme is a contrast to the theme of the first line.

This is called parallelism.

The Hebrews utilized several types of parallelism but the main ones were:

A. similarity (also called synonymous) – in which the theme of the second line is similar to the first, but is a variation of the same idea:

Ps. 3:1           “Lord, how they have increased who trouble me!  
Many are they who rise up against me.”

B. contrast (also called “antithetic parallelism”) In this form of parallelism, the second line provides a contrast to the first line.

Ps. 1:6           “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked shall perish.”

C. synthetic At times, the following lines add to the information of the first line:

Ps. 1:1           “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of  
the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”

D. Completion (also called climactic) in which the second line partially repeats the first line and then completes the theme:

Ps. 96:7          “Give to the Lord, O families of the people,  
Give to the Lord glory and strength.

E. A fifth type of parallelism can be called metaphoric (sometimes called emblematic) in which the first line gives a figure of speech and the lines following explain the figure of speech.

In the following case, the metaphor is a simile:

Ps. 1:3           He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf shall not wither;  
And whatever he does, shall prosper.

## II. Formation through the Psalms:

Holy men and women of the ages have encouraged us that the way to understand the Psalms is by praying them and to use them in ways that allow them to form us, to shape us.

We cannot simply read the psalms as we do nearly all of our other readings...newspapers, novels, textbooks, and the like. We don't read the psalms for information but for formation.

It means submitting ourselves to the text of scripture and allowing it to search and examine us. It means opening our heart to the message of

scripture and receiving its comfort, encouragement, its exhortation, its command, its rebuke, its correction.

We don't come to the psalms to analyze them, dissect them and categorize them, although some of our study tools are useful in developing the background and main themes of a psalm.

When coming to the Psalms, we employ what has been called "holy reading."

To engage in holy reading, it is useful to begin with a period of silence. (For God alone, my soul waits in silence." Ps. 62) This will prepare our hearts to receive from the Lord but also allows us a moment to redirect our reading habits away from our usual fact finding, cut and paste, hurry up and get my 5 chapters read today, how I learned to read with Evelyn Wood (speed reading) processes.

We then can read prayerfully, thoughtfully, as Asaph says, with musings and meditations, ruminating on a passage, waiting and watching to see how the Holy Spirit will open up this passage to us. As a hen, we learn to brood over the text. We go slowly just as you do when a chocolate truffle is melting in your mouth and you want to savor all of its taste.

Often, this process leads us into praying the psalm and it begins to be ours as we learn to pray (or sing or worship or petition) from the heart. The words of the psalms written by David or Asaph or the sons of Korah, or Solomon hundreds of years ago now become our words to God.

And as they do, formation begins to occur, as our heart becomes involved in the process. Through the Psalms we become a work of art, a work of the heart.

One of the great tragedies of our time is to have something and not know what we've got. So it is with the book of Psalms, a treasure of treasures, more to be desired than fine gold. The living Word of God, active and sharp, cutting and dividing, molding and making, healing and making things new within us, forming us and shaping us as we sing it, pray it, petition through it, worship and praise with it, as we do it from our heart.

Definitions: (From Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible – Spiritual Disciplines Index)<sup>1</sup>

1. Celebration: utter delight and joy in our life and our world as a result of our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty and goodness.
2. Confession: sharing our deepest weaknesses and failures with God and trusted others so that we may enter into God's grace and mercy and experience His ready forgiveness and healing.

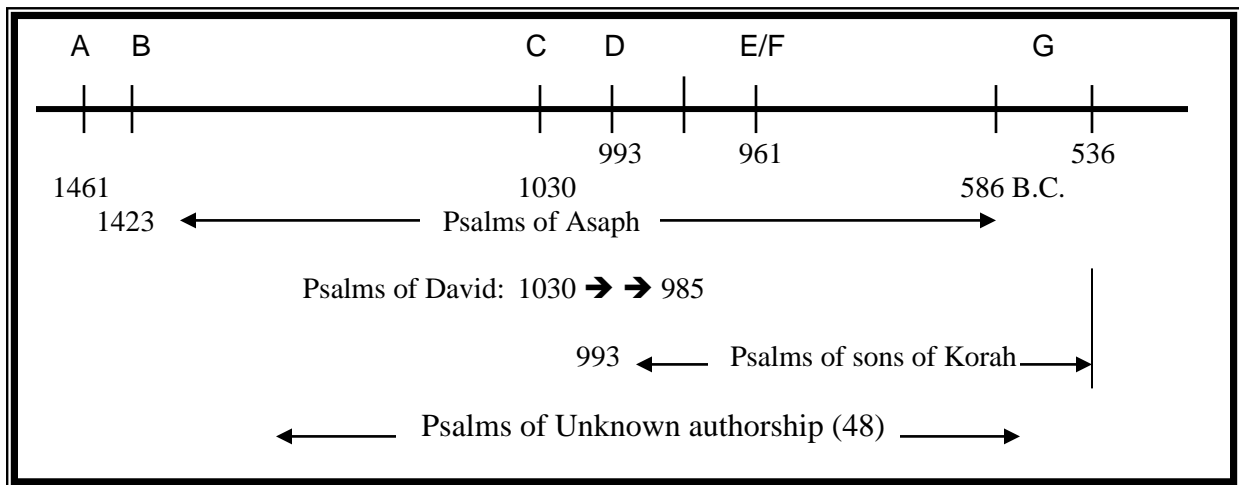
3. Guidance: experiencing an interactive friendship with God that gives direction and purpose to daily life.
4. Meditation: prayerful rumination upon God, His Word and His world.
5. Prayer: Interactive conversation with God about what we and God are thinking.

### III. An Overview of Psalms

#### Authors:

- |    |                    |   |
|----|--------------------|---|
| A. | Moses (1)          | 1461 B.C.   |
| B. | Asaph (12)         | 1423 (Ps 78) – 586 B.C. (Ps 74, 79)<br>(There were, most likely, two Asaphs.) |
| C. | David (73)         | 1030 – 985 B.C.   |
| D. | Sons of Korah (12) | 993 (Ps 42) – 536 B.C. (Ps 84/87)   |
| E. | Heman (1)          | 961 B.C (Ps 88)   |
| F. | Ethan (1)          | 961 B.C. (Ps 89)  |
| G. | Unknown (50)       |   |

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



#### A review of the book of Psalms:

The book of Psalms has been sub-divided into 5 sections (often referred to as "books"):

Section I: Psalms 1-41

In these Psalms, there is a wide range of experiences by the psalmists in which the two primary themes are "Help Lord,



I'm suffering" (lament) and praise and remembrance of the blessings of God.

Section II: Psalms 42-72

This book is similar in content to the first with the lament psalm being the most frequent but closely followed by praise and worship.

In books one and two, David is the principal author.

There are 7 psalms by the sons of Korah in this book that are of varying themes.

Section III: Psalms 73-89

Lament is the dominant theme of this book but there is such a variety in this grouping, that it could be called "a miscellaneous" collection.

There is more emphasis on the community life of the nation in this book than in the previous 2 books; e.g. Ps. 73, 74, 78.

Asaph wrote the majority of the psalms in this book.

Section IV. Psalms 90-106

Praise and thanksgiving are dominant themes in this book in which the focus is on God's character and what He has done.

Section V. Psalms 107-150

There is a wide variety of topics in this book but the dominant theme is praise and worship.

There are some clusters of psalms by author or topic that can be identified:

Psalms 120-134 are identified as the Psalms of ascent. They were sung by the people of Israel as they went on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the feasts that God had prescribed.

Psalms 146-150 - Hallel Psalms, called as such because each of the Psalms begins and ends with the word, Hallelujah, meaning praise the Lord.

An interesting observation about these Psalms is that they are pure praise, there are no petitions in these 5 psalms.

Psalms 73 through 83 were written by Asaph.

In book I, Psalms 1-41, David wrote all but 4 of these Psalms.  
In book II, Psalms 42-72, David wrote 18 of the 31.  
He wrote only 3 books total in Books III and IV; but writes 15 more in book V.

In book IV, the authors are mostly unknown (14 out of 17).

See the chart at the end of this chapter for a color presentation of the authors and their psalms.

The following is a typical categorization of the Psalms according to the type of Psalm:\*

Ascent or pilgrimage – psalms which were sung by pilgrims while traveling to Jerusalem for Israel's feasts

Enthronement – celebrates the reign of God

Imprecatory – petitions God to execute a judgment against the enemies of God or Israel

Individual Lament – speaks with God about a desperate personal situation and requests His help

Messianic – contains prophetic language related to the coming Messiah

National Lament – speaks with God about a national emergency and request his intervention

Penitential – expresses sorrow and repentance over sin

Praise – exalts God for his works or character

Royal – describes and compares the reign of an earthly king with our heavenly king

Songs of Zion – songs which speak of Zion, the city of God

Thanksgiving – expresses a person's gratitude to God for His acts of kindness

Wisdom – provides wisdom for living a godly life

Worship – a psalm in which the individual bows in worship and adoration of God...does not necessarily include petition

\*Note: This is one system or categorizing the Psalms. Others are extant.

### God's Action:

God interacts with mankind in deeply personal ways.

God hears and answers prayer, but not always immediately.

God is not absent when His people are going through difficult times.

He establishes a system (liturgy) for public worship.

### Man's Response:

Man responds to God in many ways including :

- praise and worship
- joyful celebration
- deep anguish over difficult circumstances
- heart wrenching grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people
- moments of resting, waiting, silence, solitude
- petition for needs
- prayers of imprecation hoping for the demise of their enemies
- recitation of God's mighty acts on their behalf
- wisdom statements

Psalms, also called the Psalter, is a collection of the corporate and individual experiences of Israel expressed in the richness of Hebrew poetry for public reading and remembrance.

The English title comes from the Greek word *psalmos* which translates the Hebrew word *mizmor* (song) which is found in many of the titles provided in the Bible.

The Hebrew name for the book is *tehillim* which means "praises."

And what is the source of prayer and praise? **the heart.**

So, Psalms can be called the book of the heart, the well-spring of the Immanuel life.

The book of Psalms is a collection of lyric poems that express the range of feelings and thoughts of the believer. John Calvin called the Psalms "*an anatomy of all the parts of the soul.*"

Definition: "Lyric"

= A short poem that expresses the thoughts and/or feelings of the speaker.

They do not usually tell a story and, at times, have a seemingly disjointed structure in which the poet jumps from one thought or feeling to the next.

The Psalms often exhibit a range of feelings.

Lyric poems usually have a central theme about which the entire poem centers, e.g. "Help Lord, I'm in trouble;" or "I will exalt you."

Even though they don't tell a story, a life experience often provides the occasion for the lyrics. e.g. David being pursued by Absalom (Ps. 3)

**From Dictionary** – "lyric" – of or relating to a category of poetic literature that is distinguished from the narrative and dramatic and is most representative of music in its sound patterns.

Lyric poetry is believed to be called so because it was often accompanied by the lyre.  
Lyricism – an intense outpouring of emotion

Lyrics generally have a 3-part structure:

- a. introduction – "help"
- b. development - "Why I'm in trouble"
- c. closure - "but I remember you and I will praise you"

In lyrics, the poet may use a number of different techniques for developing their theme:

- a. repetition
- b. listing/catalog
- c. contrast
- d. association (in which the poet branches out from an initial idea to a related idea. e.g. Ps 107 – the different ways a person loses their way

The Psalms are self-contained compositions meant to be read individually.

Although there is no progressive structure in the book of Psalms in general, there are groupings of Psalms such as the Psalms of ascension (120-134) and Hallel (145-150). Ps 90-106 are principally psalms of praise and thanksgiving.

Another thing the Psalms do is take the basic themes of OT theology and turn them into a song.

Some of the basic themes you may recognize are:

- monotheism – there is one God
- the nature of God
- creation and fall (and therefore, the nature of man)
- election and covenant
- eschatology – the people of God are headed towards a glorious future.
- worship
- suffering

The Psalms include a wide variety of emotions including;

- love and devotion towards God,

- sorrow over sin,
- dependence on God in desperate circumstances,
- the battle of fear and trust,
- walking with God even when the way seems dark, and
- confidence in the eventual triumph of God's purposes in the world.
- deep distress over a current life situation

The Psalms were simply read or chanted, but, on some occasions, they were accompanied by a wide variety of musical instruments. An inherent beauty of the Psalms is that they can be sung by individuals, small groups or large choirs in locations as diverse as large cathedrals, wilderness mountains, public gardens and the privacy of one's own home.

They are not limited in their transformation capability by the skill or quality of the one reciting or singing them or the number of people singing them.

The Psalms are one of the major tools God uses to transform the inner life of His people. Much of this effectiveness lies in their capability to affect all of the parts of our inner life.

#### IV. Praying the Psalms

##### A. Verbatim Praying (8, 19, 23, 145)

Praying the words that are in the text, just as they are.  
In some Psalms, you may want to change the action from indicative (statement of a fact) to direct address.

Example: Ps 23 "*The Lord is my shepherd.*"  
to: Lord, You are my shepherd.

