

Old Testament Curriculum

for

Eternity Bible College

and

The Apprenticeship

by

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# Rationale

The idea for creating a curriculum that worked systematically through the entire Bible originated in the early days of Eternity Bible College (EBC) as a group of us prayed and met regularly to think about how to equip believers for the work of ministry. Much has changed since those early days, but the vision of walking systematically through all of Scripture continued on. This work is the result of that vision.

Our rationale for taking this approach stemmed largely from the fact that we wanted a curriculum that taught and modeled how to study Scripture. We wanted students to be immersed in the text in its context, taking progressive revelation into proper consideration.

As a Bible College, we were also keenly aware of some of the dangers of teaching students in this phase of life. With young and zealous students we were concerned about primarily teaching systematic theology which often gives students the impression that they have all the answers. Our intention is that by structuring our studies around the text itself, students would have a profound sense of how much they don't know, while at the same time giving them a solid foundation for how and where to find those answers. Furthermore, we wanted to allow the theological concerns and practices we emphasized to be shaped by Scripture itself, with the result that our students are equipped for the theological questions of the future and able to apply their knowledge of Scripture in contexts globally where the questions being asked may be very different than the ones we typically provide answers to. We of course also believe in the systematic study of theology (which we have included in the final year of our studies), but strongly believed that this thorough and integrated approach was more necessary as a strong foundation first.

To read more about the rationale for structuring our curriculum around Biblical Theology, read:  
<http://theapprenticeship.org/why-biblical-theology.html>

The classroom videos and other materials that accompany this curriculum are at:  
<http://theapprenticeship.org/otvideos.html>

# Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to Eternity Bible College for the opportunity to spend so much time studying through the Old Testament. I have only become more convinced of its foundational importance and complete relevance to every aspect of believers' lives. EBC graciously allowed me to systematically cycle through teaching the various Old Testament classes in preparation for the new curriculum, until I finally had the chance to teach the entire Old Testament straight through. I did this several times, and then recorded videos for every class, which gave multiple opportunities to refine the curriculum.

Joshua Walker and Spencer MacCuish have been my 'bosses' over the last 14+ years, although that doesn't do justice to their roles in my life. You have both supported and encouraged me in every aspect of life and ministry and gave me incredible freedom and support to study and teach at EBC. Thank you Josh for coming alongside in difficult times of ministry, being there for me, and always being a sounding board. Thank you Spencer for your genuine care and for your thought provoking questions that always make you think! It's been a joy to work with you both.

We are also thankful to other EBC professors whose work I was able to reference who taught some Old Testament classes before me. Preston Sprinkle taught through the Former Prophets, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, and Song of Songs before I did. Brian Colmery also taught through the Former Prophets after Preston and added his own additions that were passed down to me. I also referenced the notes of Nate Foreman when working on the material for Isaiah-Jeremiah. I had the privilege to be the first at EBC to teach the other books as part of our new curriculum and had also taught through many of those books in the church context.

It should be noted that although these professors made contributions of their class notes and studies, all the views and mistakes in this document I am fully responsible for. Over many years I heavily added to, removed from, and edited all of the material to make the curriculum as consistent as possible (in style, format, emphases, and theology). Thus they receive credit for their work, but I receive the blame for any inadequacies.

I also want to thank Ernesto Duke, a former student who became a fellow professor at EBC. After going through this curriculum as a student, he came alongside to help teach and make videos for the classes. Beyond his contributions to the curriculum, he is a dear brother, and I always appreciate getting to work with and be sharpened by you.

Beyond those that directly were involved in the project, I'm thankful for three men in particular who taught me the Old Testament: Dr. Barrick, Dr. Grisanti, and pastor McDougall. Each of these men exemplified a passion for the Old Testament, helped me see how much amazing and applicable truth is there, and gave me valuable tools to dig deep into the meaning of the text.

Lastly, I am also deeply thankful to my wife Melody whose support and encouragement has enabled this work. Her keen discernment has constantly helped shape and refine my own views and how I explain and live the Bible. I am thankful that one of the biggest ways you help me is in lovingly helping me to see inconsistencies in my thinking or life so that I will be more like Jesus. I love you.

May the saints be equipped from serious study of God's Word for His glory.

# Using the Curriculum

This Old Testament Curriculum was originally designed as the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a four year Bachelor's program in Bible. The Old Testament portion consists of six classes (Torah, Former Prophets, Latter Prophets 1, Latter Prophets 2, Writings, and Biblical Theology of the OT) over 18 units, 9 units each semester. Rather than taking the classes in parallel, they were designed to be taken in sequence. So for example in a typical college setting, you take around 4 classes each semester, dividing your attention between your courses. Our curriculum was designed so that you would take the OT classes sequentially. This means for a nine unit class you have roughly 20 hours a week immersed in a given book of the Bible every week! This allows extended time to focus on each book, tracing the themes, ideas, and storyline as they developed in progressive revelation. It also allows time to not just work through the purpose, setting, and interpretation of the books, but to meditate on the Biblical Theology, implications, and application as well.

The intended use of the curriculum is for students to do the following process for each lesson:

- 1) Read through the text on their own (usually multiple times in multiple versions), making observations and noting questions of the text and context.
- 2) Go through and answer the study questions which are designed to help the students get into and see for themselves what the author is emphasizing (there are .doc files without the 'answers' given so that students can fill in their own notes and end up with a 'journal' of the OT). The questions should guide students through the process and not just give them the 'answers' or 'nuggets'. Because the goal is to guide students, most of the questions have some intentional ambiguity. The questions aren't so specific that answering them is simply a matter of filling in blanks. This also means that sometimes students might miss exactly what is being asked. That's ok. The goal is to get students into the text, thinking about what the author is emphasizing and why. It's not important to 'get the right answers,' and we never graded the questions except for completion.
- 3) Do the other assigned reading (such as commentaries). [If pastors are taking students through the curriculum, a lot of other reading could be supplemented, changed, or removed from what is listed in the assignment. The questions almost never reference anything directly from the reading, it is designed to be purely supplemental.]
- 4) (Optional) Read the suggested 'answers' for the questions. This will hopefully clear up any ambiguity about what I was trying to get at with the questions, as well as give what I find significant in the text.
- 5) Watch the associated classroom videos (there are 280 videos with 132 hours of lecture for the entire OT curriculum).
- 6) Do other assignments for the class. Besides papers, outreach projects, and memorizing Scripture, the main assignment we had students work on every week was an 'Analytical Outline' of every book of the OT. See "Analytical Outlines" on the main curriculum page for more info.
- 7) Meet up with a pastor or teacher and discuss the material (there is a pastor/teacher guide which is an abridgment of this document with one page summaries of each lesson which may be helpful).

Although originally used as a 9 month intensive study through the Old Testament, the curriculum can easily be worked through at any pace. A very simple modification would be to do one lesson per week rather than three, and at this pace the entire Old Testament curriculum would take just over two years if done without breaks. You could also modify how much homework is assigned to make it easier to work through everything. It would also be possible to study a single book out of the curriculum as a book study, although there is definitely much benefit in seeing how the Old Testament builds upon itself.

One of the goals of releasing the curriculum for free is that pastors will lead groups through the material in the context of the local church without having to do everything themselves. Please contact me at [josh@scrolltag.com](mailto:josh@scrolltag.com) if there is any way I can help you use the material to equip students in the Word.

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## I. **The Torah**

The Torah is the first division of the Old Testament in the Hebrew Canon. It consists of Genesis-Deuteronomy and is foundational to the rest of Scripture. Some of the major themes include God's Sovereignty and Plan for the world, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the Law and the sacrifices, and blessing and cursing. This is a 4 unit class and consists of 18 lessons.



## **1. God's Plan for the World: Overview of The Torah**

**Scripture:** Genesis-Deuteronomy

**Theme:** God's Plan is to Bless the World through His Covenant Keeping Nation

**Objectives:**

- To understand the structure of both the Torah and Genesis.
- To understand the setting and recipients of the Torah.
- To understand the purpose of the Torah and Genesis in the Torah.
- To shape our worldview through an understanding of God's purpose in the world.

**Reading:**

- Skim through the Torah and familiarize yourself with its contents and structure.
- Read "Interpreting the Pentateuch," in The Pentateuch as Narrative by Sailhamer, pages 1-79.
- Read "Introduction," in An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch by Wolf, pages 17-47 (this one is not due until the 4th class period).

**Questions:**

**Note: Answer all the questions in order without reading the next question before answering the previous one. This is true for every lesson!**

Note: The Hebrew Old Testament is called "The Tanak" (also spelled Tanach). This is a Hebrew acronym for the three sections which make up the Old Testament: the Torah (the Law), the Neviim (the Prophets), and the Ketuvim (the Writings) (cf. Luke 24:44). We begin by studying the first section, the Torah, which contains the first five books of the Old Testament. Thus, another name for this section is the Pentateuch (the penta prefix means five, as in pentagon).

1. If the first five books of the Bible are one literary unit (and they are), who is the author (hint: Look in the last 4 chapters of Deuteronomy if you can't find other references in the Torah)? Why is this significant? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Moses wrote the Torah. See Exo 24:4, Exo 34:27, Num 33:2, and especially, Deu 31:9. As we learn in Bible Study Methods (Hermeneutics), in order to understand the point of the letter, we have to understand who wrote the letter to whom, and why. Note that Moses was singularly gifted and equipped by God to write this foundational book of the entire Bible. Raised in Pharaoh's court, he was probably one of the most literate and knowledgeable people in the world at the time.*

2. What is the setting that the Torah was written in (ie. when was it written and to whom)? What was the situation these recipients were in (remember back to OT survey)? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Torah was written to the 2nd generation of Israelites after the 1st generation had died in the wilderness (everyone 20 years old or older at the time of the rebellion died in the wilderness, cf. Num 14:27-38). They were about to go in to the promised land and conquer it according to God's promise. This puts the date at roughly 1406 B.C (if one adopts Thiele's widely accepted conclusion that Solomon's fourth year is 966 B.C., of which the Exodus was 480 years earlier according to 1 Kings 6:1). God had made Israel His own*

*special people by redeeming them from Egypt and had entered into covenantal relationship with them at Sinai. They were to be the vehicle through which God was going to work out His plan in the world...*

3. What do the following verses add to your understanding of the recipients? Deu 4:1; 5:1-3; 9:1; 27:9-10; 29:9-14. (2-3 sentences)

*A: These verses show that the current generation is not the generation who came out of Egypt. This was the **2nd generation**. They had just entered into a **covenant renewal ceremony**, since the previous generation did not keep the covenant and died in the wilderness. This covenant was to be kept by the coming generations as well.*

4. How is the Torah broken up as a whole? Does the five book division seem to reflect the intention of the author? Look at how each book ends and the next begins as a starting point. Do these breaks seem to be natural breaks intended by the author? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)

*A: The five book division of the Torah does seem to reflect the intention of the author in constructing the Torah. For example, the book of Genesis has a clear structure (noted below) which ends with the Joseph story and Jacob and Joseph dying in Egypt and giving their blessings. Exodus begins with a new generation in Egypt, and starts with a **summary statement** of Genesis. Exodus ends with the glory of Yahweh filling the tabernacle, concluding a major section on the building of the tabernacle. Leviticus begins a new section by detailing the sacrifices and other ordinances of Yahweh. Leviticus ends with a lengthy section on holiness, and concludes the book with a **summary statement** of what Yahweh told Moses on Mount Sinai. Numbers begins a **new section with the numbering of the people** and ends (much like Leviticus) with a **summary statement** of what commands Yahweh gave to Moses at the Plains of Moab. Deuteronomy itself has a clearly defined structure (an ANE treaty document) which will be looked at in detail in the weeks to come. In summary, each of the five books of the Torah have a clear structure that indicate that they were intended to be read as literary units themselves which make up the larger literary unit. Thus we look at the Torah as a 5 act play, with clear breaks, but intended to go together.*

5. What is genre? Why do you think most of the Torah is narrative? What effect do you think comes from the fact that the Torah is mostly narrative? How does a narrative teach theology? Think about any differences that may exist between a narrative and the actual events themselves? What are the implications of these differences? (1+ paragraph)

*A: In the Bible there are many different genres. A genre is a type or form of literature (or music), that sets up a set of expectations or norms for that category. For example, one common genre is the 'epistle' or letter genre. Just like in personal (or business) letters today, letters in the ancient world had a sender, a recipient, a body, and greetings. The norms and expectations give us assumptions about what we are to expect when reading. For example, when you pick up a menu, you have a list of different food items, and by knowing that you are looking at a menu, you know that the numbers on the side are the prices and that these are all foods that can be ordered. In the Torah we are dealing primarily with narrative genre. This sets up the expectation that we are going to be looking at a story of events that happened. However, we need to understand that no story can be written without a purpose! **There are no such things as the 'raw facts'**. Each story is written to have some effect on the reader and will be influenced by the intention and beliefs of the author. Thus when reading Scripture, we need to try to ascertain the purpose that the author was writing.*

*In Sailhamer's introduction he discusses the difference between text and event (page 22) and how this affects interpretation. Key within this discussion is the principle of **selectivity**. In other words, when an*

author tells a narrative, there are many more events that happened than what is recorded. Imagine a scenario where two people were eyewitnesses to an event and both tell the story of what happened. We can imagine that both of them may be completely accurate, yet will include different aspects of the story. They of course will **emphasize what they thought was significant** and helped to make the point that they were trying to make. **Every author reveals his worldview when telling stories**, and so our goal when coming to Scripture is to understand the emphases and purpose of the author and to seek to be shaped by the worldview he is espousing!

6. What then do you think the purpose of the Torah is? (1 paragraph)

A: Sailhamer talks about the purpose of the Torah and of Genesis on page 27 (see also page 6). There he summarizes three main purposes of the Torah. 1) God wants to show Israel that His plan to bless the world will be worked out through the Abrahamic Covenant (ie. Israel!). 2) God wants to show Israel that blessing to the world failed because they did not trust and obey Him. and 3) God wants to give Israel hope that He will ultimately succeed in His plan because **He is faithful** to His promises and will finally give them a new heart to trust and obey Him. Thus understanding their (and also our!) **identity** and **why** they/we were created is absolutely essential for us to live as God wants us to! It is also vital for us to understand our God if we are going to live in relationship with Him! Our **worldview** is absolutely vital and influential in guiding every decision in our lives! It is the **grid** by which we evaluate everything! Genesis and the Torah lay these foundations as to why humanity was created, what the problem(s) is/are in the world, how it/they can be fixed, and how we are to live in right relationship with our Creator. These are obviously very foundational and thus very applicational for every aspect of our lives!

7. Skim through the book of Genesis and note all the genre changes (specifically where the book changes from narrative to genealogy and back). Are there any common phrases that tie these changes together (where the change takes place)? If/when you find a common phrase, note all the places where it is found (use Bible search software like ScrollTag to find all occurrences). What do these findings suggest about the structure of the book of Genesis? How many sections would it have? How long would they be? While you are skimming, also note where/how the scope of the book changes (ie. is the focus on individuals or on all humanity)? Why is the structure of a book important? (1 paragraph)

A: There are 9 genealogies in Genesis, and 10 [11, but 1 is a restatement] "These are the generations of" ie. (Toledot) statements. Toledot is the Hebrew word translated 'generations' and is related to the root 'yalad', to give birth. It means 'descendants' or 'successors'. Five of these are before chapter 12 and five are after, dividing the book into two parts. This also fits the change in scope that occurs from the first 11 chapters to the ending chapters of the book. The first 11 chapters are much more focused globally, on creation, the Fall, the flood, the tower of Babel, etc. Whereas starting with chapter 12 the book narrows its focus to Abraham and his descendants who will be God's means of restoring blessing globally. The 10 Toledots are (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 [36:9]; 37:2. In the first half of the book (chapters 1-11) there is steady movement to chapter 12. In the second half, there is an alternating pattern where the chosen line keeps being narrowed through a pattern of alternation. Thus we have: Abraham [chosen], Ishmael [short section of the rejected line], Isaac [chosen], Esau [short section of rejected line], Jacob [chosen]. Knowing the structure of a book helps us to see how the author is trying to communicate his message. Each section will have a point, that somehow will relate to the points in other sections. Understanding the structure of the various books of the Bible will be very helpful to see what the author is trying to communicate.

8. What is a generation (use an English dictionary if necessary)? (2-3 sentences)

A: A dictionary answer: "All of the **offspring** that are at the same stage of descent **from** a common **ancestor**: Mother and daughters represent two generations [emphasis added]." (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2009 by Houghton Mifflin Company).

9. In light of your answer in the previous question, how is the word 'generation' used in Gen 2:4? What is interesting, different, or noteworthy about the usage of the word here? (2-3 sentences)

A: The fact that the first Toledot is the generations of the heaven and earth points to the fact that this phrase is being used as a synthetic **literary device** since heavens and earth cannot literally have children. This in turn helps us to see that this literary device is being used by Moses to structure Genesis. This is how everything came to be...

10. Do the Toledots ('these are the generations of' statements) go with the preceding or following section? Why? What does this tell us about 1:1-2:3? (1 paragraph)

A: Each Toledot goes with what is following. A generation is an offspring, or what comes from a person. If you look at the various Toledots, the section following it is about the descendants of the person mentioned in the Toledot. Thus for example 5:1 is the Toledot of Adam, and chapter 5 records Adam's descendants. Thus the Toledot is usually followed by a genealogy. So also in 11:27 is the Toledot of Terah, and the whole next section is about Abraham, Terah's offspring. This means that the first Toledot is the account to what happened to the heavens and earth that God created (2:4). What happened to God's creation? It fell into sin and got worse and worse (chapters 2-4). This means that 1:1-2:3 is an **introduction** to the book of Genesis (and the Torah) as a whole. This makes a lot of sense due to the emphasis on Elohim (God as Creator), which changes to Yahweh starting in 2:4.

11. How is Genesis 12:1-3 important for understanding the Torah? How is its position in the structure of the book significant? What does it tell us about what God is going to do in His plan? (2-3 sentences)

A: God's plan was to restore blessing to the world through the seed of Abraham. There is much repetition of the key concept of blessing, which is so key in the beginning few chapters of Genesis. This was God's plan for His creation and the reason He created! Obviously, this is essential for us to live according to our design!

12. How does knowing the Torah is one literary unity affect the application and interpretation of Genesis? (2-3 sentences)

A: By understanding that all the Torah is one literary unit, we can see that the recipients of Genesis are the same as the recipients of Deuteronomy. Thus Genesis was written to the 2nd generation of Israelites about to go in and take the promised land. They needed an understanding of who their God was, who he had created them to be, and what He required of them. They needed to understand their **purpose** was to serve the God they had been created and redeemed for and that He called for trust and obedience as they were to live in **relationship** with Him. They needed to know that He alone was God if they were to give their full allegiance to Him.

13. Application: How does understanding the overarching structure, literary and historical context of the Torah affect the way that we read, study, and apply the Bible 1) collectively as the Church, 2) personally, and 3) devotionally?

## 2. God's Good Creation: Genesis 1

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1-2:3

**Theme:** God Created His World Good for His Purpose and Placed Man at the Center of His Plan

**Objectives:**

- To understand who God has revealed Himself to be.
- To understand who man is and what is his created purpose.
- To lay a foundation for understanding the purpose of Genesis, the Torah, and the Bible.

**Reading:**

- Read (thoughtfully) Genesis 1:1-2:3 **three** times.
- Read "Method for Studying Genesis," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 37-49.
- Read "The Composition of Genesis," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 65-97.
- Read "The Creation of the Universe by the Word of God," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 99-116.

**Questions:**

1. How does this section (1:1-2:3) function in relationship to the structure of Genesis looked at last time? In other words, how does this section contribute to the overall structure of Genesis (in the light of the whole Torah)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is a prologue to the book of Genesis specifically and to the Pentateuch as a whole. We know this because it stands outside - ie. it comes before - the "generations" structure of Genesis.*

2. In what way is 1:1-2:3 a "prologue"? Why have a prologue? How is it a prologue to the book of Genesis? How is it a prologue to the whole Torah? How is it a prologue to the whole of the Bible? (1 paragraph)

*A: A prologue is an introduction that sets the stage or forms the frame or gives the **lens** by which the remainder of the story is to be understood. It shows that the entire Bible is God centered. It is a prologue to Genesis because it stands before the "generations" statements contained within the remainder of the book. It is a prologue to the whole Torah because Genesis is one of the five books of the Torah and is to be understood within the whole of the five books (not as a single book with no connection to the overall story contained within the whole of the Torah). It is a prologue to the whole of the Bible because the Torah contributes to the overall story contained within the whole of the Bible. As the prologue to Genesis, which is a part of the Torah, which is a part of the Bible, this opening section really sets the stage or forms the frame or gives the lens by which the whole of the story of the Bible is to be understood. In other words, you absolutely **cannot understand the Bible** apart from understanding the foundation laid in chapter 1 of Genesis.*

3. What is the scope of Genesis 1, and what does this imply about God and His plan? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The scope is the universe and this implies that **God is global**. He is not a local deity. He is the God of the universe and His plan and story are therefore also global.*

4. On what day did God create the earth? What does this tell us about the focus in creation? What would have been significant about the fact that God created the earth/land (same word in Hebrew) to Israel as they heard this for the first time? (1 paragraph)

*A: God created the earth on Day 1, in the introduction. The point is that 1:1 is a **summary statement** of the whole. Note: Verse 2 gives a parenthetical background statement showing the land in its '**not yet**' state, before God '**formed and filled**' it. The focus in creation is therefore on what God is doing on earth, the **stage** for His drama. God created the earth/land and so it is His. He has the right to give it to whomever He wishes.*

5. What are some possible reasons the author included the Spirit of God in verse 2? What is the Spirit doing? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Including the Spirit in verse 2 shows that the Spirit of God was involved at creation, and that the Spirit **empowers** what God does. We will see this theme elsewhere in the Torah. He plays an active role in the world!*

6. What words or phrases are repeated in Genesis 1 (there are at least 5 significant ones)? What significance would each of these have had for the original recipients? (1 sentence each)

*A: God said. - **God's Word has power**. They have received His Word and should not treat it lightly. God alone created out of nothing. He alone is God.*

*A: It is good. - This is a major theme in the Torah. God is good and created His world good. His plan is for His world is good. We will see the implication then is that we should **trust** Him.*

*A: Blessed. - This is another major theme in the Torah. God created His world good and He blessed it. Blessing comes only from God.*

*A: Land. God created the land, so it's His. He has the **authority** to give it to whom He will.*

*A: God called/named. - God has authority. Naming implied **dominion** in the ANE.*

7. What did God create in each of the six days, and is there any pattern to His creation? What is the pattern? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 1) Light and darkness 2) Sea and sky 3) Fertile earth 4) Lights for day and night 5) Creatures for water and air. 6) Creatures for the fertile earth. This seems to reflect a 'formed and filled' structure for creation, to match the 'formless and void' of verse 2. The first 3 days God formed, and the next 3 He filled.*

8. Due to the fact that there is a structure in the 6 days of Creation, does this indicate that chapter 1 is poetry? Why or why not? What is the significance of this? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 1 of Genesis is definitely narrative. This is indicated by the characteristic use of the waw-consecutives (then..., a grammatical construction in Hebrew) which marks the chapter as Hebrew narrative. The rest of the book of Genesis is also narrative as is marked by these waw-consecutives as well. The significance of the fact that Genesis 1 is narrative is that the author is reporting the **events as facts** with theological significance. The structure of the narrative does not make it less factual, but shows that God has a **purpose in history**. Thus the events of Genesis 1 are to be taken as a factual account of what happened, just as the narratives of Jesus' life are.*

9. What differences are there in the structure of how the six days are laid out? In other words do all 6 days have the same structure, if not, what is different and why? (1 paragraph)

*A: Days 3 and 6 have two acts of creation in them and thus receive the focus (See also the double evaluation in Gen 1:10, 12, 25, 31). The focus in God's creation was the **land and humanity**. Mankind is God's crowning creation, it receives the focus by the parallel structure with the emphasis on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> days, and the fact man is put last in creation as the finale.*

10. What are some possible reasons the creation of the great sea creatures is mentioned? What about other aspects of creation that are mentioned (ie. the creation of the sun and the moon), what significance would there be for the original recipients in knowing that God created these things? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The sun and moon, sea creatures, and much else in creation was worshiped by pagans. The creation account shows that God created these things and thus He deserved to be worshiped, not His creation. The Genesis account clearly establishes a distinction between God and His creation.*

11. What is different in the text about how God brought man into existence? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God uses the plural, "Let us." This is much more **personal** than "Let there be." Also, God made man in His image in contrast to the rest of the creatures. Once again the focus is on humanity at the center of God's creation.*

12. What was God's immediate purpose in creating man and woman in His image (hint: if you can't see the purpose in the text, see verse 26)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Although it doesn't come out in English translations, the Hebrew actually states "Let us create man in our image in order that he may rule..." God created man in his image for the purpose that man would rule over God's good creation as a vice-regent on the earth.*

13. What does this imply about **what it means** to be made in the image of God (think about this!)? (1+ paragraph)

*A: As we just saw, the explicit purpose of being made in the image of God is the ability to rule. As we saw in the focus on the creation of the land, God is creating the stage of human history for man to rule over in the outworking of His **mediated rule and the kingdom of God**. Thus other aspects of what is typically considered to be a part of the 'imago dei' such as the fact that we are spiritual, personal, moral, relational, rational, emotional, and creative beings should be considered the **giftings** that God gave us to rule over creation in His stead. Some of what this means includes 1) Spiritual: we are not merely material beings, but can relate to spiritual things, including God who is Spirit. 2) Personal: we are each different, significant before God, designed uniquely by Him, having self-consciousness and purpose. 3) Moral: we understand that there is right and wrong and have been created with a conscience. 4) Relational: God is relational in the Trinity, and made us to live in relationship as well. 5) Rational: God made us to use our minds to make decisions; We are 'autonomous' in that God doesn't just tell us everything to do, but gives us guidelines for us to seek His values and thus as we become like Him to choose what He wants. 6) Emotional: God is love and wants us to love what is good and not just act from duty. 7) Creative: God is creative and has made us to be creative as well as we are "fruitful and multiply and fill and subdue the earth" we are to create society and culture that reflects God's creativity.*

14. When it states that man was made in God's image, does this include women? How can you tell from the text? What does this imply about men and women? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yes, it includes women. The word 'man' (Hebrew: adam), can also be translated mankind. As can be seen in the subtle, yet effective switch at the end of the verse from singular to plural (them), God's creation of mankind included both men and women. Thus men and women are equally made in the image of God and have an inherent equality in person-hood (in the image of God) and purpose (to rule).*

15. What command did God give the man and woman? How does this fit in with being made in God's image? What is tied/connected to this command in the text? What is implied by this connection? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God commanded them to be fruitful and multiply and to take **dominion** over the earth. As we just saw, this is the fleshing out of verse 26 and so we see a bit more what it means to rule over God's creation for Him. Mankind was to multiply, fill the earth, and subdue and rule over it. In other words we were to create society and culture in establishing God's kingdom on earth. This command is introduced by God's blessing which is tied to His command. Thus we see that fulfillment of God's command is closely tied to His blessing.*

16. What did God give to the man and the woman? What does this imply? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God gave them everything on the earth, all the trees and all the animals. This implies that **God is good** to man and that God gave man complete dominion over the earth. This shows that they were the crowning act in His creation!*

17. What significant words are used of the seventh day? What do they signify? (1 paragraph)

*A: On the seventh day the key words ceased, rested, blessed and sanctified are used. **Ceased**- God finished His work of creation. It was done. **Rested**- A significant word that signifies His accomplishment and celebration of completion. This verb is related to the Hebrew word for Sabbath, the day set apart for the worship of God. **Blessed**- God's blessing is an important part of His plan for creation. It is necessary to accomplish that plan. **Sanctified**- God set apart the seventh day to be holy. God set things apart for His own use and purpose. Creation is ultimately about worship.*

18. What do we learn about God's world in this prologue? (1 paragraph)

*A: God's world – both the heavens and the earth (ground, land) – is created and is good ("very good"). Physical material is not bad, but was created good. It all has a purpose in God's intention to bless the earth that He created in playing out His story. That story centers around humanity and them taking dominion over God's good earth as kings ruling over His kingdom in His stead.*

19. Application: How does understanding God's creative intent for the world and for mankind affect the way that we think about life and our relationship to the world we live in?

