

# project 4:4

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one year one bible one church one lord

Welcome to project 4:4, a journey through the word of God over the course of one year's time. We're taking this journey together because of our conviction that what Jesus says in Matthew 4:4 is true: we don't live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

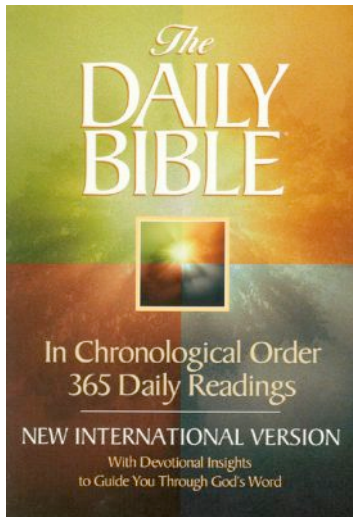
This year, we're going to try and take in *every word*. Starting with Genesis this January and ending in December with Revelation, we're going to work our way through the entire Bible. Here's the challenge for you:

## **Read through the entire Bible in 2010.**

Your job is to read it in your home, one day at a time. Together, in our classes at church, we'll talk about what we've read and hear themes from those texts in the sermons on Sundays. Who knows, we might even strike up a conversation or two over cups of coffee or lunch breaks, and don't be surprised if you see a Facebook status update or two along the way. We want to give the word of God a chance to wash over our whole lives, to shape every contour of who we are, by bringing us closer and closer to the heart of God. When we're all doing that together, we have the opportunity as a community to hear from each other how the Lord is using this time to shape each of us in different ways. And we all better believe that, when we as a community commit to listening to the word of God, it will indeed shape us.



Reading the Bible as a whole can be an imposing proposition, so we're approaching it in a particular way to help it become more manageable.



In order to organize the readings, we are using *The Daily Bible*, edited by F. LaGard Smith. This Bible takes the NIV text, organizes the readings into a chronological order, and divides the text into daily readings. In order to follow along with PV's reading schedule, we highly recommend you acquire a copy. It can affordably be found at some local bookstores or quite easily online. There is a link on the church's website ([pvcc.org](http://pvcc.org)) to make the process easier!

**This notebook** includes additional notes to help you process what you're reading and prepare to discuss it in class settings. Each Sunday, beginning January 3, 2010, the classes will generally cover what has been read in the previous week, and the notebook includes questions that will be discussed in class. The lessons are dated according to the Sunday by which you need to have finished the readings.



## Class Schedule for 2010

Jan. 3	1. The Beginning
Jan. 10	2. Abraham and the Covenant
Jan. 17	3. Jacob and Joseph
Jan. 24	4. Out of Africa
Jan. 31	5. The Law of Moses
Feb. 7	6. The Presence of God with Israel
Feb. 14	7. To Canaan's Land - Almost
Feb. 21	8. A Holy Nation
Feb. 28	9. The Demands of Holy Living
March 7	10. Holiness in Daily Life
March 14	11. Conquest of Canaan
March 21	12. Apostasy and the Judges
March 28	13. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
April 4	14. David's Rise to Power
April 11	15. David: Triumph and Tragedy
April 18	16. David: Trouble in the Kingdom
April 25	17. Psalms of the Troubled Soul
May 2	18. Psalms of Righteousness and Praise
May 9	19. Christ in the Psalms
May 16	20. The Reign of Solomon
May 23	21. The Way of Wisdom
May 30	22. Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes
June 6	23. The Kingdom Divides
June 13	24. Prophets and Kings
June 20	25. Joel, Jonah and Hosea
June 27	26. Amos, Isaiah 1-6, and Micah
July 4	27. Isaiah's Judgments
July 11	28. Israel Falls and Judah Declines
July 18	29. Isaiah Offers Hope for the Future
July 25	30. More Hope from Isaiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah
Aug. 1	31. Jeremiah Takes his Stand
Aug. 8	32. Jeremiah Meets Resistance
Aug. 15	33. The Exile Begins
Aug. 22	34. Signs and Visions from Ezekiel
Aug. 29	35. Jerusalem Falls!
Sept. 5	36. The Exiled Nation
Sept. 12	37. Why the Righteous Suffer
Sept. 19	38. A Conversation About Suffering
Sept. 26	39. Daniel's Visions of Restoration
Oct. 3	40. Haggai, Zechariah, and the Rebuilding of the Temple
Oct. 10	41. Esther and Nehemiah
Oct. 17	42. Between the Testaments
Oct. 24	43. The Coming of Jesus!
Oct. 31	44. Jesus Begins to Teach and Heal in Galilee
Nov. 7	45. Miracles, Parables, Crowds, and Conflict
Nov. 14	46. The Events Leading to Jesus' Death
Nov. 21	47. The Gospel of Jesus Christ
Nov. 28	48. The Gospel Spreads, Even to Non-Jews!

Dec. 5	49. Letters to Thessalonica and Corinth
Dec. 12	50. Paul's Gospel
Dec. 19	51. Paul's Final Letters
Dec. 26	52. The General Letters
Jan. 2, 2011	53. Revelation

**Sunday, January 3**  
(Reading Jan 1-Jan 2)

**1. The Beginning**  
**Genesis 1-5**

**Key Point:**

The first 11 chapters of Genesis (which means “the beginning”) record the beginnings of the world, life, man and woman, sin, languages, and nations.

**Key Verse:**

“God saw all that he had made and it was very good” (1:31).

**Main People:**

Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his family

**Outline:**

**The Creation of the World (Genesis 1, 2)**

**Sin in the World (Genesis 3, 4)**

**Thought Questions:**

1. How is the “image and likeness” of God reflected in human beings?
2. What can we learn from Adam and Eve about dealing with temptation and sin?
3. How has your resistance to sin been tested by Satan?
4. Why did God accept Abel’s offering but not Cain’s (see Heb. 11:4)?
5. Based on these chapters, would you describe humans as basically *good*, with some weaknesses, or basically *evil*, with some redeeming features? Or both?

**January 10**

(Readings Jan 3-Jan 9)

## **2. Abraham and the Covenant**

**Genesis 12-26**

### **Key Point:**

God chose a man, Abraham, and his descendants, the Jews, as His people, to be His witness to the other nations and through whom would come the Messiah.

### **Key Verse:**

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’” (12:1-3).

### **Main People:**

Abram (Abraham), Sarah, Lot, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac, Eliezer, Rebekah

### **Outline:**

**Noah and the Flood (Genesis 5-9)**

**The Beginning of Nations and Languages (Genesis 10, 11)**

**The Call of Abraham (Genesis 12-14)**

**The Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15, 16)**

**The Confirmation to Abraham (Genesis 17-21)**

**The Confidence of Abraham (Genesis 22, 23)**

**The Concern of Abraham (Genesis 24, 25)**

**The Conferring of the Blessing on Isaac (Genesis 26)**

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What does the story of Noah, the flood, and the rainbow tell you about God?
2. What passages in early Genesis reveal how God views and deals with sin?
3. What was God's purpose in choosing Abraham and his descendants – and is it unfair of God to single out one group as His people?
4. What six things did God promise to Abraham and his descendants? (Gen. 12:1-3)
5. What is the significance of Melchizedek in chapter 14?
6. In the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, whom do you like the most? The least?
7. How is the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah relevant today?
8. In choosing Isaac and rejecting Ishmael, is God cruel? Arbitrary? Gracious? Sovereign?
9. What do you think Abraham was thinking when he took his son to the altar?

10. In your view, what is the most important lesson from the life of Abraham?



**January 17**

(Readings Jan 10-Jan 16)

### **3. Jacob and Joseph**

**Genesis 27-41**

**Key Point:**

God works in the lives of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, and great-grandson, Joseph, to confirm His covenant with His people.

**Key Verse:**

"God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob [*he deceives*], but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel [*he struggles with God*]. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.'" (Genesis 35:10-12)

**Main People:**

Jacob, Esau, Laban, Rachel, Leah, Dinah, Judah, Tamar, Joseph, Potiphar and his wife

**Outline:**

**The Life of Jacob (Genesis 27-36)**

Jacob gains Esau's blessing (27:1-28:9)

Jacob's life at Haran (28:10-31:55)

    Jacob's dream

    Jacob's labors and marriages

    Jacob's flight

Jacob's return to Canaan (32-33)

    Jacob fights with the angel

    Jacob makes peace with Esau

Jacob's residence in Canaan (34-35)

    The defilement of Dinah

    The devotion at Bethel

    The deaths of Rachel and Isaac

**The History of Esau (36)**

(to be continued)

**Thought Questions:**

1. Why was Jacob (the younger) chosen by God over Esau (the older)?
2. What changes do you see in Jacob's character over his lifetime?
3. What is the significance of Jacob's wrestling with the angel and having his name changed in Gen. 32:22-32?
4. What can you apply in your life based on Jacob's experience in marriage and parenting?
5. What are the differences and similarities in Jacob's two experiences at Bethel as recorded in Gen. 28:10-17 and 35:1-15?

## January 24

(Readings Jan 17- Jan 23)

### 4. Out of Africa

(note: this section runs into the reading for Jan 24)

#### Key Point:

The Lord sees the misery of his people in Egypt and plans to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land.

#### Key Verse:

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land" (Ex. 3:7-9).

#### Main People:

Joseph, Reuben, Benjamin, Jacob, Zipporah, Moses, Aaron, Pharoah

#### Outline:

##### The Life of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)

The corruption of Joseph's family (37-38)

    Joseph's family sins against him

    Joseph's family sins with the Canaanites

The exaltation of Joseph (39-41)

    Joseph's test with Potiphar's wife

    Joseph's test with Egyptian society

    Joseph's test with Pharoah's dreams

    Joseph's exaltation over Egypt

Joseph turns up the heat on his brothers (42-44)

Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers (45)

Joseph and Jacob are reunited (46)

Jacob's family settles in the land of Goshen (47)

Jacob blesses his sons (48-49)

Jacob and Joseph die (50)

##### Establishment of a Nation (Exodus 1-13)

Israel's population flourishes in Goshen and made a nation of slaves (1)

Moses born, raised in royal position, flees to Midian as a fugitive (2)

God's plan to deliver his people revealed to Moses (3-4)

God brings plagues on the Egyptians (7-11)

Passover and the Exodus (12-13)

#### Thought Questions:

1. Since Joseph is not in the Messianic line, why is so much attention given to his life?
  
2. In what ways does Joseph's life foreshadow the life of Christ?

3. Is there a reason God would want His people in Egypt instead of Canaan? Explain.
4. What do we learn from Joseph's dealings with his desperate brothers?
5. Joseph was able to see God's providence in his life (Gen. 45:4-8); can you look back over events in your life and see God's providence?
6. How do we reconcile the heroic actions of Shiphrah and Puah with their dishonesty?
7. What kind of background did Moses possess, and why was it important in shaping him as a leader of God's people?
8. What is chilling about Pharaoh's statement, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go?"
9. What is interesting about the progression of plagues that God brings on the Egyptians?

10. What lesson was the Passover designed to teach Israel?



**January 31**

(Readings Jan 24-Jan 30)

**5. The Law of Moses**

**Exodus 14-38**

**Key Point:**

God leads His people to Sinai, where He establishes His covenant with them through Moses. God gives laws that, if broken, could separate the people from God and a tabernacle so they can approach Him.