##### B. Paraphrase Praying (59, 84)

Paraphrase praying is useful when the circumstances of the prayer don't fit with ours but suggest something similar.

e.g. Ps 59:1-4 (p. 89) We may not have enemies lurking behind a tree but we do have spiritual enemies that will try to trip us up.

Ps 84:9 "Behold our shield; look upon the face of Your anointed."  
This is a reference to the king of Israel. Our prayer might be for our president or people in positions of authority.

Paraphrase praying can also be restating a line in modern English:

"I shall not want."	I won't lack anything that I need.
"My cup runneth over."	My life overflows with His blessings.
	He blesses my socks off.

C. Praying over a Psalm (78)

Summarize large sections. Useful in praying longer Psalms.  
Summarize the content of the Psalm or of each stanza/segment.

107: Ways people go astray: lost their way, rebelled, iniquities,  
busy in business.

D. Responsive (1)

Respond to issues raised in the Psalm or in each segment.

Allow the Psalm to guide your prayers.

e.g. Ps 1 walks in the counsel of the ungodly  
stands in the path of sinner  
sits in the seat of the scornful

guard: my steps/path; my friendships; the desires of my heart

E. Guided (67, 90, 129)

Let the Psalm guide you to pray for something particularly pressing in your  
life or for someone else:

e.g. Ps 67:2, 4, 7 might guide you to pray for missions  
Ps 129 : persecution – persecuted church  
Ps 90:16 “...let your work appear to your servants and your glory  
to their children”

We could pray that God will reveal Himself and His glory to the  
youth of CCW.

F. Combination (19)

Some Psalms can be combinations of any of the 5 methods above.

e.g. 19 vv. 1-11 guided : praise – creation and the Word  
vv. 12-14 verbatim “Let the words of my mouth...”

**V. Inferred Literary Intentions** (from Literary Bible)

Some of the inferred literary intentions of the Psalms are:

1. give expression to the emotional and reflective side of personal,  
Immanuel experiences
2. express truth by means of images and figures of speech (see Ps. 19)

(makes it more memorable)

3. package the content in highly artistic poetry so that the beauty of expression is an important part of the total effect.
4. present and be truthful to human experience  
provide honest and insightful views into right responses to God's actions with us
5. exalt God, his person and deeds
6. provide materials for public and private worship
7. record human responses to God and the experiences of life
8. provide a formative tool for personal growth

## **VI. Benefits for Our Formation**

1. The Psalms provide a God-given format for expressing the critical experiences of our own personal lives.
2. The Psalms provide language that we might never think to use, and, in doing so, enrich our own prayer life.
3. The Psalms prayed from the heart will work formation in our hearts.
4. Psalms show us acceptable ways of responding to a situation when making our petitions to God. A dominant characteristic is honesty in praying.
5. The Psalms provides us an anthology of the actual experiences of the people of God as they walk their earthly, pilgrim journey. In them, we see their heart in response to the specific circumstances God has allowed into their lives.
6. The Psalms encourage us as we go through similar circumstances.

## **VII. Do's and don'ts for reading the Psalms (from Literary Bible)**

### **1. Do's:**

- Anticipate a flow of feelings and reflections rather than narrative events.
- Anticipate that the poet will share more and more of his feelings as the psalm progresses.
- Accept that the poems are self-contained units and not chapters in an on-going saga.
- Be ready for sudden movement from one topic or feeling to another (C.S. Lewis spoke of the emotional rather than the logical connections in the psalms.)

- Begin with the premise that poets think in images rather than abstractions and that they prefer the figurative to literal language.
- slow down your speed of reading. Be meditative, thoughtful, imaginative.
- consider that the psalms are a chapter in the master story of the Bible. This master story is the record of what God and people do in history. The Psalms show us what God does in the three areas of creation, history and in the personal lives of people. The primary actions of God recorded by the Psalms are creation, providence, judgment and redemptions/rescue.

Additionally, many of the Psalms express messianic expectations.

## 2. Don'ts:

- Try to read the psalms as stories. (They are not narratives.)
- Speculate unduly about the details of the life situation that may be the context of the poem. Often, the context is unknown.
- Ignore the images and figures of speech. (You will need to make a literal interpretation of the figurative speech.

e.g. Ps 19 "Their line has gone out into all the world.")

### Some additional illustrations:

Hos. 8:1 "A bird of prey is over Israel."

"The Lord will call for a sword."

"Perhaps he has gone aside."

"He knew his wife."

"Israel is like an unturned cake." (Hos. 7)

"Israel is like a treacherous bow." (Hos. 7)

"Israel is like a silly bird." (Hos. 7)

- Operate on the presumption that a psalm is like an essay which is structured as a logical sequence of ideas with clear transitions between units.
- Read a psalm as a collection of individual verses with little connection between them. There is unity within the Psalm.

## VIII. Character Studies

Character Studies: (with an emphasis on spiritual disciplines)

David



A quick survey of some of the Psalms of David reveal many adjectives that described his relationship with God: my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my strong tower, my shield, my strength, Sovereign, majestic, Most High, awesome, etc. It is very clear to see the center of his life, the Lord God, the maker of heaven and earth.

David's life was centered on God. Even in the midst of difficult times, some of which he brought on himself, God was still the focus of his life.

His life was a demonstration of a life with God...writing and singing Psalms, dancing before the Lord, leading the people as they went to the temple to worship. And, if God had allowed it, he would have built Him a dwelling place.

He is credited with authoring 73 Psalms, almost half of the Psalter. It is likely there were more. (The authorship of approximately 50 Psalms is unknown.)

His early life as a shepherd contained much silence and solitude. It is likely that it was in the fields of Bethlehem that his relationship with the living God had begun.

His songs are filled with praise and worship.

He encourages the practice of meditation.  
Along with meditation, he practiced memorization. (Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God.)  
He seized opportunities to celebrate God. (Celebration: utter delight and joy in our life and our world as a result of our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty and goodness.)

And he definitely practiced the discipline of study or Bible intake.  
(Ps 19:7-11)

He was a disciplined "man after God's own heart." (I Sam. 13:14)

### Asaph

Asaph (definition = collector or gatherer) led in the service of music during the reigns of David and Solomon. 12 Psalms are ascribed to Asaph, the principle grouping being Psalms 73 through 83. It is likely, based on the assigned dates, that there were 2 Asaphs.

He is referred to as a poet and a prophet. He is said to have led a school of music and his children numbered 148. (Neh. 7:44)

His psalms provide us a window into his interior life.

With this inner view, we see that he sought God on many diverse occasions and situations:

- envious of the arrogant and prosperous (Ps 73)
- help in time of national humiliation (Ps 74)
- thanksgiving for God's judgments (Ps 75)
- in praise of God's majesty ("you indeed are awesome, who can stand before you) (Ps 76)
- He remembers the awesome deeds of the Lord. (Ps 77)
- He rehearses God's goodness in delivering Israel out of Egypt (Ps 78)
- He pleads for mercy for Jerusalem. (Ps 79)
- He prays for the restoration of Israel.
- He becomes a mouthpiece for God when God admonishes Israel because they would not listen to His voice. (Ps 81)
- He pleads for justice. (Ps 82)
- He prays for judgment on the enemies of Israel. (Ps 83)

His was a life of prayer, prayer being defined as interactive conversation with God about what we and God are thinking and doing together.

His prayers contained the discipline elements of praise, thanksgiving and worship.

Only David has more prayers in the Psalter than Asaph.

Another facet of his prayers was the inclusion of the discipline of meditation. As he recalls the mighty deeds of God, he says:

- I think of God and I moan. I meditate and my spirit faints. (77:3)
- I commune with my heart in the night. I meditate and search my spirit. (77:6)
- I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. (Ps 77:11-12)

We see the spiritual discipline of meditation permeating his prayers.

Insights from this lesson for spiritual formation:

David            silence, solitude, praise, worship, celebration, meditation,  
word intake/study

Asaph            praise, prayer, meditation

## **XI. Homework assignments**

David:

1. How did David come to have a heart that delighted in God?

2. Was his time as a shepherd in silence and solitude instrumental in providing an opportunity to know God? If yes, why or how?
3. How might you respond if you found yourself alone, in the dark, in the forest, with a bunch of smelly, wandering sheep?
4. What discipline had David forsaken when he entered into his relationship with Bathsheba?

Asaph:

1. What was the answer to Asaph's query about the prosperity of the wicked in Ps. 73? (see v.17)
2. What national tragedy is the setting for Ps 74?
3. In 81:11ff, God is speaking. What is Israel's problem? What application can we make for ourselves from these verses?

PSALMS* by AUTHOR									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72-S	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88-H	89-E	90-M
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127-S	128	129	130
131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150

David		73
Asaph		12
Solomon	#-S	2
Sons of Korah		10
Heman	#-H	1
Ethan	#-E	1
Moses	#-M	1
Unknown		50

## LESSON #8

Stage 8: Wisdom Literature – **Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon**

Wisdom for daily living

Community focus: God gives precepts for living in community

### I. Introduction:

In session # 8, we reviewed the book of Psalms, the Prayer and Song book of Israel. This was Israel at prayer and worship.

We discussed how God uses the Psalms to continue the work of formation in the lives of his people. We observed that, as the heart embraces and prays or sings through the Psalms, God continues his work of Christ-like formation.

Interesting to note: The formation which is occurring may or may not be observed by the person being formed.

Introduction to the Wisdom Literature:

In the wisdom literature, we see the completeness of God's provision for us. He gave us a "manual for life with practical guidance." He didn't just bring us into His family and say: "Good luck, I hope you do well. See you at the rapture."

Not only did He give us doctrine and principles, but He showed us how to apply the principles where "the water hits the wheel."

In the wisdom literature, God provides guidelines that:

- help us in our own personal lives,
- show us how to work and relate with others, and
- how to discover God Himself. e.g. "The fear of the Lord is the knowledge of the holy."

One of the great mind-boggling scriptures is John 14:23 in which Jesus says that anyone who loves me and keeps my word, the Father and himself will come and make their home with him. This scripture reinforces the need for obedience to God's instructions and it also shows us the incredible benefit... God and Jesus dwelling with us.

The wisdom literature is the Word of God. In fact, Jesus himself is wisdom.

So, when we look into the wisdom literature, we are also seeing into the very heart of God.

The wisdom literature demonstrates to us that our experiences in life are directly related to the choices that we make. As we look back on our lives, we can see that we are

where we are because of choices that we've made. And how we'd like to be able to go back and change some of those choices.

Secular poet: Omar Khayyam "the moving finger writes and having writ moves on. Nor all your piety nor wit can lure it back to cancel half a line of it."

The wisdom literature shows us our responsibility to choose wisely as we exercise our "freedom of choice" to serve God. We can see in advance the consequences or benefits of the practical choices we make in our daily living. They are like a pair of prophetic binoculars that enable us to see the result of our choices before we make them.

The wisdom literature teaches us the things that are true **for the most part**. They are not guarantees or promises of a certain result. e.g. "Hard work brings a profit." This saying is true for the most part, but, if wisdom is not used in the planning and execution of a "hard work project," the results may be disastrous.

"The wisdom tradition of the Bible focuses on building character, promoting virtue, condemning vice, and teaching us ways in which we can do the right thing, for the right reason, at the right time and in the right way."<sup>1</sup>

These books provide us a rich treasure of human experience that reveal the wisdom and grace of God.

## II. Background to the Wisdom Literature

Dispensation: Law

Context: Israel is at the zenith of her prosperity.  
David has died and Solomon has become king.  
God has given Israel peace on all of her borders.  
The wisdom literature is written during the time of Solomon.  
Not long after Solomon's death, and his son (Rehoboam) becomes king, the division of the nation into two kingdoms occurs.

Date: Solomon reigns from 985 – 945 B.C.  
These three books are written during his reign. (see chart below)

Literary Type: Proverbs – Wisdom literature (literature produced by wise men)  
A collection (or anthology) of individual proverbs  
In Biblical thinking, wisdom is skill for living.  
"A proverb is a concise, memorable statement of truth."

Ecclesiastes - Proverb with underlying "quest motif"

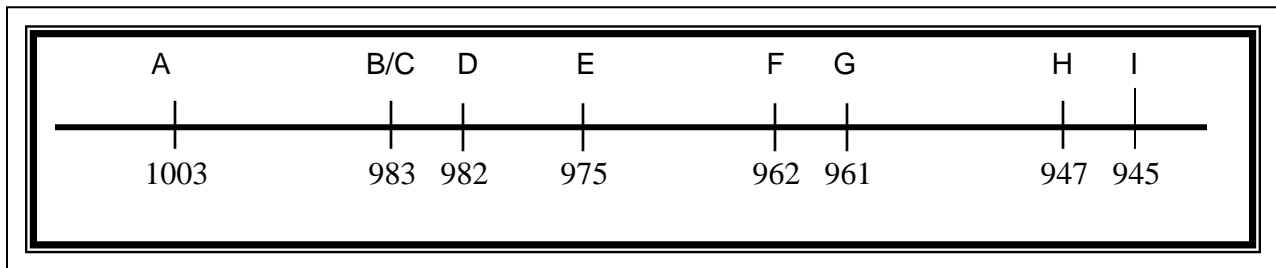
Song of Solomon – "Love poetry"  
An anthology of love lyrics

### III. Summary of this era

Major Events: (dates are from Reese Chronological Bible)

- A. Birth of Solomon 1003 B.C.
- B. David dies 983 B.C.
- C. Solomon becomes king 983 B.C.
- D. Temple building begins 982 B.C.
- E. Temple completed 975 B.C.
- F. Song of Solomon written 962 B.C.
- G. Proverbs written 961 B.C.
- H. Ecclesiastes written 947 B.C.
- I. Division of the kingdom 945 B.C.
- J. Proverbs 25-29 collected by Hezekiah's men (~700 B.C.).