20. Application: How should an understanding of God's fundamental goodness affect every aspect of our lives?



### 3. Man's Purpose and Plummet: Genesis 2-3

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:4-3:24

**Theme:** God Created Man to Rule His Good World, but Man Fell through not Trusting Him

**Objectives:**

- To understand God's purpose for creating man and woman
- To understand the similarities and differences between man and woman
- To understand the effects of the fall on God's creation
- To understand how God's plan will continue

**Reading:**

- Read (thoughtfully) Genesis 2:4-3:24 **three** times.
- Read "The Creation of Man and Woman in the Garden," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 117-129.
- Read "The Temptation and Fall," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 130-138.
- Read "The Oracles of God at the Fall," in Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 139-151.

**Questions:**

1. Read through this section and note any differences in the names used of God. What different names of God are used here and what do they signify? Why is the change of names here in chapter 2? (1 paragraph)

*A: The two primary names used of God thus far are Elohim and Yahweh. Elohim is the generic word for God and signifies God as Creator. This name for God was used exclusively in chapter 1. Yahweh is the **personal name for God** and is introduced here for the first time in 2:4. Yahweh signifies God in **relationship** with His people, and is the **covenant** name for God. As chapter 2 narrows its focus from all of creation to specifically man and woman, it is very appropriate that the name switches to Yahweh, God's personal covenant name. God is in (covenant) relationship with His creation.*

*These two names for God are used in various combinations as well, combined with another name for God, Adonai, or Lord. Adonai signifies God's authority and sovereignty as Lord or Master. Because of a superstition that arose in Egypt, Jews started taking it as a violation of the commandment to take the Lord's name in vain to say 'Yahweh'. Thus instead, they started saying Adonai. This of course causes some confusion when reading the text, which is the underlying word. This came into English translations as well, which translate Yahweh as LORD with all capitals. So, God translates Elohim, LORD translates Yahweh, and Lord translates Adonai. However, when you have Yahweh Elohim (LORD God), or Adonai Yahweh (Lord GOD), it can get confusing! Yahweh Elohim signifies that Israel's covenant God Yahweh, is indeed the **Creator God** and only true God. Adonai Yahweh emphasizes that Yahweh is the Lord, the **Master and Commander of the universe** and is sovereign over it all.*

2. As you read chapter 2, what is being emphasized in verses 5-14? Why are the various details given? What do you think living in the garden would have been like? (1 paragraph)

*A: As the details are given in describing the garden, God's **goodness** in giving His people such a good place to live is emphasized. He gave them **everything they needed** to live out His good design! The whole garden had a built in watering system with rivers and a mist! Moreover, the description of all the gold and jewels is*

reminiscent of the tabernacle (which remember they would have already known about). This paints the picture of the garden as the place that God dwells with His people. **God's presence** with with them! The presence of God will be a major theme throughout the Bible culminating in the New Jerusalem, where God will forever dwell with His people!

3. Note the different words for plants in 2:5. Where else are plants are mentioned in chapters 1-3? What is different about how the plants are referred to in chapter 1 and chapters 2-3? How does chapter 3's mention of plants tie in with chapter 2? What is the point of mentioning the plants in chapters 2 and 3? (1 paragraph)

A: When chapter 1 mentions plants, it does so without adding the phrase "of the field." Chapters 2-3 add this phrase. Thus when 2:5 mentions that no "shrub of the field" and no "plant of the field" had sprung up, most likely it is looking forward to chapter 3 and the **curse**. Thus the point is not that there were no plants, but no cultivated plants and weeds to go with them. Thus the condition in the garden in chapter two was without the effects of the Fall: plants flourished and grew without needing to be farmed/cultivated and without the weeds which were the effect of the Fall. The emphasis is on the goodness of God's creation before the Fall and how God had so provided for His people. As 2:5 states, the garden produced without the need of any man to work the land!

4. Thought question: What do you think is signified by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What would happen (besides dying!) if it was eaten? What does it mean to have the knowledge of good and evil? What does it imply that they didn't have this knowledge when created? (1 paragraph)

A: It likely refers to moral autonomy, being able to decide for oneself what is good and what is evil. Before man ate the fruit, he did not decide for himself what was good or evil, but **trusted** God for that. When man ate the fruit, he became a 'god', making himself the center and ultimate authority of what is best. He now became a judge of good and evil, whereas before, He only knew the good because he completely trusted God to decide what was best.

5. When was woman created? What comes before this and what comes after this in chapter 2? What is significant about this order? What happens between Adam and Eve's creation? (1 paragraph)

A: The description of God's creation of woman begins in verse 18. This is after God created man, placed him in the garden, gave him his purpose (2:15), and gave him the command not to eat the fruit (2:16-17). This is important because man was given purpose which the woman was to **help** him in. And man was responsible to trust God's command and to obey, and is ultimately responsible for his wife's obedience as well. God's Word has authority (as we saw in chapter 1), so man should have obeyed this command (which was for his good).

6. What is significant about 2:18's use of 'good'? How does this tie in with the use of the word good so far in Genesis? What does this imply about God since He is the One who recognized and remedied the situation? (1 paragraph)

A: This is the first time anything in Genesis is described as **not good**! It was not good that man was alone. He was incomplete in some way. This ties in with the main point that God created everything good. When something was less than very good, God saw, acknowledged, and did something about it before Adam even recognized that there was a problem! God is watching out for Adam! This proves that God can be **trusted**, He

*knows what is good and what isn't and will always act for man's good. Man should have trusted that God would do everything that was good for him!*

7. What words are used to describe the woman's relationship to man in 2:18? What do these words imply about the man and woman's relationship? (1 paragraph)

*A: The two words used to describe the woman are **helper** and **suitable**. The word helper implies that man was given purpose (in 2:15) which the woman was to help him to accomplish. It was his responsibility, but she was given as a help in that responsibility. Thus they were to have different roles in accomplishing God's purpose. The word suitable could be better translated 'as his counterpart.' Men and women are different! They have different strengths and weaknesses that **complement** one another. Where one is weak the other is strong, and visa versa. But together they are meant to accomplish God's design!*

8. What does the fact that Adam names the animals imply? When Adam says that his wife is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, what does this imply? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Adam's naming of the animals implies that God gave him dominion over them. When Adam says, "Now at last!" it emphasizes Adam's excitement that God had given him a helpmate, and God's goodness in doing so. Secondly, it emphasizes the **unity** that Adam and Eve had as distinct from the animals.*

9. Does verse 2:24 seem like a parenthetical statement (outside the scope of the narrative)? Why does the author include it? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yes, 2:24 is an interjection from the narrator. The author purposely takes an aside to apply the truths of the narrative to the readers of the Torah. He draws the conclusion that because of the uniqueness of the relationship between man and woman, that the marriage relationship is different from all others. When a man and woman get married they leave their parents and become united as one. Moreover, the words **forsake** and **cling** have strong covenantal overtones. This relationship is a covenantal one, ie. one where there is a **commitment of faithfulness** which cannot be broken.*

10. Why does the author include 2:25 and what does it add to the narrative? (1+ sentence)

*A: 2:25 speaks of the openness and trust that existed before the Fall; **Sin** is what causes shame and distrust.*

11. How does the first few words of chapter 3 begin? How do these words function in the narrative? What is the author doing by starting with "Now there was this crafty serpent..." (ie. why does he tell us that up front)? In the Hebrew the word for 'crafty' describing the serpent in 3:1 is almost the exact same word used in the previous verse saying that the man and woman were 'naked'. The author is making a word play between the two verses. Why? What is implied by this wordplay? (1 paragraph)

*A: The author is introducing a new character into the story. Before telling us what the serpent said, he wants to introduce us to what kind of a serpent he was, he was a **crafty** serpent. This background information is given at the start of the narrative and so colors our understanding of the rest of what happens. The serpent isn't asking these questions because he wants to know the answers, but to place **doubt** in the woman's mind. By using a wordplay between naked and crafty, Moses is placing side by side the naive couple and the cunning serpent. The wordplay makes this contrast more stark.*

12. What was the serpent's basic tact in tempting the woman? How is her response different from what we have seen earlier in the narrative? (1 paragraph)

A: The serpent questions God and is trying to place **doubt** in the woman's mind. He is tempting the woman not to **trust** God's words. He is also calling into question whether God has their best interests in mind. He frames the questions in such a way as to encourage the woman to think independently, and to decide for herself what would be best for herself, rather than trusting that God had their best interests in mind. She added to God's command by saying, "and not touch it", thus making God's command more strict than it originally was. All sin is a trade of instant gratification over long lasting satisfaction. All sin begins with believing a lie. The lie is that this thing will make me happy more than what God says. It all begins with the problem that we think we know how to make ourselves happy, whereas Genesis so far is trying to drill into us that God knows what is good, He is looking out for us, and He alone can make us happy and blessed!

13. What key words do we see in 3:6 that we have seen earlier? What is different about their use here? What does 3:5 say will happen when they eat the fruit and how does that tie in with why Eve ate in 3:6? What three phrases are used to describe the reason why the woman ate the fruit? What do they imply about temptation? How did Adam respond? (1+ paragraph)

A: Two key words in 3:6 are '**good**' and '**saw**'. In chapter 1, God is the one that saw and declared that things were good. He is the One who evaluated goodness. Here, the woman is doing so **independently**. Notice that Satan says that when they eat the fruit their 'eyes will be opened' (cf. 3:7). Their eyes being opened meant that they evaluated what was good for themselves and we will see the use of eyes/saw throughout the Torah to speak of this independent evaluation. The three phrases are "good for food," "delight to the eyes," and "desirable to make one wise." (They are similar to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life in 1st John and Jesus' temptation, thus showing that those authors view these temptations as **paradigmatic** in many ways). At the heart of the temptations are **selfishness and pride**. Our desires should be for God alone. He gives us what is best (note that the word 'desire' here is the same word in Deu 5:21). We should not judge by our senses what is best for us, but should judge everything by God's Word. Also, Biblical wisdom is to fear Yahweh. We need to understand that we don't have a comprehensive understanding of what is best, but He does. Therefore we should fear and submit to Him. We should trust Him. It was selfishness and pride that motivated the first sin. The selfishness of desiring what God warned as harmful, and the pride of thinking we can judge for ourselves what is best and become like God. That is at the essence of what it means to be a fallen human: the pride of autonomy and becoming like God. Adam simply **followed his wife** and ate. He had the responsibility, but he willfully chose rather to **abdicate his leadership** and so sinned with his wife.

14. What were the immediate responses to them eating the fruit (verses 7-10)? (2-3 sentences)

A: They received the **knowledge of good and evil**, but it wasn't like they thought it would be. It brought **shame** of their sin and **broke the unhindered relationship** they had with God. Sin separates. Distrust and separation replaced the fellowship and intimacy they had. Perfect love casts out fear...

15. Who did God go to after they sinned? Why? What is each of their responses? What does Adam imply about God in his response? What does Eve say in her response? Does the text affirm or contradict her response? (1 paragraph)

A: When God goes looking for the couple He calls for the man, because he was **responsible**. Adam blameshifts rather than taking responsibility, as does Eve. Adam even goes so far as to imply **blame upon God**, that the

very good gift of his wife was the problem. God's good gift was not the problem! Eve says that the Serpent deceived her and this is true. Adam willfully chose to sin, Eve was deceived. This speaks some to differences between men and women. Men are more bullheaded and women are more easily deceived... (cf. 1Ti 2:14).

16. How does God respond to the Serpent? What key word is used here for the first time in the Torah? What related term have we already seen. Read 3:15 very carefully and list all the different people involved. What key is there in the text that the verse is speaking of more than just a literal serpent and its literal offspring? (1+ paragraph)

A: God **curse**s the Serpent. 'Curse' is our new key word which of course is related to the concept of blessing. The woman, the Serpent, the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the Serpent are the key people in this verse. Note that it is the **offspring of the woman** who is going to crush **the Serpent itself**, not the offspring of the Serpent. In other words we don't have the offspring of the woman crushing the offspring of the Serpent, which is what we would expect. We have a descendant of the woman crushing the Serpent itself. This shows that this goes beyond the literal snake (who must last for generations in order to be crushed by the descendant of the woman). Plus, this was a talking snake. Thus when Moses is writing this thousands of years later it is already evident that what is being talked about here is not simply enmity between snakes and humans. Here a major theme is introduced that works its way through all of Genesis, and indeed the Old Testament. A **seed** is going to be born who would **crush the head of the Serpent**. There would be **two opposing lines** at constant enmity with one another. Good and evil are at war. This is what we continually see through Genesis, the two lines (ie. Cain and Abel, Shem and Ham, Isaac and Ishmael [Arabs], Jacob and Esau [Edomites]). There is also a continual anticipation of the seed who would come and crush the head of the Serpent. Even in the midst of sin there is hope...

17. Are the man and the woman cursed like the Serpent? What word is used of both the man and the woman? How does the Fall effect both the man and the woman? List the effects. Notice what reasons God gives for what He says to each the man and the woman. (1+ paragraph)

A: Neither one is directly cursed, like the Serpent was. But there is **pain** for both of them. That is the result of the Fall. For the woman it is likely the Hebrew text reads that her pain **and** her conceptions will increase. It is likely that she wouldn't have gotten pregnant as often without the curse (ie. have a yearly menstrual cycle instead of a monthly one). And if we look at third world countries we indeed see that having lots of children is difficult. Our modern society with birth control mitigates some of the effects of the Fall. Furthermore, we see that the Fall effects her relationship with her husband. Her lust will be to be over her husband, but he will rule over her (cf. **Gen 4:7** for the same words). For the man, the ground is cursed. Note that work is not the result of the Fall (work was given to man in chapter 2). But the fact that work was painful and toilsome **is** the result of the Fall. No reason is given for Eve, but for Adam the reason for his punishment is because he **listened to his wife**. Once again he is held **responsible** for his passivity. He should have listened to God instead of his wife.

18. Did the man and woman die? Why? Explain your reason. (1 paragraph)

A: The man and the woman did die. God said they would surely die and they did. The moment they ate the fruit the **principle of death entered into them** which immediately separated them from God and would result in their physical deaths as well. This principle of death is what now governs their lives (cf. Rom 5:12-14). And furthermore, the final effect of the Fall given is that they would die and return to dust, a reminder of the frailty of humanity in light of the Fall.

19. How did Adam respond to God's pronouncements? How did God then respond to Adam? (1+ paragraphs)

*A: Adam responded in **faith** to what God said. Even though they had just sinned and been separated from God and the principle of death had entered into them, Adam **believed the note of hope, the promise** that God gave in the pronouncements that there would be seed from the woman that would ultimately crush the head of the Serpent. This meant that humanity was not over. And Adam believed what God said and acted upon it by naming his wife Eve, the mother of all the living, trusting that life would indeed continue from her as God said. God then responded to Adam's act of faith by making coverings for them. Thus their **shame was covered** by animal skin. This is the **first death** in Genesis, but it was not their death, but the death of an animal in their place. Thus, because of a **sacrifice** they can continue to have **relationship** with God and be **covered**. These are major concepts that Israel would have readily been aware of as they already knew their sacrificial system.*

20. How does the story of the Fall end (vss. 22-24)? What reversals have occurred? What irony is there in this section? (1 paragraph)

*A: Man would have lived forever, but wanting to be like God he was subjected to death. Man attained the knowledge of good and evil, but doing so only added to his awareness the awareness of evil. He knew what was good before! God had given him everything good. God had placed him in the garden to serve the garden, now he is kicked out of the garden to serve the cursed ground. They were to guard the garden, but now the garden is guarded from them! So they are barred from the tree of life and receive death. They wanted the knowledge of good and evil, and so now evil predominates this sin cursed world. They should have simply trusted and obeyed...*

21. Application: How does this passage effect our understanding of men's and women's roles? How does it effect our understanding of marriage? In what ways should this change the way you live either now or in the future?
22. Application: What do we learn about temptation and how to battle temptation from this passage? How will understanding this section effect how you respond to temptation in the future?

#### 4. The Downward Spiral of Sin and Death: Genesis 4-11

**Scripture:** Genesis 4:1-11:26

**Theme:** After Mankind Fell into Sin, the Effects of Death Permeated God's Good World

**Objectives:**

- To understand the effects of sin and death on the world
- To give an appreciation for God's plan to restore blessing to the world
- To understand God's holiness and hatred of sin

**Reading:**

- Read (thoughtfully) Genesis 4:1-11:26.
- Read Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 152-256.

**Questions:**

1. How does Genesis 4:1 begin? In light of what we've just read in chapter 3, what do you think Adam and Eve would be thinking? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Chapter 4 begins with a birth of a son. With the birth of each son would have been the hope and anticipation that this child might be the **seed** of the woman who will crush the Serpent's head!*

2. What is different about Cain and Abel's offerings? What does the text put **emphasis** on? (1 paragraph)

*A: Although there is a difference in that Abel brought an animal offering and Cain an offering of fruit, the text lays emphasis on the fact that Abel brought the best, the firstfruits of his flock, whereas this is conspicuously missing from Cain's account. The Hebrew text uses a clear contrast to compare Abel's offering with Cain's by saying "But Abel indeed brought..." The point is that we need to offer our best to God. This passage is about a **heart attitude**, not the type of sacrifice that needs to be brought.*

3. What key word is used again in 4:7 (note that 'well' and 'good' are the same word in Hebrew)? What do we learn about it here? What does God do in this verse and the preceding one? Why? (1 paragraph)

*A: Our key word '**good**' surfaces once again. Here Cain has the opportunity to do good or not. He is at a fork in the road. The conflict between good and evil arises immediately. God in His **grace** asks Cain a question to try to warn him. Good and evil is a battle right through the **middle of each of our hearts**. We see the connection with 3:16 which shows that the battle in our hearts comes from the Fall. Sin always leads to death. As a result of the Fall sin is crouching and trying to kill us. Here God explicitly warns Cain that sin is crouching like a lion seeking to devour him. He calls Cain to **rule** over his sin. God gave Cain every opportunity to obey.*

4. What is the answer to Cain's rhetorical question in verse 9? What would have been significant about this for Israel? (2-3 sentences)

A: Yes, he is his **brother's keeper!** This is about mutual **responsibility**. 'Brother' is an important word in the OT that speaks of solidarity and mutual responsibility that we have for one another. The Israelites would have understood this mutual responsibility, which makes a murder of a brother all the more heinous!

5. What key word do we see in verse 11? What is different than how it was used earlier? (2-3 sentences)

A: Cain is **cursed**. Thus far no human has been cursed. But Cain didn't respond in faith to God's warning, but shows himself to be of the line of the Serpent in the battle between good and evil. Even though his parents sinned, they ultimately trusted and were forgiven, whereas Cain refuses and is simply cursed.

6. What is God's punishment of Cain (what good thing is taken from Cain)? How does Cain respond to his punishment? (2-3 sentences)

A: Cain is to be a wanderer. This means that he has no **'land'**. Thus we see such a key concept in Genesis emphasized here. It's easy for us to miss how significant land was, but here the text is emphasizing its importance. Land has to do with peace, purpose, and permanence [kingdom]. Cain responds in self pity rather than repentance.

7. What is the point in the story about Lamech? (2-3 sentences)

A: The point of this story is that things just kept getting **worse!** We go from murder to polygamy, from premeditated murder to murder on a whim!

8. How does the chapter end? What does this teach us about God and His plan? (2-3 sentences)

A: Despite the world going down the drain, God is still in control and there is still hope. God will still provide a seed to ultimately defeat the Serpent. Men began calling on the name of Yahweh, He has not been completely forgotten.

9. What is the pattern in the genealogy in Chapter 5? What does that pattern emphasize? (1 paragraph)

A: The Pattern - 1) A person lived x years, and bore a son. 2) That person lived y more years and bore more children. 3) That person lived x+y years total and died. This pattern emphasizes **death** and the effects of sin. Death spread to all. It was inevitable... It also emphasizes new life and the hope of the seed of the woman.

10. What are the exceptions to the pattern (there are 3)? And what do they each emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

A: Adam, Enoch, and Noah are the exceptions. Adam- The point is emphasized of God's original good purpose to bless in contrast to death. God's purpose is not obliterated. Enoch- Emphasizes that walking with God is a way to escape death. Noah- Emphasizes hope from the curse.

11. What's the point of this genealogy? (1 sentence)

A: The point is that man can walk with God in the midst of the curse and death in hope that God will one day deliver.



12. Who are the sons of God and the daughters of men? What clues do you have just from this immediate text? Elsewhere? What happens here and how does this fit into the Genesis narrative? (1 paragraph)

*A: The sons of God are 'angelic' beings. This can be seen by the contrast between 'sons of God' and 'daughters of men.' Job 1:6 is the only other place in Scripture this exact phrase is used and there it describes angelic beings as well (cf. 1Pe 3:19-20, 2Pe 2:4-5, and Jud 1:6-8 which makes the identification certain). So angelic beings cohabit with women (either by possessing men or taking corporeal form, the text doesn't say). They do this presumably to foil God's plan to redeem and restore blessing to His world. Thus God must treat this **rebellion** with the utmost severity and wipe out the whole world so that His plan will continue. This is a diabolical plan to frustrate God's plan and to pollute His line through which the Serpent Crusher would come, but God is in control and **His plan isn't foiled**. He will triumph in the end!*

13. What key words do we see again in 6:2 (note: 'beautiful' is the same word for 'good') that we have seen before and what do they emphasize? What key words do we see again in 6:5 and what do they emphasize? How does 6:5 play off of 6:2? What word is repeated in 6:6 from 6:5 and why? If you have the ability, note the Hebrew words repeated in 6:6 from 5:29. (1 paragraph)

*A: Here these 'sons of God' saw that something was good, just as Eve did. They were judging what was best for themselves, something which in reality wasn't good at all, but evil! So we see in 6:5 that God saw that their wickedness was great. Notice the parallel use of saw and the contrast between good and evil. **What men judged as good, God judged as evil**. There had been a complete corruption where good and evil were completely backwards in men's evaluation! Note the use of the word 'heart', how the wickedness in man's heart grieved God's heart. There is also a probable word play with 5:29: Lamech sought comfort (Heb: naham) from toil (Heb: `atsav), but God was sorry (Heb: naham) and grieved (Heb: `atsav). This wordplay emphasizes the fact that pain was a result of sin because sin pained God!! God wants us to feel pain because He is pained by sin.*

14. How does this section end in 6:7? What does 6:8 state? What is striking about these two verses next to each other? What is a synonym for 'favor'? What does this signify? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The section ends with God's resolve to wipe out mankind because of the far reaching effects of sin and death on His world. In spite of God's resolve to wipe out mankind, there still is hope. God's plan hasn't failed. Grace is a synonym for 'favor'. God's grace triumphs in the midst of sin and death!*

15. How is Noah described in 6:9? How is this specifically seen in the narrative that follows (details)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Noah is **righteous**. This will largely be defined in the narrative to follow. He trusted God by obeying (a crazy command). Here it seems that the word denotes both a **covenantal relationship** and **proper conduct** within that relationship. In light of the major emphasis on faith and trust within the Torah it is likely that Moses is portraying Noah as a man of faith. Like Enoch, being righteous meant walking in **relationship** with Yahweh, and escaping death as a result (there is the application for us: to escape death we must be in relationship with Yahweh). Noah's righteousness is seen in the meticulous care he takes to build the ark. Note all the details given for how to build the ark in 14-16 (these details weren't given so we could see if the ark floated! Moses tells us it did! These details show us how careful Noah was to obey to the letter all that God said!). See the emphasis in 6:22 (and 7:16) on Noah's careful obedience to God's **commandment**.*

16. What major key word is used for the first time in the Bible in this section 6:18-22, and is a major emphasis for the rest of the flood account? What does it signify? (1 paragraph)

A: The key word first used here is '**covenant**'. God's covenant is what saves the world. It is His faithfulness and His grace. Noah and God have a relationship and so now God makes a covenant with him. The issue at stake is whether they will **trust** one another (whether Noah will trust God that He will keep His word and whether Noah will prove to be trustworthy in obeying so that the world will be saved). This mutual trust and relationship is at the heart of what covenant is!

17. What verbs are repeated in 7:16-24 (use software or a concordance if necessary)? What do they emphasize about God? (2-3 sentences)

A: Key words include: Prevailed (Heb: gbr); Wiped out (Heb: mhh); and Died (Heb: mut). The word for prevailed implies that God is a warrior. Notice the bow He puts in the sky which is a warrior's bow! God is the victor. He always wins. He wiped out the earth and everybody died! So while we see God's covenantal grace in the life of Noah, here we see His just wrath in **conquering** His enemies!

18. Why is 8:1 such a pivotal point within the flood narrative? What does it signify? What is emphasized through the rest of this section (8:1-15)? Why all the mentions of time? What is Noah doing? How does the chapter end (8:16-22)? What is important about this ending? (1 paragraph)

A: God is **faithful** to His word and to His covenant. He will not forget, He always remembers. He will be faithful to remember and do what He says. The emphasis in the remaining section is on **waiting**. Noah had to wait in trusting that God would do what He said. He waited a long time and trusted that God would be faithful to His word. The chapter ends with a sacrifice. **Sacrifice** is a necessary part of relationship with God. We need substitution, atonement, and forgiveness as we already saw in chapter 3 (more on this in Leviticus!).

19. What key word begins chapter 9? What does this remind us of from earlier in Genesis? What does the rest of this section emphasize (9:1-17)? What key word is repeated? (1 paragraph)

A: The word 'blessed' begins chapter 9. God is continuing to bless and this is reminiscent of the commission to Adam. **God will continue to bless life.** The rest of the section emphasizes God's covenant. Although there is a new beginning, this one is under covenant obligations. Even though God wiped out the earth, life is still sacred. There must be limits so that life is held sacred so there is the death penalty (9:5), and God has made a covenant not to wipe out the earth in this way again. God will be faithful to keep His Word and has placed restrictions so that His plan will not be jeopardized again.