**Key Verses:**

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to be above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5,6).

**Main People:**

Moses, Aaron, Miriam

**Outline:**

**The Redemption of Israel from Egypt by God (Exodus 5-15) (continued)**

Israel redeemed from Egypt and led through the Red Sea (14)

Israel praises God (15)

**God Preserves Israel in the Wilderness (16-18)**

God saves Israel from thirst, hunger, defeat, and chaos

**God Reveals the Old Covenant (19-31)**

The preparation of the people (19)

The revelation of the covenant (20)

The judgments (21-23) – these will be covered in future lessons

Ratification of the covenant (24)

Instructions for the tabernacle (25-27)

Institution of the covenant (30-31)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. In what ways was the wilderness a favorable place for God to mold the Israelites into a strong nation before they entered the land promised to them?
2. What do you learn about worshipping God from the book of Exodus?
3. What is the significance of the Ten Commandments for us today?
4. How do you think the people of Israel fell so easily into idolatry, even after seeing the great things God did?
5. Why is so much attention given to the instructions for and building of the tabernacle?
6. How do the tabernacle and the priest foreshadow the role of Christ? (Heb. 8-10)
7. What can you learn about prayer and fellowship with God based on Moses' example?



**February 7**  
(Jan 31-Feb 6)

## **6. The Presence of God with Israel**

### **Key Point:**

God commits to being present with his people on their journey, which necessitates an understanding of holiness. The establishment of cultic (priestly and ritual) ordinances helps communicate this holiness to the people.

### **Key Verse:**

“The Lord replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”  
(Exodus 33:14).

### **Outline:**

**The Covenant is Broken and Renewed (Exodus 32-34)**

**Israel Willingly Obeys the Covenant (Exodus 35-40)**

**Priests are Ordained (Leviticus 8-9)**

**Israel is Numbered (Numbers 1-9)**

### **Thought Questions:**

1. This section opens with the story of the golden calf. What do we learn about Israel or people in general? What do we learn about God?
2. The aftermath of this story show God deliberating with Moses about whether or not God's presence will go with the people. What was the significance of this decision for Israel? For you?
3. This section includes the construction of the tabernacle. Is that difficult for you to visualize? What do you think it meant for Israel to watch its construction?
4. Much of the cultic ordinances (those involving priests, the tabernacle, or sacrifices) seem to exist to give Israel a physical representation of holiness. Why is that important to people pursuing faith? How do you feel about the physical nature of your spirituality?
5. This section also includes the accounts of some of the sacrifices made by people for the tabernacle. What about that inspires you? Why do you think those things were recorded?
6. What does this whole section communicate about the seriousness of being in God's presence? What does that mean to us, when we say that God's presence is always with us in the Holy Spirit?



**February 14**  
(Readings Feb 7-Feb 13)

**7. To Canaan's Land—Almost  
Numbers 10-26**

**Note:**  
While this week's reading covered portions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, our study today focuses only on Numbers 10-14 (pages 168-174 in the *Daily Bible*).

**Key Point:**  
On the verge of entering Canaan, the Israelites become discouraged at the report of the spies. For their disbelief and rebellion, God decrees that they will wander in the wilderness 40 years.

**Key Verses:**  
"The Lord replied, 'I have forgiven them—but not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me 10 times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers'" (Numbers 14:20-23).

**Main People:**  
Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb

**Outline:**  
**The Failure of Israel En Route to Kadesh (Numbers 10-12)**

- Israel departs Mount Sinai (10)
- Israel complains, Moses complains (11:1-15)
- God provides for Moses and Israel (11:16-35)
- Miriam and Aaron rebel against Moses, and Miriam is punished (12)

**The Failure of Israel at Kadesh (Numbers 13-14)**

- Investigation of the Promised Land – 12 spies (13)
- Israel rebels against God, and Moses intercedes (14:1-19)
- God judges Israel and the faithless spies (14:20-38)
- Israel rebels against the judgment of God and is defeated by the Amalekites (14:39-45)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What is the attitude of the Israelites in Numbers 11:1-9?
2. Can you sympathize with Moses' frustration in Numbers 11:10-15?
3. When are you, like Israel and Moses, most likely to become discouraged with your position in life?
4. How do you think God feels when we complain about our lives and long for the "good old days"?
5. What do you think motivated Miriam and Aaron to oppose Moses in chapter 12?
6. Do you think the Israelites' fears were valid, based on the report of the spies (13:27-29)?
7. What enabled Joshua and Caleb to look by faith and not by sight?
8. Do you tend to see life's problems as insurmountable obstacles or manageable challenges? What helps you face your fears and "conquer the giants"?





**February 21**  
(Readings Feb 14-Feb 20)

## **8. A Holy Nation** **portions of Exodus and Deuteronomy**

**Focus:**

Our study today focuses on the religious and ceremonial laws of the Mosaic Law (DB pages 219-245).

**Key Point:**

This section teaches the holiness of God. He may be approached through feasts of national worship and offerings made by a priest.

**Key Verses:**

“Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD who makes you holy” (Lev 20:7-8).

**Outline:**

### **I. Religious and Ceremonial Laws**

- A. Laws against idolatry and paganism
- B. Laws against false spiritualists
- C. Laws regarding blasphemy
- D. Laws requiring dedications
- E. Laws requiring tithing
- F. Special instructions for conquest
- G. Special feasts
  - 1. Passover and Feast of the Unleavened Bread
  - 2. Feast of Weeks (Harvest or Firstfruits, later known as Pentecost)
  - 3. Feast of Trumpets ( known as Rosh Hashanah – New Year’s Day)
  - 4. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
  - 5. Feast of Tabernacles (Booth or Ingathering)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What purpose did each feast and offering serve? (use the above list for reference)
2. Since God is more concerned with the heart and inward devotion, why does He command the establishment of these external feasts and offerings?
3. What is the importance of the phrase “the life of the flesh is in the blood”?
4. Why do you think God required priests as mediators for the offerings?
5. What is the symbolic importance of these feasts and offerings regarding Christ?
6. Since we no longer live under the old law, what are the lessons for us from this section?

**February 28**

(Readings Feb 21-Feb 27)

**9. The Demands of Holy Living  
portions of Exodus and Deuteronomy**

Our study today focuses on the laws covered on pages 248-263 of the *Daily Bible*.

**Key Point:**

This section teaches the holy living expected by a holy God. The special benefits of being the “set apart” people of God also bring high demands.

**Key Verses:**

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy’” (Leviticus 19:1,2).

**Outline:**

**Religious and Ceremonial Laws (continued)**

- H. Sacrifices and Offerings
    1. Burnt offerings – for sins
    2. Cereal (grain) offerings – devotion
    3. Peace (fellowship) offerings – thanksgiving and fellowship
    4. Sin offerings – for unintentional sins
    5. Guilt offerings – atonement
  - I. Rules for priest
  - J. The sabbatical year (rest for land on seventh year)
  - K. Year of Jubilee (yearlong rest and redemption of 50th year)
  - L. Purification
    1. After childbirth
    2. For leprosy
    3. For discharges
    4. Concerning death
  - M. Persons excluded from the congregation
  - N. The Nazirite vow
  - O. Vows of dedication
  - P. Laws of separation
- II. Laws of Government**
- A. Concerning a king
  - B. Respect for rulers
  - C. The judicial system: courts, fairness, witnesses, punishment

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What does the Aaronic Benediction (DB page 248) say about what God wants for His people?
2. Why do you think there is such an emphasis on the priest's physical perfection and ceremonial cleanliness? How does this relate to God's holiness?
3. Since we are to be a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9, DB page 1633), how do the rules for the priesthood relate to us?
4. Why do you think God made the Year of Jubilee part of His law? In what ways do we have a jubilee?
5. In what ways do the laws of cleanliness relate to spiritual hygiene today?
6. What is the link between the holiness demanded by God and the judicial system?

**March 7**

(Readings Feb 28-Mar 6)

## **10. Holiness in Daily Life portions of Exodus and Deuteronomy**

### **Key Point:**

This section teaches the holy living expected by a holy God. The laws emphasize respect for life, property, individual dignity, one's parents, the poor, animals, and even trees. Laws regarding ceremonial and dietary cleanliness are also detailed.

### **Key Verse:**

"For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess" (Deut. 30:16, DB page 301).

### **Outline:**

#### **III. Laws of Special Crimes**

Crimes against the person

Crimes against property

#### **IV. Personal Rights and Remedies**

Restitution, injuries and damage, masters and servants, credit, contracts, weights and measures, inheritance, Levirate marriage

#### **V. Marriage, Divorce, and Sexual Relations**

Marriage, divorce, sexual violations (adultery), prostitution, incest, homosexuality

#### **VI. Health and Dietary Laws**

Leprosy, discharges, clean and unclean animals, blood, and fat

#### **VII. General Welfare Laws**

Duties toward the poor, parents, elderly, widows and orphans, strangers, deaf and blind, neighbors, animals

#### **VIII. Rules of Warfare**

#### **IX. Responsibilities Under the Laws**

Blessings of obedience, punishments for disobedience

### **Thought Questions:**

1. How is our criminal justice system different from that described in the Old Testament?
2. How important is the concept of restitution in the Mosaic Law?
3. What are some ways that the poor are protected under the old law?
4. Israel was theocracy (ruled by God), but we are a democracy (ruled by the people). Should Christians be politically involved to make our nation godlier, or should Christians stay out of the political realm? Explain your answer.
5. Why do you think the sexual sins—adultery, homosexuality, bestiality—were punished so severely?
6. How would you describe the basic principles of this law?
7. How do the laws regarding kind treatment toward the poor, elderly, etc., apply to us?



**March 14**  
(Readings Mar 7-Mar 13)

**11. Conquest of Canaan**  
**Deuteronomy 31 – Joshua 21**

**Key Point:**

This section reveals how God brought His chosen nation into the Promised Land. It records the triumph for faithful obedience to God.

**Key Verse:**

“So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there” (Joshua 21:43; DB page 338).

**Main People:**

Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Achan

**Outline:**

**Renewal of the Covenant (Deut. 28-34)**

Transfer of leadership to Joshua, Moses’ final words, Moses’ death and burial

**Preparation for Conquest (Joshua 1-5)**

Joshua replaces Moses, the faith of Rahab, crossing the Jordan River

**The Taking of Jericho and Ai (Joshua 6-8)**

Jericho’s walls fall, Ai defeats Israel, the sin of Achan, Israel ambushes Ai

**General Conquest of Canaan (Joshua 9-12)**

Southern and Northern Canaan are taken

**Division of the Promised Land (Joshua 13-21)**

Settlement of the tribes east and west of the Jordan, settlement of the religious community

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Was Rahab spared because of her lie or in spite of her lie? Is it ever right to lie?
2. What is the significance of Joshua calling on the people to consecrate themselves?
3. Why did Joshua set up the monument at Gilgal (Joshua 4:19-24,DB page 316)? What is the lesson for us?
4. Why did God command the complete extermination of the Canaanites? How can such apparent brutality be justified?
5. What was the significance of the fall of Jericho?
6. Why was Achan's family killed along with Achan? Did they participate in his sin?
7. What lessons did the conquest teach future generations of Israelites? Are those lessons for us as well?