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### IV. Book Summaries:

**Proverbs:** "Walking in the Fear of the Lord"

(Note references to the fear of the Lord in 1:7, 23:17 and 31:30.)

Theme: One of the major themes of the Bible is the salvation of mankind, the restoration of mankind's fellowship with God. This theme is especially prominent in certain books such as the gospels and the book of Romans.

The Bible was also written to show the restored person how to live now that they are saved. This instruction is found throughout the Scriptures but is especially prominent in certain books. Proverbs is one of them.

Proverbs teaches the righteous works of a saved person. It does not teach salvation by works. It doesn't include or dwell much on doctrine. It does emphasize application and practice.

A book from the New Testament, James, is sometimes referred to as "the Proverbs of the New Testament."

Definition: A proverb is a short, memorable saying about conduct and character.

The Hebrew word for proverb is “mashal” meaning “to be like” or to represent. This is very appropriate since many proverbs use comparison to teach simple life truths.

Author: Most of the Proverbs were written by David’s son, Solomon. (see 3 main sections beginning at 1:1, 10:1 and 25:1.

Two chapters, 30 and 31 were written by Agur and Lemuel.

Jesus used Proverbs at times to teach His disciples. But the relationship of Proverbs to Christ is much deeper than it appears. A fundamental connection between Proverbs and Christ is that the wisdom spoken in Proverbs is found completely in Christ. (see I Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3)

Topics addressed: The list of topics addressed in Proverbs seems to be endless. Following are just a few:

Areas of life: domestic, urban, political, military, agricultural, religious

Social relationships: master to slave, rich and poor, husband and wife, parents and children

Social and ethical virtues: thrift, discretion, love, pleasure, purity, truthfulness, chastity, kindness, justice, humility

Evil persons: the fool, tattletale (talebearer), whisperer, backbiter, false boaster, the one who winks with his eye, the forbidden woman

Contrasting subjects: God and man, time and eternity, truth and falsehood, wealth and poverty, purity and impurity, pleasure and misery, the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked

#### Outline of Proverbs:

1:1-9:18 Who the truly wise man is

10:1-22:16 How the wise man should live

22:17-24:34 Application – determining in the heart to walk righteously

25:1-29:27 Continuation of book theme by contrast and description  
(continues the theme of who the wise man is and how he should live)

Note: These 5 chapters were compiled by “men of Hezekiah” some 250 years after Solomon wrote them.

30:1-33 The words of Agur (note use of numerical proverbs)

31:1-31 The words of Lemuel



- A. Counsel to a king (2-9)
- B. In praise of a noble wife.(10-31)

**Ecclesiastes:**

Ecclesiastes (Heb. *qohleth*) means “one who speaks to an assembly.”

Author: The author is identified as the son of David. This plus other internal evidences (e.g. wealth, unrivaled wisdom, extensive building projects) favor the traditional view that Solomon is the author.

Perspective: Throughout this book, the author show two views:

1. the natural man without divine revelation...his conclusion is that all in life is futile, vain, without purpose or meaning, vanity.
2. the man who has divine revelation. His conclusions now have purpose and hope.

It is to be noted that, when he writes as the man of the second view above, when naming God, he uses the word “Elohim,” the name especially associated with God’s creative acts. He does not use the name Yahweh (God of covenant faithfulness) in the book.

Purpose: The purpose of Ecclesiastes is (1) to show the futility of pursuing materialistic, earthly goals as an end in themselves (excluding God), and (2) to point to God as the source of meaning, hope and all that is good. It is God who gives true meaning to life.

Literary genres: Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature.

Outline of Ecclesiastes:

The main body of the book consist of four sermons (discourses). Each sermon addresses two subjects: vanity/futility and hope.

- 1:1-1:12 Introduction: “All is vanity
- 1:12-3:15 First sermon: “Bring God into the picture”
- 3:16-5:20 Second Sermon: “God is in heaven.”
- 6:1-8:13 Third Sermon: “Who knows what is good for man in this life?”
- 8:14-12:7 Fourth Sermon: “Remember now your Creator”
- 12:8 Premise restated
- 12:9-14 Summary of the solution: “Fear God and keep His commandments.” (13a)

Key Verses/words:

Key verses in Ecclesiastes are 1:14 and 3:14

Some of the key words are vanity, “under the sun,” wisdom, labor, God, evil, know

Miscellaneous comments:

1. The New Testament never quotes or comments on Ecclesiastes.
2. Every time the author names God he uses the name Elohim.
3. Vanity is the word “hebel” which means something transitory that passes away swiftly.

**Song of Solomon:**

Background: The title of this book is “Song of Songs.” This is the Hebrew manner of indicating the degree of importance...it is the best of the songs.

It is a lyrical poem having a series of songs of various lengths.

From D. Hocking “Romantic Lovers”:

Of all the books on marriage that are available in secular as well as Christian bookstores, none of them can possibly improve on the biblical teaching found in the Song of Solomon. Here is romantic love for married couples that exceeds our greatest dreams and expectations. Here is a manual on sex that beats all secular viewpoints on how a man and a woman should make love. Here is the viewpoint of God Himself, though He is not mentioned by name in the book.

The Mishnah records these words of Rabbi Aqiba:

“In the entire world there is nothing to equal the day on which the Song of Solomon was given to Israel. All the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is most holy.”

Interpretation: There are several ways of viewing this book:

1. Literal (historical) – viewed strictly as a love story with no typical meaning.
2. Allegory (symbolic) – a figurative story that is not based on historical facts
3. Typical (symbolic) – a teaching from historical facts that represents Biblical types

Several types may be intended:

- A. Israel is the bride and God is the bridegroom.
- B. The church is the bride and Christ is the bridegroom. (see Eph. 5:22-33)
- C. An individual believer (of the church) is the object of Christ’s love.

From an application standpoint, this is the most intimate application a believer can make from the books "typical" teaching.

Purpose:

1. Literal: to extol the virtue of human love and marriage; teach the sanctity and beauty of marriage as God intended it.

The Song of Solomon is read at the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Passover.

2. Figurative: to demonstrate God's love for Israel and Christ's love for His church and the individuals comprising the church.

The bride's maturing in love demonstrates the growth of the Christian in the love of Christ.

Uniquenesses:

1. It is one of the few books in the Bible that focuses on human love.
2. There is only one reference to God in the book. (8:6)
3. No other books of the Bible have any references to this book.
4. There are 117 verses, 470 Hebrew words in the Song of Solomon. Of these words, 47 are unique to the Song of Solomon (only used in this book.)
5. There are no theological words or references to religious practices or ceremonies in the Song of Solomon.

Outline:

A. From I. Jensen " Self-Study Guide on Song of Solomon"

1:1	Title	
1:2-3:5	The bride reflects upon her days of courtship.	Courtship
3:6-5:1	The wedding	Wedding
5:2-6:3	The wife has a troubling dream about being separated from her love.	} Married life
6:4-8:4	The mutual love of the husband and wife	
8:5-8:14	Their love is renewed and sealed.	

A shortened outline :

1:2-5:1      Their love is expressed and experienced

5:2-8:14     Their love is tried and triumphant

B.      From N. Geisler Bible Survey

1:1-2:7      The virgin and the vineyard

2:8-3:5      The damsel and the dream

3:6-5:1      The queen and the quest

5:2-6:9      Recollection and romance

6:10-8:4     Romance and reality

8:5-14      The homestead and the honeymoon

**V.      Action/responses in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon:**

God's Action:

1.      As in each age, He is guarding, guiding and nurturing His plan of the ages. ("He never sleeps.)
2.      He is teaching His people how to live a holy life in the practical matters of daily living. He gives them guidance for making wise choices.
3.      He illustrates his great love for Israel, the church and for individuals
4.      He teaches the sanctity and beauty of marriage as He intended it.
5.      He is teaching mankind about Himself and how they can please Him.
6.      He is showing them in advance the fruit of righteous choices and the consequences of bad choices.
7.      In the divided kingdom, He is showing them the results of bad choices. ("We want a human king." (Solomon had a nation ready to rebel.)

Man's Response:    treasures wisdom and learning,  
                                 enjoys poetic literature,  
                                 some take God's wisdom into their hearts to live a godly life,  
                                 understands the futility of life (vanity) without God,  
                                 receives and experiences God's love, enjoys romantic love in the  
                                 sanctity of marriage

In the pages of Scripture, we see people who internalized the wisdom teachings in such a way that their actions were governed by them. Joseph and Nehemiah are examples of

men of God living according to the teachings of wisdom literature. (even though the full body of wisdom literature may not have been entirely available to them.)

Examples: Joseph - chastity – see Prov. 6 and 7

Nehemiah – building a wall when your enemies are trying to stop you? Prov. 24:5-6; see also Neh. 4:15-17

Some examples of making poor choices: Sampson and Solomon

Question: What was Sampson's problem? a great gift – strong physically but weak in moral character

He used his gift to promote his own agendas.

Question: How can we explain Solomon?

Solomon is an example of one who began by following the directives of the wisdom literature (he authored much of it) but later, lost his moral footing with disastrous results. The wisest man on earth left his son an inheritance of a nation ready for rebellion.

His fall, I believe, was a carefully constructed eroding of his moral character over a long period of time. This was accomplished through his many wives and his extensive building projects.

Think about it... 1000 wives and numerous, huge building projects. Where did his time go?

This shows me the necessity of a daily life in fellowship with God and to obey God's laws, in this case about foreign wives.

I also see that a good beginning does not assure a good ending and that having knowledge of God's wisdom does not assure that you will always make good choices.

Question? Who constructed the implements of erosion? the devil

Another important consideration:

To the people of Israel, life wasn't divided or compartmentalized. It was a seamless garment. There was no separation between the sacred and the secular, the public or private life. The way you lived your life during the week was consistent with the moral guidelines of the holy days.

But today, many go to church on Sunday and that's the only time of the week that you hear Jesus' name or discussions about the Word. Religion and worship are things you "do" on Sunday.

Those who followed the directives of the wisdom literature maintained a moral basis that guided them in all phases of their lives.

The Biblical wisdom literature is a part of the revelation we receive from God that prepares us for the “God with us” life. God saves us through the blood of Jesus ushering us into a new life. The wisdom literature now shows us how to live out the practical application of our new life in Christ.

## **VI. Benefits for our Formation:**

We often look for wisdom to answer the questions of the emotions and feelings that sometimes direct our attitudes and actions.

- Why am I feeling this way?
- How can I control or change the way I respond to certain situations?
- What are appropriate ways of meeting the needs of others?
- How can I make wise choices in a world that is dominated by self-seeking?

These questions and many others motivate us to seek counsel and understanding that produces wise conduct.

From Proverbs, we learn that the “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.” These beginnings will lead us to a reliable moral life.

The moral life helps us to see how our choices shape our lives. It makes the connection between the eternal wisdom of God and our every day living. We can apply wisdom from an omniscient/all-knowing God to our every day lives. We have the opportunity to be really wise about how we live our lives.

And, we also discover that we can learn from the mistakes of others without having to repeat the same mistakes.

### Examples:

We can learn the wisdom of not becoming a guarantor for our neighbor (Prov. 11:15; or the poverty that follows a slack hand; (Prov. 10:4) or the prudence of restrained speech. (Prov. 10:19)

We can learn the benefits of receiving wise counsel recognizing that one who hates a rebuke will die. (Prov. 15:10)

Many people memorize the wisdom sayings. They are like little “pocket reminders” that provide wise guidance for the daily decisions of life. And, because they are God’s Words to us, we can depend upon their reliability to provide the best moral guidance possible.

Recommend: “A chapter of Proverbs a day “

## **VII. Limits for our Formation:**

The wisdom literature is one of the tools we have for living a life of grace. But they do not eliminate the need for faith. They should never be used as a substitute for our personal relationship with God.

Because there is a strong emphasis that virtue has its own reward, (blessing to the righteous and curses to the wicked rebellious), there is a tendency to think of wisdom literature with a sense of self-sufficiency, removing any dependency on God. In short, it can lead to a “works-righteousness.”

The Scriptures teach us that God is the source of our wisdom for daily living. It provides practical guidance while also connecting us to the broader picture of the full intent of Scriptures; i.e. our need for daily reliance on God for wisdom.