20. What is the point of the next section (9:18-29)? How does the background (parenthetical, see ESV) information given in verse 18 help us to understand the point? Contrast how Shem/Japheth deal with their father and how Ham does. Elaborate. (1+ paragraph)

A: We continue to see sin seeming to corrupt God's plan. Even Noah here is debauched in naked drunkenness. Not a good way to start a new beginning! But God's plan continues on. The point of this narrative seems to have everything to do with Ham/Canaan. Once again we will see **two lines**. The line of Shem, the righteous/blessed line, and that of Ham, the wicked/cursed one. This of course is tied in to Israel's situation in that they were about to go in and wipe out the Canaanites because of their wickedness. Thus

*this section gives them more theological basis for seeing why God wanted to wipe out this wicked people. Note the contrast between Shem/Japheth and Ham. They covered their father's nakedness, whereas he exposed it. There are two kinds of people, those who have a sense of sin and shame before God, and those who don't. Thus Canaan is cursed and Shem receives the blessing (although technically God is the one who is blessed). There are only two groups, the blessed and the cursed, which one do you want to be?*

21. How is the genealogy in chapter 10 different than the others in Genesis (there are several significant differences)? In light of these differences, what is the purpose of this chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 10 doesn't trace individuals from an ancestor, but traces **whole people groups**! Thus it contains cities, families, and nations, rather than just individuals. It doesn't just trace a single line, but spreads out more. Its purpose is to show Israel its place in the world. It places her in her **context**. It gives her a worldview. The whole world has commonality in Noah yet is separated by language, land and government. **This** is the world that God desires to bless through Israel. It appears to be intentional by Moses that the list has 70 names, the same as the number of the descendants of Israel (Gen 46:27). Thus as Deuteronomy 32:8 says, this is the world that God apportioned for Israel to reach with His blessing! This is the mission field Israel is placed amidst!*

22. What were the key elements of the people's sin in the Babel account? What do we learn about God? How does this story fit into God's plan? (1 paragraph)

*A: We continue to see the global focal as we finish out the first 11 chapters of Genesis (11:1). 11:2 states the first act of sin in that they purposefully rejected God's command (in 9:1) to fill the earth. 11:4 shows that this was an immense act of **pride**. The whole earth was united together, **but apart from God**. This is humanism. God of course hates pride and humbles those who are proud. He wants humanity to humbly depend upon Him alone and to obey Him. So God guaranteed that His plan and purpose to fill the earth and then to bless it would be fulfilled. **World peace is the absolute worst thing that could ever happen to a world opposed to God!***

23. Who is the genealogy in 11:10-26 about? Who does it tie to whom? Why? (1-2 sentences)

*A: It's about Abraham and ties him to Shem and the chosen line of blessing. God is going to bless the world through His grace of choosing and blessing.*

24. Application: What does this section teach us about mankind and our predicament? How does this shape our worldview and effect how we interact with unbelievers?

## 5. The Chosen Man in God's Plan: Genesis 12-25

**Scripture:** Genesis 11:27-25:11

**Theme:** God Chose One Man through whom He Would Work out His Plan to Restore Global Blessing

**Objectives:**

- To understand how God's promise to bless the world will be worked out so that we know how to participate in God's plan
- To see how Abraham trusted in God and was blessed so that we will be confident to trust
- To be grounded in the faithfulness of God to His promises so we will be encouraged to live in faithful obedience

**Reading:**

- Read (thoughtfully) Genesis 11:27-25:11.
- Read Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 257-430.

**Questions:**

1. Trace the Abrahamic Covenant through this section (this will take a while, do this thoughtfully). Note all the places where God makes promises to Abraham. What does God promise in each section? What are the conditions? How does the promise grow/change through the section? Work carefully on this! As a sub-question, note the use of 'blessing' through this section (especially in 12:1-3). Why is God blessing Abraham? (1/2 to 1 page, single spaced)

A:

*Gen 12:1-3 is the beginning of the Abrahamic covenant. There God calls Abraham to obey Him in **faith**, and **promises to bless** him with land, seed, and blessing. What is very important to note is the global emphasis here (**all the families of the earth**), even though the narrative has narrowed from humanity to a single man. It is also important to note the emphasis on blessing in these verses, 5x in 2 verses. This of course picks up on this major theme which began in chapter 1. Note that God will bless Abram so that he will be a blessing. God's purpose in calling Abram was to bless the world.*

*In 12:7 God promises to give Abram's offspring the **land** (cf. Gen 13:14; 15:1; 17:1; 18:9; 22:15; 26:2; 26:24; 28:13; 35:10)*

*In chapter 15 (which is in response to Abram's faith in ch 14), God promises to reward Abram and to be his shield (fitting in light of ch 14). Abram took no reward from the kings of Sodom/Salem, so God will **reward** him. Abram doesn't respond out of a lack of faith by asking about his heir, but in **faith**, for what other reward to Abram would mean anything except the fulfillment of God's promise? God apparently was delaying in keeping his promise, but why? It has much to do with seeing Abram's faith in the promise. So in 15:5 God promises him numerous **offspring** (key word 'seed'). Abram **believes** God (key word 'believe'), but the striking use of verb tense may suggest that Abram had already believed. It is Abram's belief that God reckons as righteousness. We see throughout this book that Abram isn't perfect. But God isn't looking for perfection, but faith/trust/obedience. Then God confirms this covenant promise by the smoking oven incident, which emphasizes that God Himself will ensure the promise is kept based on His own faithfulness and not based on Abram's (he was asleep). God alone walked through the pieces and so obligated Himself alone to keep the covenant (a unilateral, unconditional covenant). In 15:18 God reaffirms that He is making a*

covenant with Abram and promises him the land once again, this time giving him specific borders. As Abram continues to believe/trust, God continues to reaffirm and promise. Notice in 15:13 the need to wait for the fulfillment of the promise. It lies in the **future**. But God knows and predicts the future and calls us to trust Him for it.

17:1-27 God makes further promises to Abram in this chapter (notice how many times 'covenant' in this chapter!). In 17:2-4 God promises to multiply him greatly and make a multitude of nations come from him. He changes his name to Abraham here (17:5) which is significant in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Notice in 17:7 that the covenant is **eternal**. It can't be broken. Yet we see in 17:9 that God calls him and his descendants to keep the covenant and gives him the sign of the covenant, circumcision. So while the **covenant is eternal**, participation in it by any individual is conditioned on keeping the covenant (17:14)!

2. Trace Abraham's (and others as well!) triumphs and failures of faith in this section. Try to divide up this section into the individual narratives and answer the following for each: When did he triumph? When did he fail? Why did he either triumph or fail? Give lessons learned from each. (1-2 pages, single spaced)

A: As the narrative continues, there is a major emphasis on Abram's faith. Note even at the beginning in 12:4 how Abram obeyed, even though he didn't know where he was going and even when he was already old.

12:10-20 We start off and see a failure of Abram's faith. Compromise is never the way to fulfill God's plan, even when it **seems** that it is the only way that God's plan will continue (cf. 12:12). God calls us to trust and He will ensure that His promise is kept (12:17).

13:1-18 Notice in 13:4 that Abram made an altar. The times he does so shows he is **living by faith**. So we see in the next narrative that Abram by faith gave the choice of the land to Lot! Even though God promised to give the land to Abram, he trusted God and gave Lot the choice. Lot chose by what he saw, what seemed best, much like Eve (13:10). So God had Abram lift up his eyes (13:14) and gave him what actually was best.

14:1-24 Abram is shown once again to be a man of faith. The emphasis is international and how God is blessing Abram even on an international scale. By contrast Lot is not shown in a positive light, from living near Sodom, to **IN** it! The end of this section is especially significant dealing with the king of Sodom who brackets the king of Salem (to contrast the two kings). The king of Salem blesses Abram (main theme) and shows that the victory of these major kings is due to God's blessing. God won the battle. But Abram trusted and acted in faith. And so Abram tithes to this king-priest who is in relationship with Yahweh. But by faith Abram won't take anything from the wicked king of Sodom to show that God is the One who blessed him, so God will get the glory.

16:1-16 Abram fails once again. He becomes impatient for the promise (16:3) and takes matters into his own hands. He listens to the voice of his wife in 16:2 (sound familiar?). We should listen to and trust God! Notice the emphasis on the Angel of Yahweh to receive importance throughout the Torah.

18:1-33 After renewing the covenant with Abraham, Yahweh Himself eats with him. This was very significant in ANE covenantal contexts, where the meal signified relationship and that the covenant was established. Note 18:17-19 which is highly significant in the development. Abraham has a highly significant place in God's plan, especially here as **intercessor for the world** (cf. 18:18, 23).

19:1-38 Here we see Lot's failures of faith and how getting involved in the world cost him (cf. 19:1, 16, 26).

Note **19:29** which is significant in that it shows Lot was spared **because of** Abraham. Once again Abraham is portrayed as an intercessor/means of blessing.

20:1-18 Another failure of Abraham. He lies again! God is the one who guards His own righteousness (20:6).

Yet even though Abraham had a failure of faith, notice that he must be the intercessor for Abimelech (20:7, 17). God is working out His plan despite Abraham's sin and blessing him (20:14) and blessing those who bless him and visa-versa (20:18).

21:1-20 When God **visits** (key word, cf. 21:1) He acts in accordance with His character, either in blessing or cursing depending on the situation. God shows up! and if you are in relationship to Him, you will be blessed, otherwise you'll be judged! Here He is faithful to His word, but in His time (cf. 21:2, 5). Abraham waited for the promise and now receives the firstfruit of it. This issue in the section is about the heir to the promise (21:10). God is even in favor of casting out Hagar (21:12) because He will ensure that the heir is protected. Isaac is the son of promise, and so he will be the heir, even though God will bless Ishmael on account of Abraham (21:13). Once again the Angel of God comes in to protect Hagar/Ishmael and is a reminder that God does act in this world and cares for people.

21:21-34 The point of this section is that Abraham is living peacefully in the land in relationship with those around him (from the pagans!). As **21:22-23** shows, God is blessing Abraham, and even the outsiders can see it. They see his faith and God's blessing. That's the point of the Abrahamic covenant! In 21:27 **Abraham makes peace and resolves the conflict.**

22:1-24 This chapter is of course Abraham's greatest triumph of faith. The chapter begins by telling the reader that this was a test. This assures us that God didn't intend to actually kill Isaac. Yet, Abraham doesn't know it is a test, and so his **faith** is highlighted. This is one of the greatest acts of faith in all of Scripture, as God commands Abraham to kill his special, one of a kind, son, through whom God had given the promises and through whom God would uniquely work out His plan for the world! Abraham's unwavering faith is shown in his immediate obedience without questioning or delaying (22:3). 22:5 shows that Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead, for there was no other way for God to keep His promise. That is how much Abraham believed and trusted God, and so the act itself was to be one of worship (22:5). Abraham believed that God would provide since God **sees** and cares for His children (22:8). Abraham actually went through with the command (22:10) and passed the test (22:12). He sacrificed his own wisdom and will to that of God's and showed a true fear of Yahweh. Obeying is what is best no matter what and is always the path to blessing. Cf. the relationship between fear and faith. Fear is a confidence in the unseen awesomeness of God, while faith is a confidence in the unseen goodness of God. We need to live in light of that fact that God is real. So God gives a substitute (22:13) and God Himself confirms the covenant. He says that He will **surely** keep it, and **swears by Himself** to keep it (22:16-17). Because of the faithful obedience of one man the world will be blessed (22:18). Everything after this chapter in the Abraham narrative is transitional. Abraham has proved his faith, and so now we prepare for the next generation.

23:1-20 As the patriarchs (and matriarch) begin to die, what will happen to the promise? It was yet unfulfilled. Will God keep it? So in this section Abraham shows his faith by believing God's promise. He shows his future is in Canaan even though his ancestral home is in the east. There was no going back for Abraham. He believed God's promise so surely he made provisions for it even after his own death. God's promises go beyond a single generation. Note that in **23:6** the locals once again recognize God's blessing on Abraham. The emphasis in Abraham's buying of the field is that he did so fairly and legally (23:9). He obtained witnesses and paid the full price. Thus he makes it clear that God is the one who blessed him, not

*the Canaanites. This also shows that the Israelites have a right to the land. Thus this section ends with Abraham buying a small portion of the land that would one day belong to his seed. It is a down payment of sorts.*

*24:1-67 Abraham once again makes provision for the future in faith. God providentially works out this story in an amazing way (like the Joseph story) to work out His plan. Abraham even makes his servant swear because of the importance of finding Isaac a bride in God's plan because the Canaanites were cursed and to mix the seed with them would be to jeopardize God's plan (24:3). So Abraham planned and acted so that God's plan would be fulfilled (24:4). There are many tensions in this story to finding a bride (24:5). Would it work out? Abraham is confident that God will work it out and even send His Angel to ensure it does (24:7). We also see the faith of the servant, he prays and trusts Himself (24:12). God's **timing** shows He is **sovereignly** working it all out (24:15). And so God gets all the credit for He had been faithful to His promises (24:27).*

*25:1-11 And so, Abraham dies and the line passes to Isaac (which is the emphasis and point of this section). Abraham ensured that Isaac was the heir because he believed the promise (25:5, 6). And yet the promise did not die with Abraham.*

3. Application: What do you learn about God and man's relationship to Him by walking through the Abrahamic covenant? How does that knowledge effect the way you live?
4. Application: What do you learn through Abraham's triumphs and failures of faith as a whole that will change the way you walk in relationship to God?

## 6. The Faithfulness of God Despite Deceit: Genesis 25-36

**Scripture:** Genesis 25:12-36:43

**Theme:** Although Jacob did not Trust God and so Acted Deceitfully, He was Still God's Chosen means through which to Work, so God Ultimately Changed his Heart and Used him

**Objectives:**

- To see how deceit endangers God's plan and our participation in it
- To see how God is faithful to His Word and plan despite sin

**Reading:**

- Read Genesis 25:12-36:43.
- Read Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 431-594.

**Questions:**

1. How does the genealogy of Ishmael (25:12-18) fit into the structure of Genesis and move the story forward? (1 paragraph)

*A: There are five genealogies in the first half of the book of Genesis (1-11) and five after (12-50). The first five move progressively to the apex of the book in chapter 12 and God's choice of Abraham. The next five have an alternating pattern which shows God's election of His line for His plan (Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, Jacob). So the line of Ishmael comes before Isaac (the chosen one) to reinforce **God's election and choice**. God's election emphasizes that God is the one who is going to work out His plan!*

2. How does the narrative in 25:19-34 set the stage for this section? What do we learn about the key 'actors' who are introduced in the narrative here? What do we find out here that will be developed as the story progresses? (1 paragraph)

*A: From even before their birth, Jacob and Esau are at odds. The **prophecy** in 25:23 sets the stage that God is going to bless the younger, and thus reinforces God's election and plan. Yet we see how the sin of **favoritism** (25:28) is going to tear this family apart and the effects of sin will be much pain for this family, even though God will work out His plan. We also see that Jacob cared about the birthright, and the blessing which went with it, while Esau despised it and therefore didn't care at all about what God was doing in the world through His plan. It's hard for us to see the importance of the **birthright** from our western perspective, but it had everything to do with being the **heir** and thus the one through which the family line would be passed. Throughout Genesis there is a large emphasis on the 'seed', where God is choosing a line in anticipation of the serpent crusher who would come. Jacob wanted to be that line, Esau despised it.*

3. What's the point of chapter 26? Do we see any similarities with what has come before? Where and what are they? Why does the author bring out these similarities? What key words are in this section? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is continuing to bless Isaac, just as he blessed Abraham (cf. this point explicitly in 26:2-5, especially verse 4 which echoes Gen 12:1-3 and also 26:12, 24). In fact, this section invites us to compare the two men and God's blessing on them by the similarities we see with what came before. This blessing came even despite Isaac's sin (cf. 26:7), **showing it is about God's choice and plan**. Just as Abraham impacted the 'pagans' around him, so Isaac (26:26-31, see key words: **covenant, peace, blessed**). They recognized God's*



*blessing and they themselves participated in that blessing to some degree. As a side note, if there are similarities in a narrative with what came before, it is not coincidental. The author included those similar events, not because he liked repetition, but because he had a point. In this case he wants to invite comparison between Abraham and Isaac and to show that 'history repeats itself' in a way. God continues to bless His line and the readers could expect the same even in their day and we can in ours!*

4. What's the point of chapter 27? Did the various people in this story do what was right or wrong? Why do you think so? What was the result? What do we learn about blessings? What do we learn about God in the midst of it all? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jacob and Rebekah didn't **trust** the promise/prophesy given all the way back in chapter 25, but decided to take it upon themselves to 'steal' the blessing. Because of their **deceit** the family will experience great pain and separation for many years. We don't know how God would have worked out His plan otherwise, but they should have **trusted** that He would! Yet we see that once the blessing was given, it was irrevocable. There was a sense in which the blessing itself was prophetic (27:33). So God's plan will be worked out even despite deception, but there will be great consequences to the family for the favoritism and deceit. Note also how there may be a play on the garden of Eden in 27:1 and 27:4 where Isaac could not **see** and so judged by his **taste**. His appetite was what drove him and he could not **see** based on spiritual realities.*

5. What does 28:1-5 teach us about God, His blessing, and His plan? (1 sentence)

*A: Chapter 28:1-5 teaches us that God is faithful and thus will continue to bless His chosen line, and that His plan will continue.*

6. What is the context of 28:10-22 (remind yourself of what has just happened)? How would Jacob have felt coming into this section? How would this incident have made Jacob feel? What would it have reaffirmed to him? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As Jacob has been exiled out of the promised land and forced to flee for his life, certainly he would have been tempted to doubt God's promise and blessing. But this incident would have **reassured** him that God was still with him and would fulfill His good promise to Abraham despite what had transpired.*

7. Does 29:1-14 sound familiar? To what? What do the similarities teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We learn here that **just as** God was sovereign and faithful to give Isaac a wife, so with Jacob. God is blessing so His plan can be worked out. God provides!*

8. What happens in 29:15-30? Who does what to whom? If you were watching this story (starting at 25:12) how would you feel at this point in the movie? What's the lesson the author is trying to communicate? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Laban tricks Jacob into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. **Poetic justice** is done! The deceiver gets deceived! You always get what you deserve in the end!*

9. What do we see going on in 29:30-30:24? What is the cause and what is the result (both immediate and lasting for hundreds of years)? (1 paragraph)

A: Favoritism and jealousy are at work. Because of Jacob's favoritism toward Rachel it resulted in jealousy and a **family torn apart**. This can be clearly seen in the Joseph story to come and throughout Israel's history. Those lines and **division** lasted for years until the northern kingdom eventually separated from the south! That's long lasting and major consequences! And the recipients of the Torah would have personally known the lines of division that ran through the midst of the nation of Israel.

10. What does 30:25-43 emphasize (especially in 27, 30, 43)? Why is this amazing in light of what is going on in the rest of 30:25-43? What does this teach us about God and His plan again? (1 paragraph)

A: These verses emphasize how greatly Jacob was blessed. But this is in the midst of deception on all sides (by both Laban and Jacob!). Both are trying to cheat the other, but God not only continues to bless Jacob, but also blesses Laban as a result (30:27)! But because of Jacob's deception, once again he must be driven out of a land. He was going to be blessed anyway, yet he didn't trust God for it and so faced the results. He was twice kicked out of where he lived and yet was still not getting the lesson...

11. What key (and somewhat rare) word is repeated over and over in chapter 31 (8 times)? What does this teach us about what we continue to see in this chapter? What other key word shows up in verse 44? What is the lesson here? (1 paragraph)

A: '**Stole**' is repeated 8x (30:33; 31:19, 20, 26, 27, 30, 32, 39 2x). Deceit continues in this chapter. Jacob continues to be the deceiver, but God continues to bless and protect him, but he continues to face the consequences of his actions. Even Laban is forced to make a covenant with Jacob because God is protecting him. So God is blessing Jacob **despite himself** because God will always be faithful to His promise.

12. What does 32:1-21 emphasize? What is Jacob thinking? How would you describe his feelings? What does Jacob do in this section that is key to what follows? (2-3 sentences)

A: Jacob was thinking that Esau was going to kill him. This section emphasizes Jacob's fear. He didn't trust God fully yet. But, he did pray to God and call out to Him in his time of distress. And so God will answer his feeble prayer!

13. Explain the significance of 32:22-32 and how it fits into the narrative. (2-3 sentences)

A: God changes Jacob. Just as there was a significant event as he left the promised land, so there is a significant one as he returns. Jacob wrestled with God and was **finally humbled** and forced to **seek the blessing from God** rather than trying to be **manipulative** to get it! Thus we see an important theme in the Torah: God must change people's hearts to trust Him if He is going to use them as part of His plan! God will certainly work out His plan, but He will only include those who trust Him within His blessed plan. So watch for the promise to transform hearts and a preview of the New Covenant in Deuteronomy...!

14. Remind yourself when was the last time Jacob saw Esau and the circumstances. What happens in chapter 33? Is this what Jacob expected? Is it close to what he expected? What does this teach us? What key word is repeated several times in this section and what does it teach us? What do we continue to see of Jacob in 33:2 and 33:18 (in light of 33:14)? (1 paragraph)

A: Esau welcomes Jacob with open arms. It is very emphatic how welcoming Esau is! God paved the way and blessed Jacob immensely. God is the one who has completely changed Esau's heart completely independent

*of Jacob's **scheming** (ordering his caravan, etc.)! Notice how 33:1 begins with Jacob **lifting up his eyes** and seeing Esau coming, and his evaluation of that fact based on a human perspective and not faith (he divided up his family)! Verse 11 shows how even Esau receives a blessing through Jacob. God is the One who is blessing. Jacob should have trusted God and not feared because God promised to bless him. **Grace/favor** is repeated several times and we are reminded that it's all God's grace/favor that we prosper. Notice as well the similarities in this story with the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. In 33:2 we continue to see Jacob's favoritism, and in 33:18 we see he didn't keep his word to Esau in 33:14.*

15. Does chapter 34 seem to fit into the narrative at this point? What have we learned we should do when something seems out of place? Why is this section here? What does it teach or emphasize (especially verses 2, 9-10, 23) that would have taught something to the original readers (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 34 definitely seems out of place. We have learned that we should always try to see how it fits in with where the author is going and why he included it here! This section emphasizes the wickedness of the Shechem and that the Canaanites wanted to **assimilate** the Israelites. This is why it was so important for Israel to **be separate and therefore holy**. Contrast this with how the Egyptians viewed the Israelites in Gen 43:32; 46:34. God sovereignly protected His fledgling nation from assimilation by taking them to the 'incubator' of Egypt to grow into a nation. There the Egyptians loathed them and so didn't intermix with them and God's people were kept protected and separate. When they were to go back into Canaan, it was very important that they separate and not assimilate with the world (and even kill the Canaanites and leave nothing remaining). God cares about **holiness**! Also note that this helps explain why Judah as the 4th-born is the chosen as Reuben will be disqualified in 35:22 and here Simeon and Levi are disqualified.*

16. What is added by chapter 35 to this section? What themes do we see repeated that we have already seen? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God continued to bless Jacob. He reminded him of the name change again because of the significance of the **change** that had transpired in his life. He reminds him of the Abrahamic covenant (in 35:11-13). And Jacob reaffirmed his worship of Yahweh in building an altar (35:14-15).*

17. How does the genealogy of Esau (chapter 36) fit into the structure of Genesis and move the story forward? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again God is **choosing** His line. We see God's **sovereign election** of His line for His glory to work out His plan.*

18. Application: What do we learn for ourselves in this narrative? What is the interrelation of God's plan and our involvement in it?

## 7. God Meant it for Good: Genesis 37-50

**Scripture:** Genesis 37:1-50:26

**Theme:** God will Sovereignly Work out His Plan in the End, though it Doesn't always Look Like it

**Objectives:**

- To see how God works out everything according to His sovereign plan
- To learn how to trust God in the midst of circumstances that seem contrary to His plan

**Reading:**

- Read Genesis 37:1-50:26.
- Read Creation and Blessing by Ross, pages 595-717.

**Questions:**

1. How does this section begin in chapter 37 (especially the first few verses)? How are key characters introduced? What is said about them? How does this color what is to follow? Why are dreams so important in this narrative? What are they generally about? (1 paragraph)

*A: Joseph brought an 'evil' report to his father (37:2). Evil is a major theme in this section (as is good), as evil immediately comes of this evil report (cf. 37:20). Jacob (Israel) is portrayed here showing **favoritism**. The verse about Israel loving Joseph more than his brothers in a disjunctive clause (parenthetical) in Hebrew, showing it is important background information meant to color what follows. Family strife immediately ensues. Dreams are important because they are given and interpreted by God. They show that the **future** is in His hands and **He can reveal it** (and its interpretation) to those He chooses to.*

2. Does chapter 38 seem to fit into this narrative? How does it begin (the first few words)? What does how it begins suggest? Who are the main characters? What is important about them for the original recipients of the story? What do we see as this story progresses about these characters? What does that tell us about the point of this section? What one verse in the chapter sums up the point? (1 paragraph)

*A: The first few words "It came to be at that time" show that this is a scene shift in the narrative. Thus this section is **distinct** and has its own point, which clearly comes in at 38:26. It is about and displays the character of **Judah**, one of Israel's predominant tribes. The whole family was corrupt. However, there is such an emphasis on Judah not only because he became a major tribe, but because as the Joseph story progresses we will see his transformation. God will **radically change his heart so that His plan will continue!** This chapter gives us the '**before**' picture, so that we can see what God does in his heart! Seed is also an important emphasis in this chapter.*

3. What does chapter 39 add to the narrative? What major themes that we have already seen in Genesis are reinforced? How does Joseph respond in this chapter? Are there lessons we can we learn from this? (1 paragraph)

*A: God blesses the nations on account of His chosen people once again (Gen 39:5)! Joseph fled from temptation because He feared Yahweh (39:9, notice the theme again of evil in this verse). Even when no one else can see, God does. We should live in the same fear of Yahweh. Notice the key Hebrew word '**hesed**' (best translated loyal love, faithful love, or covenant love) in 39:21. God was in **relationship** with Joseph and*

*continued to bless and care for him even through the trials. Everything he did prospered (39:23). God blesses those who trust in Him!*

4. How would Joseph have felt at the end of chapter 40? How do you feel at the end of this chapter? What does it add to the narrative to have another glimpse of hope shattered? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Circumstances** don't always go as we want them to! We expect Yahweh to work in our way and especially in our timing! He doesn't always do so. We need to trust in Him, knowing that He is working out His plan in a very miraculous way, a way that we can't see or understand.*

5. What do we see happen in chapter 41? How do the previous chapters lead to this point? What is the lesson we learn from what happens? How is Joseph portrayed here? If you could choose one word to describe him in this chapter what would it be (hint: it's in the text if you read carefully)? How has this characteristic been shown of him throughout the narrative thus far (pick a couple other examples from previous chapters). (1 paragraph)

*A: God miraculously makes Joseph the second most powerful man on the earth at that time! We see God's **sovereignty and timing** and working through all the ups and downs of the previous chapters to bring him to this exact point in time and space. God is **sovereignly** working out His plan in ways we cannot understand and so we need to trust Him implicitly, no matter what happens to us. Joseph is portrayed as a man of **wisdom**. He trusted God and we see God working through him (cf. 41:38). If we depend upon God He is the One who supernaturally gives us the wisdom that we need to live the life He calls us to. We see this in how he fled from Potiphar's wife and in his interpretation of dreams.*

6. What is the key word in chapter 42 that informs us of it's point? What is the question the readers would have wondered? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The key word in this chapter is '**test**'. The brothers were being tested to see if they had changed from the evil they did at the beginning of the narrative...*

7. Where do we find ourselves at the beginning of chapter 43? What is the predicament? How is it resolved? More importantly, **who** resolves it and how? Contrast how the problem is resolved in chapter 43 with the attempted resolution at the end of chapter 42. Note 43:32. What does this side note emphasize and why is it important? (1 paragraph)

*A: The brothers can't go get more grain unless they take their father's favorite son to Egypt. Thus they are at a standstill. It is **Judah** who takes charge (commanding his father in 43:8) and takes responsibility (43:9). At the end of chapter 42, Reuben attempts to resolve the problem by offering to kill his own two sons if Jacob will send Benjamin. This is not responsibility, but stupidity! In contrast, Judah **stands up** and takes genuine **responsibility himself** for Benjamin! 43:32 is significant, because God brought His people to Egypt where they were not assimilated into the pagan Egyptian culture, as contrasted to the Canaanites who wanted to assimilate with them (the main point of chapter 34).*

8. What do we see happen in chapter 44? Who talks and what does he say? What key words keep reoccurring through this narrative? Why? (1 paragraph)

*A: Judah steps up. That's a great speech! **He takes responsibility** and shows that God has completely transformed his heart. God has worked to save the family for His plan and by His grace. **Good and evil***

reoccur in the chapter. They are being tested if their intentions are good or evil and the main point of the narrative centers on their **evil intentions** in contrast to **God's good intentions**. God always intends good for His people, even when they don't!