**March 21**  
(Readings Mar 14-Mar 20)

**12. Apostasy and the Judges**  
**Joshua 22 – Judges 12**

**Key Point:**

The book of Judges shows how the people repeatedly disobeyed God and how God raised up leaders to call them back to faithfulness and continue the conquest of the land.

**Key Verses:**

“Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers” (Judges 2:18-19; DB page 347).

**Main People:**

Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah

**Outline:**

**Joshua’s Farewell Addresses (Joshua 22-24)**

**The Failure of Israel to Complete the Conquest (Judges 1-2)**

**The Deliverance of Israel during the Seven Cycles (Judges 3-16)**

The Southern Campaign – Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar (3)

The Northern Campaign – Deborah, and Barak (4-5)

The Central Campaign – Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jari (6:1-10:5)

*(The following two are in next week’s readings)*

The Eastern Campaign – Jephthah (10:6-12:7)

The Second Northern Campaign – Ibzan, Elon, Abdon (12:8-15)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What was the main lesson for Israel from these chapters? How does that apply to us?
2. Why do you think the Israelites failed to completely drive out the Canaanites?
3. Looking at the illustration, do you see any similarities between your struggles and those of the nation of Israel?
4. Based on what the judges did, what might be a better title for them (other than judge)?
5. What does the leadership of Deborah say about the role of women in Israel?
6. Should we make decisions like Gideon by “putting out the fleece”? Explain your answer.

**March 28**  
(Readings Mar 21-Mar 27)

**13. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**  
**Ruth, Judges 13-21, 1 Samuel 1-12**

**Key Point:**

These chapters show the stark contrast between integrity and depravity—those who remained faithful to God and those who turned their backs on Him.

**Key Verse:**

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

**Main People:**

Ruth, Samson, Delilah, Micah, Hannah, Samuel, Eli, Saul

**Outline:**

**The Story of Ruth’s Love (Ruth 1-4)**

**The Judge Samson (Judges 13-16)**

**The Failure of Israel through Idolatry, Immorality, and War (Judges 17-21)**

The idolatry of Micah and the Danites (17-18)

A Levite and his concubine (19)

Civil war with Benjamin (20-21)

**Hannah and Her Son (1 Samuel 1-2)**

**The Fall of Eli; the Rise of Samuel (1 Samuel 2-7)**

**Thought Questions:**

1. How does the story of Ruth compare and contrast with the book of Judges?
2. What spiritual lesson can be found in the story of Samson and Delilah?
3. Judges 19, the story of the Levite and his concubine, has been called the "Sewer of Scripture." Do you agree? What would have cleaned it up?
4. What lessons for today can we draw from the story of Hannah?
5. Was Eli responsible for his sons' failings? Are parents to blame when their grown child turns away from God?
6. God spoke to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. How do you hear God's voice today? What could make you a better listener?

**April 4**

(Reading Mar 28- Apr 3)

**14. David's Rise to Power**  
**Portions of 1 Samuel and Psalms**

**Key Point:**

Saul is rejected as king by God because of his sin and his failure to learn that "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). God establishes the dynasty of David because of David's obedience and dependence on God.

**Key Verse:**

"But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command" (1 Sam. 13:14; DB page 400).

**Main People:**

Saul, Samuel, Jonathan, David, Goliath, Michal, Abigail

**Outline:**

**The Reign of Saul (1 Sam. 13-15)**

Saul's early successes, followed by his failure to obey God

**David's Rise to Power (1 Sam. 16-31)**

David is chosen by God and anointed by Samuel (16)

David defeats Goliath, enters Saul's service, and is befriended by Jonathan (17,18)

Saul attempts to kill David (18-20)

David rises in exile and builds an army (21-27)

The final decline of Saul (28-31)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What were the specific weaknesses of Saul that made him an unsuitable ruler?
2. David was chosen because of his heart, not because of external qualities. Is it ever possible for us to know someone's heart? If so, how?
3. How does our concept of God affect the way we face our "giants" (challenges) in everyday life?
4. What do you think brought Jonathan and David together as friends?
5. What do the psalms in this section teach you about David's relationship with God?
6. What does the incident of David sparing Saul's life (1 Sam. 24, DB page 423) say about David?
7. In your opinion, why is David called "a man after God's heart"?



**April 11**  
(Readings Apr 4-Apr 10)

## **15. David: Triumph and Tragedy**

### **Key Point:**

Saul is rejected as king by God because of his sin and his failure to learn that “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). God establishes the dynasty of David because of David’s obedience and dependence on God.

### **Key Verse:**

“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (God speaking to David through Nathan, 2 Sam. 7:16; DB page 450).

### **Main People:**

David, Ish-bosheth, Abner, Joab, Michal, Mephibosheth, Nathan, Bathsheba, Uriah

### **Outline:**

#### **The Deaths of Saul and Jonathan**

David mourns the loss

#### **The Triumphs of David**

David made king of Judah

Ish-bosheth abandoned, David becomes king of Israel

David captures Jerusalem

Paraders of the lost ark—the ark restored to prominence amid celebration

Mephibosheth given a place of honor

David wants to build a house for God; God promises to establish the house of David

David defeats the Philistines, Ammonites, and Amorites

#### **The Tragedy of David**

David commits adultery with Bathsheba and has Uriah killed

Nathan confronts David, David repents, the child of David and Bathsheba dies

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Why does David lament the death of Saul?
2. What characteristics did David possess that made him a good leader?
3. Why does Joab kill Abner? (2 Sam. 3:22-27; p. 437)
4. Why does David desire to move the ark? (1 Chron. 13:1-8, DB page 440)
5. How do you react to David's leaping and dancing before the ark? Was Michal's response justified? (1 Chron. 15, DB page 445)
6. In what ways are we like Mephiboseth when we stand before the throne of God?
7. What can you learn from the way David reacted to Nathan's confrontation? (DB page 455)
8. In what ways did David pay for his sin with Bathsheba? (2 Sam. 12, DB pages 455-456)



**April 18**

(Reading Apr 11-Apr 18)

## **16. David: Trouble in the Kingdom**

### **Key Point:**

As a result of David's sin in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, he continues to suffer serious trouble. Despite his weaknesses, David is still held up as a role model for righteousness.

### **Key Verses:**

"O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head" (from Psalm 3, a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, DB page 467).

### **Main People:**

David, Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Joab, Shimei, Sheba, Gad, Solomon

### **Outline:**

#### **Absalom's Rebellion**

Amnon rapes Tamar, Absalom kills Amnon, Joab brings Absalom back  
Absalom rebels, David goes into exile, Shimei curses David, Hushai advises Absalom  
David's warriors defeat Absalom, Absalom is killed, David mourns and regains throne, Sheba rebels and is killed

#### **Two Major Calamities**

Seven descendants of Saul killed to avenge Gibeonites and end famine  
David counts soldiers and Israel is punished

#### **Preparations for Building the Temple**

David gathers materials and assigns Levitical roles  
David instructs Solomon

### **Thought Questions:**

1. In your view, is David an example of a good father? What should he have done differently in his dealings with Amnon and Absalom?
2. How would you describe Absalom's driving motivations?
3. What can you learn from David's reaction to Shimei? (2 Sam. 16:5-14, DB page 466)
4. Based on the famines and plagues sent by God in David's time, is it appropriate to see God's judgment in natural disasters today?
5. Why was David's census of the soldiers a sin?
6. David says, "I will not sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing" (1 Chron. 21:24, DB page 478). How does that relate to our giving today?
7. What key pieces of advice does David share with Solomon? (1 Chron. 28; DB pages 488-489)



**April 25**  
(Reading Apr 19-Apr 24)

## **17. Psalms of the Troubled Soul**

### **Key Point:**

These psalms reflect the fears of one whose enemies surround him. They speak to anyone who feels persecuted, betrayed, or alone in a hostile world.

### **Key Verse:**

I lift up my eyes to the hills –  
    where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD  
    the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1, DB page 518)

### **Overview:**

#### **Hebrew Poetry**

The poetry of Psalms is based not on rhyme, but on various patterns of expressing thought. The basic unit of the psalms is the verse. Usually a pair of verses will express the same thought in different words. For example:

    I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor  
    and upholds the cause of the needy (Ps. 140:12)

#### **Basic Outline of the “Psalms of Lament”**

- A. A cry to God for help
- B. The lament
- C. A confession of trust in God
- D. The petition
- E. A declaration or vow of praise

#### **Purpose of Psalms**

Many of the psalms were put to music and used in the temple worship. Because of this, the Psalms have been called “the songbook of the Old Testament.” They are primarily designed to praise and worship God. The psalms still serve as an outstanding model of both individual and community worship.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. The “imprecatory psalms” call for a curse or divine judgment on the writer’s enemies. In your opinion, do these show a lack of compassion?
2. What emotions do you find in these psalms?
3. What qualities of God are described in these psalms?
4. It has been said that while most of the Bible is God speaking to humans, the psalms are humans speaking to God. How do you react to that?
5. Which emotions do you usually bring to worship?
6. How might these psalms be used in our personal and congregational worship today?

**May 2**

(Reading Apr 25-May 1)

## **18. Psalms of Righteousness and Praise**

### **Key Point:**

The first 17 psalms in this section extol righteousness and condemn wickedness. The next 24 psalms are filled with joy and praise for God and his creation.

### **Key Verse:**

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness;

come before him with joyful songs. (Psalm 100:1, DB page 550)

### **Facts about the Psalms:**

- The inscriptions or titles above many of the psalms were added after they were written; some indicate authorship, although the words “of” and “for” are the same in Hebrew (ie, a psalm “of David” may be a psalm dedicated “for David”).
- David is thought to be the author of at least 73 of the psalms.
- The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119, the shortest chapter is Psalm 117, and the middle verse of the Bible is Psalm 118:8.
- The term *selah* occurs 71 times, and its meaning is unknown; it may be a musical instruction to the worshippers indicating a pause, musical interlude, or a crescendo
- The 10 major types of psalms are as follows:
  1. Individual lament, predominant type, examples in 3-7, 25-28, 38-40, 54-57
  2. Communal lament, lament on behalf of nation, examples in 44, 60, 74, 79-80
  3. Individual thanksgiving, examples in 18, 30, 32, 66, 106
  4. Communal thanksgiving, found in 124, 129
  5. General praise, *hallelujah* (praise the Lord) occurs often, examples in 8, 19, 103, 148
  6. Descriptive praise, praise for God’s acts and attributes, examples in 33, 36, 105, 146
  7. Enthronement psalms, describe God’s sovereign rule, found in 47, 93, 96-99
  8. Pilgrimage songs, sung by pilgrims en route to Jerusalem, examples in 43, 76, 120-134
  9. Royal psalms, the reigns of the earthly king and heavenly king, examples in 2, 18, 21, 89
  10. Wisdom and instruction, found in 1, 37, 119
- Many of the psalms are messianic (refer to coming of the messiah), such as 2, 19, 22, 110.
- There are more references to Psalms in the New Testament than to any other book.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Read Psalm 36 (DB page 522) and answer these questions:
  - From the first few verses, what qualities characterize the wicked?
  - What difference do you see between the thoughts of the wicked and the righteous?
  - Why does David move from talking about the wicked to a description of God's character?
  