## **VIII. Insights for our Formation:**

There is today, a crisis in the confidence of moral living. People often think or believe that following moral guidelines will not make a difference in our lives. (e.g. the unrighteous prosper while the righteous live on the edge of poverty)

As at the end of the book of Judges: “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” so it is today. People prefer to establish their own rules of morality rather than adhere to the divinely inspired wisdom of the Scriptures.

However,

1. The wisdom literature of the Scriptures provides a reliable, divine source for the wisdom we need in our daily lives.
2. The wisdom literature shows us the importance of our regular, day-to-day living and being careful about the choices we make.
3. The wisdom literature provides the connection between the ethical teachings of the Law and our daily life. We cannot separate our religious duties from the tasks of ordinary living...raising a family, friends and neighbors, our professional work, obeying civil laws, etc.
4. Reading and meditating on the Scriptures can have a formative and peaceful effect on our inner parts. “A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh but passion makes the bones rot.” Prov. 14:30 e.g. meditation – often drives the cloud away

Also: “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.”

5. True wisdom (from above) expands our vision to give attention to the relationships that we have and ultimately, our relationship with God Himself.

## IX. Character Studies

### Solomon

Solomon became king at the apex of Israel's power and influence in the world. "God gave him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel." I Chron. 29:25 "And God was with him." II Chron. 1:1

He made a good beginning. "And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father."

When God asked him (in a dream) what he wanted, he replied: "Give therefore, thy servant an understanding heart (II Chron. 1:10 says that he asked for wisdom and knowledge) to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil."

A review of his writings (see Ecclesiastes) indicates that he became very busy with construction projects: 2 houses (God's and his), a house for Pharaoh's daughter, the wall of Jerusalem, several cities, a navy of ships, shields of gold, a great ivory throne, 12 lions to stand by the throne, 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, not to mention his occupation with numerous projects to learn the meaning of life.

Solomon was a very busy man. And it causes me to wonder if he had time for God, for an on-going, daily relationship with God.

Also, he loved many strange women, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians and Hittites...700 wives/princesses and 300 concubines.

Scripture gives a very sobering account of the result of his many pursuits (especially the wives):

"For it came to pass, that when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." I Kgs. 11: 4

Summary: Solomon made a good beginning, but a good beginning does not a good ending make.

His pursuit of the meaning of life is unparalleled in all of history. No matter what we may do in our pursuit of meaning in the world, Solomon did it to a greater degree which should demonstrate to us the folly of worldly pursuits for the meaning of life.

His many pursuits did not have the result of drawing him closer to God. Make sure your pursuits in life will lead to a godly life and hence a prosperous spiritual life.

He was led astray by his many wives. He ultimately abandoned the Word of God and "went after foreign gods."



The revelation of scripture for marriage is one woman with one man. Gen. 2:18ff

He had more wisdom than any other man in history. But, the accumulation of wisdom and knowledge does not a godly life make. Wisdom and knowledge must be applied. The New Testament refers to this as hearing and doing. "Be not a hearer only."

- Spiritual lessons:
1. completing a task – Solomon did well in completing projects. e.g. the temple which took 7 years to build
  2. making a good beginning – He made a good beginning as king (asking for wisdom) but he allowed his many wives to turn his heart away from the living God.
  3. the results of not continuing in obedience to God's Word
    - God gave Solomon a very stern warning in I Kgs. 9:2-9 esp. v.6 which warns against turning from following after God.
    - The Israelites also had received numerous warnings about marrying foreign women.
  4. making time for God – Solomon became entangled in the busyness of the numerous projects he undertook. As a result, his relationship with God suffered.
  5. the love of God for His people from the Song of Solomon

**X. Homework assignments:**

1. What is the underlying purpose of wisdom literature?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do Proverbs provide a guarantee of success? Explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The literal title of the Song of Solomon is "Song of Songs." What might this suggest about this book? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The Song of Solomon is something of an embarrassment because of its unrestrained romantic passion and physical attractiveness.  
  
Do you feel this is a fair statement? \_\_\_\_\_  
  
What do you say about this book? \_\_\_\_\_

5. In Ecclesiastes, what does the phrase “under the sun” mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the author’s summary statement about the meaning of life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Eccl. 6:12 provides this question: “Who knows what is good for man in this life? How would you answer this question? (clue: see 8:5)  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Solomon tried all of the pursuits of man “to the max.” It seems very certain that no one could “try out” a pleasure and do it to an extent that exceeded the record of what Solomon did. e.g. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.  
  
What meaning or application can this have for us in our lives?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How would you propose to interpret the Song of Solomon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON #9

### Stage 9: Kings, Chronicles, Prophets

#### The Divided Kingdom

Community focus: The people of God in rebellion against God

Scriptures: I Kings 12– II Kings 25; II Chron. 10-36  
Isaiah, Jeremiah 1-36  
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah

We are where we are because of the choices that we make.  
And the decisions we make often have lasting effects for good or bad depending on the wisdom of our choices.

This makes it exceedingly important for parents to train their children in the art of decision making.

In today's lesson, we will see Israel at a major decision point in their life as a nation.

We will also look at God's heart when he surveys the wreckage of His people as a result of their choice to have a king like the rest of the nations.

We will also look at one of the prophets who spoke God's word of repentance to this divided nation, a people that were so immersed in their sinful ways to the point that they could not make the connection between a natural disaster and the judgment of God.

We will look at the application of this passage to our present time.

#### **I. Background**

Dispensation: The Law

Context: Israel has enjoyed prosperity and prominence with the reigns of David and Solomon.

However, Solomon was led astray by his many wives and he turned away from God to worship idols. (see I Kgs. 11) As a result, God determined to tear the kingdom away from him.

Date: Beginning with the death of Solomon in 945 B.C. and ending in the captivity of Judah in 586 B.C.

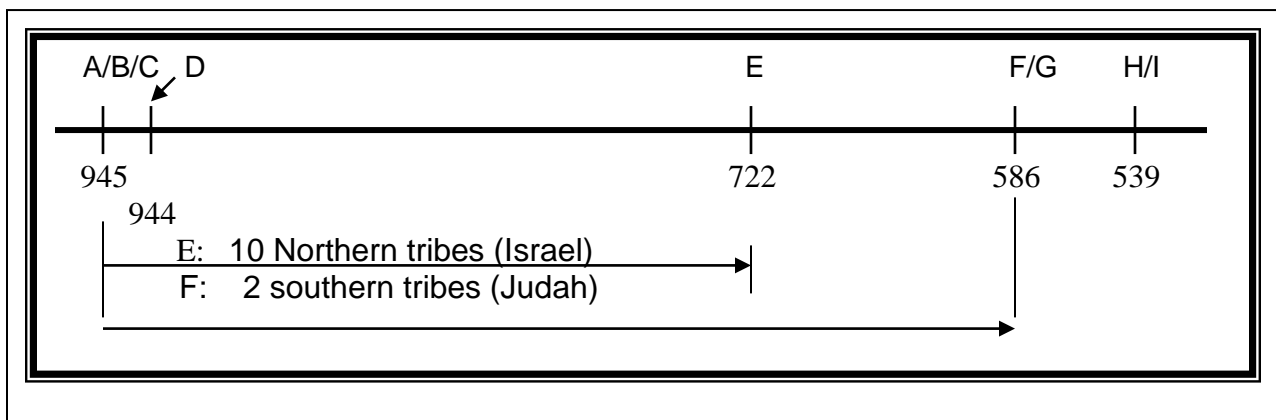
Literary Type: Historical narrative, chronicling the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah

## II. Summary of this era

### Major Events:

- A. Death of Solomon (945 B.C.)
- B. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, becomes king. (945 B.C.)
- C. 10 tribes revolt and follow Jeroboam (945 B.C.)  
The 10 northern tribes locate at Samaria and are called Israel. (also Ephraim)
- D. The southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin continue at Jerusalem.
- E. Jeroboam constructs two golden calves and installs worship at Bethel and Dan to keep the heart of the people from returning to Rehoboam should they go to Jerusalem to worship. (944 B.C.)
- F. Israel – 19 kings, all bad 945 B.C. to 722 B.C.  
Israel is taken captive by Assyria (722 B.C.)
- G. Judah – 19 kings, some good and some bad plus one wicked Queen (Athaliah) (945 B.C. - 586 B.C.)
- H. Siege and capture of Jerusalem; Judah taken into captivity to Babylon
- I. The fall of Babylon (539 B.C.)
- I. The decree of Cyrus (539 B.C.)

### Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### A Walk through the Bible from I Kings 12 - II Kings 25; II Chron. 10 - 34:

- I Kings 12: 10 tribes revolt against Solomon's son, Rehoboam.  
Jeroboam installs 2 golden calves for worship at Dan and Bethel.
- I Kings 14: Judgment and death of Jeroboam
- I Kings – II Chron. 10  
Judah's kings – Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah (queen), Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoikim, Jehoichin, Zedekiah

Israel's kings – Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hosea

### Period of the Judges (review)

When Israel entered their “new garden of Eden,” the promised land, God gave them judges who acted as the means of mediating His presence. These judges settled disputes, mustered armies in defense of Israel’s national security and spoke against and destroyed the sites of idolatrous worship in the land.

During the 350 years of the judges there were 7 cycles of rebellion according to the pattern:

rebellion – judgment – repentance - restoration

However, at the end of this period, even considering the greatness of God’s mercy and grace to them, the people still decided that they wanted “a king such as they nations around them had.”

### **This was a significant event with major implications!**

See I Sam. 8:7-9, 19-20

Question? Why did the people want a human king?

- They were rejecting God’s rule over them.
- They wanted a king to fight their battles for them.
- They didn’t want to be different

Question? But...what would be the effect of having a human king?

Read I Sam. 8:4-18 God warns Israel what the human king will be like.

Nevertheless, God gave them what they asked for. He gave them Saul. And he was like the kings around them...a fairly decent warrior but weak in character... expedient, fear of man, jealous, compromising, he had become prideful.

This ushered in the period of the monarchy, human kings ruling over Israel.

### United Kingdom (review)

The period of the monarchy embraced 3 kings – Saul, David and Solomon.

Israel reached the height of their worldly success during the reigns of David and Solomon. However, Solomon became idolatrous, being led astray by his many wives.

At the end of his life, he left an inheritance to his son Rehoboam of a nation ready for rebellion due to the hard labor and heavy yoke to which he had subjected the people during the time of his reign.

So...after 120 years of human kings...

See I Kings 12:4 *“Your father made our yoke heavy...”*

Although the people requested leniency from Rehoboam, he threatened to increase their hard labor and they revolted. Ten tribes moved to the north into Samaria while Judah and Benjamin remained in the south with Jerusalem as their center.

### **GOD’S KINGDOM ON EARTH WAS DIVIDED.**

Question? What kind of problems might this create for the 10 tribes moving to the north?

- separated from the temple and the sacrificial system including the Levites
- How would they offer sacrifices for sin?
- What kind of legitimate religious system could they have outside of Jerusalem?

This was huge.

Their lives had centered around the temple in Jerusalem.

Now, the center of their community life, the heart of their identity was no longer in their midst.

### **The Divided Kingdom**

This presents a remarkable picture.

What is God working towards? a community of people in which He dwells.

Can you picture God in heaven looking down on the earth and seeing this scene?

Did God ever think to Himself: “What was I thinking when I created man?”

He endured their rebellion in the wilderness, a rebellion that began only 3 days after they had crossed the Red Sea and escaped the armies of Pharaoh. He endured their continuous complaints in the desert as they longed for the leeks and onions of Egypt.

But He didn’t abandon His people then and He didn’t abandon them on this occasion.

Can you begin to grasp the mercy and grace of God?

Or sense the heart of God as His people divide His family?

What can we learn from these things...**the faithfulness of God.**

In this era, we will see the actions of God as He continues to work out his plan for a community of loving persons with His nation that has rebelled and become a divided kingdom. They are now standing on the road to destruction, captivity and dispersion. And yet, He has not abandoned them.

During this period, God graciously raised up prophets to speak His messages of repentance and return.

The prophets' primary task was to declare God's judgments due to sin, both on individuals and the kingdoms. They identified the sins of the rulers and people and warned of imminent destruction and captivity if there was no repentance.

Example: Look at Joel 1:1-7

This first passage of Joel was an initial wakeup call to a rebellious nation.

A national disaster, an army of locusts, had devastated the land.

In v.5 he calls the people to wake up.

What is happening in Israel? I believe the people were so immersed in their sin that they could not make the connection between a natural disaster and the judgment of God and yet, verse 1:15 clearly says that the locust invasion was by the hand of God.

And this was only the beginning.

Joel prophecies to their current situation, then foretells an invasion by a northern army which will be followed by an even greater catastrophe.

Question? So...how do you make the connection between a disaster and a judgment of God?

U.S. 9/11 We had a national disaster on 9/11.

Question: What did the people do? went to church for about 6 months

next: the economy collapses

What next???

Is there a similarity in the pattern here between the time of Joel and today?

Are we so immersed in sin and rebellion that we can't make the connection between a national disaster and a judgment of God, a wakeup call?

Look at Chart of Rulers and Prophets.

This chart shows the prophets and kings of Judah and Israel from the time of the divided kingdom until each of them went into captivity.