9. Using literary terms, what is chapter 45? What is the main point (which verses make this point explicit)? (1 sentence)

*A: Chapter 45 is the climax of the story and verses 5-8 show the point that God's amazing plan and providence will preserve His people!*

10. What do chapters 46 and 47 add to the story? (1 paragraph)

*A: Finally we see the resolution. **Everything** works out just as God planned. We also see that in 47:7 and 10 Jacob blesses the Pharaoh himself! Notice in 47:27 how God is blessing the nation. As Jacob prepares to die, he begins to bring this section to an end, he has faith that God will bring about His promise to return them to the promised land. Canaan is where his **future** lies because Yahweh will sovereignly be faithful to His promise!*

11. What is the emphasis in chapter 48? What key words/themes come up? What key theme in Genesis does the switching of the hands by Jacob reinforce? (1 paragraph)

*A: God chooses the weak! **Election** continually emphasizes God's **grace**! Blessing is also a key theme. The blessing continues on. God's providential provision is also emphasized (48:15). The key word evil is brought up to emphasize that God has redeemed Jacob from the evil that has gone on in his life. Also, the key theme of God's election is reinforced by the episode of Jacob's blessing of the younger over the older. Just as in the Jacob and Esau story, it is God's choice that matters.*

12. What happens in chapter 49? What is the time frame? What does this time frame emphasize? What is significant about Genesis 49:10? Why does the fourth son receive this blessing instead of the first three (this can be answered in detail from the text)? What key word is repeated in 49:25-28? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jacob **predicts the future** for his twelve sons. The focus is on their future. He characterizes each of the sons because who the sons are becomes **paradigmatic** for their tribes which come from them. In emphasizing the future it is a reminder once again that **God is in control of history** and He is bringing it to His intended end. Genesis 49:10 states that Judah will be the tribe from which the ruler of Israel comes and is a prediction of the coming of the Messiah (Shiloh was most likely an early messianic name). Reuben forfeited receiving this honor because he slept with his father's concubine (Gen 35:22). Simeon and Levi forfeited it in the incident of Dinah (Gen 34:25, 30). Judah is the fitting recipient and especially in light of his stepping up, taking responsibility, and leading the family through the crisis, he is the heir to the throne!*

13. What plot twist occurs in chapter 50? What does its resolution emphasize? What key words are used and how? What verse is key and seems to summarize the point of the entire section? How does the narrative end? Where are the people and where does Joseph want his bones ultimately buried? Why? (1 paragraph)

*A: After their father died, the brothers were afraid that Joseph would repay them for the evil they had done to him. In 50:17 they emphasize the greatness of their transgression and sin and evil which they did. 50:20 is*

*the key verse and conclusion of the whole. While the brothers intended their actions for evil, God was actually sovereignly behind that same event, and God's intention for that event was good. God's plans always overrule the plans of men, and His plans are always good! Therefore, no matter what the circumstances of our lives are, we should always trust Him. The people end in Egypt, while God's ultimate plan for them is the land of Canaan. He uses Egypt to grow them into a people in preparation for them taking the promised land. Egypt is in a sense an 'incubator' where God will grow His people apart from the corrupting and assimilating influence of the Canaanites. Joseph wants his bones buried in Canaan, because he recognizes by faith that Canaan is where their future lies in fulfillment of God's good promises to His people.*

14. Application: How does the Joseph story effect our perspective as we go through difficult circumstances? How should we respond?
15. Application: What do we learn about God and His plan from Genesis as a whole to apply to our lives?

## **8. Yahweh's Saving Power: Exodus 1-12**

**Scripture:** Exodus 1-12

**Theme:** Yahweh Displayed His Saving Power and Mercy through Redeeming His People

**Objectives:**

- To see what God was accomplishing through the Exodus
- To understand how we fit into God's grand design and what our response should be

**Reading:**

- Read Exodus 1-12 *three times*.

**Questions:**

1. What is the structure of Exodus? (1 paragraph)

A:

*I Setting (1)*

*II Salvation of Israel (2-18)*

*2-4 Call of Moses*

*5:1-7:7 Initial request*

*7:8-11:10 10 Plagues*

*12-13 Passover and Exodus*

*14 Red Sea*

*15:1-21 Song of Moses*

*15:22-18:27 God delivers to Sinai*

*III Covenant with Israel (19-40)*

*19 Sinai context*

*20:1-21 Ten commandments*

*20:22-23:33 Additional commands*

*24 Covenant confirmed*

*25-31 Laws for tabernacle*

*32 Golden calf*

*33-34 Yahweh's character*

*35-40 Laws for tabernacle*

2. A key word used throughout the Exodus narrative is the word 'serve' (Heb: `abad). The root behind this verb is also used in the English words, 'slave', 'slavery', 'work as slaves', 'labor/work rigorously', 'serve', etc. What significance does this word have throughout the narrative (Exodus 1:13-14; 2:23; 3:12; 4:23; 5:9, 11, 18; 6:5, 6, 9; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7, 8, 11, 24, 26; 12:25, 26, 31)? What point(s) is Moses trying to get across by using this word? (1 paragraph)

*A: Israel was servants to Pharaoh, but God redeemed them so that they would be His servants. This is the reason why He saves us. We are saved to serve! Notice also how the words sacrifice (3:18; 5:3; 8:23), worship (3:12), and celebrating a feast (5:1) are interchanged with serve (7:16) in the various statements of Israel going to the wilderness and the interrelation of these concepts. This word shows us that ultimately, **worship is about serving Yahweh!** God wants the totality of our lives! We are slaves, and He wants us to*



worship/serve/sacrifice to Him all that we are (remind us of Rom 12:1-2?!?!)! This word shows us that following Yahweh is an issue of **total life allegiance**! We are God's slaves!

3. As you read through this whole section (chapters 1-15) what key word/phrase repeatedly comes up as to the purpose for the Exodus (there are several slight variations of the same wording/phrasing/theme sprinkled through the first 15 chapters of Exodus. Hint: It occurs over 15 times)? What is God's reason for saving His people? Once you find this phrase, think about what God was accomplishing in the Exodus and how He did so. Answer this question before moving on. Spend a good deal of time thinking through and answering this question! (1 paragraph)

A: In **6:3, 7; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 16, 29-30; 10:1-2, 7; 11:7, 9; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 12; 18:11** we see that Yahweh saved His people "in order to make His name **known**." God is displaying His character and glory in the Exodus. And He is doing so visibly and globally. This of course ties into the Abrahamic covenant, and God's plan to bless the whole world. God's heart and plan is for the world to know Him! So He is showing who He is for all to see! Also note that the word 'know' implies relationship. God wants relationship with people!

4. How does chapter 1 set up for the book? What is the point of Exodus 1:7? What is ironic about Exodus 1:12? 1:17? How do the midwives respond and what does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

A: God is  **blessing** His people. No matter what Pharaoh tries to do he can't foil God's plan to bless His people. Even his own daughter saves the man who will lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. How ironic! God's plan cannot fail! Notice the emphasis on the midwives' **fear of Yahweh** (1:17, 21)! Ironically, we know the midwives' **names** (1:15) and yet we do not the Pharaoh's **name**! God honors those who humble themselves before Him and recognize His awesomeness!

5. Think about the timing of chapter 2, and especially how 2:11-14 fits into the timing of the Exodus narrative. What is apt and ironic in this chapter? What lessons we learn from God's sovereignty and timing in preparing and raising up Moses? What was Moses trying to do/accomplish? (1 paragraph)

A: God's sovereignty in raising up Moses is amazing! How ironic that Pharaoh's own daughter saves him! So Moses was trained in the court of Egypt, and yet was raised by his own mother (thus understood his identity) and so spoke Hebrew as a native speaker! Who else would have been trained in writings systems, language, literature, and law like Moses! Moses basically formalized the Hebrew language. Yet before Moses could rescue Israel, he needed to learn to **depend** on Yahweh and not to do things in his own strength. Moses tries to lead a slave revolt and gets rejected by his own people! It's a lesson we all need to learn... We get impatient, and so seek to get things done ourselves! Yet this wasn't God's way for the deliverance, and so Moses has to go be a shepherd in the wilderness for 40 years before God is ready to use him. Think about how Moses would have felt for 40 years, knowing his people were suffering. Think about all the shame and blame, thinking he messed up God's plan. Yet, apparently, God accomplished His goal with Moses in preparing him to be a servant who is humbly dependent on Him as we see in Numbers 12:3. Who else had God prepared to have such an intimate, face to face relationship with Him (Exo 33:11)! God will only use broken vessels, so that He gets all the glory!

6. What is so significant about Exodus 2:23-25 in the flow of the narrative? (2-3 sentences)

A: **Prayer** and dependence on Yahweh is what kicks off all the events of the Exodus. God hears His people and acts when they call out to Him in humble faith and complete dependence! This is a major lesson for the Israelites of Moses' day and for us in our day. Notice also that God's **covenant with Abraham** is the basis for His action. He will be faithful to His word, He will keep His promises!

7. What is significant when Yahweh reveals Himself to Moses at the burning bush in chapter 3? (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice that it is the angel of Yahweh who appears to Moses. We have already seen in Genesis that the angel of Yahweh is Yahweh's authoritative representative, and in fact is Yahweh Himself. So when Moses comes closer, we find that the place is holy, because God is there (3:5). And then Yahweh speaks out of the bush and reveals His name to Moses. Yahweh is "I am who I am." He is the only self-existent one, not like anyone else! Yahweh is God's memorial name (3:15). God is revealing who He is in the Exodus!

8. What key word is repeated in 4:1-9 that is so significant in the flow of thought of the chapter? How does this idea fit into the big picture of what God is doing in the Exodus? How does 4:31 fit into this? (2-3 sentences)

A: The key word in 4:1-9 is '**believe**' (4:1, 5, 8, 9, 31). God wanted His people to believe and trust in Him. He showed great signs so that they would live in humble faith and dependence on Him. And so we see Moses' humility and lack of faith in himself. He is not able to save God's people. But Yahweh is angry at Moses because Yahweh made Moses. Of course Yahweh can use Moses! If we **believe and trust in Yahweh**, His **power works through us**. It is not about us! We are **merely the channel!** And so God showed the people great signs and they believed!

9. Does Exodus 4:24-26 seem to fit into the narrative? If not, is it significant? What does the episode center around? What is the significance of this? What is the point of this episode therefore? (1 paragraph)

A: No, these verses seem out of place and so are probably included for some significant point. The episode centers around circumcision which is the sign of the covenant. The point seems to be that disobedience to the covenant is a very serious matter, and that Moses' failure to circumcise his own son almost endangered the whole plan! Faithfulness to the covenant (bridegroom of blood is covenantal language) is vital for success! The leader needs to be right with God! Thus in the flow of thought it is **not our skill** or our **ability** that brings success, but our **faith** and **covenant relationship** with Yahweh!

10. When Moses and Aaron first approach Pharaoh, how does he respond and why? How does Exodus 5:2 fit into this question and the flow of the narrative (think about this!)? (2-3 sentences)

A: The question Pharaoh asks, "**Who is Yahweh?**" he really doesn't want the answer to, but he gets the answer anyway! Pharaoh oppresses God's people because he doesn't know who Yahweh is. And so, Yahweh says, "You want to know who I am?, I'll show you!" That is the question that the rest of the narrative does indeed answer, and at the end, Pharaoh does **know** who Yahweh is and why he should obey Him!

11. How does everyone respond in Exodus 5:20-23 and why? How does this fit into the flow of the narrative and what is the lesson for us? What needs to change so we don't respond like that? (2-3 sentences)

*A: First the people, and then even Moses so easily **doubts** (in contrast to believing) God's ability to save! We need to more firmly believe God's word so that we will not doubt. When **hardships** come, it is so easy to lose **perspective**! This was exactly what Pharaoh wanted to happen (5:9)! He wanted to **discourage the people**. It's so easy to **blame**, rather than to see the big picture and remember the goodness of God. But God always keeps His promises! It's so easy to doubt, even right after we see God's power and are convinced we should believe and trust in Him!*

12. In light of Moses' frustration at the end of chapter 5, what does God do in chapter 6? What does God mean when God says in 6:3 that He didn't make Himself known by the name Yahweh to the patriarchs? And why did Moses ask Yahweh what His name was in 3:13-14? Didn't the name Yahweh already appear many times in Genesis? How does 6:4-5 flow out of 6:3? Think very carefully about this paragraph and what it reveals about God's purpose. Spend time on this! (1 paragraph)

*A: Even though the name Yahweh has been in the text since Genesis, we learn here that the burning bush is where God first revealed **His name**. Moses had only put the name 'Yahweh' earlier because he wanted to identify that Israel's God was the one in the story. But why reveal His name here? God's name isn't just a title. Yahweh wasn't just making incidental details known in the Exodus, but revealing **who He is**. In the Exodus Yahweh is defined in a way that has not been shown up to this point. We have never seen Yahweh in His **mercy, grace, wrath, righteousness, justice, power and salvation** so clearly defined as in the Exodus event! So Yahweh isn't only showing, but in some way is defining who He is through the Exodus! Prior to the Exodus He was not known for who He truly is in His **saving power** that really defines Him. Moreover, He is showing that this saving power is bound up in covenant (6:5): God's saving power in behalf of His covenant people is defined in the Exodus! This really is the idea of **God being a husband**!*

*We also see here Moses and Aaron's genealogy, going back to Levi. There is a strong emphasis on the fact that these were the actual guys who led God's people out. The genealogy ties them to the covenant people and emphasizes the historicity of these events.*

13. How does the key idea of 'knowing' that runs through chapters 1-18 fit with the idea of God's name? If it doesn't seem to fit, go back and revise your answers! (2-3 sentences)

*A: God revealing His name is about God revealing His character. It is all about God being known! God was revealing His character globally, so that the world would know who He is.*

14. How does 7:1-7 fit into the flow of the narrative? (1 sentence)

*A: This section is transitional. We can see this from the summary statement in 7:7. It is getting us ready for the big showdown between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt. God is about to step onto the scene...*

15. What do we see the Egyptian magicians doing in this narrative (Exo 7ff.)? How do they fit into the story? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see them trying to duplicate God's miracles and they are pitted against Moses and Aaron. There is definitely a battle between good and evil going on in this narrative, even as we saw in Genesis. This battle has a spiritual side as well, demonstrated by the gods of Egypt and the magic arts being used. Notice that they do have **some** spiritual power (or at least deception!), as they are able to duplicate some of God's miracles. But ultimately, Yahweh is shown to be supreme!*

16. How does Pharaoh fit into the story we have continued from Genesis? What key themes and ideas from Genesis do we see developed in Exodus and how does Pharaoh and Egypt fit into this (ie. Exodus 1:22)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Pharaoh was **defiantly opposed** to Yahweh and His plan. We definitely see good and evil so clearly laid out in this story. He was proud and opposed to God and God humbled him. Also remember that Pharaoh was a god in Egypt, and thus Yahweh is demonstrating His superiority to all other gods!*

17. What is said in this section about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? Who hardens his heart? What is the emphasis and why does the author repeat this theme? How does Exodus 7:3 and 10:1-2 fit into this purpose? (1 paragraph)

*A: Both Pharaoh hardens his own heart, and God hardens his heart (Exo 4:21; 7:3, 13, 22; 8:15, 19,32; 9:7, 12, 34; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17). It emphasizes the human responsibility as well as God's divine plan and election (or rejection). God is using Pharaoh to display His own glory for His plan as an object of wrath! This is an awesome thought in the truest sense of the word, yet Pharaoh has full responsibility for his actions and hardening his own heart (see Exo 8:15). In Exodus 7:3 and 10:1-2 we see this purpose made explicit, that God hardens Pharaoh's heart to display His own glory and make Himself known. That is ultimately what God is doing!*

18. After the first 9 plagues, what does chapter 11 show us? (1 sentence)

*A: We see how powerfully God worked through the Exodus. Not only did He rescue His people, but He also graciously gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians (crazy!) to give them gold and silver and to give them a good reputation among the people. Ultimately all people will see and know and bow down to Yahweh!*

19. What does Exodus 12:12 teach us about what God was doing in the Exodus? How is this seen in the 10 plagues? How specifically? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God was **executing judgment on the gods of Egypt**. We see this in that there seems to be a correlation in the plagues inflicted on Egypt, and Egypt's gods (although not necessarily a perfect correspondence). Sun god, Nile god, frog god, etc. Cf. also Numbers 33:4.*

20. What is emphasized in the Passover and its ritual (cf. Exo 12:27)? Why is it important to perform this ritual every year (Exo 12:14, 17, 24)? What application does that have for us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The emphasis in Passover is on the fact that God **delivered** His people. He showed His saving power. It was important to keep this every year to **remember** God's salvation. It is important for us to remember how God has saved us as well! It is not coincidental that communion also celebrates Yahweh's salvation in Jesus as a constant reminder of it. It is so easy for us to forget how great our salvation is and to not live in light of it! Thus God instituted reminders to help keep our perspective on the gospel! Also note the similarity in purpose between Passover and Communion. We constantly need to remember God's salvation!*

21. Application: Who is our God? Who has He revealed Himself to be? How does that change our lives? How do we live in light of His revealed character?

## 9. Entering Faithful Covenant Relationship: Exodus 13-24

**Scripture:** Exodus 13-24

**Theme:** Yahweh Entered into Covenant Relationship with His People at Sinai, and Called them to be Faithful to it.

**Objectives:**

- To understand God's purpose in entering into covenant relationship with Israel
- To shape our worldview in terms of what God is doing in this world and how He is accomplishing that plan

**Reading:**

- Read Exodus 13-24 *twice*.

**Questions:**

1. What ritual is chapter 13 about, why should they do it, and what key word is introduced? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 13 is more about the Passover, but specifically about the **ransom** of the firstborn. Israel was supposed to **set aside** every firstborn man and animal to Yahweh. The animals were to be sacrificed, and firstborn children were to be ransomed as a reminder that they were bought by Yahweh through the Passover. Ultimately, the Levites were substituted for the firstborn males.*

2. What is the significance of the phrase 'strong hand' that occurs throughout the Exodus narrative and especially in chapter 13? (1 sentence)

*A: God has power and He displays and uses this power on behalf of His people! This phrase is often correlated with God's salvation!*

3. Noting that 13:1-15:21 are really a continuation of the previous section, what continued phrases and themes do you see from the previous section here? What **key word** that we have seen mentioned earlier is now explicitly emphasized as to the purpose of why God brought Israel through the Exodus (see Exo 14:4, 17, 18)? Define this word? What is the significance of it? Are there any other new or expanded words/themes from the previous section that are significant? (1 paragraph)

*A: We continue to see that God worked in the Exodus to make Himself known. In 14:4, 17, 18 we see the new theme of God getting **glory** from what He did. It is interesting that this word for 'glory' is the same word we've already seen for Yahweh 'hardening' Pharaoh's heart (cf. 8:11, 28; 9:7, 34; **10:1**). Thus the author was using a word play already to emphasize that God **hardened** Pharaoh's heart for His own **glory**, and now in chapter 14 we see that made explicit. We also see in 14:13-14 that God was displaying His salvation. God's **glory** is the sum total of God's attributes put magnificently on display!*

4. What key concepts do we find in 14:10-14? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see once again a key emphasis on **fear**. The Israelites '**lifted up their eyes**' and judged by what they saw, rather than fearing and trusting Yahweh! And yet, despite their lack of faith, God shows His great **salvation**, while they did nothing!*

5. What is the significance of 14:30-31? What key words are used and what is the author trying to teach Israel? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Three key words in these verses are **fear**, **believe** and **saved**. In light of all that Yahweh has done (His **salvation!**), the people should fear Him alone and never fear man, and they should believe and trust in Yahweh!*

6. What stands out in Moses and Miriam's Song? Does 15:11-12 emphasize that we have seen earlier as well? What does 15:14-16 add to this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is a song of **salvation!** 15:11-12 shows that in the Exodus Yahweh was showing that He is **unique** among the gods. There is no god like Yahweh. He has displayed His saving power in the Exodus. 15:14-16 adds that this was shown to the nations around as God desired to display His power globally.*

7. What key word is used to describe Israel's sin in 15:22-17:16? How does this fit in with themes we have seen earlier? How should have the people responded (using themes we have already seen emphasized) rather than how they did? What does 16:6, 12 add to our understanding/connection of these themes? What does it imply about their grumbling? What is so shocking/amazing about this in light of the timing of everything? What does this teach us? Do we do the same thing? Think about the application of this for your own life! (1 paragraph)

*A: The people grumbled! 16:6 and 12 emphasize that their grumbling was contrasted to knowing that Yahweh is God. Believing and knowing and trusting Yahweh are fundamentally opposed to grumbling against Him! If we trust Him we will believe that where and however He is leading us is best, we will never complain! This is amazing in light of the fact that they have just been through the Exodus! Yet we so often do the same thing. We've seen so clearly the power of God, and yet we complain and grumble when circumstances get tough and we forget to trust in Him for everything!*

8. What do we see happening in 18:1-12 that brings us back to key themes in the Torah? Think carefully of how especially verse 1 and 8-9 and 11 fit into this. (1 paragraph)

*A: Here we see Jethro, a non-Israelite, hearing of Yahweh's fame and blessing Yahweh for it. We also see how Moses was instrumental in **proclaiming** Yahweh's greatness and how ultimately Jethro blesses Yahweh Himself. Notice as well how Jethro knows Yahweh as a result of what Yahweh did **and** Moses' proclamation of that salvation! This was to be a paradigm for the Israelites, and ultimately for us as well. As God displays His saving power, we are to tell others about it, and as we proclaim it and others believe it, they too will be blessed! This is how God intends to bless the world! And notice that as a result, Jethro **knows** how great Yahweh is!*

9. What is the point of 18:13-27? (1 sentence)

*A: We see Moses' humility in listening to Jethro, the wisdom of delegation and shared leadership, and the importance of passing on **God's Word** so that others can lead too!*

10. As Israel finally arrives at Sinai, what does Exodus 19:4-6 teach us about God's purpose in saving Israel? What is the implication of the 'if' in verse 5? Describe in your own words what it means in verse 6 that Israel would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. What is a priest's job? How could the whole nation be a kingdom of priests? Who are they priests to? What does 'holy' mean? These are obviously significant concepts, what do they mean? (1+ paragraph)

*A: God saved Israel (bore them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself!) so that they would be the means of reaching the **world**! They were to be the **priests** to the world! Yet we see that God will only use them in this way **if** they keep covenant with Him. They must be in right relationship with Yahweh to be used by Him. Moreover, the fact that they were to be 'holy' means that they were to be set apart (being set apart is at the heart of what the Hebrew word for holiness entails) for a specific purpose. Yet the ethical aspect of holiness also plays in (more on the full explanation of holiness in Leviticus). If you are going to be specially used by Yahweh on His mission, you also must be obedient to Yahweh and in relationship with Him! God cannot use rebellious and defiled people for that would reflect badly on Him (thus why Yahweh is always transforming people! We've already seen this in Genesis and will continue to see this!). Thus here we see that Israel was to be in right covenant relationship with Yahweh so that they could mediate His salvation to the world, intercede for the world, and proclaim His truth to the world!!!*

11. How do the people respond, and what does Exodus 19:9 say about how they should respond. (2-3 sentences)

*A: The people respond that they will obey everything Yahweh has said. And yet we have seen and will continue to see how fickle they are. So Yahweh will appear before them so that they can hear firsthand Yahweh speaking to Moses, so that they will believe forever. That is what is needed. **Belief** is an important concept in the Torah. We also see God's validation of Moses, His leader.*

12. What is consecration (cf. 19:10, 14, 22, 23)? If you are able, look up what words are related to this word in the Hebrew? Use a (Hebrew) dictionary if possible. What do we learn about this concept in 19:10-25? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Consecration** is being set apart for a specific purpose. It is related to the concepts of 'holiness' and 'sanctification'. Here note also its relationship to cleanliness. When someone or something is going to be used by God for a special purpose, it must be holy to accomplish that purpose. We also see hear that **God's presence** demands holiness, and that there must be separation (set bounds). The people were not to gaze at God or touch the mountain. Yet God came down and met with the people, but only the way that He prescribed.*

13. What is significant about the first two verses of Exodus 20? Why is verse 2 so important when coming before the 10 commandments? (1 paragraph)

*A: The basis for obedience is the fact of redemption. The Israelites owe Yahweh allegiance, for they are no longer slaves to Pharaoh, but to Yahweh. He has bought them. Therefore obedience is not merely moralism, but flows out of redemption. Moral imperatives always flow out of redemptive indicatives. In other words, we do not merely obey God out of duty, but out of love and gratitude for His salvation! This is the gospel, as opposed to mere religion!*

14. What are some principles you learn about Yahweh and what is important to Him from reading the 10 commandments? What is significant/different about the last commandment? (1 paragraph)

A: Yahweh demands **exclusive worship** because He is jealous. He enters into a covenantal relationship with His people, and demands **faithfulness**. He is a wrathful God, but also a very gracious and loyal-loving God. He cares not only about our relationship to Him, but how that fleshes out in relationship to others in the covenant. Relationship with one another as His covenant people is important! His character demands **righteous** behavior in specific action by those who follow Him. His followers must reflect His character. We also see that the last commandment is different than the others. The word for 'covet' actually doesn't have any negative connotations in Hebrew. It simply means do not 'want' anything that is wrong (ie. don't commit adultery and don't even want to!). It might be possible to think that we could actually keep the other 9, but the last commandment shows that it's not merely about obeying certain rules, but also wanting to obey them perfectly (cf. Rom 7:7ff. where this is the sin Paul uses to illustrate how the law shows us our sinfulness)! **This shows that ultimately no one can keep the law, and that God cares about the desires of our hearts!**

15. What is the response to the giving of the 10 commandments and what do we learn from this? (2-3 sentences)

A: We see the importance of keeping the **awesome majesty** and **greatness** of God before us and to guard the way we think about Him. We cannot bring Him down to our level, bring Him down to earth and make Him common or profane. We must live in fear/awe of Him always, and our practice should parallel that thinking.

16. As you read through chapters 21-23, what are some of the principles that you learn about Yahweh and what is important to Him from these laws? (2-3 sentences)

A: God cares about righteousness in relationship. Trust is important in the law (22:9 and elsewhere). God wants His people to live in right relationship to one another (to be a testimony). Relationships are built on mutual trust!

17. Thought question: Are we bound to obey these laws in 21-23? How about the 10 Commandments? Why or why not? (1+ paragraphs)

A: No. Excursion on the relationship of the Law to the believer. Illustration question: If someone builds a house in Montana, are they legally bound in any way to obey the building codes of California? Answer: No. Yet since the conditions, nature of houses, materials, etc. is similar in the two states, there will be many similarities between the two states' building codes. One may even learn quite a bit about building if one were to read another states' building codes. For example, it might be helpful to read California's building codes if one wanted to make an earthquake-resistant house in Montana. So we can learn from the other code without being bound by it. And if you obey Montana's building codes it is likely that you will be keeping much of California's building codes. But they are separate codes, and the situations are different and you aren't bound by both. Especially if both building codes had the same author it would be very helpful in understanding what that author desired or intended to study the other building code. We could go to New Testament passages like: Galatians (esp. Gal 2:15-16, 21; 3:21; 4:21-31; 5:4) and Romans (esp. Rom 6:15; 7:4-6; 10:4; 13:8, 10) for a more full NT treatment of the subject.