2. Read Psalm 84 (DB page 532); what makes worship either exciting or dull for you?
  
3. Read Psalm 8 (DB page 536); what does this psalm say about humans and God?
  
4. Read Psalm 19 (DB page 538); what does this say about God and his word?
  
5. How can you become more praise-oriented in your everyday life?

**May 9**  
(Reading May 2-May 8)

**19. Christ in the Psalms**

**Key Point:**

The psalms continue in expressions from the heart in praise and thanksgiving to God. We will look also at the “messianic psalms” that refer to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

**Key Verse:**

Praise the LORD, O my soul.

I will praise the LORD all my life.

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Psalm 146:2, DB page 580)

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Fulfillment</b>
2:7	God will declare Him to be His son.	Matthew 3:17
3:6	All things will be put under His feet.	Hebrews 2:8
16:10	He will be resurrected from the dead.	Mark 16:6-7
22:1	God will forsake Him in His hour of need.	Matthew 27:46
22: 7-8	He will be scorned and mocked.	Luke 23:35
22: 16	His hands and feet will be pierced.	John 20: 25, 27
22: 18	Others will gamble for His clothes.	Matthew 27: 35-36
34: 20	Not one of His bones will be broken.	John 19: 32-33, 36
35: 11	He will be accused by false witnesses.	Mark 14:57
35: 19	He will be hated without a cause.	John 15:25
40: 7-8	He will come to do God’s will.	Hebrews 10: 7
41: 9	He will be betrayed by a friend.	Luke 22: 47
45: 6	His throne will be forever.	Hebrews 1:8
68: 18	He will ascend to God’s right hand.	Mark 16: 19
69: 9	Zeal for God’s house will consume him.	John 2: 17
69: 21	He will be given vinegar and gall to drink.	Matthew 27: 34
109: 4	He will pray for his enemies.	Luke 23: 34
109: 8	His betrayer’s office will be fulfilled by another.	Acts 1: 20 Matthew 22: 44
110: 1	His enemies will be made subject to him.	Hebrews 5: 6
110: 4	He will be a priest like Melchizedek.	Matthew 21: 42
118: 22	He will be the chief cornerstone.	Matthew 21: 9
118: 26	He will come in the name of the Lord.	

**Thought Questions:**

1. Psalm 119 (DB page 554) is an acrostic—the verses of each stanza begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Use Psalm 119 to make an acrostic of the benefits of God’s word.

2. Why does Psalm 136 (DB page 564) repeat the same phrase over and over?
  
3. Read Psalm 139 (DB page 566). How does David feel about God's total knowledge of him?
  
4. How do you see the Messiah predicted in Psalms?

**May 16**  
(Reading May 9-May 15)

**20. The Reign of Solomon**  
**Portions of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles**

**Key Point:**

Solomon succeeds his father, David, as king and proceeds to consolidate his power, build the temple, and rule with God's gift of wisdom.

**Key Verses:**

"I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for – both riches and honor – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life" (God speaking to Solomon in a dream; 1 Kings 3:12-13, DB page 595).

**Main People:**

Solomon, David, Bathsheba, Adonijah, Queen of Sheba

**Outline:**

**Solomon Becomes King**  
**Solomon Secures His Kingship**  
**Solomon Blessed with Wisdom**  
**Building of the Temple**  
**Dedication of the Temple**  
**Construction of Cities and Royal Palace**  
**Extent of Solomon's Glory**

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What steps does Solomon take to solidify his power?
2. Why did Solomon ask for wisdom above all else?
3. How have you gained wisdom? From experience? The Bible? Your parents? From God?
4. Why did Solomon get involved in a dispute between two prostitutes? (1 Kings 3, DB page 595)
5. Does the temple say anything about the character of God? If so, what?
6. Are church buildings as important today as the temple was in Solomon's time? Where is God's temple today?
7. Solomon prays as the temple is dedicated (2 Chron. 6:14-21, DB pages 603-604). What does his prayer reveal about where God dwells?
8. What surprises you, if anything, about the Queen of Sheba's visit? (1 Kings 10, DB page 611)



**May 23**  
(Reading May 16-May 22)

## **21. The Way of Wisdom** **Proverbs**

### **Key Point:**

Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings from several sources, including Solomon, laying practical rules for right living based on reverence for God instead of mere human wisdom.

### **Key Verse:**

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10, DB page 620).

### **Main People:**

Solomon, David, Bathsheba, Adonijah, Queen of Sheba

### **Outline:**

The book of Proverbs states general principles that apply to all persons and all times. However, all principles have exceptions. For instance, Prov. 22:6 says, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it,” yet there were and are exceptions to this. Proverbs contains principles, not promises.

The advice contained in Proverbs includes the following:

- Obey your parents and respect your elders
- Avoid bad company
- Seek wisdom
- Be kind to others
- Do not commit adultery; love your wife
- Do not be lazy; work hard
- Be honest in what you say and how you treat others
- Watch your tongue; avoid gossip and nagging
- Give to the poor
- Don't be proud or arrogant

### **Thought Questions:**

1. How is wisdom different from knowledge or intelligence?
2. Describe the wisest person you know. How can we develop more wisdom?
3. From the list above, what advice in Proverbs is the most personally challenging?
4. What does "fear the Lord" mean? How does that lead to wisdom?
5. Read through the proverbs on "speech" on DB pages 641 and 642. How do these relate to our proverb "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"?
6. Read the proverbs on "benevolence and generosity" on DB page 648. How does this advice compare to most people's attitudes about giving and the poor?

**May 30**  
(Reading May 23-May 29)

## **22. Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes**

### **Key Point:**

The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) is a love song written by Solomon that depicts his wooing and wedding of a shepherdess. Ecclesiastes portrays Solomon's search for meaning in life and his conclusion that all is meaningless (vanity) apart from God.

### **Key Verses:**

"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned" (Song of Solomon 8:7, DB page 670).

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13, DB page 689).

### **Interpretations of Song of Solomon:**

This book is arranged like scenes in a drama with three main speakers: the bride (a Shulamite woman), the king (Solomon), and a chorus (daughters of Jerusalem). There are three main interpretations of this book:

1. *Fictional* – Some view it as a fictional drama, but the book seems to indicate actual events.
2. *Allegorical* – In this view, the book's primary purpose is to illustrate God's love for his people; the story may or may not be fictional. This approach can be highly subjective.
3. *Historical* – The Song of Solomon is a poetic record of a true love story. It powerfully affirms God's gift of sexuality and romance within marriage.

### **Outline of Ecclesiastes:**

**Failure of the World (knowledge, work, pleasure, money) to Satisfy Our Longings (1-4)**

**Value of Wisdom and Reverence in the Midst of Meaninglessness (5-10)**

**The Conclusion of the Matter (11, 12)**

**Thought Questions:**

1. Which interpretation of Song of Solomon do you think is accurate? Why?
2. Why do you think we have this book in the Bible?
3. What are some ways we can apply this book today?
4. What are some modern examples of the meaningless search for happiness described in Ecclesiastes through money, worldly pleasure, education, power, achievement, drugs?
5. Are there statements in Ecclesiastes that seem to contradict other Scriptures? If so, how do you explain them?
6. How might you use this book in dealing or studying with non-Christians?

**June 6**

(Reading May 30-June 5)

## **23. The Kingdom Divides**

### **Key Point:**

Because of Solomon's unfaithfulness to God, the kingdom divides during the reign of his son, Rehoboam. Years later, we see the contrast between a great prophet of God, Elijah, and two of the most evil people in the Bible, Ahab and Jezebel.

### **Key Verses:**

He (Elijah) replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came... I reserve 7000 in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:14-18, DB page 709).

### **Main People:**

Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Elijah, Elisha, Ahab, Jezebel

### **Outline:**

#### **Division between Israel and Judah**

Rehoboam places burdens on the people

Kingdom splits into North (Israel) under Jeroboam and South (Judah) under Rehoboam

Jeroboam makes golden calves and altars at Bethel and Dan; Prophecy against Jeroboam

#### **Two Kingdoms in Contrast**

Judah blessed by the rule of Asa and Jehoshaphat

Israel continues to decline under seven wicked kings

#### **Elijah the Prophet**

Elijah ministers to a widow and raises her son from the dead

Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel

#### **Ahab and Jezebel**

God works through Ahab to defeat Syria

Ahab and Jezebel murder Naboth to gain his vineyard

**Thought Questions:**

1. Why does Rehoboam favor the young men's advice?
2. Why does Judah remain faithful to Rehoboam?
3. What are the most striking lessons from the life of Elijah?
4. Why do you think Elijah taunted the prophets of Baal at Carmel?
5. How do you explain Elijah's deep discouragement in 1 Kings 19:1-5 (DB page 708)
6. What helps you recover from a spiritual letdown?
7. What was God saying through the wind, earthquake, fire, and whisper?
8. What does the story of Naboth say about the character of Ahab and Jezebel?



**June 13**

(Reading June 6-June 12)

## **24. Prophets and Kings**

### **Key Point:**

The divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah continue their political and moral decline despite the work of God's prophets Elisha and Obadiah.

### **Key Verse:**

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. (Joel 2:13, DB page 745)

### **Main People:**

Elisha, Obadiah, Naaman, Gehazi, Jehu, Joash

### **Outline:**

#### **Elisha the Prophet**

Elijah taken up; Elisha receives spirit

Elisha purifies water; takes care of jeering youths; heals the Shunammite's son

#### **Miracles and Massacres**

North and South (Joram and Jehoshaphat) join forces to defeat Moabites

Letter from Elijah; Syrians see the light; Naaman healed of leprosy; Gehazi's sin

Second siege of Samaria and the fortunate lepers

Reign of Jehu in Israel

Joash crowned in Judah

#### **Obadiah's Prophecy Against Edom**

In this book of uncertain date, the prophet Obadiah predicts the demise of Edom

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What does Elisha mean by asking for a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit? Why does Elijah say it’s a “difficult thing”?
2. What is the lesson for us from the youths who jeered Elisha for being bald and then were mauled by bears?
3. What was the purpose of all the miracles performed by Elisha?
4. What do you find intriguing about Naaman’s story (2 Kings 5, DB page 731)?
5. How can you learn from what happened to Gehazi (2 Kings 5, DB page 732)?
6. What’s the point of the trampled gate officer (2 Kings 7, DB pages 733-734)?

**June 20**

(Reading June 13-June 19)

## **25. Joel, Jonah, and Hosea**

### **Key Point:**

God works through his prophets Jonah and Hosea to warn the Ninevites and Israelites that they face severe punishment for their unfaithfulness. At the same time, both prophets speak a message of hope for those who repent and turn to God.

### **Key Verse:**

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened (Jonah 3:10, DB page 757).