Question? What observations can we make about Judah and Israel from this chart?

1. All of the kings of Israel were evil.
2. The kings of Judah were about 50/50 good and bad.
3. Israel lasted 209 years before going into captivity.  
Judah – 344 years

Judah survived longer than Israel but ultimately, still went into captivity.

4. God sent more prophets to Judah than Israel (only 3 and only one, Hosea, actually came from Israel.).

### The Response of the People:

The people wouldn't listen. In Eden, God banished Adam and Eve for their sin. Now, in their new Eden, God will banish the people from the land of promise because of their continual sin and refusal to repent and give up their idolatrous ways.

II Kings 17:7-17

Also Note: "each group had their own gods. (Does this sound familiar?) II Kgs. 17:29

An irony: II Kings 17:25-26 Lions – The heathen ruler understood that the lions were a visitation from the god of the land.

It is important to note, that even when the prophets prophecy of destruction and captivity, there is always a note of hope in the messages delivered by the prophets. The messages contain the hope of returning to the land of promise but also include the larger promise of the future reign of the Messiah of God.

Israel had been set apart for the blessing of the nations initiated in Abraham, but is now facing an inevitable judgment for their sins. They will be dispersed among the nations.

The prophets faithfully proclaim the messages given by God and are rewarded by the people with rejection and persecution. (e.g. Jeremiah – not one conversion in 40 years of ministry) Israel continues in their idolatrous ways, with idol worship reaching its high point during the time of the divided kingdoms.

A prophetess, Huldah, declares the Word of God: "Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods...therefore, my wrath will be kindled against this place and it will not be quenched." (II Kgs. 22:16-17)

### **III. Benefits for our Formation:**

1. In the midst of the threats to Israel's identity and continuance, we see the works of God in history a level above His focus on individuals, families or even nations. God knows no bounds. He works wherever and with whomever He wills.



He even uses unbelieving nations to judge and punish His own people. God uses nations as instruments of judgment even as Israel, for example, is calling out to them (Assyria) for help. see Hos. 9:3. See also book of Habakkuk.

How could God use a heathen nation to punish his “holy people?” Let alone, allow a heathen king to come into the holy city and destroy the holy temple of God? In essence, they believed that Jerusalem was indestructible.

“But Lord, we have the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the Patriarchs, the worship and the promises and from our race according to the flesh is Christ.” (Rom. 9:4-5)

How can you use a heathen nation to punish us? We’re your children.

In many eyes, the very thing in which they had based their life trust, had betrayed and failed them.

2. We also see in this period that even non-Jews (for our day...non-Christians) can demonstrate a greater spiritual sensitivity than those in the family of God. (e.g. See Jonah 3:6-8...how Nineveh repented at Jonah’s message but Jonah himself is sitting under a plant sulking.)

Question? Why was Jonah sulking? because the Ninevites, due to their repentance, will not be judged. Also, since the impending judgment he preached did not occur, he might be considered a false prophet.

The kingdom of God is not identified with or limited to earthly kingdoms. It is not bound or limited by human political, cultural or religious institutions. Jesus Himself said to Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. (Jn. 18:36)

This must have been quite a shock to the divided kingdoms since they were the chosen people and a person could only come to God through the Jewish traditions.

3. The appointing of single individuals to speak prophetically to the people shows that God is still making his presence and message known through individuals. The temple, the priesthood, the sacrificial system and the monarchy were certainly important. But God shows that He still uses individuals to bring people into fellowship with Himself. And, it’s still the way He works today. Here, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, He still uses people to bring people into His kingdom.

4. Another benefit of this period of time was the availability of the Law. People had the opportunity to be trained and formed through study and obedience to the Law.

#### **IV. Limitations for our Formation:**

In this era of ungodly political power exercised by human kings, we see the conflict between temporary, self-seeking political power and God’s divine purposes.

The messengers that God sends to deteriorating political institutions are not well-received. They are rejected, ostracized, ignored, silenced by isolation or killed.

God's servants, the prophets, are messengers without institutional support or approval and are in the minority.

And, of course, the rulers and the people love the false prophets (who abound.) There is always someone willing to "give a word" that is pleasant to the ears of the listeners. They are preferred to the true prophets who give God's assessment of a nation's true condition. "No one likes a "discouraging word " much less the one speaking it.

This raises a big issue: discerning between true and false prophets.

Question: Do we have false prophets today?

Question? What do they sound like?

Question: How can we identify a false prophet today?

#### **V. Insights for Our Formation:**

1. The prophets provide guidance for our formation because they lived and prophesied during **a time very similar to our own.**

Question: How is our time similar to the time of the writing prophets? e.g. Joel 1

2. From the prophets, we learn that righteousness is of the heart by faith, not as a matter of obedience to a creed or in the externals of a sacrificial offering. God is not interested in a formal obedience to a set of laws. What pleases God is justice, mercy and love issuing from a true heart.

3. Also, we observe that, even though we may resist God (as the Israelites did many times), He does not completely abandon us. And when words of rebuke and correction come, hope will always be present.

Question: When should we be worried? When He stops speaking to us.

4. God is with us throughout our life. We have now seen God with the Israelites in captivity in Egypt, in exodus and wilderness wanderings, in the promised land, in the cycles of rebellion of the judges, in times when they rejected Him as king, birthed as a nation, in times of the prosperity of the kings and now with the nation in rebellion.

He has brought difficult times into their paths, as any loving father would do. But He has not totally abandoned them and continues to watch and wait patiently for them to return (see story of the prodigal son – The father saw the son coming from a great distance. Even after all the time that the son was away squandering his inheritance, the father was watching and hoping for his return.). He is with us throughout the seasons of our lives.

5. The accounts of Israel in this era also remind us how quickly and easily the life of faith may slip away from us. (Note in Judah, the alternation between good kings and bad kings) We continually need to bring disciplines to our personal lives but we also desperately need the love, mercy and grace of God to lead, protect, sustain and provide for us.

6. From the time of this era of the prophets, we learn that the life of a “spokesperson for God” will likely be filled with difficulties. But God is with His prophets just as He is with us when we go through difficult times.

## VI. Actions

God's Actions: Executes His judgments on the disobedient.  
His prophets foretell His redemption through the Messiah (e.g. Isaiah)  
Demonstrates His sovereignty over the nations (brings Assyria and Babylon to effect His judgments)  
Keeps a remnant of His people.

Man's Response: Northern kingdom – continuously rebellious, idolatrous, and increasing depravity  
  
Southern kingdom – some bright spots when good kings ascend to the throne  
The religious life of the kingdom was a reflection of the influence of those on the throne.  
But, in the end, “Moreover, all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to the abominations of the nations and defiled the house of the Lord which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.” (II Chron. 36:14)

## VII. Character Studies

Josiah – Bible study/intake

Josiah is the remarkable account of a child who, at the age of 8 was installed as king of Judah. His father, Amon, had done evil in the sight of God and was killed after reigning in Judah for only two years. Prior to Amon, Judah had been ruled by Manasseh, who, for the most part, was a wicked king.

Several years after Josiah had become king, the book of the law was found in the house of the Lord. Josiah's response was immediate...he tore his clothes and wept before the Lord. II Kings 22:11,19

He then guided Judah in restoring true worship of the true God.

In Donald S. Whitney's book entitled: “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life,” he identifies the spiritual discipline of Bible intake. This discipline includes the study of God's Word.

One wonders, with Manasseh and Amon as his predecessors and no book of the Law to study, how did Josiah come to have the tenderness of heart to respond with sorrow when he first heard the law read.

Nevertheless, he did and in the process, he got God's ear. And God rewarded him for his actions.

Josiah is an example to us of the biblical discipline of Bible study or intake. When he heard the Word of God, he embraced it with his heart. He was quick to respond and then took actions to obey the precepts of the Lord.

He "made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book." (II Kings 23:3)

Elijah - prayer and solitude (I Kings 17-21)

Elijah's time on earth had a distinctive thread of miraculous prayer followed by solitude woven into it as a repetitive pattern.

- He prays and the Lord withholds rain.

But then, God tells him to go and hide himself by the Wadi Cherith. While there, God commands the ravens and they bring him bread and meat in the morning and evening.

- At God's command, he lived with a widow for a season. While there, her jug of oil and jar of meal did not empty.

- Later, the widow's son dies but Elijah prays and God restores the life of her son.

- When Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal, God sends fire and consumes the offering that Elijah had prepared.

When he heard of Jezebel's threat against his life, he fled to the wilderness. Then an angel of the Lord came and gave him food to eat because he was to travel 40 days to mount Horeb. This time he was moving at God's direction.

- When his time on earth was finished, God took him up in a whirlwind in a chariot of fire and horses.

The pattern of his life showed times of great and powerful miraculous events in which he confronts the idolatry of the nation. These times were often followed by seasons in the wilderness, in solitude. Some of the solitude was by his own choosing but, at other times, his trips into the wilderness were directed by God.

The times of solitude were provided by God to refresh and strengthen his servant.

So, we too will experience times of intense activity in the kingdom of God. But there will also be times of pulling away, of going to the place of solitude to be strengthened, encouraged and refreshed by God.

Ahab - the slavery of sin

The scriptural monument to Ahab's grave is not flattering: "He did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him." Scripture records that he followed the evil practices that had preceded him. Additionally, he married a woman who only encouraged him in his evil ways.

Yet, he was not without opportunity to repent and turn to God.

He was a witness to one of the great OT miracles when Elijah called down fire from heaven that consumed the prophets of Baal. He had heard Elijah pray to God that the people would know Him. When the fire fell, the people fell on their faces. But Ahab, it would appear, was unmoved. His wife was moved, but with anger because Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal.

Later God gave him victories over the Arameans with the purpose of demonstrating to Ahab that "God was the Lord."

But only once did Ahab show any sign of repentance. And it was not lasting.

He remained entrenched in his sinful ways, encouraged in them by his wife, Jezebel.

His life illustrates to us how sin can gain a hold on us. And, as we continue in it, it will numb our spirit to the truths of God.

The Scriptures warn us that, in the last days, the love of many (that once existed towards the Lord) will grow cold. The tender arteries of repentance, love and compassion will become hardened and unfeeling. Then, even seeing the miracles of God (as did Ahab). will not be sufficient to turn our hearts towards the living, true God.

Lessons from Ahab:

1. Bad company corrupts good character.
2. God gives us sufficient opportunity to repent and change.
3. Resisting God's grace will only lead us further down the road of unrighteous living.
4. Make sure your repentance is lasting.

Spiritual disciplines summary:

Josiah: bible study/intake

Elijah: prayer and solitude

Ahab: Ahab was well-practiced in doing evil. His slavery to sin hardened his heart and prevented him from responding to the grace of God.

**VIII. Homework assignments:**

Josiah:

1. How do you respond when God's Word speaks to your heart convicting you of a sin or an action that you need to take?
2. What were the consequences of your obedience or disobedience?
3. How long did it take for you to see the results of your response?

Elijah:

1. Has God ever asked you to do something that seemed strange or unreasonable to you? Did you do it?
2. How would having a confidence that God had spoken to you change your attitude towards doing something He requires of you that is "out of your comfort zone?"

Ahab:

1. Do you have existing relationships that are leading you away from God?
2. What steps can you take to sever these relationships?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What can you do to renew your love towards God when it is waning?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Rulers and Prophets of the Divided Kingdom

ISRAEL	Prophets	JUDAH	Prophets
Jeroboam 931 - 910 B.C.*		Rehoboam 931 - 913	
Nadab 910 - 909		Abijam 913 - 911	
Baasha 909 - 886		Asa 911 - 870	
Elah 886 - 885			
Zimri 885			
Omri 885 - 874			
Ahab 874 - 853		Jehoshaphat 873 - 848	<b>Elijah</b>
Ahaziah 853 - 852		Jehoram 853 - 841	<b>Elisha</b>
Jehoram 852 - 841		Ahaziah 841	<b>Obadiah</b>
Jehu 841 - 814		Athaliah 841 - 835	<b>Joel</b>
Jehoahaz 814 - 798		Joash 835 - 796	
Joash 798 - 782		Amaziah 796 - 767	
Jeroboam II 793 - 753	<b>Jonah</b>	Uzziah 792 - 740	
Zachariah 753 - 752	<b>Amos</b>		
Shallum 752			
Menahem 752 - 742		Jotham 750 - 731	
Pekahiah 742 - 740			<b>Isaiah</b>
Pekah 752 - 732			<b>Micah</b>
Hoshea 732 - 722	<b>Hosea</b>		
<b>Israel Captivity 722</b>		Ahaz 735 - 715	
		Hezekiah 715 - 686	
		Manasseh 695 - 642	
		Josiah 640 - 609	<b>Nahum</b>
		Jehoahaz 609	<b>Jeremiah</b>
		Jehoiakim 608 - 598	<b>Zephaniah</b>
		Jehoiachin 597	<b>Habakkuk</b>
		Zedekiah 597 - 586	
		<b>Judah Captivity 587</b>	<b>Daniel</b>
			<b>Ezekial</b>

**Legend:**

Evil king

Dates and chart positions are approximate.