18. How does this section end in chapter 24 and what do we learn there? (2-3 sentences)



*A: The people entered into covenant relationship with Yahweh and promised to keep His covenant. The covenant was sealed with blood, and the people saw Yahweh in His glory and worshiped Him. Once again we see the awesomeness of God and the importance of keeping a right perspective on who He is!*

19. Application: How is our purpose similar or different from Israel's purpose? How is the basis for our obedience similar or different?

## **10. God with Us: Exodus 25-40**

**Scripture:** Exodus 25-40

**Theme:** God Dwells among His Covenant People when they are Holy in Relationship to Him

**Objectives:**

- To understand the significance of God dwelling with His people and the implications of that
- To see God's character more clearly, and how we should respond to it

**Reading:**

- Read Exodus 25-40 *twice* (you can skim over the specific laws)

**Questions:**

1. What are the laws in chapters 25-31 centered around (one word answer, something physical)? What does this thing symbolize? What is the purpose of the other things in this section in relation to this primary object? Why so much detail? What is so important to God? (1 paragraph)

*A: This section centers around the **tabernacle**. The tabernacle symbolizes God's presence with His people. The other things in this section emphasize various requirements and aspects of Yahweh's dwelling with men. Much of the emphasis is on the requisite **holiness** required for Yahweh to dwell with His people. The mercy seat is certainly central as the place of atonement. The lampstand symbolizes Israel's purpose as a light to the nations and as a kingdom of priests. The priests are necessary to stand between Yahweh and the people. The bronze altar receives focus as the place the sacrifices are made and atonement is accomplished. The bronze basin emphasizes the need for cleansing and holiness. These things emphasize what is necessary to come into the presence of God (forgiveness, atonement, a mediator/go between, etc.). One cannot be **flippant** in their relationship with God!*

2. What happens in Exodus 32:1-6? What are the people saying about the calf? about Yahweh? What is verse 5 saying and how does that fit into the rest of these six verses? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Israelites attribute the Exodus to a god represented by this golden calf (cf. Gen 20:13 where a plural verb is used of Elohim and Neh 9:18 where the pronouns are changed to singular referring to this event)! [It seems most likely that the plurals are not true plurals here (in Hebrew, sometimes a plural noun could be for emphasis of sorts), but they are saying that this singular calf represents Yahweh, not a bunch of (Egyptian) gods]. They get impatient with Moses who is their contact point with Yahweh, and so **fashion Yahweh after their own liking**! Note that this of course is in direct disobedience to either the 1st or 2nd commandment if not both! Yahweh on the mountain was too fearful for them, they wanted a god that they could control and that met with their liking!*

3. What does Moses do in Exodus 32:10-14? What is the basis for what Moses asks? How does this basis fit into the key themes we saw in the first 15 chapters of Exodus? What do we see Yahweh do in 32:14? How does this fit into our understanding of Yahweh's sovereignty? How does this affect our understanding of prayer? (1+ paragraph)

*A: Next, Moses **intercedes** for the people. Note here that Moses is fulfilling the role as mediator just as Israel was to do for the nations. The basis for his intercession is the **Abrahamic covenant**. He is concerned about **Yahweh's reputation** among the nations, Him being made known and His glory! He is extremely selfless in*

this prayer as it would have been much easier for Moses to have this rebellious people done away with (remember they have been complaining and rebelling against his leadership!)). But Moses cares more about Yahweh's glory among the nations, His reputation which is bound to His promise to His people, and His display of His faithfulness than his own glory, and so he pleads with Yahweh to spare His people! And so Yahweh changes His mind and relents!

Yahweh relenting shows that **prayer** actually changes things, even though Yahweh is completely sovereign! God seeks to communicate in such a way that we understand who He is in our finite minds. If, for example, Scripture never said that God was angry at sin, we might come to the wrong conclusion that He condones it. So while it is true in one sense that God always does whatever He wants and so is supremely happy, it is also true that He is angry at sin. While it is true in one sense that God never changes His mind (Numbers 23:19), it is also true that He changes His mind (otherwise we would come to the mistaken conclusion that prayer doesn't actually accomplish anything and that God doesn't care about what goes on in the world but just lets everything be). Both truths are true and need to be believed and held onto simultaneously!

4. What does Moses do in Exodus 32:25-29? Why is this necessary? What key/significant word shows up again that we've seen before? Why do you think this key concept shows up again here and what is Moses trying to teach us about it by talking about it here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Moses cleanses the camp by killing those opposed to Yahweh. This is necessary because of Yahweh's holiness. Sin and rebellion must absolutely be dealt with. The key theme of blessing shows up again. This reminds us that there must be holiness for there to be blessing!*

5. How does Exodus 32:30-35 bring some resolution? What is required? What types of consequences are at stake? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Atonement** is required. Forgiveness is required. Intercession is required. And we see that being blotted out of God's book of grace is at stake! This book hasn't been defined, but appears to reinforce God's election of individuals by His grace. This concept that God has a book with those who are His and covered by His grace will continue to unfold in Scripture.*

6. What result of this incident is given by God in Exodus 33:3? How do the people respond to what God says in 33:3? How does Moses respond to 33:3 in 33:12-13? How does God respond to Moses (33:14)? What does Moses say in response to God's answer and how does what Moses say inform us about what is at stake here (33:15-16)? (1 paragraph)

*A: God tells them to go to Canaan without Him! They respond by mourning. Moses responds by once again interceding for the people and pleading with God on their behalf. Yahweh responds by agreeing to go with His people. Moses responds by stating that God's presence is absolutely necessary. If God doesn't go with His people, the Israelites are no different than any other nation on earth. **God's presence with His people is vital** and what makes them singularly different than any other nation/people on earth! The promised land without the promising God is not a blessing at all! Oh that we would learn this lesson for we too often seek the gift and not the Giver!*

7. In 33:17-23 and also in 34:6-7, what key words are used? What is God doing there? What is God's name? What is so absolutely shocking about this revelation of Yahweh in light of chapter 32? (1+ paragraph)

A: Yahweh shows His glory to Moses because Moses has found **grace** (favor) in the eyes of Yahweh. Yahweh's glory (vs 18, the sum total of God's attributes and character on brilliant display) and His name (vs 19, names are not just labels given to people, but sum up their character as well) are concepts directly related to His character! But we also see this is roughly equal to His goodness (vs 19, the sum total of His character **is** all **good**). Thus, notice that when Yahweh wants to display who He is (His name, glory, goodness = character) what He says about Himself: The first things He says which are at the heart of God's revelation of His essential character are His grace and compassion (33:19). Then when He passes by Moses and speaks His character, He also brings in other important concepts. He is faithful and abounding in loyal love (= *hesed*). God is a God of relationship! He even has relationship with sinful people! For that to happen, He must be forgiving God, yet we see that He is still righteous and judges sin. This is an **amazing** revelation of God's character, especially in light of the golden calf! Therefore we see once again that God is displaying His glory, His character, His name and reputation for the world to see. Thus He deserves to be worshiped for **who He is!**

8. How does Moses respond to God's revelation of Himself? How should we? (2-3 sentences)

A: Moses responds by **worshipping**. We should do the same. He also continues to **intercede** for Israel and asks and stresses the importance of Yahweh's presence with His people. Connected with this is Yahweh's forgiveness of their sins.

9. And so what do we see in response to all of this in 34:10, 27 (cf. 34:11-16)? (2-3 sentences)

A: God renews His covenant with His people, and promises to do even more amazing and awesome acts than He has previously done, and will do so in a way that are visible to the world! Amazing! Cf. 35:31 where the Spirit empowers and 40:16 and the emphasis on obedience.

10. What do chapters 35-40 remind you of (cf. you shall make...)? Anything we've seen before? Where? What's the point of the similarities? (1 paragraph)

A: This section of laws about the tabernacle are very similar to the laws given before the golden calf incident. Thus we see **God's grace in allowing a new beginning**, even though the people violated (blatantly!) the covenant immediately after it was given to them (breaking the 1st and 2nd commandments!!!). Yahweh is at His very nature a gracious and compassionate and forgiving God, and so He renews covenant with His people and begins again with them! He will keep His promises despite everything!!!

11. How does Exodus end? What is so significant about the ending? How does it relate to major themes and lessons in this book? (2-3 sentences)

A: The book ends with the glory of Yahweh filling the tabernacle. God dwells with His people, even though His people are sinful. At the heart of Yahweh's character is **grace and forgiveness**, and the sacrificial system and dealing with sin is so important for Yahweh to be able to dwell with His people.

12. Application: How is the presence of God significant in our lives? What do we learn from this section about God's presence and how that should affect us? What is necessary for God's presence?

13. Application: What do we learn about God's character from this section? How should we respond?

## 11. Sacrifice and Atonement: Leviticus

**Scripture:** Leviticus 1-7, 10, 16-17

**Theme:** Substitutionary Atonement through Sacrifice is Necessary to be in Relationship with God

**Objectives:**

- To understand the various aspects of sacrifice and atonement from an OT perspective
- To understand the importance and significance of sacrifice and atonement in God's economy

**Reading:**

- Read Leviticus 1-7, 10, 16-17
- Read Holiness to the LORD by Ross, pages 15-33; 42-58; 65-66; 73-82; and Introduction, Theological Ideas, Synthesis, and Concluding Observations from chapters 2-15, 19, 28, 30.
- Read **carefully** "The Terminology of Atonement; The Old Testament Root (כפר)" in A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace by George Zemek, pages 118-123. **We will discuss this article in class, so try to understand it even though it is difficult. Feel free to discuss it with fellow students.**

**Questions:**

1. Name and carefully compare and contrast the various sacrifices in Leviticus 1-7. What does each one emphasize? What lessons do we learn about God and how we should relate to Him? Take time on this! What is signified by placing the hand on the animal (Lev 1:4)? What does the 'salt of the covenant' emphasize (2:13)? (3+ paragraphs)

*A: The burnt offering (‘olāh): Everything goes up in smoke. It is the only sacrifice that belonged wholly to God, and it involves complete surrender. Worshipers laid their hands on their own animal and then slaughtered it themselves for atonement on their behalf (1:4), having the blood sprinkled on the altar. The sacrifice was then wholly burned on the altar as a pleasing aroma to Yahweh. This ritual emphasizes substitutionary atonement (1:4). The sacrifice could be brought by anyone, but it must be perfect. "Yahweh accepts with pleasure whoever comes into His presence by substitutionary atonement through the shedding of blood" (Ross, 95).*

*A: The meal/grain offering (minḥāh): An acknowledgment that everything belongs to God. A portion given back to Him as a reminder of this. There is an emphasis on salt (3x) and the salt of the covenant (2:13) in this section. This salt is a reminder of covenant faithfulness in complete obedience to Yahweh (since salt was used since ancient times as a seasoning, preservative, and disinfectant, it metaphorically signified permanence, loyalty, fidelity, purity, etc.). There is also an emphasis on remembering (2:2), presumably remembering the covenant and the need to be faithful to it. Also note that the sacrifice had to be without leaven or honey. Interestingly, honey can contain botulism spores, which are bacterial spores that release a toxin. Thus this requirement emphasizes the need to guard against the spread of defilement (sin). Presumably this offering emphasizes then gratitude to God and commitment to Him. "Those who are loyally dedicated to the covenant will offer themselves and the best they have to Yahweh" (Ross, 108).*

*A: The peace/fellowship offering (sh’lāmiym): A celebration of the peaceful relationship with Yahweh. A joyous time of feasting in God's presence. The three occasions were 1) a thank offering (todāh) as a public thanks for what God had done, 2) the payment of vows or 3) a freewill offering (offered at any time as a celebration of the covenant). Leviticus 7 explains that this was a meal eaten in the presence of Yahweh. The*

kidneys, etc. were burned (possibly as a symbol of the devotion of the will to God). The fat was a symbol that the best is given to God. "Those who surrender their hearts to God and come before Him on the basis of the shed blood of the sacrifice may celebrate being at peace with God (in a communal meal)" (Ross, 119).

A: The purification/sin offering (ḥattā't): There is a way for sin to be dealt with, it is through sacrifice. This sacrifice emphasizes that sin needs to be paid for. Sin defiles. Therefore purification and forgiveness is needed. The death of a substitute is needed to cleanse sin. All sin, both **known** and **unknown** needs forgiveness. The defilements must be dealt with before participating in the sanctuary. Sin is pervasive and spreads. By dealing with the sin, atonement is achieved. "God will restore the sinner who appeals to Him for forgiveness on the basis of the purifying blood of the sacrifice" (Ross, 134).

A: The reparation/restitution/guilt offering ('āshām): Sin causes guilt and defrauds God and others. This sacrifice emphasizes that sin and guilt must be dealt with. The wrong must be righted. Justice must be upheld. "Ma'al" is the key Hebrew word used of this sin of defrauding God or others here. Full restitution must be made before this sacrifice. "Anyone who violates the covenant by defrauding Yahweh or another person must confess the sin and make full restitution in order to find full forgiveness and restitution" (Ross, 152).

A: The wave offering and the contribution: This was the priestly portion.

A: "In the Old Testament worshipers approached God through a priest to present a sin offering (to acknowledge their need for forgiveness) and burnt offering (to signify their complete submission to God). Then the way was clear for them present a peace offering (to commune with their covenant Lord). Today, worship is theologically the same yet radically transformed: we approach God through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is also our sin offering, given up for us so that we can present ourselves alive, holy, and acceptable to God, and completely dedicated to him" (Andy Snider, 9-6-2014 on Facebook).

2. What does the number, frequency, and variety of sacrifices emphasize? How important was the tabernacle and sacrificial system to OT worship? Why? (2-3 sentences)

A: All the sacrifices emphasized that sacrifice is very important in Israel's worship! This system emphasizes the complete guilt and corruption of sin and the constant need for it to be dealt with! Sin is pervasive, but God has made a way for it to be dealt with!

3. Define atonement (use an English dictionary if necessary). What does the meaning of the Hebrew word for atonement suggest about how atonement is achieved (the Zemek article comments on this)? (1 paragraph)

A: **Atonement** means reconciliation: at-one-ment. The root meaning of the Hebrew word for atone has to do with the concept of **covering** or **cleansing**. This suggests that atonement is achieved through dealing with sin. Sin is what separates man from God and sin is what makes us enemies with God! When sin has been dealt with then mankind can be in a relationship with their Creator!

4. What are the definitions to the words propitiation and expiation (use an English dictionary if necessary and also see the Zemek article if needed for this whole question)? What is the difference between propitiation and expiation? What is the difference in the grammatical subject between the verbs propitiate and expiate (ie. who/what is propitiated and who/what is expiated)? Where do we see aspects of either or both of these concepts in the chapters in

Leviticus we read for this lesson? Which of the two words (propitiation/expiation) better describes pagan sacrifices? How are sacrifices in the OT different than pagan sacrifices? What is the relationship between propitiation and expiation? How do both these concepts fit together into an OT concept of atonement? (1+ paragraph)

*A: Propitiation is turning away God's wrath, while expiation is removing/dealing with sin. **God** is propitiated, **sin** is expiated. Much of the OT emphasizes the need for expiation and sin to be dealt with (Lev 16 and the two goats, the 'sin offering', Lev 4:2-6, 5:6, etc.). But we also see propitiation in the OT (Leviticus 10 for example). Propitiation implies that God has wrath toward sin. In pagan sacrifices, the gods are pacified or propitiated. But in pagan sacrifices they are merely appeased by human manipulation. In the OT concept, God is propitiated by dealing with our sin. Thus the two terms come together in the OT concept of atonement: God is propitiated through our sins being expiated (ie. God's wrath is turned away from us when our sin is removed/forgiven). This is because **sin is what breaks relationship with Yahweh and causes His righteous wrath**. God is not angry at us because He is vindictive like the pagan gods for what we've done to hurt Him, but because He is holy and must hate sin! Thus we see that sacrifices are a pleasing aroma to God because God is the one dealt with in sacrifice. It's about pleasing Him and being acceptable to Him by dealing with sin and thus restoring relationship (cf. Lev 4:35 for the relationship between atonement and forgiveness).*

5. What do we learn about atonement from Leviticus 16 (note that the word translated 'mercy seat' literally is 'place of atonement' in Hebrew)? What do the rituals involving the two goats signify? What is death (in a theological sense) and how does this fit in? (1 paragraph)

*A: We learn here that atonement deals with sin (16:34). That since the blood is sprinkled on the atonement seat, it pictures the need for atonement to be in the presence of God. We learn that the whole ritual of Yom Kippur ('day of atonement' in Hebrew), is about substitution (the two goats), laying on of hands on them (picturing the transference of sin), killing them in our place, and sending out into the wilderness because of the separation we deserve from God because of our sin. **Death is about separation**. Sin and death are related. **We sin because we are born dead and the principle of death separates us from God.***

6. Who could enter the Holy of Holies? How often? What does the entire ritual of the day of atonement teach us about access to God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year. This teaches us about the seriousness and absolute holiness required to be in the presence of God. Sin absolutely separates from God and only sacrifice can bridge that gap.*

7. What does Leviticus 17 teach us about blood? Why is blood so important? What does it signify? How does this connect with the rest of the Torah (specifically, Genesis 3)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Life is in the blood. Blood signifies life, and therefore also death. The blood signifies the need for a death as a substitute. Life and death are major themes in Genesis 3. Because of sin man deserved to die, but an animal was killed instead.*

8. What are the implications of the fact that the OT talks about intentional and unintentional sins (ie. Lev 4)? What is different in the way they are dealt with? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The fact that unintentional sins are mentioned in the OT speaks to the fact that we can sin unintentionally! We see that God deals with these different kinds of sins very differently! God deals with sins with a **raised fist** by death as opposed to the unintentional sins which can be atoned for! Open and unrepentant sin against Yahweh is a very serious offense!*

9. What lessons do we learn about God and our relationship to Him from the sin of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10? What was Moses angry about in 10:16-18? Why do you think that Eleazar and Ithamar didn't get consumed by fire like Nadab and Abihu? What's the difference? Why is this story put right after the previous one? What does this teach us about God? Comment on what Leviticus 10:3 teaches us in this regard. (1 paragraph)

*A: God has wrath toward sin and will righteously judge it. Sin is serious. Moses was angry in 10:16-18 that they didn't follow the explicit commands. Eleazar and Ithamar presumably didn't get consumed like Nadab and Abihu because their reason for disobeying was to honor God (10:19 is their reason). God cares about **hearts and motives!** The two stories are put right next to each other to show the contrast and to emphasize the **grace** of God. God is a gracious God, while at the same time being completely holy and righteous. We see in 10:3 that God's glory is bound up in His holiness! If He is treated as commonplace, He is not shown to be the most glorious One in the universe!*

*We see there is great precision in how the various sacrifices and worship was to be done. Although we do not have so many strict rules to follow (the law has been fulfilled!), a clear implication is that we should be **precise** in our understanding of God and what He wants! All of these rituals were intended to communicate truths about the seriousness of sin and how sin can be dealt with. God does not want us to treat Him and His Word flippantly!*

10. What principles should we take away from all of this about how we relate to and worship God? (1 paragraph)

*A:*

11. Application: What does learning about sacrifice and atonement change about the way you think of 1) God, 2) yourself, 3) Christ's sacrifice? How do you respond?

12. Application: What does Leviticus teach us about sin?



## 12. Holiness, Purity, and Priesthood: Leviticus

**Scripture:** Leviticus 8-15, 18-27

**Theme:** God is Holy and so Requires Holiness and Purity from His People

**Objectives:**

- To understand the relationship between holiness and purity and what this teaches about God and His relationship to people
- To understand how God wants His people to live in the world and how holiness and purity relate to God's purposes in this world

**Reading:**

- Read (quickly) Leviticus 8-15, 18-27
- Read Holiness to the LORD by Ross, the Synthesis, and one sentence summary statement (indented in the text and using a different font in the Concluding Observations) from chapters 16-27; 31-48; 50
- Watch: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-is-morality-other-than-harm>

**Questions:**

1. What is consecration/sanctification in Leviticus? What do the words mean? What is consecrated in Leviticus (especially chapter 8)? What is 'progressive sanctification' and do we see that concept in Leviticus? What does Leviticus 22:32 teach about consecration and the reason it is done? What is the connection between consecration and holiness? (1 paragraph)

*A: Consecration is being set apart for a specific purpose. These words (consecration/sanctification which are the same Hebrew word) literally mean, 'to make holy'. Aaron and his sons are consecrated. Also their clothes are consecrated. Days and weeks are 'set apart'=consecrated. The firstborn is consecrated. The altar and its utensils are consecrated. Really, anything that is going to be specially used in the worship of Yahweh is consecrated. Leviticus 22:32 shows us that **Yahweh sanctifies people in order that His name may be sanctified!** This in one sense is the ultimate purpose of consecration/sanctification, that Yahweh would be seen as holy and separate from this world, and so those who are specially used in the worship of Yahweh must be set apart as holy. Yahweh is not commonplace and so everything used to worship Him must be set apart and holy for Him! The concept of 'progressive sanctification' isn't really in Leviticus, although we do see the concept of spiritual growth in Scripture. Sanctification in Scripture usually (but not always) refers to a **definitive act**.*

2. Thought question: Why is there a distinction between the priests and the rest of the people? What other distinctions can you think of in Leviticus? What do these distinctions teach us? Think about this! (1 paragraph)

*A: There are many levels of **separations** in Leviticus. God is holy and cannot come into contact with sinful humanity and this world. The levels of separation teach us that sin separates God from His creation, and the only way to overcome this is by sacrifice. The tabernacle itself is another clear example of this separation, where the holy of holies represents the very presence of God, and so must be very separate from the everyday lives of the people.*

3. What happens in chapter 9 of Leviticus? What is God's response to what happens in chapter 9? What key word is used at the end of this chapter? What is the connection with what proceeded? What does this teach us? (1 paragraph)

*A: The **consecration of the priests** takes place. God's response was for His **glory** to appear to all the people. The priests also blessed the people. Blessing comes through the people being in right relationship to Yahweh. When they have been set apart and are worshiping Him correctly, He blesses and does so with His presence. If we want to be blessed by God, we too need to be in right relationship with Him, especially as it regards sin, holiness, and sacrifice.*

4. What was the main failure of Nadab and Abihu according to Leviticus 10:3? Where do we see this elsewhere in Leviticus? What does this teach us about the purpose for all the regulations in Leviticus? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They did not set God apart as holy, they did not sanctify Him or glorify Him. Lev 18:21; 19:12; 21:6; 22:2, 32. This is one of the major purposes of all of these regulations about cleanliness and holiness. God must be set apart as holy and magnified in the eyes of the people and this world by doing so. Cf. Lev 24:10-16.*

5. How does 18:1-5 introduce the next section? What does it tell us about what is to come? What do we learn about holiness and 'standing out'? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see in the introduction of 18:1-5 that many of the laws to come have to do with how Israel is to be **distinct and different** from the nations around them. This is all because they have been redeemed by Yahweh and they are His special people. So they are not to be like the world, but different and distinct from the world that they may be a light to the world!*

6. What are chapters 18-20 about? What is the common theme? Why does God give these laws? What do the laws communicate about God and His people? (2-3 sentences)

*A: These chapters (and many of the following ones) are about holiness. God wants His people to be different and set apart from the wicked nations around them. Once again, God is holy and so wants His people to be holy as well. We also see that God cares about justice and righteousness. We need to care about **God's value system**.*

7. What do the following words mean: clean, unclean, holy, common/profane, defile/pollute, profane (as a verb), consecrate/sanctify, cleanse? What is their relationship between one another? How does Leviticus 10:10 help us to understand them? What other verses point out the relationship between these words? Do word searches on them (using biblegateway.com if necessary) and see their relationships. What does 12:4 teach us about the relationship between what is clean/unclean and what is sacred/holy? What does Leviticus 21:4 add to our understanding? Try to look up as many verses as you can that use these words and to understand what is going on in relationship to all of them. (1 paragraph)

*A: That which is clean is that which has no defilement (there is a connection with sin, although in the OT often there are things that are ritually clean/unclean as a picture of the spiritual realities). Unclean is that which is defiled. When something is holy, it is something set apart for a specific purpose. Holiness does contain an ethical aspect as well. Something common/profane is that which isn't set apart, but is naturally worldly. To defile/pollute is to make something unclean. To profane is to make something common. To*

consecrate/sanctify is to make something holy. To cleanse is to make something clean. Leviticus 10:10 shows that there are these two alternating descriptions in the holy/common and the clean/unclean. As we'll see they are not exactly overlapping, but form a system. By having the two sets of requirements (holy/clean) it creates **greater separation** between Yahweh and the world. Only that which is holy can be specifically used in the worship of Yahweh, because Yahweh is holy. When something unclean comes into contact with what is holy, it profanes that which is holy. Only that which is clean can come into contact with that which is holy. Leviticus 12:4 teaches us that anything unclean cannot come into contact with that which is holy. Leviticus 21:4 also shows us that there is a connection between being unclean and profaning what is holy.

8. What are chapters 11-15 about? What is the common theme? Why does God give these laws? What do the laws communicate about God and His people? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapters 11-15 are about cleanliness and purification. God gives these laws to teach that His people need to be undefiled and is a picture of how **sin defiles**. Lev 11:45 sums up much of the point. God communicates that He is completely undefiled and wants His people to be clean and holy as well.*

9. What happens to make something unclean in Leviticus? Can uncleanness spread? What happens to make something clean in Leviticus? What happens to make something holy or to make something common in Leviticus? (1 paragraph)

*A: Inappropriate sexual activity or sorcery defiles. Certain skin conditions, mold, food requirements and contact with the dead make unclean. And yes, uncleanness can **spread**. That is why mold becomes such a big deal in Leviticus as it is such a picture of that spreading. Anything that touches something unclean becomes unclean (ie. Lev 15:19-20). Sacrifice and purification with water are what make clean. We see through this whole system that it is **so easy to become unclean**. Sin is like gravity. If we aren't careful we will be defiled. And it takes purposeful effort and specific atonement for cleansing and sanctification to occur.*

10. What **principles** would you draw out of all this? What was God trying to communicate with all this clean, unclean, holy, common/profane, defile/pollute, consecrate/sanctify, cleanse terminology (think about this!)? (1+ paragraphs)

*A: Sin defiles us and makes us so that we can't come into the presence of God. To do so would be to profane His Holiness. **We need to be cleansed to come into contact with that which is holy, and we need to be sanctified to be used by God.** Sacrifice is necessary to cleanse and to sanctify/consecrate. God desires to glorify Himself. This is accomplished by people setting Him apart as holy and exalting His holiness by treating Him as so. When we treat God just like the ordinary things of these world, we profane His holy name. God is not like this world, He is different, and desires that we treat Him in a way that shows the majesty of His character!*

11. What principles do we learn from chapter 25? What does this teach us is important to God? What do we learn from Jubilee? Comment on the economic system laid out in the Old Testament and compare and contrast it to the modern systems of capitalism and communism/socialism. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 25 teaches that God will provide for His people and that a future of rest is in store (Sabbath year). It also teaches that God cares about **justice and the poor**. Once again it pictures a future when the poor and destitute will not be oppressed (year of Jubilee).*

12. What is contained in chapter 26? What does this remind us of that we have seen in the Torah about the Mosaic covenant? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Here we see the blessings and the curses. It reminds us that this covenant (the Mosaic covenant) is **conditional** and that if you want to participate in the blessings of it you must live in **right relationship** to Yahweh.*

13. Thought question: Discuss the purpose of all these laws from the standpoint of the video on morality. What makes laws moral or immoral? Why did God give so many detailed laws? (1+ paragraphs)
14. Thought question: How do the concepts of 'law' and 'sacrifice' so prevalent in Leviticus (and the rest of the Torah) fit together to explain how to have covenant relationship with Yahweh and what are the implications of this for us today? (1+ paragraphs)
15. Application: Why is there such a huge emphasis on all these themes in Leviticus? What does it teach us about God and our relationship to Him to see such an emphasis on holiness, cleanliness, sanctification, purity, etc. etc. etc.