### **Main People:**

Joash, Jehoiada, Amaziah, Jonah, Hosea, Gomer

### **Outline:**

#### **The Prophecy of Joel**

The prophet Joel warns Judah to repent and predicts that God's spirit will be poured out

#### **The Era of Joash and Amaziah**

Joash and Jehoiada repair the temple

Joash accepts paganism after Jehoiada's death; Zechariah is murdered

Elisha predicts Israel's victory against the Syrians; surprise in Elisha's tomb

Judah defeats Edom; Israel defeats Judah

#### **The Preaching of Jonah Against Nineveh**

The disobedient prophet: Jonah tries to run away (1)

The disciplined prophet: Jonah prays to God (2)

The dynamic prophet: Jonah preaches to the people in Nineveh (3)

The disappointed prophet: Jonah learns that God loves all people (4)

#### **The Prophecies of Hosea**

The adulterous wife and faithful husband (1-3)

The message of judgment against adulterous Israel (4-10)

The message of God's love and restoration of Israel (11-14)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Was Joel's prophecy (2:28-32, DB pages 746, 747) fulfilled completely on Pentecost in Acts 2?
2. Joash owed his throne and his very life to the priest Jehoiada. How could he murder Jehoiada's son, Zechariah?
3. Why was Jonah disappointed and angry when the Ninevites were converted?
4. For your life, what is the main lesson from the book of Jonah?
5. Do you ever let the little things (the vine) outweigh the big things (lost souls)?
6. What is the significance of the names of Hosea and Gomer's children?
7. Have you ever treated God as Gomer treated Hosea?
8. What picture of God do you get from the book of Hosea?



**June 27**

(Reading June 20-June 26)

## **26. Amos, Isaiah 1-6, and Micah**

### **Key Point:**

Amos, Isaiah, and Micah warn Israel and Judah, as well as the surrounding nations, of God's coming judgment. They also give the people God's promise of a restored kingdom of David.

### **Key Verses:**

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies... But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:21, 24, DB page 784).

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword" (Isaiah 1:18-20, DB pages 799,800).

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, DB page 811).

### **Outline:**

#### **The Prophecies of Amos**

In the days of Uzziah and Jeroboam, God calls a shepherd from Judah to prophecy against the northern kingdom, Israel. This is a time of great prosperity, selfishness, greed, and immorality. He attacks their empty religious worship and calls for justice and mercy.

#### **The Early Prophecies of Isaiah**

During the reign of Uzziah, perhaps the greatest evangelistic prophet ever known begins his 40-year ministry to the people of Judah. He tells the people of God's judgment against religious formalism, idolatry, oppression, immorality, and pride. He warns about the coming "day of the Lord" and looks forward to the coming of the Messiah.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What are the marks of injustice in society identified by Amos? (There are at least 5.)
2. To what extent does our society's morality resemble that of Judah and Israel?
3. Isaiah is quoted 50 times in the New Testament. Why do you think that is so?
4. What does the call of Isaiah (DB page 802) tell you about God? What does it say about Isaiah?
5. What are the implications of Isaiah's mission for you today?

**July 4**

(Reading June 27-July 3)

## **27. Isaiah's Judgments**

### **Key Point:**

Isaiah foresees the coming of the Messiah, but not before the defeat and destruction of the immoral and idolatrous people in Judah and the surrounding nations. On a hopeful note, King Hezekiah cleanses the temple, restores proper worship, and reinstates the Passover.

### **Key Verse:**

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6, DB page 818).

### **Outline:**

#### **The Prophecies of Micah**

Micah preaches to Judah that God does not want empty worship from people who are morally and ethically bankrupt. Micah specifically prophesies the fall of Samaria, the fall of Jerusalem, the exile in Babylon, and the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.

#### **Isaiah Prophecies about a Savior (Isaiah 7-12)**

Isaiah predicts the fall of Syria and Israel and the eventual arrival of the Messiah.

#### **Isaiah Prophecies against Nations (Isaiah 13-23)**

Through Isaiah, God pronounces judgment against the wicked nations around Judah.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Who are the primary targets of Micah's condemnation?
2. Micah 6 and 7 describe a courtroom scene. Who is the accused? The prosecutor? The chief witnesses? Judge and jury? What is the verdict? Any chance for an appeal?
3. What does it mean to "act justly," "love mercy," and "walk humbly" (Micah 6:8, DB page 811)? Chapters 7-12 of Isaiah contain a mixture of events that were imminent and other events that were distant. Why do you think prophecies were given this way?
4. Identify the messianic passages in chapters 7-12.
5. What caused God to send judgment against Israel?
6. Why did God use Assyria to discipline Judah? Does God work that way today?
7. What was God's objective in punishing the nations around Israel?



**July 11**  
(Reading July 4-July 10)

**28. Israel Falls and Judah Declines**  
**Isaiah**

**Key Point:**

Despite prophetic warnings, Israel still rejects God and is taken captive by Assyria. Isaiah continues to warn God's people to return to him. Judah experiences spiritual renewal under the leadership of Hezekiah.

**Key Verses:**

See, a king will reign in righteousness  
And rulers will rule with justice.  
Each man will be like a shelter from the wind  
And a refuge from the storm,  
like streams of water in the desert  
and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. (Isaiah 32:1,2; DB page 848)

**Outline:**

**The Reforms of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29-31)**

Hezekiah reforms and revitalizes worship and faith in Judah.

**Isaiah Tells of "Last Days"**

Isaiah describes the exciting time when the wicked will be punished and the righteous blessed forever.

**Isaiah Warns Against Relapse**

Isaiah continues to warn the people against their sinful ways. He tells Judah of Jerusalem's fall, captivity, and restoration and the punishment of their oppressors.

**The Fall of Israel**

After an attempted alliance with Egypt, Samaria and Israel collapse, and many are taken to Assyria. Foreigners are brought to live in Samaria, and a mixed religion results.

**Isaiah Warns About Egypt and Ethiopia**

Isaiah urges Judah to rely on God's power, not on alliances with Egypt and Ethiopia.

**Last Years of Hezekiah's Reign**

Hezekiah's prayer for longer life is answered favorably. Sennacherib of Assyria fails to capture Jerusalem.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What are the key lessons from Hezekiah's reforms?
2. What is the reason for God's condemnation of the nations?
3. Read aloud Isaiah 25 (DB page 845). What great time is predicted in this passage?
4. How do the prophecies of Isaiah relate to you today?
5. Why do you think God answered Hezekiah's prayer for healing?
6. What makes prayer more effective: perseverance? Intense emotion? Irrefutable logic? Righteous living? Something else?
7. What surprises you, if anything, about the incident regarding envoys from Babylon (Isaiah 39:8, DB page 872)?



**July 18**

(Reading July 11-July 17)

**29. Isaiah Offers Hope for the Future**

**2 Kings 21, Isaiah 40-53**

**Key Point:**

Isaiah proclaims that God will redeem his people from their exile, after they have been punished for their sin. His hopeful words are paired with judgment for those who worship idols.

**Key Verses:**

Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. This week's readings open with an account of how Judah's spiritual decline occurred under Manasseh. What does that account teach us about the responsibility of leadership? What does it teach us about the responsibilities of followers?
2. How does Isaiah address the guilt of God's people in these chapters? What does Isaiah have to say about idolatry? How do idols compare with the Lord?
3. Reading these verses in Isaiah, what are some of the big problems Isaiah is working to counteract?
4. What metaphors here speak to you? What imagery does Isaiah use that communicates God's heart to you?
5. The tone of these passages alternates between tender and victorious. Which tone do you need to hear from the Lord in your life right now?
6. Isaiah often paints pictures of abundance. Where do you experience abundance in your life? Is this from God?
7. These passages also give a picture of our needs before God, and the messianic ones show how the messiah will meet those needs. Where are you experiencing need in your life right now?



**July 25**

(Reading July 18-July 24)

### **30. More hope from Isaiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah**

**Key Point:**

Isaiah's prophecies of hope continue, as do his explanations for why Israel experienced the calamities of exile in the first place. Two new prophetic voices emerge, Nahum and Zephaniah. Nahum proclaims the fall of Nineveh (the Assyrians), while Zephaniah's poetry proclaims the day when God will execute his judgment against all his enemies.

**Key Verses:**

The Lord is good,

    a refuge in times of trouble.

He cares for those who trust in Him,

    but with an overwhelming flood

He will make an end of Nineveh,

    He will pursue his foes into darkness. (Nahum 1:7-8)

### Thought Questions:

1. Parts of these readings in Isaiah sound quite universal, but parts sound quite exclusive. How do you explain the difference?
2. What is the “fast” that the Lord wants, as opposed to the meaningless one that Isaiah critiques?
3. What does this section say about the glory of God? What is God doing for his glory?
4. Isaiah speaks here about how God will make everything new. What needs to be made new in your own heart or in the world around you?
5. Nahum seems to be a deeply just book. Does it encourage you to know that God deals with and corrects injustice in the world? Does it scare you?
6. Zephaniah is a remarkable short book, both fierce and joyous. It provides an anticipation of ultimate salvation and the joy that accompanies it. What are you anticipating from God? How invested are you in that anticipation?
7. What is the “Day of the Lord”? Sometimes it sounds fearful and at other times wonderful. Which tone do you hear in Isaiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah?



## **August 1**

(Reading July 25-July 31)

### **31. Jeremiah Takes his Stand**

#### **Key Point:**

Judah's unfaithfulness has brought them to the brink of calamity, even if they don't know it. Judah's decision to pursue and trust everything but the Lord is about to result in serious pain.

#### **Key Verse:**

My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me,

the spring of living water,

and have dug their own cisterns,

broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

(Jeremiah 2:13)

### Thought Questions:

1. Jeremiah rebukes Judah for putting their trust in a lot of other things besides the Lord. What sorts of things does Judah depend on? What sorts of things do we depend on?

2. It's easy to shake our heads at Judah's unfaithfulness, but in reality, is our society any better? Are we ourselves any better?

3. What does Jeremiah express about the heart of God in these passages? What does it seem like God is *feeling*? Which of those feelings have you ever shared with God?

4. What about Jeremiah the prophet? What is his role in the story, not just as mouthpiece but as a person? What is Jeremiah feeling? How can you identify with him, or what keeps you from identifying with him?

5. What is the cry of the righteous in these passages? Is their plea answered?

6. Why is God so determined to fulfill his plan of destruction and discipline? What is at stake for God and his people? Does it seem like God is being stubborn?



**August 8**

(Reading Aug 1-Aug 7)

### **32. Jeremiah Meets Resistance**

**Key Point:**

Judah continues her descent toward captivity, despite the reign of righteous Josiah. Jeremiah is arrested for warning of the coming judgment. God answers Habakkuk's question, "How can God permit an unrighteous nation to punish His own people?"

**Key Verse:**

LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.  
Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy (Hab. 3:2, DB page 998).

**Main People:**

Jeremiah, Josiah, Habakkuk, Jehoiakim, Baruch

**Outline:**

**The Effect of Jeremiah's Preaching: Josiah's Reforms**

**The Fall of Assyria and Rise of Babylonia**

**Jeremiah Faces Charges**

**Jeremiah's Judgment Against Egypt**

**Habakkuk's Questioning Prophecy**

**First Deportation from Judah**

**Jeremiah Tells Length of Captivity**

**Jehoiakim Burns Jeremiah's Scroll**

### Thought Questions:

1. How old was Josiah when
  - A. He became king? (DB page 934)
  - B. He began to seek the Lord? (DB page 941)
  - C. He undertook his reforms? (DB pages 941, 983)
  
2. Why is the reaction to the discovery of the law so intense?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What role does the prophetess Huldah play?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Is God as concerned now as he was then in the ruling government? As Christians and Americans, how should we be involved in politics and government?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does “the righteous shall live by faith” mean? (Hab. 2:4, DB page 996)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is the big question that Habakkuk is asking? What is God’s answer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Jehoiakim has no problem burning Jeremiah’s scroll. In what ways do people today honor or dishonor God’s written word?