Kings of Judah reigned approximately 60% longer (on average) than did the kings of Israel.

\* Dates are from J.H. Walton Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament and The Reese Chronological Bible.

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# LESSON #10

## Stage 10: Kings, Chronicles, Prophets

### A time without the temple

Community focus: The people of God in exile

#### I. Background

Dispensation: Law

Context: Israel, the northern kingdom, located in Samaria, had fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah is following in the footsteps of “her sister” by going a harlotting after other Gods.

God has sent prophets to warn Judah about the impending destruction of the city and ensuing captivity.

But Judah does not believe the prophets and does not return to their God.

Date: 586 B.C. to 516 B.C. (Although Jews began to return to the city in 538 B.C., many scholars identify 516 as the end of the period of captivity which is according to the 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah.

This date corresponds with the year of the dedication of the rebuilt temple and hence, a place to offer sacrifices to God.

Literary Type: The principle literary form is narrative. Ezekiel (visionary writing), Daniel (narrative/hero story and visionary writings), captivity Psalms (67, 123, 130, 137) and Lamentations (lament) occur during this period

#### **PART B: Summary of this era**

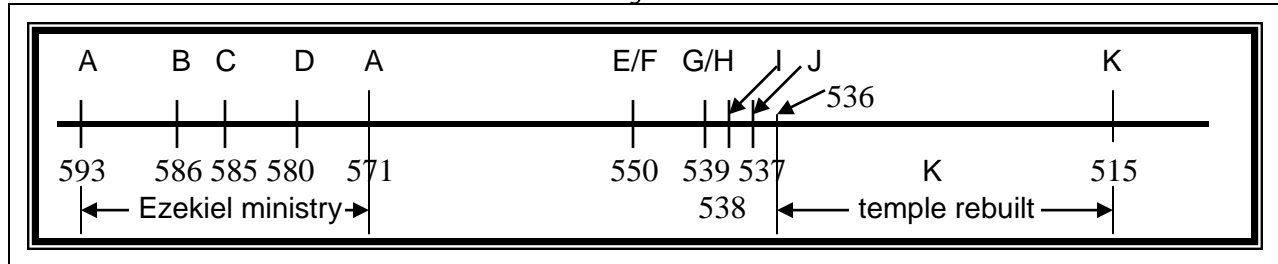
##### Major Events:

- A. Prophetic ministry of Ezekiel (593-571 B.C.)
- B. Destruction of Jerusalem, the people taken into captivity to Babylon (586 B.C.)
- C. Jeremiah (who had prophesied prior to the destruction of Jerusalem) was taken to Egypt. (585 B.C.)
- D. The fiery furnace (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) (580 B.C.)
- E. Belshazzar ascends to the throne in Babylon (550 B.C.)
- F. Captivity Psalms (according to Reese) (550 B.C.)
- G. Belshazzar dethroned (539 B.C.)



- H. Decree of Cyrus (539 B.C.)
- I. First Jews return to Jerusalem begins (538 B.C.)
- J. Daniel in the lions' den (537 B.C.)
- K. the temple rebuilt and dedicated (536 B.C. - 515 B.C.)

### Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



#### A Walk through the events of the captivity of Judah:

Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Persia, first invaded the land of Israel during the reign of Jehoiakim, the third to the last of Judah's rulers. He accepted tribute from the king and took a group of chosen captives including Daniel, to Babylon.

Nine years later, during the reign of Jehoiachin (who reigned only 3 months), he invaded Jerusalem a second time. This time he took away the king, 10,000 nobles and craftsmen including Ezekiel and left only the weak and poorest in the land.

He made Mattaniah, an uncle of the king, the ruler over Judah and changed his name to Zedekiah. He would be the last king of Judah.

In 586 B.C., after a lengthy siege of the city, Jerusalem was captured and destroyed. The king's sons were killed in front of him and then his eyes were put out. He was then taken captive to Babylon.

The prophecies of Jeremiah predicting the destruction of the city due to Judah's unfaithfulness to God had come to pass.

Before Judah's captivity, Jeremiah had repeatedly warned the king and predicted the coming destruction. He had also prophesied about the seventy years of ensuing captivity.

It was during these 70 years that several well-known events within the Bible occurred:

- Daniel in the lions' den
- the account of queen Esther
- the handwriting on the wall
- Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a giant statue
- the fall of Babylon

In 539 B.C., Cyrus of Persia, who had defeated the Babylonians, issued a decree which allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

Sadly, the majority of the nation chose to remain in Babylon. These were those who were born in Babylon and had no first-hand memories of Jerusalem. They chose, as instructed by Jeremiah, to build and dwell in houses, plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. (Jer. 29:28)

## II. Review of Lesson #10

Last week we focused on the importance of decision making in our lives. We saw that Israel, at the end of the period of the Judges, made a crucial decision which would impact them for years to come.

Question? What was that decision? They rejected God as their king.

Question? Why would they make such a decision? rejecting God, wanted a human king to fight their battles, didn't want to be different

Question? Why might someone reject "God as King" today?

Question? What was the result of Israel's decision? after 120 years of human kings – ready to rebel

An important insight: They did not know or understand what the impact of their decision would be.

But...God gave them what they asked for.

Lesson: Be wise and careful about what you ask of God. You might get it.

120 years later, after living under 3 human kings, they again faced a major decision...to continue under Rehoboam's reign or to rebel.

Question? What was the issue? also related to ruling

Question? Why did Solomon's son Rehoboam threaten to increase the severity of their labor? He had listened to his youthful advisors.

READ: I Kings 12:7 then 12: 10-11 (young men)

What was his motivation for his decision? pride/pleasing his friends.

Lesson: Be wise about your choice of friends.

Once the people heard his decision not to lighten their load, 10 tribes rebelled. But decisions of this magnitude are not without their difficulties.

Question? What was the primary difficulty in making a decision to leave Rehoboam's rulership? leaving Jerusalem, the center of worship and of the community.

leaving Jerusalem, the center of worship and of the community.

The 10 tribes split off and moved to the north while Judah and Benjamin remained under Rehoboam with the center of the community being located at Jerusalem. Jeroboam ascended to the kingship for the 10 northern tribes which came to be called "Israel" or Ephraim.

Judah alternately had good kings who sought the Lord and bad kings who led the people into idolatry. For the 10 tribes of the north, all of their kings were idolatrous. And the people followed in their ways.

God graciously sent prophets to both Israel and Judah to call them to repentance.

When you're immersed in the sin of rebellion, there is a price to pay:

Question? What happens when you continue in sin?

1. God will ultimately bring judgment for your sins.  
Why? because He is a Father and He loves His children.
2. As you continue in sin, you harden your heart to the call to repent.
3. Your sin also continues to diminish your ability to make the connection between a natural disaster and the judgment when it comes.
4. Continuing sin hardens the tender arteries of love within you. (You become unloving/unfeeling.)

In the light of the quality of the leadership of Israel, it is not surprising to see Israel carried off into captivity and dispersion (722 B.C.) much more quickly than Judah. However, Judah also went the way of captivity due to disobedience in 587 B.C.

Israel: 209 years  
Judah: 346 years

### **III. The Captivity**

Being taken into captivity is not God's preferred way of dealing with His people.

Nevertheless, the conquerors came first taking the 10 northern tribes to Assyria and dispersion and then Judah into captivity 900 miles away to Babylon.

3 deportations: 1<sup>st</sup> Daniel, then Ezekiel, then a final remnant

Let's read from scripture the account of the final days of the tribe of Judah:

Read II Kings 25:1-12 Keep in mind that these things are being allowed by God

Essential details:

- The wall is breached

- The king and his troops flee by night but are quickly captured.
- A month later, the glorious temple of Solomon and the royal palace are destroyed.
- The remaining noblemen are killed.
- The treasures of the temple are looted.
- In the next 4 years, 4600 people are taken captive to Babylon.
- The glorious era of Israel history has come to an end.

Question? How did God feel about all of this?

Father of the prodigal son. Who does he illustrate? God

He was sad, grieved, disappointed because he knew the good that was available to his wayward son in his own home.

Something to think about: God's faithfulness to Judah is seen in the judgment which took them into captivity.

Question? What would have happened if God had not allowed them to be taken into captivity?

The judgment of captivity is a severe mercy. They are stripped of all of the eternal, the temple, the land, the sacrifices, the festivals, the prophets, the king...the things that were the focus and substance of their lives.

The heart and center of their community, of their lives, the temple, is now gone. God was no longer dwelling among them.

They have nothing but the things on their backs and in their hearts, which consists mainly of the scrolls or the Torah and their memories and customs.

### **PICTURE YOURSELF:**

Think of the things that are precious to you. Now consider that a fire destroys your home and you lose your job.

All of your possessions have been burned in a fire. Nothing is left. You have nothing except the clothes you are wearing and the memories you hold in your mind. Now you are faced with rebuilding your life.

At this point...what do you have???

Question? What might be of help to you as you attempt to reconstruct your life?

- things you know,
- skills you have,
- friends/family

Sometimes, in the economy of God, it is essential to strip a people, a family or even a person of the worldly things possessed in order to cause a focus on the true and lasting values of life.

In these new “life situations,” we can learn much about the goodness and greatness of God. We learn that God is available and sufficient for the godly person no matter the circumstances.

Additionally, we learn that God’s actions are not limited to our own sphere of influence.

We also learn that experiencing the shepherding hand of God is not limited by our circumstances.

As strange as it may seem to the natural eye, “there is blessing in judgment.” The way of survival during these times is to embrace the judgment and cry out to God for grace and mercy (often the instructions of the prophets.)

During this time of captivity, the faith and culture of Judah survive by the hand of God. There is no political, financial or geographical base upon which to trust. They survive solely by the mercy and grace of God.

Even in captivity, God blesses those who walk with Him. Mordecai, Esther, Daniel, Ezekiel and others walk in relationship with God. They have a history that traces its origin to the foundations of the earth. They do still have a national identity. e.g. Esther

#### **IV. The Reaction of the People:**

Question?? What is your first reaction when a calamity or difficult circumstance occurs in your life?

The first reaction of God’s community of people to the exile is denial, resentment, disbelief, confusion and bitterness. They reject the exile, captivity and dispersion as being a part of God’s will for them.

This negative reaction feeds the false prophets who “prophecy peace where there is no peace.” (Jer. 6:14) They treat the wounds of Israel carelessly and without knowledge. They deny the reality of “a judgment from God” and maintain that Israel’s blessings will come as they maintain their continuity as a separate nation.

The true prophets of God accept the judgment having the ability to see beyond the circumstances to God’s ultimate blessing.

#### **V. Benefits for our Formation:**

A benefit to us in our formation is the identification of the individual’s responsibility before God to live a holy life and remain faithful to God and His commands regardless of external circumstances. Examples of this are seen in the lives of Daniel and his three friends, Esther and numerous other persons of faith from the pages of Scripture. Here we see the faithfulness of the individual to God and God’s faithfulness to the individual.

It gives us a clear picture of the responsibility of the individual to walk in a way that pleases God.

We can see the continuing acts of God for His people even when in great sin and captivity and be encouraged that He does not abandoned us when we blow it big time.

The prophet as an individual is now firmly established in the culture of Israel. The prophets operate independently of any Jewish authoritarian system and have the authority to speak for God regardless of their source of origin.

People such as John the Baptist can come “out of the wilderness” and have a platform from which they can speak prophetically to the people.

The people welcome the prophets and their “message from God” but the leaders whose authority and leadership are challenged withhold their support and most often become the prophets’ greatest challenge and danger.

## **VI. Limits for our Formation:**

The brutal events and disasters that came upon the Jewish people are not the recommended way to learn of God. It is not something God would have chosen for His people had it not been absolutely necessary. (What else could He do?)

Also, the Israelites in general, are not a light to the nations when they were oppressed and crushed. “How well does our light shine when we go through difficult circumstances?”

Suffering can be redeeming but only when received in faith. In general, if we don’t accept a judgment of God, we will be left with deep bitterness and resentment.

There is definitely a better way than “no pain, no gain.” God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance. (Rom. 2:4)

## **VII. Insights and Instructions for our Formation:**

What lessons and benefits can we learn from Israel’s journey into captivity?

1. 1<sup>st</sup> step: Seek God...Why is this happening?  
Embrace a judgment that comes from God.

Question? What about 911?

There were some voices crying out about judgment, but for the most part, after about 6 months, life returned to the “as normal” mode.

The nation, in general, just considered 911 as one of those things that just happen (but not a judgment from God.) There was no lasting repentance.

2. Contrary to the lament of Ps. 137:1-4, (hang our harps on the willows) we can sing the Lord's song when in a foreign land but only as we embrace "the hand of God in judgment."

Paul had learned to sing the Lord's song of "rejoicing" no matter where he was. When he wrote the letter to the Philippians, he was in jail bound by chains to two guards. (That sure sounds like captivity to me.) And throughout the letter, his dominant theme was the song of joy.

3. God is still with us, even when we have failed... and Israel had failed miserably. (He hasn't stopped loving us.) And if we embrace the judgment that we've brought on ourselves, recognizing that the consequences are an act of love, God will bring us through "to the other side." God maintains His faithfulness even when we don't.
4. God is more interested in our personal growth and godliness than He is in our comfort and convenience.