### 13. God's Blessing and Israel's Failure: Numbers 1-18

**Scripture:** Numbers 1-18

**Theme:** God Continues to Bless His People Despite their Sin, but their Ultimate Lack of Faith will Result in Judgment for that Generation

**Objectives:**

- To see the importance of faith and trusting in God in order for God's plan to be accomplished
- To learn how God prepares people for what He sends them to do
- To understand key principles upon which to build a life of prayer

**Reading:**

- Read Numbers 1-18 *twice*
- Read Dominion and Dynasty by Dempster, pages 15-51

**Questions:**

1. What does the census of Numbers chapter 1 teach us? Who is numbered? Why take the census now? (1 sentence)

*A: The census shows that God has blessed His people as He has promised. 1:3 (also 1:18, 20, etc.) says that those who were twenty years old and over and were able to go to war were numbered because they were now heading to the **promised land**.*

2. What does the test for adultery accomplish in Numbers 5:11-31? It seems out of place, so that suggests that it may be important. What is the point of the other laws in this section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It ensures that there is no lack of faith and distrust in relationships. When there is no evidence, what basis is there for trust? There must be **trust** within individual marriages, as well as corporately among God's people! The other laws all emphasize that God's people are now ready to enter into the land and so give instructions on how to live in that land!*

3. What is the emphasis in the Nazarite vow (Numbers 6)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There is an emphasis on separation in the Nazarite vow. Someone can take this vow as a special act of thankfulness and service to Yahweh, and doing so means that they will specially separate themselves to worship Him. Anyone could do this as an expression of devotion to Yahweh. [Take an aside to explain vows... Everyone has ups and downs in faith. It is good when we are humble and/or trusting God, doing well in faith to make a **commitment** to Him as an act of worship. Even fasting is a vow of sorts.]*

4. What key theme comes up again in Numbers 6:22-27? What is significant in that the priests are the ones perform this? Why is verse 27 significant? Is this just a prayer for the people? (1 paragraph)

*A: The key theme of blessing returns again. The fact that the priests give the blessing shows that they are the mediators of God's blessing to the people, just as the people were to be the mediators of God's blessing to the world (ie. kingdom of priests). What the priests said in terms of the blessing was backed up as if God*

Himself said it (verse 27) because they are His **authoritative representatives**. Thus the blessing of the priest is not a mere wish, or even just a prayer for blessing, but a **divine declaration** of blessing straight from Yahweh. This is why we see in Scripture that blessings are effectual.

5. What do we see happening in the rest of chapter 1-10 of Numbers. What are they getting ready to do (Number 10:11-36)? What does God do to get them ready? (1 paragraph)

A: Israel is getting ready to leave Sinai and to depart for the promised land. They have been redeemed from Egypt to be God's special people. God has given them the law. Now they are ready to depart. But first God assures them of His presence and leading (9:15-23; 10:1-10). They also had to be ordered (chapters 2-4) and the tabernacle had to be consecrated (chapter 7). All of these first 10 chapters emphasize what God is doing to get them ready for entering the promised land. We also see that the Passover (Num 9:4-5) was a way to prepare. **Remembering** who Yahweh is and what He had done was vital to get them ready for what they were to embark upon!

6. As the people finally set out toward the promised land what happens in chapter 11? What happens first and then what happens after that? How is each incident resolved? What does all this teach us? (1 paragraph)

A: First, the people **complained** and Yahweh was angry and consumed some of them. But the people cried out to Moses, and through his intercession the nation was saved. Then the people complained again! Once again Yahweh's anger was kindled. This time Moses called out to Yahweh and Yahweh graciously responded by appointing 70 elders to help Moses bear the load of shepherding the people. Ultimately, Yahweh even gave the people meat in a display of His miraculous ability to provide for them. The fact that God gives them meat shows that eventually God gives them over to their own desires. Here we see Moses acting as an **intercessor** once again (Moses as intercessor is the emphasis)! But even the intercessor becomes weary of bearing the burden, and so **Yahweh is gracious** with him to care for and shepherd His people! **God is so patient** in bearing with His people!

7. What happens in chapter 12? What does this teach us about God appointed leadership? Why does God want to use humble leadership? How does humble leadership relate to faith? (1 paragraph)

A: Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses in chapter 12 because he had married a Cushite woman. Here they question his leadership and the fact that Yahweh had placed him as leader of the people. They appeal to the fact that God speaks to all of His people (much as Korah will). Yahweh then reveals that Moses was indeed a very special leader, whom Yahweh spoke directly to, and not in riddles as to other prophets. He spoke with Moses face to face. The parenthetical statement about Moses' humility shows that God **wants to use humble leaders**. God punishes Miriam as an affirmation of His leadership through Moses, and by Moses' intercession she is healed. We need to be very careful about questioning leaders that God has placed over us! While it is true that all of God's people can have relationship with Him, it is wrong to therefore conclude that God doesn't put some people in leadership positions and ask us to respect those positions! We need to respect those who God has put in leadership over us as well! God also wants humble leaders because they will depend upon, rely, and trust Him wholly, and thus He will get all the glory!

8. What happens in chapter 13? What report do they give about the land? Was this report true? What was wrong with it? What is the difference about the report that Joshua and Caleb give? (1 paragraph)

*A: The 12 spies spy out the land of Canaan as Yahweh commanded for 40 days. They report the truth about the land, that it was a good land and that there were large people in the land. The report was true, but it was not a report based on faith! While seeing the same raw facts, Joshua and Caleb responded in **belief** for who Yahweh is and what He can do. Sometimes we can say things that strictly speaking is true, that still isn't based upon faith and subtly undermines who God is! We need to be so careful in our speech to be people of faith as our disbelief can influence others! Notice the danger of **gossip!** [Aside on how damaging speech can be]*

9. What is the response from the report of 10 spies (in chapter 14)? What does this teach us about unbelief? Imagine what the conversations of the 10 spies would have been like among themselves and how that then spread to millions of people. (1 paragraph)

*A: As a result of the report of the 10 spies, millions of people doubted in Yahweh and complained to Him. Notice how the **disbelief spreads!** Likely, it was only one of these spies that made a first doubting comment like, "Look how big those people are." Then the next spy started to doubt until 10 of the 12 spies were convinced that they could not take the land. Finally, this attitude of disbelief spread to millions of people. Ultimately this disbelief resulted in the people wanting to go back to Egypt in rebellion against Yahweh and His plan! Disbelief is very serious because it spreads, and so that's why we see elsewhere in the Torah that it must be cut off!*

10. How do Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb respond? How do the people respond to them? And how does Yahweh then respond? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb pled with the people not to **doubt** Yahweh, but to **trust** Him and to go forward in obedience to Him! This is such a clear example of how the people won't obey, because the people don't believe! **Every time we sin** we are **doubting** that God's plan is best for us and think we know better! So the people aren't persuaded by their leaders and ultimately are ready to stone them! Yahweh had to step in and appear in glory before the tent of meeting so that the people don't kill His leaders!*

11. What does Yahweh threaten in 14:11-12? Why do you think Yahweh threatened this? How would you have responded if you were Moses and you heard this threat (remember what just happened!)? How does Moses respond? What is the basis for Moses' response (think a lot about this!)? How does Moses plead with Yahweh? What are his 'tactics'? What adjectives would you use to describe Moses' prayer? What are some principles we learn about prayer from Moses' prayer? (1+ paragraph)

*A: Yahweh threatens to wipe out the nation of Israel and start again with Moses. Yahweh threatened this, obviously not because He was going to do it (He has made unconditional promises as we see in Genesis!), but as a 'test' for Moses, to work through Moses' prayer. We would likely respond by saying, "Great! Sounds good to me. These are rebellious people and starting over with me as the head of a nation sounds good." Moses responds by pleading for the nation of Israel. He pleads God's character and promises. In other words, his prayer is solidly based upon who God is and what God has said. He has incredible **holy boldness** because He knows what Yahweh has revealed about Himself and His plan. God will be faithful to His Word, and so Moses can plead this firmly. He also appeals to God's glory as the basis for his prayer and **reasons** with Yahweh about how God would glorify His name among the nations. In essence, Moses is arguing with Yahweh that He would make His secret/sovereign/decretive will to match His revealed/moral/preceptive will. [Excursus on the two wills of God.]*

Notice how **God centered** this prayer is. All Moses is concerned with is God displaying His character and being faithful to His Word and His plan so that Yahweh would receive all the glory through what happens. Notice how **selfless** Moses is, as this would mean he would have to continue leading these rebellious people, and not even Yahweh's enticing threat tempted Moses to take the offer because Moses was so God-centered in his thinking. Obviously, Yahweh will answer a prayer based upon such clear God glorifying thinking!

12. So how does Yahweh respond to this prayer? (1 paragraph)

A: Yahweh responds by answering it. Notice how Yahweh affirms that indeed He will **glorify** Himself through this world. Yahweh will not wipe out His people entirely, but will judge the generation that disobeyed. The wilderness wanderings are a result of this disbelief. But notice how God's plan is an answer to Moses' prayer while at the same time He will judge those who have rebelled. The Abrahamic covenant will continue, but the nature of the Mosaic covenant demands obedience from those who will be a part of the blessing!

[Excursion on prayer.]

13. How do the people respond to Yahweh's response? What does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

A: They respond by an apparent '**remorse**', but one not born of **true repentance**. True repentance would have been seen in obedience and trust of Yahweh, not seeking to accomplish His plan without Him! Often we are self-centered in our sadness, but are not truly concerned with God and His glory which we have defied in our sin. It is dangerous to only be sad about the consequences of our sin and not what truly is sad about our sin, that we have spit in the face of God!

14. Why do you think laws about sacrifices are inserted at chapter 15 of Numbers? (1 sentence)

A: It is fitting in the flow of the narrative which has so much rebellion to remind the people of the need for **sacrifice**.

15. What was at the heart of the sin in Korah's rebellion? What specifically did Korah state as the issue? Is this true? What is wrong with what they said? What is interesting about who Korah was and how this relates to this issue? How was the issue resolved? How did the people respond to this resolution? What did Aaron have to do because of their response and why? Why is 15:30 significant as it relates to sin/rebellion? (1+ paragraph)

A: At the heart of Korah's rebellion was a **discontentment** and lack of faith and submission to the leadership that God had placed over them. Korah stated that all the people were holy, and this was true to an extent. Often a truth can be used to support a conclusion that isn't true. Just because all the people were holy to an extent didn't mean that God hadn't appointed Moses as the mediator between Himself and the people. What is interesting is that Korah himself was a Levite, and thus had some responsibility more than the rest of the people, and thus was already a leader of sorts himself. Yet he wanted more than he was given by God. The issue was resolved by God showing His approval of Moses by doing exactly as Moses had said and having the ground swallow up Korah and his company. The people should have realized that this was a miracle straight from the hand of God and therefore it was met with His approval, but they even rebelled against this and still didn't follow Moses! So God started killing them off for this sin and Aaron had to make atonement for the people with his censer so that the plague was stopped. This once again points to the **seriousness of sin**,



*especially the sin of complaining and not trusting God (particularly the leadership He has appointed)! This shows the danger of discontentment and how it can lead to rebellion.*

16. Whose idea is what happens in chapter 17? Why does God do this? What do we see about God in this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is God's idea to make Aaron's rod bud as a way to affirm His choice of the house of Levi. We see God's **grace and patience** in bearing with His rebellious people! He continues to bear with them over and over again and to deal with their weaknesses by **reminding** them and proving to them His truth! Notice how God deals with our weaknesses and our lack of faith!*

17. What does God reaffirm in chapter 18? What do you think the phrase 'bear iniquity' means in 18:1 and what is the significance of it? What does this teach us about what it means to be a priest? (1 paragraph)

*A: God affirms His choice of Aaron's house to be the priestly line. They were to be separate and distinct from the rest of the nation. The phrase '**bear iniquity**' speaks of the fact that the priests were the ones who dealt with the sin of the people. This is at the heart of the sacrificial and cultic system. This was a primary aspect of the priests' purpose, to **deal with sin**. Notice as well that priests are the ones who **carry the burdens of other people**. Priests were the ones who knew how to deal with sin and had the responsibility to help other people deal with their sin.*

18. Application: What do we learn about trusting God from this section?

19. Application: Think much about Moses' prayer and how we should pray like Moses. What should be the basis for our prayers? What should we ask for in our specific circumstances?

## 14. Rebellion and Hope: Numbers 19-36

**Scripture:** Numbers 19-36

**Theme:** Even though the People continue to Rebel, God Continues to Bless and Give Hope for the Future

**Objectives:**

- To understand the seriousness of rebellion against God and yet the grace of God toward sinners
- To see how the plan of God will continue despite whatever sin and rebellion oppose His plan

**Reading:**

- Read Numbers 19-36 twice.
- Read Dominion and Dynasty by Dempster, pages 55-92

**Questions:**

1. Why do you think more laws on purity are included in chapter 19 (see also the next question for a hint)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again, in the midst of the sin and impurity of the people, it is an important reminder of the need for cleansing and purity. This is also fitting right before the deaths of Miriam and Aaron. We should note that 38 years pass very quickly in a short span of verses in this section. As Miriam dies, really a whole generation of Israelites is dying. With all this death, there is definitely a need for cleansing! Through this whole section we continue to see sin and death, but we also continue to see the **grace of God** in forgiveness and cleansing His people!*

20. What do the deaths of Aaron and Miriam signify? What time frame are we now in? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The 40 years of wilderness wanderings have silently passed by with the death of Miriam in chapter 20. Now the old generation is dying off and the **new generation** is ready to go in and take the promised land.*

21. What happens (again!) in 20:2-9? Does there seem to be a progression in the people from the beginning of Numbers to here? How does Moses respond this time? What does God say is at the heart of Moses' failure? What does it mean that Moses didn't treat God as holy? What is the significance and application of this (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again the people rebel! This happens over and over. It appears that the rebellion is becoming more deliberate. We've moved from complaining to **outright rebellion** in this section of Numbers. This time Moses does not respond by obeying God. At the heart of Moses' failure is a **lack of trust/belief** in Yahweh. Equally significant is the fact that by disobeying God, Moses did not sanctify (set apart) Yahweh as holy. This is a significant aspect of what the people were to do. Yahweh is holy, and so we should treat Him as such, and never treat Him flippantly. Our mindset of how **reverently awesome** He is should affect our actions so that we treat Him as completely holy in all that we do!*

22. What happens in the rest of chapter 20 (20:14-29) and what does this teach us? (1-2 sentences)

A: Edom refuses to let Israel pass through even though they were a brother nation and it would cost them nothing to help their **oppressed brother** and Aaron dies outside the promised land because of the sin of Meribah. In the first episode we see God's heart for the **sojourner**, and in the second the **seriousness of sin**.

23. What happens in 21:4-9? How is it resolved? Why is the way it is resolved significant in the flow of the narrative? How do the people respond, and compare and contrast that with how we've seen them respond in previous chapters? What is significant about the picture used and what does it signify? (1 paragraph)

A: The people rebel again! And so God sends judgment on them again. But keep in mind that this is the second generation. And so this time the people **acknowledge** their **sin**. There seems to be a difference in their **repentance**, and **they ask** Moses to pray for them. In the past they didn't ask Moses, he just did it on their behalf. The picture is so significant in that it shows the importance of **trust** and **belief** as they look to the snake on the pole. The snake of course symbolizes sin (Genesis 3). It took faith for the people to actually go to the pole and look (their responsibility), yet it was God who saved them (His action and initiative). Sin has to be dealt with, and **faith** is the vehicle God uses to save us!

24. What happens in 21:10-35? What is different than what we've seen so far? (2-3 sentences)

A: The people are **obeying** and are being **victorious**! That's new! They defeat their enemies mightily through the power of God as they trust in Him. This can only come after they are forgiven in the previous section!

25. Read the section on Balaam carefully (22-24). What is the emphasis (hint: why are there so many oracles in this section)? What is Balaam hired to do? Can he do it? Why or why not? What does this teach us? How is Balaam portrayed (especially in chapter 22)? What happens in 22:21-35? Why is this story included? What does it tell us about Balaam? Is Balaam good or evil? Why? How is Balak portrayed? Why do you think Balak and Balaam keep trying to curse Israel from different peaks? What does Balaam say in his oracles that is significant? (1+ paragraph)

A: The emphasis in the Balaam section is on the **future**. That is why there are many oracles, because these oracles are about the future. Balaam is hired to curse Israel, but he is only able to **bless** them. God has blessed Israel, so it is impossible for them to be cursed. So God will bless Israel in the future. He has their future in His hand! Balaam is portrayed as spiritually dull and blind. The story about the donkey seems to be included to show that while Balaam did in a sense obey Yahweh, he in reality was opposing Yahweh (cf. 22:32). God allowed him to go, but God was not for him going to curse His people! Balaam was opposed to God and his plan and was ultimately doing this for the wrong reasons. Balaam is not portrayed as a good prophet of Yahweh, but one who is opposed to Him and is **spiritually dull** (more stupid than his donkey!). Balak is obviously opposed to God and His people. They keep trying to curse Israel from different spots, presumably because they think that if they go to a different peak, they might have a better chance of cursing Israel there. The people at that time believed that deities were localized and had many other superstitions. So they thought they could manipulate the situation to see Israel cursed. Balaam went along with this presumably because he thought he could curse Israel. God of course overrode their attempts. Their repeated attempts once again show their **stupidity**! They should have known they could be successful against Yahweh and His people! Balaam says many significant things about Israel's future. Significantly he continues to show Yahweh's **blessing** on His people. 24:17 is of course a very significant prophecy about a ruler who would rise from Israel, the **coming King and Messiah**!

26. What happens in 25:1-5? What was at the heart of their sin? What happens then in verse 6 in the midst of this? How were the people responding to the incident of the first five verses? How is their response different from what we've seen of the previous generation? What is so blatant about what the Israelite then does in verse 6? How does Phinehas respond? What does God say about Phinehas and what does that teach us? What is the key thing that God says about Phinehas? (1+ paragraph)

*A: The nation of Israel got sucked into worshiping Moab's gods through going after their women. This is a reoccurring problem in Israel's history: pagan women **enticing** Israel to worship pagan gods. It appears that the people were genuinely repentant and were weeping about their sin. Right in the midst of their weeping over this incident, an Israelite takes a Midianite woman right into his tent blatantly in front of everyone. **Balaam couldn't curse them one way so he tried another** (by enticing them, see Num 31:16)! Phinehas responded by killing the two of them right in the midst of their sin. God says that Phinehas was as **jealous and zealous for God's glory as God is for His own glory!** This is an amazing statement. Phinehas sanctified Yahweh as holy among the people. God received the glory for this. As a result God made a **perpetual covenant** with Phinehas and his descendants. This covenant of peace is referred to in Malachi (wait till then to discuss it further). Likely, it refers to the fact that Phinehas' family would be the chosen line for the priesthood. Notice it also states that he made **atonement** for the people. Sin was dealt with and so right relationship with Yahweh was restored!*

27. What does the census in chapter 26 emphasize? (1 sentence)

*A: Chapter 26 emphasizes that there is a now **new generation** that God has blessed to go in and take the promised land.*

28. Why is it such a big deal in chapter 27:1-11 and chapter 36 about the daughters of Zelophehad? What does this teach us was very important to the Israelites that often isn't very important to us? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Land** and **inheritance** were a big deal in that society and culture! It's hard for us to understand from our American perspective, but land and inheritance had everything to do with God's blessing and provision for His people. It also had to do with how was going to accomplish His plan, with His people in His land, living out His ideals before the nations. The nation of Israel is a **nation**. And so part of being a nation is the **land**. Having a part of the land was part of participating in the nation.*

29. What do all the offerings in chapters 28 and 29 emphasize? Why are these reminders and laws given here? What about chapter 30? (1 paragraph)

*A: These offerings are what they are regularly supposed to offer as they go in and possess the land. They are part of Israel's worship of Yahweh and a regular part of their daily lives. They should continually be reminded of Yahweh and the need to be in right relationship to Him through all of this. This is the appropriate time to give these reminders to this new generation as they are about to go in and take the land. The same is true of chapter 30; it is appropriate to remind them of the need to live out faithfulness to Yahweh in their vows as well as their offerings as they are about to go into the land. **They were to work Yahweh into the fabric of their daily lives in the land!***

30. What happens in chapter 31? Why does God want them to do this? What is important to God? Who is singled out to go with the army and why? How does this relate to the previous incident (see verse 16)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Israel is called to avenge Midian. Notice that in doing so they are executing **Yahweh's vengeance**, not their own (31:3). God is holy and so needs to wipe out these wicked people, and also to protect the purity of His people who are tempted to be led astray by their wickedness. **Phinehas** is singled out to go with them, presumably because of his **zeal** for God's holiness and glory. Numbers 31:16 tells us that the previous incident was done at the provoking of Balaam.*

31. What does chapter 32 emphasize? (1 sentence)

*A: Chapter 32 emphasizes the importance of **unity** within the nation of Israel. The 12 tribes all needed to be unified in their following of Yahweh and of taking the promised land **together**.*

32. Why recount Israel's history in chapter 33? (1 sentence)

*A: Recounting Israel's history was to remind them of Yahweh's faithfulness in preparation to take the land.*

33. What do chapters 34-35 emphasize? (1 sentence)

*A: These chapters emphasize further readiness to go in and take the land. The land is divided up and the cities of refuge established for when they are living in the land.*

34. Application: What do we learn about rebellion against God and His grace?

35. Application: What do we learn about God's plan for the future and our faith?

## 15. History has Meaning: Deuteronomy 1-5

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 1-5

**Theme:** God will be Faithful in the Future because He has Done so in the Past

**Objectives:**

- To have a greater understanding of God's faithfulness that will cause us to trust Him more
- To understand how God was accomplishing His purpose through His covenant people and how that applies to believers today

**Reading:**

- Read Deuteronomy 1-5 *three times*.
- Read Deuteronomy by Merrill, pages 21-32 and 38-57.

**Questions:**

1. What is the structure of Deuteronomy (see Merrill)? What is the genre of the book (ie. what form common in their day does it take)? What does this teach us about the purpose of the book (think carefully about this!)? What would be different about this book if it were simply a letter? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Outline:*

*The Covenant Setting (1:1-5)*

*The Historical Review (1:6-4:40)*

*Preparation for the Covenant Text (4:41-49)*

*The Principles of the Covenant (5:1-11:32)*

*The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant (12:1-26:15)*

*Exhortation and Narrative Interlude (26:16-19)*

*The Curses and Blessings (27:1-28:68)*

*The Epilogue: Historical Review (29:2-30:20)*

*Deposit of the Text and Provision for Its Future Implementation (31:1-29)*

*The Song of Moses (31:30-32:44)*

*Narrative Interlude (32:45-52)*

*The Blessing of Moses (33:1-29)*

*Narrative Epilogue (34:1-12)*

*The purpose of the book has everything to do with covenant. It is in the form of an ANE treaty document. It is a covenant document, designed to call Israel to covenant faithfulness. In fact, this book is a covenant renewal with the second generation of Israelites, as the first generation has passed away. Since this book is a covenant renewal with the second (and following!) generations, it is **binding** on them. That is why there are **witnesses** and **covenant blessings and cursings**. That is why all the prophets to come continually call the nation back to covenant faithfulness (so often quoting Deuteronomy). It is impossible to understand the rest of the OT without an understanding of the covenant nature of Deuteronomy.*

2. What does 5:3 imply about the purpose of this book? Why would Moses say that the covenant wasn't made with their fathers? What was he emphasizing by saying that? What do 26:16-19; 29:1, 10-15; 30:19; and 31:9-13 teach us about the purpose and setting of the book? Why is there such a huge emphasis on 'today' in Deuteronomy? (1+ paragraph)

A: Deu 5:3 shows that while their fathers were indeed the ones who were at Sinai, this covenant is being made with **them**. Thus this is a covenant renewal ceremony and Moses is emphasizing their personal involvement and participation in it. 26:16-19 emphasizes that God is commanding them to obey His law today, and that they have declared today that they will keep it. Thus they have entered into the covenant '**today**'. 30:19 emphasizes the covenant nature of this book as well. It is not just a sermon that they can choose to obey or not. It is a covenant that if they do not obey they will be cursed because of. Heaven and earth are ongoing witnesses to the fact that they have entered into this solemn agreement with Yahweh. The rain and the crops will testify to this covenant! 31:9-11 shows that this covenant was to be ongoing with **future generations**, who were to read the covenant so that they would know what they needed to be faithful to. The emphasis on 'today' shows the covenantal focus of the book. It's like nowadays, when you sign something, you always date it. This emphasis on 'today' therefore shows the very official and covenantal nature of the book.

3. How does Deuteronomy 1:1-5 function? What is the time frame? What does 1:5 teach us about the purpose of Deuteronomy and even the structure of it? What does this teach us about the importance of explaining, reviewing, and reminding ourselves of Scripture, and even our own history? (1 paragraph)

A: It is the prologue/introduction to the book. It establishes the context and time frame as the 40th year, after the wilderness wanderings, after the conquest of transjordan as they are about to go into the promised land. 1:5 teaches us that most/all of Deuteronomy is Moses' expounding/explaining of the law. Thus Deuteronomy is a **series of speeches**. It also speaks to the importance of explaining and expounding the law, and our own history as well, as a means of reminding us to be faithful to God.

4. What do we see God do again in 2:30 that he has done before and why? (1 sentence)

A: God hardened someone's heart in order to glorify Himself and show His power.

5. What is the point in retelling Israel's history? Why does Moses do so and what is he trying to impress upon them? Think about this! (1 paragraph)

A: Moses retells Israel's history for many reasons. He is putting their history into **perspective**. It is important for them to **remember** what God has done. This impresses upon them the faithfulness of God, as well as the power of God. These are important truths for them to remember if they are going to **trust and obey** Him. They needed to know **who their God is!** It's about the **character** of the one entering into this agreement, He is **faithful**. They also have a history of messing up, so don't forget to be faithful! Remember that the 2nd generation wasn't present for the Exodus and Sinai (or at least were young), and so they needed to be taught and reminded who Yahweh was and what He had done for them!

6. What is the implication of the fact that Moses says in 3:24 that he has only begun to see what Yahweh will do? How does this relate to the future? What does the past teach us about the future? Why is there such an emphasis on the future in the Torah? How does it relate to the purpose of the Torah? (1 paragraph)

A: This teaches us that Yahweh is going to do even greater things than He has already done in the Exodus! The future is more glorious than the past, and the past teaches us that God will work in the future! The past becomes the paradigm of the future. God has been faithful in the past and so He will do so in the future.