**August 15**

(Reading Aug 8-Aug 14)

### **33. The Exile Begins**

**Key Point:**

The great deportation of Judah into Babylonia begins. During the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah unleashes a blistering attack against the false prophets who refuse to believe that Judah's punishment will be severe.

**Key Verse:**

This is what the LORD says: "When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place" (Jer. 29:10, DB page 1021).

**Main People:**

Jeremiah, Jehioakim, Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (Mattaniah), Hananiah

**Outline:**

**Daniel's Faithfulness, Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

**Jehoiakim's Last Years**

During these years of conflict, Jeremiah brings judgment against Judah's neighbors.

**The Great Deportation (597 B.C.)**

Nebuchadnezzar captures Judah's royal family and thousands of leading citizens.

**Reign of Zedekiah**

For 11 years, the puppet king Zedekiah rules over the final collapse of Judah.

**Jeremiah's Prophecies Under Zedekiah**

Jeremiah writes to the exiles that their captivity will last 70 years; he brings judgment against Babylonia.

### Thought Questions:

1. What is the significance of Jeremiah's prophecies against Judah's neighbors?
2. Why do you think Babylon deports the middle and upper classes (DB page 1019)?
3. Jeremiah advises the people to "settle down" in Babylon (Jer. 29, DB page 1021). How "at home" should Christians be in this world?
4. Read Jer. 28:1-17 (DB page 1023-24). When are you tempted to say something nice instead of the painful truth?
5. Jeremiah 50 and 51 (DB pages 1026-36) predict God's retribution against Babylon. For what sins will Babylon drink the "cup of wrath"?
6. What effect will Babylon's fall have on the Babylonians? The other nations? The Jews?
7. Why do you think the word "Babylon" later becomes a symbol of worldliness?
8. What feelings do you think these prophecies instilled in the Jewish captives?



## August 22

(Reading Aug 15- Aug 21)

### 34. Signs and Visions from Ezekiel

#### Key Point:

Among those taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. was Ezekiel, a member of the priestly aristocracy. As he speaks to the Jews in exile, Ezekiel emphasizes the glory of God and the judgment against Judah for her idolatry, corruption, false prophets, and sins.

#### Key Verses:

Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! ...get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live! (Ezekiel 18:30-32, DB pages 1059-60)

#### Outline:

##### The Call of the Prophet (Ezk. 1-3)

Ezekiel sees a staggering vision of the glory of God and receives his commission.

##### Judgment Against Judah (Ezk. 4-24)

1. The nearness of God's judgment (4-7)
2. The need for Jerusalem's judgment (8-11)
3. The nature of God's judgment (12-24)

#### Object Lessons

##### Sign

1. The Brick
2. The Prophet's Posture
3. Famine
4. The Knife and the Razor
5. The House Mover
6. The Sharpened Sword
7. The Smelting Furnace
8. Ezekiel's Wife's Death

##### Teaching

- Jerusalem's siege and fall  
Discomforts of captivity  
Deprivations of captivity  
Utter destruction of the city  
Removal to another land  
Judgment imminent  
Judgment and purging  
Blessings forfeited

##### Passage

- 4:1-3  
4:4-8  
4:9-17  
5:1-17  
12:1-20  
21:1-23  
22:17-31  
24:15-27

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What about God stands out to you in the call of Ezekiel (chapters 1-3)?
2. What spiritual lessons can be learned from the life and ministry of Ezekiel?
3. Why do you think Ezekiel's object lessons (listed above) were necessary? Are there issues today that need to be dramatized to gain people's attention?
4. Read 2 Chron. 7:1-3 (DB page 606). In Ezekiel 10 (DB page 1047,48), we read that the glory of the Lord left the temple. What is "the glory of the Lord" and why did it leave?
5. Read Ezekiel 18:1-20 (DB pages 1058-59). What does this say about personal responsibility? What are some ways in which we sometimes try to avoid responsibility?
6. Read Ezekiel 18:21-32 (DB pages 1059-60). What does this teach about repentance?

**August 29**  
(Reading Aug 22-Aug 28)

### **35. Jerusalem Falls!**

**Key Point:**

Plagued by famine, drought, and pestilence from within and the Babylonian army from without, the City of David finally falls. Jeremiah does not gloat but laments the fall of Jerusalem. Meanwhile in Babylon, Ezekiel brings judgment against the surrounding nations.

**Key Verse:**

How deserted lies the city,  
    once so full of people!  
How like a widow is she,  
    who once was great among the nations!  
She who was queen among the provinces  
    has now become a slave (Lamen. 1:1, DB page 1103).

**Main People:**

Jeremiah, Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, Gedaliah

**Outline:**

**Jeremiah's Prophecies During Siege**

Jeremiah advises Zedekiah to surrender or be destroyed.

Jeremiah foretells the restoration of Israel to be accomplished by God.

**Jeremiah Sees Spiritual Restoration Under the Messiah**

God's prophet foresees the coming of the son of David to establish a new covenant.

**Ezekiel's Prophecies During Siege**

Ezekiel brings judgment against Judah's neighbors, especially Egypt, Tyre, and Sidon.

**Jeremiah Escapes Death**

Jeremiah is imprisoned, then thrown in a muddy well, only to be rescued by Zedekiah.

### Thought Questions:

1. What kind of king was Zedekiah?
2. How might leaving Jerusalem be an allegory for being a committed Christian?
3. Chapters 30-33 (DB pages 1074-85) have been called a "book of consolation." What is the reason for this message of restoration? To whom is it directed?
4. How would you explain the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant to a friend? (see Jer. 31:31-34, DB page 1085)
5. Why does God, through Ezekiel, warn Israel's neighbors of the coming judgment?
6. What were the chief sins of the people of Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt?
7. In what ways can you identify with Jeremiah's predicament (Jer. 37-38, DB pages 1097-99)?
8. How does the book of Lamentations deepen your understanding of God's character?



**September 5**  
(Reading Aug 29-Sep 4)

### **36. The Exiled Nation**

**Key Point:**

Jerusalem lies desolate and deserted. God's spokesmen, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, begin to focus their message on healing and restoration. Meanwhile, Daniel's three friends refuse to bow to an idol and are rescued from the fiery furnace.

**Key Verses:**

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold that you have set up."

*(the words of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – Daniel 3:17, 18, DB page 1135)*

**Outline:**

**Jeremiah's Lamentations**

This book, believed to have been written by Jeremiah, laments the fall of Jerusalem.

**A Remnant Flees to Egypt (Jeremiah 40-44)**

The final remnant in Judah disobeys God and escapes to Egypt.

**Ezekiel's Restoration Prophecies (Ezekiel 32-39)**

Ezekiel speaks words of comfort to a scattered and defeated people.

**Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3)**

Daniel's friends remain faithful to God and are rewarded.

### Thought Questions:

1. To this day, Jews commemorate the assassination of Gedaliah with a day of fasting. Why do you think this even was so significant?
2. Jeremiah's ministry ends with him in a foreign country surrounded by Hebrew idolaters. Would you judge his life's work a success? How do you measure success?
3. Read Ezk. 34 (DB pages 1122-23). Write a job description for today's shepherds (elders) based on the descriptions in this chapter. (What does it mean to "bind up the wounded"?)
4. Read Ezk. 37:1-14 (DB pages 1126-27). What is the application of the "valley of dry bones" vision for the church in 1997?
5. Ezekiel 38 and 39 predict a cataclysmic battle between good and evil. How would we interpret this?
6. Who or what was the fourth figure in the furnace in Daniel 3 (DB page 1135)?
7. Why were all the details about the temple in Ezekiel's vision never built?
8. Why was it so important for Israel to know that there would be another temple?



**September 12**  
(Reading Sep 5-Sep 11)

**37. Why the Righteous Suffer**  
**Ezekiel 40-Job 11**

**Key Point:**

The first scene of this dramatic historical poem opens with a conversation between God and Satan regarding the righteous man, Job. Satan removes Job's prosperity and children and inflicts personal suffering, but Job refuses to lose faith in God. While he never curses God, Job does pose a hard question to God: Why must the righteous suffer? Three of Job's friends argue that Job's suffering is a result of unacknowledged sin.

**Key Verses:**

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,  
and naked I will depart.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;  
may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21, DB page 1157).

**Outline:**

**Ezekiel's Great Temple Vision (Ezekiel 40-48)**

Ezekiel prophesies a new temple to be built in Israel.

**Job is Tested and Met by His Friends**

<b>Job's Friends:</b>	<b>Eliphaz</b>	<b>Bildad</b>	<b>Zophar</b>	<b>Elihu</b>
Character:	Theologian	Legalist	Dogmatist	Intellectual
Relies on:	Observation	Tradition	Assumption	Education
Personality:	Considerate	Debater	Rude, blunt	Perceptive
Voice of:	Philosophy	History	Orthodoxy	Logic
Argument:	If you sin, you suffer.	You must be sinning.	You are sinning.	God purifies and teaches.
Key Verses:	4:8; 5:17	8:8	20:5	37:23
Idea of God:	Righteous	Lawgiver	Merciless	Teacher

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Why did God allow Job to be tested by Satan?
2. If you were to lose everything in the next week, what would be your biggest question?
3. Why did Job's suffering continue after he passed Satan's test?
4. Many people today, like Job's friends, try to explain suffering as punishment. What other explanations for trouble might there be?
5. Where have you recently come up against pain or suffering that seemed to have no explanation?
6. How do you compare to Job's friends in the area of providing comfort to people who are suffering?
7. What do you think are God's purposes in allowing Satan to exercise certain powers? What are our weapons in defending against his attacks?



**September 19**

(Reading Sep 12-Sep 18)

**38. A Conversation About Suffering  
Job 12-42 and selected psalms**

**Key Point:**

Job poses a question: Why must the righteous suffer? The oversimplified solutions of Job's three friends are inadequate. Elihu's claim that God can use suffering to purify the righteous is closer to the mark. The conclusion at the whirlwind is that God is sovereign and worthy of worship *whatever* He chooses to do. Man cannot question God's wisdom, love, and power.

**Key Verses:**

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:

“Who is this that darkens my counsel  
with words without knowledge?

Brace yourself like a man;

I will question you,

and you shall answer me” (Job 38:1-3, DB page 1202).

**Outline:**

**The Book of Job**

The dilemma of Job (1-2)

The debates of Job and his friends (3-26)

The final defense of Job (27-31)

Elihu's solution (32-37)

God's challenge to Job (38:1-42:6)

The deliverance of Job and his friends (42:7-17)

**Psalms of a People in Exile (44, 74, 79, 80, 85, 89, 102, 106, 123, 137)**

The nation in exile expresses repentance and hope for deliverance.