He is willing to strip away our false idols and the things we lean on (instead of Him) in order for us to learn to trust Him.

It is His goal that character formation occur during times of adversity.  
He is committed to our personal growth.

6. We also learn that there is a limit to sin. There is a point where mercy and grace are ended and judgment begins.

He is then faithful enough to us to allow us to see the results of our bad choices.

### **VIII. What is God doing during this period of Israel's existence?**

1. He continues to work out His ultimate plan of a people with whom He will dwell.
2. He maintains his covenant faithfulness to His people.
3. He gave extensive warnings of the impending judgment if repentance did not occur.
4. He brings a Father's discipline to His people. He brought judgment upon the people because of their sin.
5. Even in judgment, He gave hope and the promise of a return.
6. He continues to bless the faithful among His people. These blessing demonstrate that, even in captivity, God still leads, protects and blesses the faithful among His people.
7. He is teaching them His ways, e.g. There is a limit to sin.

8. He speaks words of comfort and encouragement to His people through the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
9. He demonstrates that His presence and blessing is not limited to Jerusalem.

Man's Response: did not believe God's prophets  
did not repent  
mourned for Jerusalem, learned to seek God without the temple

## **IX. Character Studies**

### Character Studies:

Daniel:

Daniel was taken from his homeland early in life and put into the service of the rulers of the nations who had taken him captive. (Babylon and Persia) Even though his circumstances were not to his choosing, he remained faithful to his God even in the midst of trying circumstances.

He exhibited several spiritual disciplines in his manner of life.

- a. the discipline of self-control

He was faced with the potential of eating foods and drinking wine from the royal rations. His remarkable humility was displayed as, instead of insisting on eating foods of his own choice, he offered the chief steward an alternate plan.

His plan succeeded with the added benefit to himself and his companions of a visible, discernible improvement in their physical states (in only 10 days) as compared with the others who were eating the king's food and drinking his wine.

- b. the discipline of prayer

When the ruling nation was overthrown, Daniel was given a high position in the new kingdom. He distinguished himself with the excellent spirit that was within him, drawing the envy and jealousy of other rulers in the kingdom.

When trying to find grounds for complaint against him, they could not find fault nor corruption in him.

The conspirators designed a plot against him based upon his observed daily habit of praying to his God. According to their plan, no one would be allowed to pray to anyone but the king for thirty days. The penalty for disobeying the interdict of the king was to be thrown into the den of lions.



Even after the document was signed and sealed by the king, Daniel continued to pray three times a day as he had done before.

The conspirators, of course, were like “sin crouching at the door” looking for the opportunity. The opportunity they awaited came and they seized upon it. As a result, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions.

God delivered Daniel from the mouths of the lions. His conspirators, including their children and wives, however, were thrown to the lions who quickly pounced on them.

c. the discipline of serving

In ways similar to Joseph, Daniel faithfully served wherever and with whomever he was placed. His service was with wisdom and humility and positioned him to serve those in places of high authority.

Ezekiel: - submission

In Richard J. Foster’s book “Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth,” he lists the spiritual discipline of submission.

Submission, in a spiritual sense, can take many forms. At times it will take us out of our comfort zone. We will need to be confident that God knows what He is doing and that His thoughts (and plans) are greater than ours.

Ezekiel was called to the discipline of submission in unique ways. He was called to be a prophet to warn Israel of impending disaster due to their unfaithfulness.

Some of the unique behaviors he displayed in response to God’s instructions were:

He shaved his head and burned his hair.

He lay on his side for a year eating food that was cooked on cow dung.

He was instructed by God to clap his hands and stomp his feet.

He crawled through a hole in his house.

When his wife died, he was forbidden to mourn for her.

Then, after Jerusalem was destroyed, he became silent.

The people must have considered him a mad man.

There was no natural rhyme nor reason for his behaviors.

But God was in charge and Ezekiel did what God had instructed him to do in the manner he was instructed to.

So with us, when instructed by God, we are to do what he tells us to do in the way we are told to do it. We are to leave the results (and the criticisms from doubting friends) in God’s hands. We may not understand the “why” of our

actions, but, if we are faithful, our actions will achieve the purposes intended by God. (recall God's instructions to Moses in the wilderness to strike the rock )

Spiritual disciplines summary:

Daniel - self-control, prayer, serving

Ezekiel - prayer and solitude

**X. Homework assignments:**

- Daniel:
1. Have you been in a situation where your faith was tested and there would be a consequence for remaining true to your beliefs?
  2. What was the crucial moment in the story of Daniel and the lion's den?
  3. How would you state the primary lesson of the account of Daniel and the lion's den?
- Ezekiel:
1. Does God call us today to behave in ways similar to the things he called Ezekiel to do?
  2. What was the purpose of Ezekiel's bizarre behavior?
  3. What kinds of submission does God call us to today?

# LESSON #11

## Stage 11: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (prophets)

Community focus: God restores His people

### I. Background

Dispensation: the Law

Context: God has stirred the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to issue a decree that those in captivity who desired, could return to Jerusalem. (See Isa. 44:28 for the prophecy written 140 years prior to this time which mentioned Cyrus specifically by name.) see also Ezra 1:3 and II Chron. 36:23 for the proclamation.

An astonishing thing which also happened is that Cyrus provided the Jews with the finances and the building materials to rebuild the temple.

In addition, he gave them the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple when it was razed.

Not so oddly, a majority of those who were in captivity, decided not to return. This included many who were born in captivity, who had never seen the city and principally spoke the language of their captors.

Apart from the things told them by their fathers, they had little experience or knowledge of the land of Canaan.

Date: 536-516 B.C. (rebuilding of the temple) – 397 B.C.

Literary Type: Ezra/Nehemiah – historical narrative  
Esther – narrative (hero story)  
Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi - prophecy

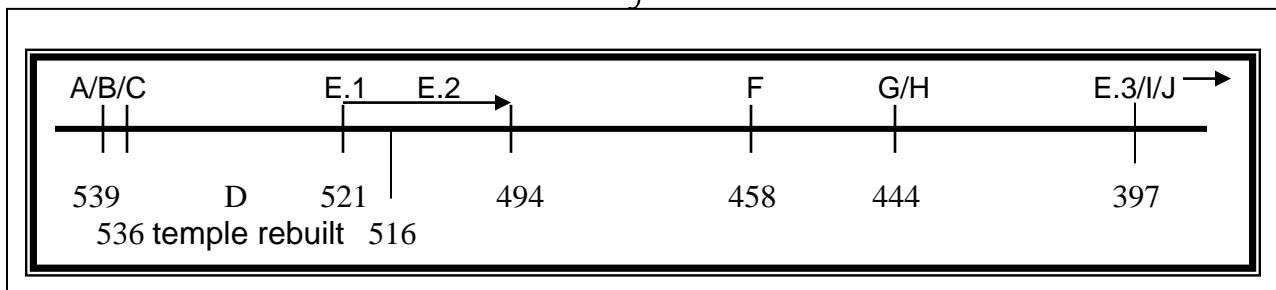
### II. Summary of this era

Major Events: The major events in this era were:

- A. Decree of Cyrus (539 B.C.)
- B. Daniel in the lions' den (537 B.C.)
- C. First Jews return to Jerusalem begins (536 B.C.)  
Altar rebuilt to offer sacrifices
- D. the temple rebuilt and dedicated (536 B.C.- 516 B.C.)
- E. Prophecies – (521 B.C. - 397 B.C.)

1. Haggai (521 B.C.)
  2. Zechariah
    - o 1-6 (521 B.C.)
    - o 7-8 (519 B.C.)
    - o 9-14 (494 B.C.)
  3. Malachi (397 B.C.)
- F. 2<sup>nd</sup> return - Ezra (458 B.C.)
  - G. 3<sup>rd</sup> return – Nehemiah (444 B.C.)
  - H. The wall rebuilt (52 days) (444 B.C.)
  - I. End of the Old Testament History and Canon (397 B.C.)
  - J. Inter-testamental Period begins (397 B.C.)
    - Grecian rule begins (333)
    - period of Jewish revolt (167 B.C. – 63 B.C.)
    - Roman rule begins (63 B.C.) (Daniel’s 4<sup>th</sup> world empire)

Time Chart of Major Events (B.C.)



### A Walk through the Bible from Ezra through Malachi

The return from Babylon to Jerusalem was completed in three separate journeys.

The first return which began in 536 B.C. was led by Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah. It took the company of approximately 50,000 persons 4 months to travel the distance of 700 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The first thing they did when arriving in Jerusalem was to rebuild the temple altar and begin offering sacrifices to God.

In the second year of their return, they laid the foundation of the temple.

There was major opposition to the effort of rebuilding the temple by some of the people of the land. These people were foreigners who had been transported to the area when the temple was sacked. They were successful in obtaining a decree from the king of Persia to stop the work.

The work lay dormant for 16 years before the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred the people to the work of rebuilding the temple. They obtained copies of the initial decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple and the work was resumed.

The temple was completed in 4 years. It was dedicated with a great celebration of joy. (Ez. 6:16)

The second return was led by Ezra, a scribe who brought back a large number of the temple items taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he was astonished to learn that the people had already begun to intermarry with the inhabitants of the land and “mingle the holy seed.”

Read Ezra 9 for the description and words of Ezra’s prayer and fasting. (one of the great prayers of the Old Testament.)

The people responded to Ezra’s intercession with a great repentance, agreeing to put away the wives they had married including the children born through them.

The result of Ezra’s prayer of intercession was a great revival that moved throughout the land.

The third return was led by Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king. A small group of those who had returned with Ezra, returned to Shushan and brought news to Nehemiah of the deplorable state of the city:

- the walls were broken down,
- the gates which had been destroyed by fire had not been rebuilt.

This meant that the city and its inhabitants were unprotected. The people were in danger and were a reproach in the land.

He prayed and fasted for 3 months asking God for direction. He petitioned the king and received not only a leave of absence to go to Jerusalem but also obtained written orders from the king that materials and goods for the work at Jerusalem should be supplied to him at no cost.

Upon his return, in the midst of significant opposition, the work of rebuilding the wall and its gates was completed in just 52 days.

Under the guidance of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people covenanted with God as follows:

- entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s laws,
- restoration of the feast of tabernacles,
- separation from the idolatry of the land,
- no intermarriages,
- no buying or selling on the Sabbath,
- tithes would not be withheld, and
- they would not forsake God’s house.

### A Summary of the Prophets:

1. before captivities: Jonah to Nineveh
2. to the 10 tribes of the divided kingdom: Amos, Hosea, Obadiah, Joel
3. to Judah: Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah
4. in exile in Babylon: Ezekiel, Daniel
5. to the returned remnant: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the people when they had stopped work on the temple.

Malachi prophesied to the people when they began to neglect the temple after it was rebuilt.

### **III. Discussion**

In Lesson 11, we saw the people of God in exile, a judgment of God. Israel (the 10 northern tribes) had been taken captive in 722 B.C. and dispersed in Assyria. Judah, some 136 years later, was taken captive to Babylon. (586 B.C.)

Keep in mind that this is God's people, God Almighty, the One who dwells in unapproachable light, who is omniscient and omnipotent.

This is His dearly beloved.

The judgment, a severe mercy, was needed because the people continued to rebel against God and worship idols. It was also needed because He was working out His purposes in the world through His people and He was conveying a message to all peoples.

But even in captivity, God had not abandoned them.

The external evidences of their faith, the temple, the rituals, the feasts, had been stripped away causing them to focus on the true values of life: love and obedience towards God.

What did the people do in exile?

- Some repented and sought God.
- Others became mixed in with the citizens of the country of exile.

The people who repented learned about the goodness and mercy of God. They saw that He was available and sufficient for the godly of heart no matter their situation or where they were located, hard lessons to learn first-hand.

They also learned that God's activity was not limited to the Jewish nation.

Ultimately, God's plan includes all people.

Up until now, since Abraham, His community was the descendants of Abraham.

God used the captivity to move His people down the road to the all-inclusive community He was forming in history. The Jews will now dwell among the peoples of the world and are to be a blessing to them.

When Judah was dispersed across the vast Babylonian empire, they were left to ponder their fate and consider God's original promise to Abraham.

Some questions they probably asked were:

- Why were they being punished in this way?
- What about the covenants of Abraham?
- Weren't they the chosen ones?
- Weren't they to be a blessing to all nations?
- What about the land that had been given to the patriarchs that was to be theirs in perpetuity?

The answers to their questions came in surprising ways. They receive assurances from God that they will return to their promised land, (see Isa. 44:28; 45:13b) the temple will be restored and their cities rebuilt. God gave them hope in their time of desolation and despair. (Isaiah prophesied from about 740 to 700 B.C. (The captivity began in 586 B.C.)

God works in mysterious ways, ways that we cannot fathom.

He sends Jonah to a heathen nation to warn them about an impending disaster. And when they repent, he relents and does not bring the disaster.

God is showing Israel that they aren't the only people on the planet. God ultimately is concerned for all nations.