*There is such an emphasis on the future in the Torah because a major theme of the Torah is that Yahweh is accomplishing **His plan** and design to bring creation to its intended **goal**. God will certainly be faithful to accomplish and keep the Abrahamic covenant to bless the world! He is sovereign in accomplishing this plan, but He wants and has designed people to be an integral part of that plan. Thus He challenges people to trust in Him and His sovereign plan as He brings it to completion!*

7. Does the tone change in 4:1? What is different? What is Moses doing differently and why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Moses is now **exhorting** the people after giving their history. He does this to drive home the importance of their history and how it should **apply** to their lives.*

8. What does 4:4 teach us? What key word/theme that we see in Genesis appears here? Where do we see this theme elsewhere (hint: chapter 30 and 32)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 4:4 teaches us that obedience to Yahweh means **life** (a key word in Genesis/Deuteronomy). Deuteronomy 30:15, 19, 20; 32:39, and 47 all have this theme. Once again, death was something that entered the world because of the Fall, but God is the giver of life and wants to give it to His people! **Life is found in relationship with Yahweh!***

9. What is the significance of 4:5-8? What does it teach us about the purpose of the law? (1 paragraph)

*A: 4:5-8 teaches us that the purpose of the law involved Israel being **different and wiser** than the **nations** around them so that all those nations would see and learn who Yahweh is. They would also see how Yahweh is in relationship with His people. This is the Abrahamic covenant at work, all the nations of the earth being blessed through the seed of Abraham.*

10. What does Moses exhort the people to in 4:9? What were they to be on guard against? Why is it so important that they heed this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Moses exhorts the people to be on guard against themselves and to guard their hearts. This is so important because of the **danger of forgetfulness!** The concept of guarding means to be **watchful** and **attentive** to something and to take responsibility for it! This is a key concept in Deuteronomy.*

11. What are the people to be vigilant about in 4:15-20? Why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: An important part of glorifying Yahweh is setting Him apart as **holy** and **distinct**. To make an image of Him is to show Him as less glorious than He is, for no image can compare to His glory! Yahweh alone is the **awesome** God of creation and their salvation, and so He demands exclusive worship! God is trying to guard how they think about Him. God is universal. This is all about guarding their thinking.*

12. What does 4:25-31 teach us about Israel's future? What is the remedy for this in verse 29? What does verse 31 remind us of in light of that future? (1 paragraph)

*A: 4:25-31 teaches us that there is the real danger that Israel will fall into idolatry in the future. If they do so (and the end of Deuteronomy tells us that they will!), they will be judged and scattered by God. The remedy is for them to seek Yahweh with **all their heart**, and there is the **guarantee** that they will be able to find Him*



*if they do so. God is so gracious! Even in light of their future failure, God will not forget the Abrahamic covenant, but will be faithful to keep it. However, we continue to see that the person/generation that rebels will be punished and will not participate in the blessing.*

13. What does 4:32-40 teach us about the purpose of the Exodus and Sinai events? What does this section teach us about the basis/reason for the Exodus and Sinai events? What key words come up in verse 40 to describe the results of their obedience/faithfulness (think about what 'well' means in English for one of them) and what are their significance and connection to the rest of the Torah? (1 paragraph)

*A: God did something that was so unique and magnificent that it would be obvious (primarily to Israel, but also to the other nations), that Yahweh Himself is the only God. His purpose in the Exodus (4:35, 39) was for them to **know** this. In other words, He saved them so that they would know Him! The basis for these events was His election of Abraham (ie. the Abrahamic covenant). God's **sovereign grace** is always the basis for His **salvation!** He alone gets the glory because He planned and accomplished it, apart from any good in us! But in keeping faithful relationship to Yahweh it will be **good** for them and they will **live!** Obeying Yahweh is not a burden! This was God's good design for His creation since the beginning. He created mankind good (well=good) in a good world and gave them the tree of life. He provided everything good for us to live and to have right relationship with Him! It is always **best and happiest** for us to trust and obey Yahweh because He is so good!*

14. What does 5:22-27 teach us about how Yahweh originally gave the people the 10 commandments and how they responded? What does 5:28-29 teach us about this response? What does this teach us about how to keep God's commandments? (1 paragraph)

*A: In 5:22-27 we learn that originally God gave the 10 commandments orally, speaking out of the fire. The people responded with a sense of **awe and fear** of Yahweh, and this was right. That sense of the **fear of Yahweh** is what was to drive their obedience. This is a **mindset** (heart) as we see in 5:29. The same is true for us. It is only when we have a great sense of the fear and awesomeness of Yahweh that we will obey Him. When God becomes small and insignificant, then we are tempted to act out of selfishness and pride!*

15. According to the following verses (4:6, 9, 15, 23, 40; 5:1, 32, etc.) what should the people do with the commandments? Use several translations/dictionaries/commentaries to learn the meaning of the word that is used ('keep')? What is the implication of using this word in relationship to the commandments? (1 paragraph)

*A: The people were to **guard** the commandments. That involves **watchful care** to ensure that they are obeyed. This is a major theme in Deuteronomy and even in the NT (1st John for example). If the Bible is God's very Word, we should not treat it lightly, but should be very careful to make sure we keep it.*

16. Application: How does our own history/testimony or that of others encourage us to continue to trust God?

17. Application: How does an understanding of God's purpose in calling a people to Himself help us to be about that same purpose?

## 16. The Heart of the Covenant: Deuteronomy 6-11

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6-11

**Theme:** God Calls His People to Covenant Faithfulness from the Heart

**Objectives:**

- To understand what covenant faithfulness looks like and the motives for keeping relationship with Yahweh
- To understand the hindrances to keeping relationship with Yahweh and how to resist them

**Reading:**

- Read Deuteronomy 6-11 twice.

**Questions:**

1. How does Deuteronomy 6 begin (first phrase)? What are we expecting to follow after we read the first few words? How do the first three verses of this chapter function in relationship to the rest of chapter 6? How do these three verses relate to what precedes them? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Deuteronomy 6 begins with, "Now this is the commandment". We are expecting the commandment to follow. These words are introducing and preparing for the commandment. And thus we see that these first 3 verses are a transition from the previous chapter and **emphasize** what is to follow.*

2. Why do you think 6:1 uses a singular for commandment (ie. Now this is the commandment) instead of the plural (commandments)? What is this commandment? What do the following verses in Deuteronomy add to our understanding of what this commandment is (read in the ESV): 5:31; 8:1; 11:8; 11:22; 15:5; 19:9; 30:10-11? What does the following context of chapter 6 add to our understanding? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 6:1 uses the singular because the singular 'commandment' sums up the whole law and covenant and in a word is being faithful to Yahweh in **covenant relationship** with Him. Thus verse 5 really becomes the statement of this commandment.*

3. What is the purpose of the commandment according to verse 2? How does this relate to what the commandment is? (1 paragraph)

*A: The purpose of the commandment is that they may **fear Yahweh** and **keep all His statutes**. Thus if the commandment is to be in covenantal relationship with Yahweh, fearing Him is closely related to that commandment as is the obedience that flows from it. If we fear Yahweh, we will think of Him as awesome and great, and so we will trust in Him and in His power and not rely on our own strength and wisdom. Therefore, to trust (and fear, which is the basis for trusting) and obey (which flows out of trusting) really is a summary of the law.*

4. What does verse 3 tell us will be the result of them keeping the commandment (what key words are used)? What does it teach us about the relationship between Yahweh fulfilling His promise and their participation in it? (1 paragraph)

A: It will be good for them and Yahweh will multiply them if they keep the commandment. Both 'good' and 'multiply' are key concepts from Genesis and tied to God's **promise**. But their participation in this promise is dependent on them keeping the covenant. In other words, God will keep His promise to Abraham, and eventually there will be a generation that keeps covenantal relationship to Yahweh and will receive His promises, but the current generation will only participate if they keep covenant.

5. How does verse 4 start? What do you think the reason for starting that way is? (1 sentence)

A: Verse 4 begins with a command to **hear** and thus it signals that Israel should listen up because that which is to follow is very important.

6. What is so important as this section starts (the first few words of verse 4 and following)? What is the significance of this for them? For us? (2-3 sentences)

A: What is so important is that Yahweh is the only true God, and He is Israel's God! Thus because He is the only true God, there is no other god that we should be in relationship with. The same is true for us. There is only one God and He demands **complete allegiance**!

7. After the command to listen, what is the first command given? How is this related to 'the commandment'? How is it emphasized? (1 paragraph)

A: The first command given is to **love** Yahweh with all that you are. This is at the heart of the covenant and what the commandment is. It is emphasized by being the first statement of what the commandment is, being introduced by verses 1-3 and grounded in verse 4, and also by the repetition of all the terms that reinforce the need for wholehearted love to Yahweh. This shows that the covenant is all about faithful relationship to Him. Love is about relationship, like in a marriage!

8. What do the commands in verses 6-9 emphasize? (1 paragraph)

A: Verses 6-9 emphasize that **God's words** should be repeated and ingrained in the people's consciousness. They constantly need to **remind** themselves of God's Word and their need to be faithful to it. They need to pass it on to their children by diligently repeating it over and over to them. God's Word should always be on the lips of God's covenant people. Remembering God's Word is what is necessary to be in a loving relationship to Yahweh! We so easily forget how good, powerful, and faithful Yahweh is, and so a constant reminder is necessary if we are to live in faithful relationship to Him!

9. What is the point of verses 10-12? Is that easy for us to do as well? How does that relate to verses 6-9? (1 paragraph)

A: When things go **well** we should not forget God. It's so **easy** to do when things go well because we think we can depend upon ourselves, while in reality even when things are good we need to totally depend upon Yahweh. That's why we need to constantly remind ourselves of who God is and how we should relate to Him.

10. Why should Israel (both the current generation and future generations) keep the law according to verses 20-25 (there are several parts to this answer!)? (1+ paragraph)

A: The first reason why Israel should keep the law is because Yahweh has **redeemed** them powerfully from Egypt. God's salvation and love and gratitude for that salvation is always the basis for obedience. This is not

mere moralism. They were slaves in Egypt, but God freed them from slavery so that they would be slaves to Him, in relationship with Him, and would obey Him! Note the same is true of us! We obey God because He has saved us! He made a clear distinction between Israel and Egypt (He did signs to them [ie. Egypt], **but us** He brought out) because of the covenant He made with Abraham, because of His covenant faithfulness. We also see that they should keep the law for **their own good**. They would be preserved alive (have life!) if they keep right relationship to Yahweh. The keeping of God's covenant was the means of them keeping right relationship with Him.

Notice how keeping relationship with Yahweh will be **righteousness for them**! This doesn't say that if they perfectly obey the commandments they will be righteous. It says that if they are **careful to observe this commandment** (which as we already showed was to keep covenant relationship with Yahweh), righteousness would be **for them**. This clearly implies foreign righteousness that would be for them, and not their own. In other words, righteousness is given to those in right relationship with Yahweh. Notice as well that they should be careful to obey the commandment (ie. Covenant) in the presence of Yahweh. This also adds to the idea of covenant relationship rather than perfect obedience. So the idea of imputation on the basis of faith is clearly in this text, although not as explicit as in Paul.

So they should obey because of all that God did for them (and gratitude for it) and in hope for all that God will do for them in the future (it will be good for them)! Once again, these are the only right bases for obedience. All other reasons for obedience amount to mere religion and moralism. Christianity is unique in having these motives for obedience! It's because of who God is and what He has done and will do!

[Side note: while it may be tempting to think that Jews today can also have these right motives (and some Jews did in the OT), today it is not possible because they have rejected Christ and so we see in the NT that their hearts are hardened to the truth and they don't have the Spirit to change their hearts in this way. That's the sad irony, that the New Covenant which was made to Israel to change their hearts is being participated in by Gentiles, but we know that in the end they will be jealous and will participate in it themselves (Rom 11:11, 26, but read the whole chapter!)]

11. What does 7:1-5 teach us about why the Israelites were to wipe out the nations in the land of Canaan? (2-3 sentences)

A: We learn here that the Israelites were to wipe out the Canaanites because the idolatrous nations around them would **seduce** them into following their gods, whereas Yahweh demands complete and total allegiance. Through intermarrying with those around them the values of the pagan nations would become theirs. And thus Yahweh's whole plan and purpose for the world through the nation of Israel would be ruined! This is about His **glory** working through His people.

12. What does 7:6 teach about why Israel was to be different than the surrounding nations? (2-3 sentences)

A: They were chosen to be **set apart** from all the other nations as a special people in relationship with Yahweh. God **elected** them to be His special nation, holy for the purpose of accomplishing His plan. They were unique in this role as a nation. Understanding that God wants us to be holy for a purpose changes our motive for obeying. Sometimes it is easy to get too focussed merely personal piety. But knowing that God wants us to be holy so that we can accomplish His plan helps motivate us properly. On the flipside, if all we think about is accomplishing His plan without understanding the need for holiness, that too misses the point.

13. Why did God choose Israel for this special place in His plan according to 7:7-8? (1 paragraph)

*A: God chose Israel to display His glory. He didn't chose them because they were great, but because they were not. Thus He gets all the **glory** for using them. It was because of His choice that He chose. There was nothing outside of Himself that made Him choose. It was because He is faithful to His covenant. He wanted to show His grace! **Yahweh set His love on Israel because He loves Israel!** Thus He receives all the glory for His glorious plan! It's all about Him, not about us! There are only two choices, either God chose us because of something in us, or God chose us because of something in Him. If He chose us because of something in us, it would cause pride. But because He saved us solely on the basis of His love, it produces humility, reverence, and love. And the more we think about and remember these truths, the more it changes our hearts. This is how we have relationship with Yahweh.*

14. How does 7:9-11 encourage Israel to be faithful to obey? (1 sentence)

*A: These verses encourage Israel by reminding them of **God's faithfulness** to those who obey Him, and also His wrath towards those who do not. Both the encouragement and the warning are useful!*

15. What will God do for them according to 7:12-26 if they keep His covenant? (1 sentence)

*A: He will pour out covenant blessings upon them so that they will be **blessed above every nation on earth** (7:14) [and thus be the means of blessing the world as a light to it].*

16. What does 8:2-5 teach us about God's purposes in how He leads His people and wants them to trust Him? (1 paragraph)

*A: 8:2-5 shows us that God had the intention of providing for His people all along, but **He brought trials/tests into their lives to test their hearts and obedience**. God will be faithful to keep His part of the deal, but He wants us to keep ours. If we never had any want, there would be no opportunity for us to show that we trusted Yahweh. This is what He wants, **people of faith who rely upon His greatness and faithfulness**. This is what shows Him off as the great God that He is, that He is great enough to be trusted. He wants peoples' hearts! He wants people that are willing to give up everything because of how great He is, even when He isn't blessing with anything except Himself! Thus He Himself is shown to be worth it! We need to learn to embrace trials. And until we learn to embrace trials we won't remain under them!*

17. How should they respond to God's goodness in verse 10? What does it mean that we should bless God? Isn't He the one who blesses us? What is the interrelation between the two. (2-3 sentences)

*A: They should respond by blessing Him. God blesses us by giving us good. We bless God by attributing the good that He has given us to Him. Thus He blesses us so that He will be blessed. He deserves the glory and thanks for the good that He does. Our relationship with God is not symmetrical. We are needy. Piper: The way we show that a fountain is worthy is by drinking deeply from it. We show that **God is worthy** by **depending** on Him, **trusting** Him, **enjoying** Him, and then **thanking** and **praising** Him when He comes through for us!*

18. What is a major danger of being blessed according to 8:11-20? (1 paragraph)

*A: The danger is of forgetting whence we came. We attribute the blessing that we are experiencing to ourselves! Our hearts so quickly forget that Yahweh is the One who saved and blessed us. He deserves all the praise and recognition. He wants us to be completely dependent upon Him at all times, even/especially when He is blessing us! The danger of pride is that of **self-sufficiency**. Our trials are actually for **our good**. But notice that they are good for us, **in the end**. Like the author of Hebrews, Moses knows that trials produce dependence and then righteousness which is truly what is best for us in the end.*

19. Why is God driving out the nations according to 9:1-29? What attitude should that reason produce in Israel? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is driving out the nations because of the wickedness of those nations and **not** the righteousness of Israel. Israel was wicked and kept rebelling against Yahweh. Thus it should produce **humility** in Israel as they need to completely trust upon Him. It should also produce **gratitude, fear, watchfulness, and confidence** in God... But understanding that God didn't save us because of how great we are, this humility makes us see that we are not fundamentally different than others. This produces **compassion** as we will see throughout the OT and into the NT. Self-righteousness always comes from pride and produces judgmentalism. But understanding that we are saved solely by God's grace produces an awe at God's mercy!*

20. What does Moses call them to in 10:12-22 and why? How does Moses summarize walking in the covenant in this section? What do these terms emphasize? (1 paragraph)

*A: Moses calls them to walk in relationship with Yahweh (to fear Him, to walk in His ways, to love Him, and to serve Him and to keep His commandments). Moses calls them to **circumcise their hearts**, to cut off the hardness of their hearts and to truly love Yahweh (cf. 5:29). They are called to do this because of who Yahweh is. He is the great God above all gods. Obedience should always flow out of the heart!*

*Notice as well how in 17-22 that the humility and dependence that God wants to produce in us earlier, should produce righteousness and justice in our relationships with others. Being in a right relationship with God (one of humility), always places us in right relationships with other people (compassion).*

21. What does Moses call them to in chapter 11? (1 paragraph)

*A: Moses calls them to love God and to obey Him. They should do so because **they saw** what Yahweh did. Thus obedience to Him means going in and taking the promised land as part of God's plan and promise. If they do so God will bless them. So they should be very careful to **listen** to God's Words and bind them to their hearts so that they never forget. Notice as well the dependence that the land of Israel itself was intended to produce in them. Israel is not like Egypt (11:10) in that they needed to depend upon the rain. This was God's grace in calling them into relationship. Finally, Moses calls them to make a choice. As he will say later, they must either choose the blessing or the curse. Relationship with Yahweh will mean blessing, but forsaking Him will mean cursing. So they must choose.*

22. Application: What does this section teach us about our relationship to God? What should we beware of? What should we be careful to do? Why?

## 17. Specific Obedience and Blessings for it: Deuteronomy 12-28

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 12-28

**Theme:** God Calls His People to Obey Him in Specific Ways, but will Bless them Specifically for their Obedience

**Objectives:**

- To understand what principles were guiding the specific instructions given to Israel and how they apply today
- To understand how the OT law as a whole relates to believers today
- To see how the specifics in this section play out in the rest of the Old Testament

**Reading:**

- Read Deuteronomy 12-28.

**Questions:**

1. Why was it so important for Israel to worship Yahweh at the appointed place according to chapter 12 (both explicitly stated and implied)? (1 paragraph)

*A: It was important to worship Yahweh at the appointed place because they need to worship Yahweh in His prescribed way (cf. Deu 12:8)! He is holy. Therefore there must be a sense of **awe in worship** of Him and it cannot be defined by the worshiper. There is only one God, and only one way to worship Him as defined by Him. Idolatry comes so easily. Everyone wants to define their own way to worship God, to worship in the way that's most convenient for themselves. But Yahweh demands worship of Him must be in the right and prescribed way. We also see how this promotes **unity** within the nation as it forces all of Israel to come to a specific location and to be involved in the same cultus. This in turn would help the nation **not to drift** as each location defined their own way to worship Yahweh!*

2. What does chapter 13 instruct Israel that they should do with anyone who seeks to lead them away from Yahweh? Why? What does 13:6-11 say in this regard?! (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 13 says that they should put anyone to death who sought to lead people away from Yahweh! It is a life and death matter who you worship. Even if their own son, daughter, wife, or close friend seeks to lead people away from Yahweh, they should immediately be put to death. They should **purge** the evil from among themselves (13:5)! They are seducing you (13:6, 10)! This shows how **dangerous a lack of faith** is to the entire community! It can so easily spread and **seduce** the weak in faith away from fear and trust in Yahweh! [Cf. Deu 29:17] []*

3. What is the purpose of the laws in 14:1-21? Where do you see this in this section? (1 sentence)

*A: These laws were to **distinguish** Israel from the nations around them (see verse 2 and 21).*

4. What is the point/reason of the tithe in 14:22-29 (look for the reason they were to do it in the text)? Elaborate on this. What was God trying to teach them? If they lived far from the place of worship what were they to do? What is emphasized by this provision? How does this chapter end? What does this show about Yahweh? What connection is made with the key concepts of fearing and trusting in the Torah? How does tithing and fearing God relate? (1 paragraph)

A: The point of the tithe is to **teach them to fear Yahweh** (14:23). He was trying to teach them to trust Him and believe in Him even though they couldn't see Him. They needed this constant reminder of **dependance**. Thus the connection is made again between fearing Yahweh and trusting in Him. Fearing Yahweh is living in light of His awesome nature, remembering that we are nothing compared to Him. Yahweh is the one who provides, and they needed this reminder so that they would constantly be humble in their reverential and humble dependance on Him! God is first! God is awesome.

If they lived far from the tabernacle/temple, they were to sell their tithe and go to the temple and buy **whatever they desired**. Thus it emphasizes that they should eat in **joyful fellowship** with Yahweh. Buy a steak and some wine and eat and drink in worship to Yahweh. That's what I'm talking about! This chapter ends with God's provision for the Levites and the helpless. Yahweh cares for them. And if they showed compassion like this Yahweh would bless them in all that they did!

5. What do the laws in chapter 15 emphasize? Why do you think this is important to God? What is one motivation for obeying them given in the chapter that we also saw in the previous chapter? How is this motivation tied into a major theme in the Torah? (1 paragraph)

A: The laws in chapter 15 center around **justice** and care for the poor. This is a major topic in the OT (and also in the NT!). **Compassion** is a major emphasis in this section. It is a heart issue (15:7)! They are to remember that they themselves all used to be slaves in Egypt, and it was only God's grace that they themselves weren't poor and in slavery (Deu 15:15)! This inherent equality of all people gets at the heart of the gospel. We are not better than others! If anything, we are just **bigger recipients of grace**! If we understand this concept, we **will** care for those who are worse off than us! If Israel lived out God's law, this section even goes so far as to say that there will be no poor among them because God will **bless** them (15:4)! Of course, it is not natural for us to think that if we give away we will be more blessed. But that is how OT Israel was to work in God's economy. And thus God's blessing becomes a major motivation for them to keep these laws (15:6, 10, 18).

As an aside, a fundamental question regarding the ethics of the Old Testament is what makes something moral or immoral. Who defines right and wrong? Some would say that anything you do that doesn't harm another person, is moral. But that of course begs the question, "What is harm?" Ultimately, it comes down to the question of **human flourishing**. Only by functioning according to God's design will it be best for humans!

6. What was the purpose of the three feasts in 16:1-17? What is different about the first one and the second two? What key theme is repeated in this section? Why? (2-3 sentences)

A: The feasts were there to help them **remember**. The first one is more **solemn**, while the second two are **joyful**. We need both! There is a large emphasis on God's blessing (16:10, 15, 17). They need to constantly remember how much God has blessed them. They needed to remember God's salvation, God's blessing, God's goodness and faithfulness! This is what would keep their hearts in right relationship with Yahweh!

7. What does 17:1-13 teach us about how disputes were to be handled in Israel? What is interesting about **who** is involved in these disputes? What does this teach us about their role in the nation? (1 paragraph)

A: Direct rebellion was to be punishable by death on the basis of **witnesses**. Justice and fairness are important. Difficult cases that were hard to determine were to be taken to the **priests**. They were to judge



what was right. They were to be the ones who were to interpret the law for the people, and thus had a role of bringing the Word of God to the people.

8. What does 17:14-20 give instructions about? What does this teach us about Israel's government? Is this God's ideal or a concession? Why? (1 paragraph)

A: These verses give instructions regarding a king. Initially, God's nation was a **theocracy**, where God ruled directly through speaking to a leader. Here we have instructions for a king, but it's a big debate whether it is a concession or not, since even here, it seems to be portrayed negatively (17:14). Yet earlier in the Torah there were prophecies of Israel's coming King. But what we will see is that the kingship itself was God's design, but not the way it came about (with the people wanting a leader like the other nations so they didn't have to trust Yahweh!). We will explore this topic in greater detail in the Former Prophets. But here we see that the king should rule by God's design and according to His law. He should be humble and not proud. He should trust in Yahweh and not His army.

9. What does 18:15-22 teach that God is going to do? Why will God do this and what does this teach us about the role of a prophet? How do you know a true prophet? (2-3 sentences)

A: God will continue to reveal Himself through prophets that speak His word to the people. The role of a prophet is a mouthpiece for God. A prophet was to speak God's direct words to the people. Ultimately, this passages sets up the expectation of a prophet **like Moses** (18:15) who would come and have such direct communication with God. A true prophet

10. Think about the two different kinds of laws in the Old Testament, absolute commands/prohibitions (known as apodictic law) and case law that is dependent on a specific situation (if your ox gores another ox... known as casuistic law)? Why would God give both? (2-3 sentences)

A: If we only had absolute commands and prohibitions, we wouldn't have to think about what to do. Life would merely be a list of do's and don'ts. But laws that are based on **principles**, or have to be worked out in different cases, cause us to evaluate God's priorities and make decisions based upon what we think is important to God. This forces us to **become more like Him** as we seek to obey Him. Merely following a list of do's and don'ts will be external, but God wants us to **internalize** His heart and priorities!

11. Come up with three **good** questions and the answers from chapters 19-26 like we've been doing. Read the section carefully and based on good observations come up with questions that lead us to what God is trying to communicate.

A: Note: throughout these chapters one reoccurring phrase is **'purge the evil from among you'** (this phrase is almost exclusively in chapters 17-24). This shows that many of these laws were to keep the nation pure! Sin defiles the nation and spreads within it!