**Thought Questions:**

1. How would you describe Job's attitude prior to chapter 38?
2. Do you agree with Elihu that God speaks to us through suffering?
3. To what extent is our suffering caused by God? By Satan? By other people? By our own sin? By just bad luck or coincidence?
4. Read chapter 38. What does God's response teach us about Him?
5. How do you react to the ending of the book (chapter 42, DB page 1208)?
6. Some non-Christians say they can't believe in a god who would cause or allow innocent people to suffer. How would you answer someone who said that to you?
7. What sentiments do the psalms on DB pages 1209-1221 express?



## **September 26**

(Reading Sep 18-Sep 25)

### **39. Daniel's Visions of Restoration**

#### **Key Point:**

Daniel's visions and dreams symbolize the sovereignty of God and His coming kingdom. Daniel himself is a stirring example of faith and courage even in his final years. Meanwhile, the return to Jerusalem begins and the foundation for the temple is laid, despite opposition.

#### **Key Verses:**

*(from Darius's decree, ordering his people to fear the God of Daniel)*

“He rescues and saves;

He performs signs and wonders  
in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel

from the power of the lions” (Daniel 6:27, DB page 1231).

#### **Outline:**

##### **Daniel's Apocalyptic visions**

The four beasts and the ram and goat (7-8)

The writing on the wall (5)

The 70 “sevens” (9)

Daniel in the lion's den (6)

Daniel's last vision (10-12)

##### **The Restoration Begins**

First return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1-3)

Opposition to temple's construction (Ezra 4-6)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What is one trait in Daniel's life that you would like to see mature in your own life?
2. What is the value of Daniel's visions for us today?
3. What sin brought on the writing on the wall and the destruction of Belshazzar?
4. In the "Vision of the 70 Sevens" what do the following mean: the seven sevens, the 62 sevens, the one seven, and the abomination that causes desolation (see Matt. 24:25)?
5. What saved Daniel from the lions?
6. Some see that last part of Daniel 11 and 12 as referring still to Antiochus. Others see it as referring to the end of time. How do you see it and why? Does it matter?

**October 3**

(Reading Sep 26-Oct 2)

#### **40. Haggai, Zechariah, and the Rebuilding of the Temple**

**Key Point:**

In order for their restoration to be complete, the people must give their attention to rebuilding the temple, the symbol of God's presence among them.

**Key Verses:**

"Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy." (Ezra 6:16)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What is the basic message of the book of Haggai? It is brief but historically significant. Haggai is a prophet that people actually listened to!
2. Zechariah's visions are strange and fantastic, but what is God trying to communicate to his people through these visions?
3. Restoration is sometimes hard work! How does Zechariah encourage the people? What is different now than in their recent memory?
4. While the temple is being rebuilt, there are some who complain about how things still aren't what they used to be. What is the destructive power of that complaint?
5. What tone do you hear in these psalms? Where should we be using that tone today? Are we as a community of faith, or is it missing?
6. Where do you see shades of the Messiah in these later prophecies? What is most meaningful to you in them?
7. Have you ever read Zechariah before? How does this often-ignored prophet strike you? Why do you think this prophet and the others like him are often undervalued or avoided? Is it possible to reclaim them?



## **October 10**

(Reading Oct 3-Oct 9)

### **41. Esther and Nehemiah**

Esther, Ezra, Malachi, Nehemiah

#### **Key Point:**

As the restoration of God's people to their promised land gathers momentum, God continues to work through His servants, among them Esther, Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah.

#### **Key Verses:**

"And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

"So we built the wall...for the people had a mind to work." (Nehemiah 4:6; KJV)

#### **Main People:**

Esther, Mordecai, Haman, Xerxes, Malachi, Ezra, Artaxerxes, Nehemiah

#### **Outline:**

##### **Esther**

A beautiful Jewish girl becomes queen of Persian and saves her people.

##### **The Prophecies of Malachi**

The last of the Old Testament prophets foresees the coming of the Messiah.

##### **Ezra and the Second Return**

Ezra, a great teacher of the law, leads a group of Jews to Israel with Artaxerxes' blessings.

Ezra and the leaders enforce the law's restrictions against marriages to foreign people.

##### **Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall**

Nehemiah succeeds in rebuilding Jerusalem's wall despite opposition and difficulties.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Looking at Esther 4:1 through 5:8, how would you define Esther's character?
2. Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions God. Can you see God at work in this story?
3. What is one encouraging thing in Esther's story that you can apply to your life?
4. Read Malachi 3:6-12 (DB page 1289). How do these verses apply to Christians today?
5. As the last Old Testament prophet, how did Malachi prepare the Israelites for Jesus?
6. Why is Ezra's reaction to the mixed marriages problem so drastic? What, if any, are the implications for us today?
7. What were the secrets of Nehemiah's successful leadership in rebuilding the wall?



**October 17**  
(Reading Oct 10-Oct 16)

## **42. Between the Testaments**

### **Key Point:**

As the Old Testament record comes to a close, Nehemiah has succeeded in rebuilding Jerusalem, but the spiritual renewal needed seems distant. Four hundred years will elapse until the coming of the promised Messiah. During this “intertestamental period,” the nation of Israel and the world must wait for that glorious day of promise.

### **Key Verses:**

“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10, DB page 1310).

### **Main People:**

Ezra, Nehemiah, Antiochus, Epiphanes, Judas Maccabeus, John Hyrcanus, Herod the Great

### **Outline:**

#### **Nehemiah’s Reforms**

Ezra reads the law and the people vow to follow it wholeheartedly. Nehemiah cleanses the temple and purifies the Levites and priests of foreign influence.

The wall is dedicated amid great celebration.

#### **Official Records of Israel**

This section compiles the genealogical records and historical footnotes of Israel.

#### **Historical Interlude**

A special insert in the Daily Bible describes the historical events between the testaments, as well as a brief overview of the Apocrypha.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. In the assembly of Nehemiah 9 (DB page 1311), what is the relationship between instruction from the work, confession of sin, and praise of God?
2. How does a Christian today show sincerity in confession of sin and repentance?
3. What is the significance of the written covenant described in Neh. 8:28-39 (DB page 1314)? As Christians, are there ever times we need to put our commitments (covenants) in writing?
4. What is the most important thing you learn from Nehemiah's religious reforms?
5. Pages 1318-1336 contain lists of names and other records. What possible significance could these lists have for Jews or for us today?
6. Why do you think there was a 400-year interlude between testaments?

**October 24**

(Reading Oct 17-Oct 23)

### **43. The Coming of Jesus!**

**Key Point:**

As the New Testament record now begins, the Scriptures proclaim the good news about salvation that comes through obedient faith in Jesus Christ. The birth of God in human flesh fulfills the promise of a messiah made to Abraham and the prophets.

**Key Verse:**

"...what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21, DB page 1359).

**Main People:**

Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Jesus, John the Baptist, Herod, Simon Peter, Nicodemus

**Outline:**

**The Birth of Jesus and John the Baptist**

The births are foretold by angels and occur in fulfillment of prophecy.

**From Infancy to Manhood**

Little is known of the time between Jesus' infancy and manhood, except for one incident.

**The Ministry of John the Baptist**

John preaches repentance and prepares the way for the Messiah. John baptizes Jesus.

**Jesus Faces Temptations**

After Jesus' baptism and confirmation from heaven, he goes into the desert for 40 days. Using scripture, he resists Satan's temptations of power, fame, and wealth.

**Jesus' Early Ministry in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee**

Jesus calls his disciples, performs his first miracles, cleanses the temple, and begins to teach.

**Thought Questions:**

1. What is the significance of Jesus' birth and the events surrounding it?
2. What impresses you about Joseph and Mary?
3. What do you learn about Jesus when he visits Jerusalem at age 12? Why do you think this is the only incident recorded between his infancy and manhood?
4. Why was Jesus baptized?
5. How can you apply Jesus' resistance of temptation to your own struggles?
6. What do you admire about John the Baptist?
7. How do John's and Jesus' ministries compare?
8. What do you learn about Jesus from his encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman?



**October 31**

(Reading Oct 24-Oct 30)

#### **44. Jesus Begins to Teach and Heal in Galilee**

**Key Point:**

This section describes the heart of Jesus' ministry during his life, a life of proclaiming the Kingdom of God through teaching, preaching, and performing miracles. In doing all these things, Jesus pushes pack darkness and creates light, demonstrating the rule of God in the world.

**Key Verses:**

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor (Matthew 11:4-5).

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What are some things that surprise you about Jesus in these readings?
2. Why do you think so many were willing to follow Jesus? What was appealing to people about him? What do you think your reaction to him would have been as a bystander in one of the towns he came through?
3. Just as many people side with Jesus, these readings are full of stories of people who reject Jesus and fiercely oppose him. Why do you think he encountered such violent opposition?
4. Have you ever read the sermon on the mount straight through like this? What struck you about the sermon in this reading? Is Jesus too absolute in these teachings? What would it mean to take these teachings seriously in your life?
5. Several times in these pages Jesus teaches against hypocrisy or judgmentalism. Why do you think those attitudes are so tempting?
6. Which miracle stories do you find most touching? Which ones amaze you the most?
7. Is the Jesus in these readings the one you fell in love with? How is he different from the Jesus you have imagined before? What is most important to you in these pages?



**November 7**  
(Reading Oct 31-Nov 6)

**45. Miracles, Parables, Crowds, and Conflict**  
The Middle of the Gospels

**Key Point:**

As the controversy around Jesus builds, Jesus continues to reveal his identity and intentions, forcing his followers and the crowds to choose whether they will continue to follow him or join the opposition.

**Key Verse:**

Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27).

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Do you ever think of yourself as being sent out on a mission by Jesus? What does your mission look like? What do you think of Jesus' instructions to his apostles when he sent them out? How are they relevant to us?
2. Some of Jesus' miracles seem to demonstrate that he is a Lord of abundance against the scarcity of the world. Do you feel like you live in world of scarcity or abundance?
3. Many of Jesus' followers and those in the crowds around him are challenged by his teachings and claims in these readings, so that they can't overcome the obstacles to their faith. What obstacles do you have in the way of truly trusting in Jesus?
4. There are lots of opportunities in these passages for people to say something about Jesus, such as the confession about Jesus that Peter makes. What opportunities do you have to confess Jesus? What does that look like in your life?
5. Jesus tells some people that, though they don't perceive it, they are slaves! What kinds of things can enslave us without our knowledge?
6. What do these passages teach about the connection between Jesus and the Father? How would you describe your connection to the Father? Could you use the same language Jesus does?

7. Some of these parables are about generosity, whether that of God or our own hearts. Which of these is more challenging to you: receiving God's generosity or becoming a generous person yourself?



**November 14**

(Reading Nov 7-Nov 13)

#### **46. The Events Leading to Jesus' Death**

**Key Point:**

Jesus turns toward Jerusalem as the time for his death grows near. He continues to heal the sick and teach about the kingdom of God. He predicts his own death and resurrection, but the disciples fail to understand. Indeed, the twelve still seem to have a basic misunderstanding of Jesus' mission to establish a new spiritual kingdom.

**Key Verse:**

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:33, DB page 1443)

**Outline:**

**The Raising of Lazarus**

Jesus returns to Judea to raise Lazarus from the dead, prompting the Sanhedrin to plot the assassinations of both Jesus and Lazarus.