Rulers that don't know the God of Abraham, give Ezra and Nehemiah permission to return to Israel and rebuild the temple and the wall. But, on top of that, the rulers provide the resources for the rebuilding project and armed guards to protect the people during their return trip. see Neh. 2:8 and 9 (protection)

Another element of hope was shown through Esther when she gained the favor of the king of Persia and helped avert the annihilation of the Jewish nation.

God had prepared courageous leaders such as Ezra and Nehemiah to lead the people in the restoration and rebuilding projects. The wall, approximately 2 miles in length around the city, is rebuilt in the midst of opposition in only 52 days. And this with one-armed laborers who hold a spear or sword in one hand and move stones with the other.

Ezra and Nehemiah work diligently to rebuild the temple, walls and gates and then lead the people in a national revival. Neh. 10:28 provides a summary of the new covenant made by the people: "The rest of the people...and all who have separated themselves from the people of the land to adhere to the law of God...join with their kin and nobles and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's laws and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and His ordinances and statutes."

The people had returned to God! Monotheism has returned.

God established two institutions to fortify the heart of Jewish life- **the synagogue** where devout followers of God could be instructed and grow in their faith and **the temple** where the daily rituals required by the law provide constant reminders of the goodness and glory of God.

The priesthood, festivals, worship and sacrifices that had been taken away during the times of exile (see Hos. 9-10) are finally restored. They can once again offer sacrifices in the temple.

#### **IV. Response of the people:**

The leaders call the people into a remembrance of God's word regarding their failure to keep His commandments. They recognize that their demise had come because of their unfaithfulness and repent.

Their experiences in exile have taught them to trust in God who fulfills His promises and restores His people. The people can, in reviewing the history of the nation, conclude that the people had gone astray by rejecting God and pursuing the idolatries of the people in the land.

The belief in and trust in one God is restored to Israel. They have gone full circle from their decision for a human king.

While in exile, Israel's presence in the land of promise is disrupted. But this did not mean that God had given ownership of the land of promise to another nation.

Exile had also caused a break in the Israelite culture as well. Cultural mix was a significant issue in Babylon.

Once they return, they develop a new **culture** that centers in the family, the synagogue and the community of faith.

**Culture:** Definition: "the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population"

This culture will be tested by occupations by foreign armies, religious wars and political maneuverings that envelop the land for centuries.

When Jerusalem falls to Rome in A.D. 70, the Jews are once again dispersed, but the culture will survive.

A downside to the captivity is the hardening of the hearts of the Israelites. They had rejected God before the exile by worshiping foreign gods. This rejection continues after the exile but in a different way.



They focus so intently on the law and its interpretation that they lose the element of the heart in their faith. (roots of Pharisee sect) The law becomes a rigid system of laws and regulations, compounded upon one another, focused on their own survival rather than a way to help people enter the “with-God” life.

Faith is always an issue of the heart and not merely intellectual assent.

## **V. Benefits for our Formation:**

1. Through Israel's experiences in exile, we discover that God cannot be limited to a particular time or place. Worship of the living God can occur anywhere at anytime. God is not far off or removed from interaction with individuals. One doesn't have to travel to Jerusalem to worship God in the temple. See John 4, the Samaritan woman.
2. The fact that Israel has been able to maintain their faith, even though living under foreign domination, makes it clear that a life with God is not dependent upon human governments.
3. The period of restoration is a forerunner of Jesus' message regarding the kingdom of heaven, a non-material kingdom without borders, a kingdom “not made with hands that overcomes all human governments and fills the whole earth. (see Dan. 2:34-35)  
They were restored to the land. Jesus restores us to the kingdom of God.
4. God does move in mysterious ways to liberate and restore His people.

## **VI. Insights for our Formation**

1. We learn to depend upon God for our care and security instead of any earthly institution or government. God has not, nor will He ever fail.
2. We learn the importance of homes, faith gatherings and local communities in providing social cohesiveness.

For us especially: the importance of the local church

3. We see the importance of those with gifted leadership. (e.g. Ezra, Nehemiah)  
In a similar vein, it becomes important for us to recognize and listen to those who have the gift of wisdom. (e.g. Nehemiah – building the wall, a sword in one hand and a pick or shovel in the other)
4. Worship needs to be at the center of our lives. We see a very degraded picture of Israel in captivity without worship at the center of their lives.

## **VII. What is God doing?**

1. Maintenance and oversight, jealously guarding His people.
2. Fulfilling His prophetic words; e.g. Cyrus.

3. Providing amazing provisions for His people, return, leaders, temple, walls
4. Continues His preparation for Immanuel – the Christ-event.
5. Revealing who He is...the One, true God.

He restores His people

raises up leaders to lead the returns, build the temple and wall and restore the worship of Yahweh  
 raises up prophets to call the people to repentance  
 moves upon heathen kings to be generous towards the returning Jews

Man's Response: returned to Jerusalem  
 rebuilt the temple and the wall  
 worship restored  
 lapsed back into former ways by intermarrying with the women of the land  
 put away foreign gods and Canaanite wives

## VIII. Character Studies

### Character Studies:

Ezra: Bible intake/study

Ezra was a scribe and priest who led the people back to the Word of God.

A principal scripture which reveals the heart of Ezra is Ez. 7:10 which reads:

“Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Study, obey, teach were the mainstays of Ezra's disciplined, personal life.

And in embracing this manner of life, we see its resultant effect in his relationship with God. The scripture records (7:9) that the “the gracious hand of his God was upon him.” (also 7:6; 8:31)

God gave Ezra favor with the king of a pagan nation who gave back to Israel the vessels of the house of God that Nebuchadnezzar had taken and decreed that the people of their cities and villages should assist them with goods for their trip to Jerusalem. He also supplied them with protection for the trip.

God was with Ezra as temple worship in Jerusalem was restored and the rebuilding of the temple begun.

When Ezra returned to Jerusalem after a period of absence, he discovered that the people, the priests and Levites had intermarried with the people of the land polluting the holy seed.

His response was to tear his garment and his mantle (a sign of great sorrow), pulled hair from his head and beard and sat appalled.

Scripture records (9:4): "Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice."

His prayer of repentance for the nation as recorded in chapter 9 is one of the great prayers of the Bible.

As a result, a great assembly of men, women and children gathered around him and wept bitterly.

Ezra's study of the Word of God had conformed his heart to the likeness of God. He saw and felt as God felt. His outward actions modeled the inward grief that he felt over Israel's unfaithfulness.

Through Ezra's leadership, the people repented and gave up their foreign wives.

Nehemiah: prayer  
dedicated, focused service

Nehemiah (which means "God comforts") was a layman employed as the cupbearer to the king.

He led the people of Israel in:

- rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (52 days) even though constantly under attack by Israel's enemies),
- in ethical reforms, and
- in the repopulation of Jerusalem.

These tasks required a strong, courageous leader and a good administrator; but principally, he was a man of prayer.

When he heard of the demise of Jerusalem, he immediately went to God in prayer and fasting for months.

When the king asked him what he was requesting (2:4), he immediately prays.

When enemies were plotting to fight against Jerusalem, he was at prayer.

Nehemiah shows us that there is no situation too great or small where prayer is not needed. And God is the source and supply for all of our needs whether for counsel or instruction, for protection, for insight regarding our enemies or for physical supplies.

He was also a dedicated and faithful servant diligently performing the tasks set before him

His faithful service to the king earned him favor in high places.

When he undertook the task of rebuilding the walls, he remained steadfast in his purpose and dedication to the task. He would not allow the threats and distractions of enemies to defer him from finishing the walls.

Then he set about repopulating the city and instituting ethical reforms.

This illustrates to us the need for dedication and perseverance in fulfilling the tasks given us.

Esther: fasting

Esther lived in ancient Persia with Jews who had chosen not to return to their homeland when given the opportunity. She lived with her relative Mordecai, a godly man.

Haman, a high official of the king, became incensed toward Mordecai when he refused to bow down and do obeisance to him. He subsequently conceived a plan to annihilate Mordecai and all of the Jews.

Mordecai learned of the plan and informed Esther.

Esther then instructed Mordecai and all the Jews that could be found in the city, to hold a three day total fast (without food and water). Esther and her maidservants would also fast. The crucial issue was that if anyone entered the inner court of the king without being summoned, they would be put to death...unless the king held out his golden scepter to the person.

After the fast, Esther entered the inner court of the king and he responded favorably towards her. Through a series of meals and pleadings with the king, the Jews were saved. Haman was hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

God responded to the fasting and prayer of Esther and the Jews. When God's people humble themselves through fasting and prayer, God will hear their cries for mercies and act on their behalf.

Spiritual discipline summary:

Ezra – Bible intake/study

Nehemiah – prayer  
dedicated, focused service

Esther - fasting

**IX. Homework assignments:**

- Ezra
1. What was the primary reason for Ezra's success in the things he undertook to do?
  2. Was Ezra concerned about how the people would react in chapter 9 when he pulled hair from his head and face and tore his garments?
  3. Have you ever felt grief or sorrow when you witnessed God's law being broken?
  4. If you have, what has happened within you? (clue: the natural man does not mourn over the things of the kingdom of God.)
- Nehemiah
1. Why did Nehemiah weep and mourn (Neh. 1:4) over the survivors who were left in Jerusalem? (He had never been to Jerusalem, having been born in captivity.)
  2. What is the significance of the walls being broken down and the gates destroyed?
  3. What was Nehemiah's reward for his devotion to rebuilding the wall? (see 5:14-19)
- Esther:
1. How do you determine when it is appropriate to fast?
  2. Have you fasted and prayed to the Lord with a specific objective in mind?
  3. How did God respond to your time of fasting?
  4. Why did Esther trust Mordecai?

## ABOUT PASTOR DAVID

I grew up in Illinois; my wife, Brenda, in Oregon. It was a path of many twists and turns to get the two of us connected in California! We entered into our marriage covenant in 1986 after she had agreed to my proposal for a life of adventure. Brenda claims that she scarcely comprehended the adventure that our life would be simply by saying those two little words (I do).



We had both been Christians for a number of years and determined to make God the center of our marriage. In order to make a good beginning, we structured our wedding vows around the instructions of Scripture. We are convinced that this is the reason for our successful, growing relationship.

I received my BS in Civil Engineering in 1966 from the University of Missouri. Having taken ROTC in college, I next served as an officer in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany.

After returning home to the states, I attended Golden Gate Seminary in California and received a Master of Divinity in 1972.

I worked for three Engineering companies before settling in with GE Nuclear Energy in San Jose, California. I finished my engineering career with 25 years of service at GE.

I was ordained a minister of the gospel in 1991.

Brenda is blessed with musical gifts and has played numerous instruments, e.g. bassoon, flute, guitar, piano, bass. She taught piano to children for 14 years until our move to Wilmington, NC. I also had some musical inclinations, growing up in a musical family in which everyone played at least one instrument. Brenda also has a heart for and is involved in a local "Special Touch" ministry, a ministry to people with disabilities.

Several years ago, we began attending Calvary Chapel San Jose, CA where Don McClure was pastoring. The emphasis on God's Word and the presence of God's Spirit in the worship kept us coming back until we felt confident that this was to be our church home.

Brenda became involved with the Praise team playing flute and singing. She also led the worship for two Women's Bible studies. I became involved in the teaching ministry working principally with the mature adults class (ages around 50-95, they called themselves the "Sonshiners") and also a young married couples class.

Even though we felt like we were settling into the San Jose Fellowship, in early 2004 we were presented with a company relocation, and we began to feel that God was leading us to a significant change, relocating from the West Coast to the East Coast. Little did we know what was in store for us in Wilmington, NC.

We often felt like Abraham who was told to leave his homeland but was given no information regarding what he would encounter when he arrived at his destination.

The next very shocking surprise was my early retirement, something we had not even considered when planning the move to the east coast. Nevertheless, God made it very clear that my engineering career of 37 years was soon to be ended. The retirement occurred almost 5 years in advance of my plan. But God had a bigger (and better) plan. One of my reoccurring supplications to God has been that I would rather be expending the main energy of my life teaching the Word of God than pouring it into the management of engineering projects and writing technical engineering reports. Now, God was giving me the desire of my heart.

I eventually came on staff with a local church and served for 7½ years as an associate pastor teaching Bible studies and ministering principally in the Equipping the Saints ministry. Brenda was involved in several ministries... Praise Team, Special Touch, hospitality/helps, Home Fellowships, to mention a few.

After a 1-year sabbatical in 2014, God has led us to begin a new fellowship which is called Safe Haven Berean Fellowship. Our focus is principally on the Word of God, with both Bible book studies and doctrinal teachings in progress at this time. Principal focuses are on the assurance of salvation, knowing what God in Christ has done for us, learning to live in a way that honors and glorifies God, and a continual focus upon our End Times preparations for our coming King.

Looking back now over the years that led us to this place in life, we are amazed at the Sovereignty of God and how he has orchestrated the events that have brought us to this place in this time. His loving and merciful hand has been seen time and again as he has opened doors and brought us quickly to where He wants us to be. He is, without question, an awesome God.



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