**The Final Journey to Jerusalem**

Jesus begins his final journey toward Jerusalem. Along the way, he heals and teaches.

**The Triumphant Entry – Sunday**

Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey to the acclaim of a great crowd.

**Final Week – Monday and Tuesday**

In his final week, Jesus cleanses the temple and condemns the Pharisees.

**Discourse on Future Events**

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus predicts the destruction of Herod's temple and his own return.

**Thought Questions:**

1. What is the significance of the raising of Lazarus from the dead?
2. What are the key themes of Jesus' teaching in this week's reading?
3. Why do you think the disciples still do not understand Jesus' mission? How is Jesus misunderstood today?
4. How could the crowd that cried out "Hosanna" be the same one that later said "Crucify him"?
5. What upset Jesus so much about the selling in the temple? Are there times today when we should display such righteous indignation?
6. What is the main point of Jesus' discourse on future events?

**November 21**  
(Reading Nov 14-Nov 20)

**47. The Gospel of Jesus Christ**  
**The Passion Narratives, Resurrection Narratives, and the Opening of Acts**

**Key Point:**

In the most significant week ever, Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried, beaten, crucified, and buried. The importance of Jesus' death is surpassed only by the good news of his resurrection. After appearing to His disciples and giving them the great commission, Jesus ascends into heaven. Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills the apostles, and the church is born.

**Key Verses:**

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, DB page 1482).

**Outline:**

**The Last Supper**

Jesus institutes a new memorial using bread and wine to symbolize his body and blood.

**Final Discourse**

After the Last Supper, Jesus explains his going away, promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, and prays for the unity of his believers.

**Betrayal and Arrest**

Jesus agonizes in prayer in Gethsemane, then is betrayed by Judas Iscariot and arrested.

**Trials Before Sanhedrin and Pilate**

Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin, and Pilate gives in to the crowd demanding crucifixion.

**The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus**

The Son of God is killed by being nailed to a wooden cross.

**Jesus' Resurrection, Appearance, and Ascension**

To the amazement of His own disciples, Jesus is raised from the dead, appears for 40 days, and ascends into heaven.

**The Birth and Early Growth of the Church**

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills the apostles, who speak in foreign languages and preach the good news of salvation. Three thousand people are baptized, and the early church grows rapidly.

**Thought Questions:**

1. What does the Lord's Supper mean to you?

2. What is the relevance for us of Jesus' prayer for unity?



**November 28**

(Reading Nov 21-Nov 27)

**48. The Gospel Spreads, Even to Non-Jews!  
Acts 3-18, Galatians**

**Key Point:**

Despite persecution from Jewish leaders, God's Holy Spirit causes the early church to grow. Acts records the spread of the gospel from a primarily Jewish to a predominately gentile membership through the ministries of Peter, Paul, and other early leaders.

**Key Verse:**

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:4, DB page 1497).

**Outline:**

**Martyrdom of Stephen**

Stephen becomes the first of many Christian martyrs, stoned by the Jewish Sanhedrin.

**Persecution and Preaching and the Conversion of Saul**

An organized persecution breaks out, yet men such as Philip continue preaching. One of the chief persecutors, Saul of Tarsus, is converted after the personal appearance of Jesus.

**First Gentile Converts and Persecution by Herod Agrippa I**

Peter helps in the conversion of Cornelius, then is imprisoned and released miraculously.

**First Missionary Journey**

The Holy Spirit directs Barnabas and Saul (now Paul) on a mission to Cyprus and Turkey.

**Jerusalem Conference and Letter to Galatians**

The problem of gentiles and the Jewish law is addressed by a conference and Paul's letter.

**Second Missionary Journey**

Paul, Silas, and Timothy travel west, spreading the gospel as far as Athens and Corinth.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What examples of godly character do you see in the life of Stephen?
2. What do you learn about evangelism from Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian?
3. Why do you think the account of Cornelius occupies so much space in Acts?
4. Compare and contrast the early missionary journeys with today's mission efforts.
5. What are the lessons for us from the Jerusalem Conference and the Galatian letter?
6. In what ways is Paul's sermon in Athens different from his other sermons?
7. What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the early church?



**December 5**

(Reading Nov 28-Dec 4)

**49. Letters to Thessalonica and Corinth**

**1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, parts of Acts**

**Key Point:**

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the young church in Corinth to stop division, urge morality, and encourage them to faithfulness by teaching on the hope of resurrection. A few months later, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to defend his authority and affirm his love for them.

**Key Verse:**

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20, DB page 1554)

**Outline:**

**First and Second Thessalonians**

Paul, Silas, and Timothy exhort, encourage, and teach the Christians at Thessalonica.

**Third Missionary Journey**

Paul begins his third tour and spends about three years in Ephesus.

**First Letter to the Corinthians**

- Division in the church (1-4)
- Church discipline (5,6)
- Marriage and divorce (7)
- Doctrinal disputes and Christian freedom (8-10)
- Worship and spiritual gifts (11-14)
- The resurrection and concluding matters (15, 16)

**Second Letter to the Corinthians**

- Greetings and assurance of concern (1:1-2:13)
- Defense of Paul’s ministry (2:14-7:16)
- Collection for brethren in Judea (8, 9)
- Further defense of Paul’s apostleship (10-12)
- Closing warnings and benediction (13)

### **Thought Questions:**

1. From 1 Thessalonians, describe the needs, questions, and “hang-ups” of early Christians.
2. Are we guilty today of being divided over matters of personality or pride?
3. When should we refrain from judging our fellow Christians? When must we judge them?
4. What do their serious morality problems tell you about the church in Corinth?
5. Is it ever right for a Christian to take another Christian to court (1 Cor. 6)?
6. How would you summarize Paul’s teaching on marriage and divorce in 1 Cor. 7?
7. What does it mean to you to be the “temple of the Holy Spirit”?
8. What could we do as individuals and a congregation to make our worship more meaningful?

9. What emotions do you think Paul felt as he wrote 2 Corinthians?

10. What principles of giving can you find in 2 Cor. 8 and 9?



**December 12**

(Reading Dec 5-Dec 11)

**50. Paul's Gospels**

**2 Cor 10-13, Romans, Acts 20-23**

**Key Point:**

In Romans, Paul lays out a theology that proclaims the gospel as a powerful unifying force that reconciles humanity to God. Paul's understanding of the gospel as such increasingly drives his apostolic ministry to the gentiles.

**Key Verses:**

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous shall live by faith.' (Romans 1:16-17)."

### **Thought Questions:**

1. What was Paul's life all about at this point? Do you ever feel like you're on a mission? What are some of the things that you strongly believe God put you on earth to do?
2. Early in Romans, Paul levels the playing field, claiming that at least one thing unites all of humanity. What is it, and do you agree? What's your experience?
3. How does this section describe what God has done for us in Jesus Christ? When did you first realize this?
4. How does God's grace level the playing field between Jews and Gentiles?
5. Paul teaches several ways that we can respond to the grace of God. Which of these is most striking to you or is something you need to work on?
6. How important is the unity of the church to Paul? How important is it to you? How can you tell how important church unity is to a person? How can you tell it's not?
7. When you read these letters and Acts, what does the relationship between Paul and the churches he serves seem like?



**December 19**

(Reading Dec 12-Dec. 18)

**51. Paul's Final Letters**

**Acts 24-28, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Timothy, Titus**

**Key Point:**

During his imprisonment, Paul writes letters to the Colossians, Philemon, the Ephesians, and the Philippians. It appears that Paul was released from prison and made another journey. During that time he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus.

**Key Verses:**

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me in the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim.4:7,8, DB page 1623).

**Outline:**

**Voyage to Rome and House Arrest**

After a shipwreck and brief stay in Malta, Paul and his guards arrive in Rome, where Paul is placed under house arrest.

**Prison Epistles**

- Colossians – Paul emphasizes the transforming power of the new life in Christ.
- Philemon – Paul asks Philemon to take back the runaway slave, Onesimus.
- Ephesians – Paul affirms unity in Christ and warns against false teaching and immorality.
- Philippians – Paul urges humility, love, and joy based on the compelling love of Christ.

**Pastoral (Shepherding) Epistles**

- 1 Timothy – Paul instructs his young associate on doctrine, church order, and personal conduct.
- Titus – Paul teaches another young minister regarding church matters and godly living.
- 2 Timothy – In his last letter, Paul warns and encourages Timothy to remain strong in the faith.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. How did Paul use his Roman citizenship to further the gospel? How might we use our American citizenship and other blessings to spread the good news?
2. What does Paul emphasize about Christ in the letter to the Colossians?
3. What insights into Paul's character are gained from reading his personal note to Philemon?
4. How would you summarize Paul's main emphasis in Ephesians?
5. Based on Philippians 4, what was Paul's "secret key" to contentment?
6. Does Paul's challenge in 1 Tim. 6:11-16 encourage you or intimidate you?
7. Does the elders' qualification list in Titus 1:5-9 emphasize "doing" or "being"? Why?
8. In what ways does 2 Timothy affect you emotionally?



**December 26**  
(Reading Dec 19-Dec 25)

**52. The General Letters**  
**2 Timothy, James, Jude, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Hebrews**

**Key Points:**

Apparently, Paul is re-arrested and sentenced to death under Nero. Before his execution, he writes a final letter to Timothy.

Eight epistles were written by men other than Paul and were addressed to more general audiences. The letters from James, Jude, Peter, and John and the letter to the Hebrews give us insight into the life of the early church, as well as teach us how to live as a holy people in a hostile world.

**Key Verse:**

And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6, DB page 1651).

**Outline:**

**James**

James integrates faith and everyday experience by stressing that true faith "works."

**Jude**

Jude condemns false teachers and counsels his readers to stand firm and to grow in their faith.

**First Peter**

In the midst of persecution, Peter reminds his readers to be holy and have hope.

**Second Peter**

Peter warns against false teachers and emphasizes that the Lord's judgment is coming.

**Hebrews**

The writer shows the superiority of Christ to the Jewish religion. He exhorts his readers to press on to maturity, which will bring a strong faith.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Some have claimed that James' teaching on faith ("Faith without deeds is useless") contradicts what Paul said ("For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...not by works"). How do you respond?
2. How might Jude's warning against false teachers be summarized in one sentence?
3. In what ways can we draw comfort from what 1 Peter says about suffering?
4. 2 Peter warns about false teachers. What can we do to guard against them?
5. According to Hebrews, how are the Old Testament and New Testament connected?
6. Does Hebrews 11 inspire you or intimidate you? Why?

**January 2, 2011**  
(Reading Dec 26-Dec 31)

**53. Revelation**  
**1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation**

**Key Point:**

**Key Verses:**

**Outline:**

**First John**

John writes to his little children about love for each other and faith in Christ.

**Second and Third John**

John warns against antichrists and teaches faithfulness and love.

### **Thought Questions:**

1. Based on 1 John 4:20-5:5, what is the relationship between love, faith, and obedience?
2. Since 2 and 3 John are so brief and personal, how does their message benefit to us?
3. Revelation is one of the most dramatic books in Scripture, and it's very visual. What did reading this book feel like, in terms of it being different from the other books?