12. How does the section of specific laws end in 26:16-19? What does this section teach us about the purpose of why Israel should keep the law? (2-3 sentences)

A: Moses calls them to faithfully obey Yahweh with all their heart and soul! They declared on that day that Yahweh would be their God, and Yahweh had declared them His people! They were His **treasured possession**

*who He would set above all the nations of the earth for **praise, fame, and honor**, set apart from all other nations so that He would receive all the glory!*

13. What were the people to do as outlined in chapter 27 when they got into the land? What was the purpose of this? What were they to do in verse 27:7? What does 27:9 teach us about the purpose of what they were to do on Mount Gerizim and Ebal? (1 paragraph)

*A: They were to go up to Mount Ebal and Gerizim and repeat the blessings and the curses. They were to do this every seven years. This was to remind the people, especially successive generations, of the importance of keeping **faithful to the covenant**. We see in 27:7 that they were to sacrifice peace offerings, and rejoice in the relationship that they enjoyed with Yahweh. Relationship with Yahweh was not to be a tiresome and bothersome chore, but a joyful relationship which was to be celebrated! Verse 9 shows that each new generation of people were to reaffirm the covenant with Yahweh.*

14. What does 28:1-2 (and verse 10) remind us is the purpose of the blessings? (1 sentence)

*A: 28:1-2 reminds us that as Israel obeyed God in relationship with Him, the goal was to make Israel high above all the other nations, so that they would be a light to those nations!*

15. What does verse 28:47 teach us about what serving God should be like? (1 sentence)

*A: Serving and obeying Yahweh should be a joyful and glad privilege, so that He will **bles**s us in all things, giving us **abundantly** all that we need! When the curse comes, it is a reminder to us of all that we missed out on!*

16. Thought question: How specific are the blessings and the cursings? Should we expect to see these specifics played out one way or another in the rest of the Old Testament? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The blessings and cursings are very specific! We should expect these specific blessings and cursings (one or the other!) to be played out in the rest of the OT, and they are! Look for them! Much of the ensuing history of Israel is their hard-hearted rebellion and refusal to walk in relationship with Yahweh, and Him sending prophets to call them back to covenant faithfulness and sending the curses on them to remind and warn them to come back to Him!*

17. Read and carefully think through what the following verses teach us about the believer's relationship to the Old Testament law. Be prepared to discuss: Romans 6:12-19; 10:1-13; 13:8-10; Galatians 3:1-4:11; 5:1-15

18. Application: What specific principles have you learned in this section that you need to live out in your own life?

## 18. Israel's Future Failure and Fame: Deuteronomy 29-34

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 29-34

**Theme:** Israel will Reject Yahweh in the Future because of their Hardness of Heart in Anticipation of the Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

**Objectives:**

- To show that though Israel was not able to keep the Mosaic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant guarantees that God will ultimately bless His people
- To raise anticipation for transformed hearts that come through the New Covenant

**Reading:**

- Read Deuteronomy 29-34

**Questions:**

1. What is the fundamental problem with the people according to 29:4? What do verses 29:1-6 teach about how God 'tried' to remedy that problem? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The fundamental problem is their lack of a **transformed heart**! They didn't have a heart to 'know' God and be in relationship with Him. He had revealed so much so that they would 'know' that He is God. Yet their hearts weren't softened to receive this revelation. We also see from this verse that Yahweh must be the one that gives this kind of heart, we can't produce one of ourselves!*

2. What does 29:17-21 teach about unbelief? Why do these people think that they are safe? What is the attitude that is portrayed in this section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Unbelief spreads**! The attitude is one of complacency. It is a person who thinks they are ok because they are 'in' the covenant, and yet walk in disobedience to that very covenant. They thought they were safe because they were God's people. This is serious! This is what turned into Phariseism in the days of Jesus. It is something we always have to guard against! This type of disbelief which comes from someone who thinks they are in relationship with God is nothing new and has always been very serious! This is Israel's history. Presuming on the Abrahamic Covenant while forgetting the Mosaic Covenant!*

3. What will happen to Israel in the future according to 29:22-29? What will happen after that according to 30:1-5? What is it conditioned upon? What will God then do in 30:6? And what will be the result of that in 30:7-10? (1 paragraph)

*A: Israel will reject Yahweh and be punished for it. Yahweh will overthrow His nation because they served other gods. He will send them into **captivity**! But after they are rejected like that, they will return to Yahweh wholeheartedly and He will gather them. All this is conditioned upon them returning to Yahweh with all their heart. And then Yahweh will circumcise their hearts so that they will love Him! He will transform their hearts! This is New Covenant language! And the result of this heart transformation will be abundant blessing! This is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant!*

4. What does 29:29 teach? What is its point in the context? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 29:29 teaches that although we can never fully understand God or His plan, He **has** revealed to us how to live in light of that plan! His ways are mysterious and glorious! Yet our path to walk is very clear! We are very finite in our understanding. But God isn't and He has revealed how we should live in light of the big picture.*

5. What does 30:11-14 teach Israel about the law? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It was not the law's fault if it wasn't kept! It was not too lofty for them! God revealed clearly and directly to them how they were to live. The fault was in the people, not in God's revelation! **The plan is big and mysterious, but how we are to live is not!***

6. How is obedience to the covenant portrayed in 30:15-20? How is living in relationship with Yahweh summarized in 30:16, 20? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Obedience is portrayed as a choice between **life and death**. It's a clear distinction, and we must choose which way to live. To live in relationship with Yahweh is to **love** Yahweh, to **obey** His voice, and to **hold fast** to Him. It's all about relationship!*

7. What is the purpose of the Song of Moses according to 31:19-22? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The Song of Moses was to be a **witness against them** in future times. Songs have a way of staying within the consciousness of a people. They continue on long after the original author is gone. They are catchy. And so it would continually remind them of Yahweh's faithfulness and their unfaithfulness!*

8. What is the point of putting the law beside the ark in 31:24-29? (1 sentence)

*A: The law in the ark would be a **testimony** against their rebellion and stubbornness. Thus the law would perpetually be present with the people as a **reminder** that they needed to follow it! They needed that reminder!*

9. Summarize the message of the Song of Moses. What is each section about (ie. 1-4; 5-18; 19-33; 34-43)? What does this song teach us about God? About Israel? (1 paragraph)

*A: This song is about the unchangeable fidelity of Yahweh & the perversity of His faithless people. People are fickle, forgetful, unthankful, foolish & illogical, stubborn, proud, and with uncircumcised hearts. 1-4: Introduction which is a call to listen and a reminder of Yahweh's greatness. 5-18: The folly of Israel in rebelling. 19-33: The purpose of God to punish and reject the rebellious generation. 34-43: The announcement and depiction of the fulfillment of God's purpose: **mercy on servants, wrath on foes**. Note 32:43 where we see God's vindication for His name and people while atoning for His people and land!*

10. Why wasn't Moses able to go into the promised land according to 32:51? (1-2 sentences)

*A: He **broke faith** (Heb: m`l) and did not treat Yahweh as holy. Breaking faith is treacherous and is extremely important for covenant relationship! In the midst of the people.[]*

11. What is the focus on once again in chapter 33? Does it remind us of another section in the Torah? Where? What was the focus and purpose in that section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The focus is on **blessing** and the **future** of Israel. It reminds us of the blessings at the end of Genesis. There, as also here, the focus was on the fact that Yahweh will continue to bring about His plan. The focus is on the future and what God is going to do with His nation! In the end, He will bless them, their enemies will fall before them, and they will be exalted (33:29)! God will certainly bring about His promises made to Abraham!*

12. What does 33:8-11 teach us about the purpose of the priests? (1 sentence)

*A: The priests were intended to be those who taught the law.*

13. What is emphasized about Joshua in 34:9? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Joshua was filled with the Spirit of wisdom, likely referring to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers that which God does!*

14. Thought question: What is at the heart of Israel's failure as portrayed in this section? What does this point to? (2-3 sentences)

*A: At the heart of Israel's failure was **their hearts**! The law was good. His plan was good. God had revealed what He wanted for them. It wasn't too high for them. But they didn't have circumcised hearts to be able to obey Yahweh with all their heart! So as we think about this entire section it points to the need for renewed hearts. The whole Torah, and indeed the whole OT points to the need for Jesus! The people needed a better sacrifice, they needed a better high priest, they needed a better king, and new hearts!*

15. Application: What does this section teach us about the importance of guarding our own hearts?

## II. Former Prophets

The Former Prophets class is the first class in the middle portion of the Hebrew Canon called 'The Prophets'. It consists of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel-Kings. These books are narrative, and yet are included in the Prophets because they were written to the nation of Israel corporately, to call them back to faithful covenant relationship with Yahweh. Some of the major themes include unity, corporate solidarity, judgment, and the faithfulness of Yahweh. This is a 3 unit class and consists of 12 lessons.

## 1. Conquering the Land: Joshua 1-12

**Scripture:** Joshua 1-12

**Theme:** Yahweh fights for His people who are united in trusting relationship with Him

**Objectives:**

- To summarize the characteristics and themes of the Former Prophets, and to understand how to interpret narrative literature
- To be amazed at the omnipotent power of Yahweh in behalf of His people
- To be encouraged to radically trust in Yahweh because of His great faithfulness
- To see the importance of corporate solidarity and how sin effects God's people

**Reading:**

- Read Chapter 1 “What Are the Histories? A Survey of Recent Scholarship” in *Exploring the Old Testament (EOT) A Guide to the Historical Books*, pp. 1-25
- Read Chapter 4 “Deuteronomistic History and Chronistic Books” by Richard Nelson in *The Historical Books*, pp. 67-78
- Read Joshua 1-12 *two times*

**Questions:**

14. Why do you think Joshua-Kings is called the 'Former Prophets'? What difference does it make in our interpretation of these books to think of these books as part of the Prophets? Include within your discussion the understanding of the Hebrew canon as broken up into the TaNaK (Torah, Neviim = Prophets, Ketuvim = Writings). (1 paragraph)

*A: The Old Testament is broken down into a threefold division: The **Law**, **Prophets** and the **Writings**. The Prophets can be further divided into the Former and Later Prophets and the Later Prophets into the Major and Minor Prophets. The prophets were **mouthpieces** for God, **authoritative spokesmen** for Him. He sent them to call His people back to covenant relationship with Him as defined by the Torah. Thus the Prophets focus on the **nation of Israel as a whole**, while the Writings are more focused on how an **individual** should live in relationship with Yahweh. That is why Samuel-Kings is distinct from Chronicles, they have different purposes. Samuel-Kings was written to show the nation of Israel where they did and did not match up to the Law and to call them back to relationship with God. While Chronicles was written to people who had been exiled to show them that God had not forgotten the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants and He was going to fulfill them. Likewise, even though Daniel contains lots of prophecies of the future, the book was written to show God's sovereignty over foreign nations and even over the future. The purpose of Daniel is to teach people how to live in light of God's sovereignty: with integrity, not fearing man, prayerful, and trusting that God will accomplish His plan.*

15. What is the significance of thinking of the Former Prophets as 'Deuteronomistic History'? Comment on their relationship to the Torah. What could people be referring to when they talk about the Law? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Former Prophets look at history from the standpoint of how Israel matched up to the Torah. More specifically, Deuteronomy (or the Mosaic covenant) becomes the lens by which Israel's history is evaluated. When people refer to the Law it could be referring to the Torah, the Mosaic Covenant, maybe all*

*the specific laws in the Torah, or even law in general. It is important to understand these nuances because different OT and NT writers could refer to different aspects of the Law.*

16. What types of literary devices are important to note in the study of narratives? Comment on the similarities between watching and analyzing movies in our day (which we are more familiar with), with hearing narratives well in theirs (Think carefully about this!). (2+ paragraphs)

A: *[[This whole section could be added to from Chisholm, etc.]]*

i. Repetition

- a) *Could be words, phrases, ideas, or grammatical concepts*
- b) *Gen 1: “And God said... and God said... and God said...”*
- c) *“There was no king in Israel...” (Judges 17-21)*

ii. Narrative analogy

- a) *Sometimes the narrator will “paint the portrait of a story on the fabric of a previous story.”*
- b) *Similar stories may be intended to be compared or contrasted.*
- c) *The previous story will then help interpret the meaning of the present story*
- d) *Examples: Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12, Judges 19*

iii. Gapping

- a) *Withholding information to create ambiguity (movies do this all the time).*
- b) *Zeba, Mephibosheth, and David (2 Sam 9; 16; 19)?*
- c) *Joshua 22 and the altar; it’s not until 22:26-27 where we see that their motives are pure.*

iv. Pseudo-objective narration

- a) *Judges 1: unbiased narration*
- b) *See Judges 17:1-5*
- c) *1 Kings 9-10*

v. Major and minor character development

- a) *The meaning of the story is often most affected by the major characters*
  - *Don't forget that God is always the main character of the Bible!*
  - *Don't get bogged down with “flat” character; undeveloped characters (no name, no emotions, no thoughts, etc.)*
  - *Kings of Gen 14; Eliezer of Damascus of Gen 15*

vi. “Omniscient” narrative interjection

- a) *The narrator is “omniscient”: What does this mean? He Knows the thoughts, motives, intentions, emotions of both God and humans. So when he intervenes to tell you something, we need to pay very close attention to what he says; it’ll probably be fundamental to understanding the story. Pay special attention to parenthetical statements.*
  - *Examples: Judges 14:4 (Samson’s action were “From the lord, looking for an opportunity against the Philistines”)*
  - *Esther 6:6 (how did he know what Haman was thinking?)*
  - *Judges 4:11 (cf. v. 17)*

vii. Narrative Time

viii. Context

- a) *Every story is included for a reason. Keep the point of the overarching book in mind as you study the various stories within it. There will be a connection between the point of the book and the point of the story, so make sure not to proof-story a story!*

ix. Change of scene

- a) *Just like in modern movies, in order to discern the point of a narrative it is important to discern its various sections. Often there will be a change in location, or actors which signals*



the end of one section and the beginning of a new one. Often by determining where the various section breaks are, it helps us to see what point the author is trying to make in a given section.

b) *Seemingly disconnected stories*

- The writer always has a purpose for including a story, everything is connected. So find the connection!

x. *Power in subtlety*

a) “*Parataxis*” (elusive or subtle features that force the reader to engage the text; no narrative interpretation)

- “Events may simply be laid out one after the other without any discernible arrangement. There may be no suggestion that certain episodes are any more critical or more important than others are. There may be no interpretative summaries or organizing conclusions. This compositional style, called *parataxis*... explains why biblical books sometimes seem to end abruptly on what modern readers judge to be a lame note (for example, 2 Kgs 25:27–30 or Jonah 4:11). Sometimes the use of *parataxis* invites the reader to discover meaningful analogies between events. In Kings, for example, analogies exist between several pairs of narratives. Examples are 1 Kings 3:16–28 and 2 Kings 6:26–31 (two mothers disputing about their children), 1 Kings 10:1–13 and 2 Kings 20:12–19 (wisdom and folly with visitors), and 2 Kings 9:30–37 and 11:13–16 (a wicked queen is killed)” (Nelson, 22–23).

17. Who do you think the book of Joshua was written to, what was the situation at the time, and why do you think it was written? (1 paragraph)

*A: The book of Joshua was likely written to the generation shortly after Joshua died (ie. the people of Israel in the early days of the judges. Cf. Jos 6:25. Rahab lived in Israel to this day...). The land had been taken, yet they **needed to possess it** and to continue in living faithfully to the covenant to fulfill God's good plans for them. Thus the book is written to challenge them to trust God and as a nation to seize the good promises of God together!*

18. Come up with a simple outline of the book of Joshua (more than 2 parts though).

*A:*

*Joshua 1-5: Entering the Land*

*Joshua 6-12: Conquering the Land*

*Joshua 13-21: Possessing the Land*

*Joshua 22-24: Retaining the Land*

19. What do you think the major themes and emphases of chapter 1 of Joshua are? What words or phrases are repeated in this chapter that help us to discern these emphases? How do they introduce us to and tie in to the purpose of the book as a whole? Work hard on this, the first chapter sets the stage for so much of the entire book! (2+ paragraphs)

*A: The prime emphasis in the chapter lies in the fact that the **land** (key word!) has been **given** (another key word!) by Yahweh (cf. 1:2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 15 2x). The land promise of the Abrahamic covenant is central to the entire book of Joshua. Through Israel taking the land we see that Yahweh is faithful to keep His Word! We see this emphasized in the fact that Yahweh has **sworn** to give this land (covenant), so its possession is secure. Notice also the emphasis on the **presence of Yahweh** which is related to the theme of His faithfulness*

(1:5, 9, 17). If God is with us, we cannot fail! We will continue to see that Yahweh is the one who is keeping the covenant, He is the one who is fighting, it's all about Him! If we have His presence, nothing else matters! Another major emphasis in this chapter is that of **God's Word**. God will be faithful to keep His Word, but also requires His people to be faithful to His Word as well. They need to constantly be meditating on and being careful to remember to obey what God has said (1:8). It is only through careful and constant meditation on God's Word that we will be obedient to it!

This of course relates to the theme of **human responsibility** which runs throughout the book. The people are called to be strong and courageous (1:6, 7, 9, 18), not because they are strong but because Yahweh is! Thus we respond to God's faithfulness with faith and trust in return. We have nothing to fear when Yahweh is with us, so we can step out in amazing faith because He is faithful!

Lastly, we see the theme of **unity** of the nation of Israel in this chapter (which is also a major theme of the book). This theme keeps being introduced through the interplay between the trans-Jordan tribes with the rest of the nation. Even though their land has already been conquered, they needed to stand together with their brothers (unity!) in the fight. Keep watching for the theme of '**All Israel**' throughout the book of Joshua with this focus on **corporate solidarity**.

20. Why do you think the author spills so much ink to tell us so many details in the Rahab story of chapter 2? What is emphasized in this chapter and how does this relate to the main point of Joshua? (1 paragraph)

A: There seems to be a chiasmic structure to the chapter which emphasizes verses 8-14 as central. In this section we see a **confession of faith of this pagan woman** (a Gentile harlot no less!) and her inclusion into the nation of Israel. She risks her life to save these two men! Rahab has the **courage** that Yahweh exhorts the people to in chapter 1, but her people do not (2:11). Courage comes from fearing Yahweh! That amazing faith is what should stand out about her, not her lie! Notice as well that she asks for **hesed** from Yahweh from these two men (2:12). She had **heard** about Yahweh, **believed** the report, and then responded in risk-taking faith to plead for salvation from Yahweh! She casts herself upon Yahweh in complete dependence. Thus we see Gentile inclusion (Gen 12:1-3!) emphasized as it was always a part of the plan and by God's grace there was always a way for Gentiles to be saved!

21. What receives the central emphasis in chapters 3-4 (and is mentioned 17 times)? Why is this so important and how does it tie in with the major themes of the book? What is the point of setting up the stones in 4:1-10 and what does this teach us? What do we see about Joshua in these chapters and why is this important? (1 paragraph)

A: The **ark** receives the central emphasis as it symbolizes the **presence of Yahweh**, the Lord of all the earth, with His people (3:10-11). Yahweh is the one who is fighting for Israel! He is the One who gets the glory as well, and that globally and among the nations, much in the same way as the parting of the Red Sea (4:24)! The point of setting up the stones is that they would serve as a **reminder**. "The greatest enemy of faith may be forgetfulness" (Dale Ralph Davis, 39). By demonstrating once again His powerful right hand, Yahweh is showing that He can be trusted and wants His people to remember this. It was important for God's people to recognize what Yahweh was doing so that they would attribute His mighty works to Him and He would get the glory! They had to prepare themselves for this purpose (3:5)! We also see Yahweh exalt Joshua, just as He had done for Moses, because it was important for the people to recognize that their leader was appointed by God.

22. Why did Joshua need to circumcise the people in chapter 5 and what is the significance of this and the keeping of the Passover? (1 paragraph)

*A: We are reminded by this generation's circumcision that we are repeating events of the past. There was a previous generation that stood on the brink of the Promised Land, and yet because of their unbelief, died in the wilderness. Thus this generation is circumcised, as a sign of their covenant with Yahweh. They also celebrated the Passover as a further **remembrance** of Yahweh's work. Exodus states that they needed to be circumcized in order to participate in Passover. **You had to be a part of God's covenant people in order to celebrate His salvation of you** (aside on baptism and communion)! This all should have been very sobering for them, and indeed for us. If we are to participate in God's blessing and plan, we need to trust Him and be faithful to Him. This faith should be solidly founded upon the facts of God's amazing faithfulness and power demonstrated in our salvation! We can indeed cast everything upon Him! The provision of food in the promised land and the lack of need for manna continues to emphasize God's **faithfulness**, He provided manna when they were in the wilderness, and now provides the fruit of the land now that they have arrived!*

23. What do you think the point of Joshua's encounter is in 5:13-6:5 is (Note that 6:1 is parenthetical, but that 6:2 most likely picks up 5:15 as the words of the Commander of the Army who is closely identified with Yahweh Himself as elsewhere in Scripture Yahweh's Angel is identified as Yahweh, ie. holy ground)? (1 paragraph)

*A: As Joshua is about to go in and 'fight' the battle of Jericho, there is a strong reminder that indeed, **God is the one who is fighting**. The Commander of Yahweh's hosts is not for or against Joshua because He is the King, and so He doesn't need to take sides! He is above the two sides! This Commander is the one who gives Joshua His orders, and as strange as they may seem, they strongly emphasize that Yahweh will fight and win, not Joshua. This raises the question of **allegiance**. Yahweh is saying, "I am the one with the strong army, not you. Are you going to side with me, because I don't need to side with you?"*

24. What is emphasized in the conquest of Jericho and why do you think this is emphasized? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As we read about the conquest of Jericho, the battle plans are very strange indeed! They simply circle the city and shout. However what is most important in this plan is that **Yahweh's ark** circles the city. Thus the emphasis is on the fact that **God is fighting**. When the city walls fall without any human interaction, it thus becomes very apparent that Yahweh is the one who made the walls fall down! He loves to do this to show that it is all His power, for His glory alone! Notice how their **precise obedience** to God's specific instructions resulted in success. In fact, their precise obedience may have been part of the means God used to make the walls fall down. It would be no less of a miracle for God to use the marching and sound vibrations in His sovereignty to make the walls fall down and yet for the success to be conditioned on their obedience and happen because of it!*

25. Comment on what we see in chapter 7 in contrast to the rest of the book. What do we find in 7:1 and how does this set the stage for what happens in the rest of the chapter. What key word is the verb of 7:1? What other verb phrases occur in this chapter that help us to understand what is going on? Why do you think the subject of that verb in 7:1 (and also in 7:11) is Israel? How does this relate to the main point of this chapter and indeed to the whole book? Think carefully about this chapter, it is key to understanding the point of the book! (2+ paragraphs)

A: The book of Joshua as a whole is one of the (if not the most!) **triumphant** books of the Old Testament! God's people obey and God uses them to fulfill His plan! There are little hints of a lack of full obedience later in the book, but on the whole we see unflinching faith and obedience. In this context we find chapter 7, a chapter of direct disobedience and rebellion. The first verse of the chapter preempts us with information that helps us to interpret how it could be that Israel would lose a battle with Yahweh on their side. The reality is that Yahweh was angry with them! The key word that describes Achan's deed is **ma'al**, to break faith, to act treacherously. This word is a key covenantal word. A covenant is a relationship of **mutual trust**. To deceive and deliberately break covenant is to destroy that relationship of trust. Thus by Achan's deed, the covenant relationship has been **broken** (another key verb phrase repeated in this chapter), and thus Yahweh is not for His people! He even threatens that until the sin is dealt with and the relationship is restored, He will not be with His people (7:12)! Thus we see that direct disobedience creates a breach of covenant in which the relationship between Yahweh and His people is broken! This presence of Yahweh with His people is of utmost importance in Joshua and it is in danger!

Moreover, we see that even though Achan was the only one who sinned, the text says that Israel sinned! This brings us back to a very important emphasis within Joshua, namely that there is a **corporate solidarity** among God's people. It is not until the nation is purged of this sin by killing Achan (and his family!), that the nation as a whole can be restored into right relationship with Yahweh. In other words, God can't be in a relationship with people who tolerate sin (even if they aren't the ones doing it!). As we have seen in the Torah already, we are reminded of the danger of unbelief and high-handed rebellion spreading, and thus rebellious sin needs to be dealt with quickly and thoroughly. This story should remind us that our sin **always** has great consequences on others! We can never think that our sin only affects ourselves! We stand together and we fall together!

Each and every one of our sins affects all of those around us all the time. If any of us were Jesus, how would that completely change each of our churches?! Our example, teaching, zeal, holiness would radically affect all of those around us. The ways we affect one another are more than we can imagine. Life isn't just about our personal relationship with God. Living right with God means living right with people. But relationships are messy. What God calls us to in relationship with all of those around us should cause us to be humble and dependant. We need to carry each other's burdens.

26. On what basis does Joshua appeal to God in 7:7-9? What does God tell him and why? Why is God's response so different than when Moses prayed? What does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

A: Joshua appeals to Yahweh on the basis of **His great name**! Joshua cares about Yahweh's reputation. However, Yahweh tells Joshua to get off his face! It's not the time to pray, it's the time for action! The problem was theirs, so they needed to deal with their own sin, not ask God for His blessing. At the moment, His blessing was impossible. This teaches us that sometimes it is good to pray, but other times it is a time for us to simply trust and obey!

27. Contrast Achan with Rahab. (2-3 sentences)

A: Rahab was a woman, an outsider, who acted faithfully, and whose family was saved as a result. Achan was a man, an insider, who acted unfaithfully, and whose family died with him as a result. Notice the deliberate contrast by use of the phrase '**hearts became as water**' of the Canaanites in 5:1 and of the Israelites in 7:5! Who do you fear? **God saves the weak and the humble and not the strong and self-sufficient (Achan was a soldier)!**

28. Comment on the concept of *herem* (often translated 'under the ban' or 'devoted to Yahweh' or like that: 6:17, 18; 7:1, 11, 12, 13, 15; 22:20) in Joshua and from that why Achan's sin was so serious. (2-3 sentences)

A: *herem* - "the act of making a person or object entirely over to Yahweh" (EOT, p. 46). The things that are "devoted to Yahweh," belong to Yahweh. When used in reference to people, it denotes their utter annihilation. But whether people or things, they all belong to Yahweh so that seizure of these things is stealing from God. "Achan has stolen what belongs to Yahweh (7:1), confusing the realms of the sacred and profane and bringing a kind of contagion upon the people" (EOT, p. 47). In short, Achan's act was much more than just disobedience; it was an act of high handed apostasy and in many ways served as a lesson for the rest of the Israelites.

29. What do we see then as we come to chapter 8 and Ai is faced again? Comment on the strategy used to conquer Ai and contrast it with that used to conquer Jericho. Why do you think 8:30-35 seemingly interrupts the narratives of all these battles with the blessing and curses of the Torah? (1 paragraph)

A: As we return to see Israel face Ai again, this time Yahweh is with His people and thus the victory is assured. Yet what is interesting to note is that when Ai is faced again, a great **military strategy** and overwhelming force is used to ambush this small city, which is a marked contrast from the way the great city of Jericho was conquered. This reminds us 1) of how we are completely dependent upon God's help whether the task is large or small, and 2) that often God does use human means to accomplish His purposes! He doesn't always win the battle through overtly supernatural means, but often uses **us** as the means! Trusting Yahweh doesn't imply doing nothing and simply praying! And even if the task appears to be small, we still completely need Him! Then in 8:30-35 we are reminded that **covenant obedience** is more important than battle plans and human might. Once again, right relationship with Yahweh is most important. If we are in relationship with Him, all will be well, whether in peace or in battle! Notice again the importance of unity in covenant relationship, as the word 'all' is repeated five times in these verses!

30. What is the point of the story of the Gibeonite deception? What verse stands out as the main point? Do you think the way the situation was handled after the deception was uncovered was right or wrong? (2-3 sentences)

A: The main point of this story is that we need to trust God and **we need His wisdom**, even (especially!) when we don't think we do! Notice as well that the Gibeonites did what they did because they **feared** Yahweh (9:24). Ironically, the Israelites weren't fearing and trusting God at this time. Wisdom is the fear of Yahweh, recognizing that we need Him. There is never a time in which we can put things on autopilot, don't worry God, I got this one! The key issue is brought out in 14b, "but the mouth of Yahweh they did not ask." But once the deceit was uncovered, they had sworn by Yahweh and so **Yahweh's reputation** was on the line. So what they did in keeping their word was the right response. When sin comes, we often put ourselves into twisted situations in which we must live as faithfully as we can! And still, God's grace is evident in that once again outsiders are included within God's people! But sin does have consequences.

31. What are the dual emphases of chapter 10 (and which verses sums up the chapter and contains them both)? (2-3 sentences)

A: Yahweh is the real fighter here! He is a warrior (10:42)! He is the one who threw great stones down on the enemy (10:10-11). Furthermore, we see the **power of prayer!** Joshua commanded the Lord and the Lord

*listened! **10:14** sums up these dual emphases. Here we see that the power of prayer is real, because the power of Yahweh is great and because we can be in relationship with this great God!!!*

32. What do we then see in the battle of the north with Hazor in chapter 11? What things are emphasized in the text? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again we see how great Yahweh is! He is the one who fought for Israel (11:8). Notice how the **vast** number of Israel's enemies are emphasized (11:4) so that the greatness of Yahweh's salvation would be shown! Notice as well how Israel's enemies had lots of horses and chariots, and in **God's wisdom** Israel blitzed them at Merom, which was not conducive to chariot maneuvering. Once again trusting God doesn't mean thoughtless inactivity (Dale Ralph Davis, 97). We plan, we pray, we fight, but God is the one who gives success.*

33. What then do we see in 11:16-23? Comment especially on Yahweh's hardening of hearts as well as the summary of the conquest (1 paragraph)

*A: This section summarizes the conquest with the repetition of the affirmation that "Joshua took the whole land" (11:16, 23). The fact that the land was taken, doesn't negate the fact that it still needed to be possessed (ie. the standing armies were defeated and the back of the enemy broken, yet they still needed to drive the Canaanites out). Yet at the same time we see that not all of this happened quickly, but that Joshua waged war for a long time (11:18). There is a need for **persistence** in obedience! We also see here that the reason for the Canaanites lack of seeking Yahweh for salvation was the fact that Yahweh hardened their hearts (11:20). While this is a fearsome thought, it is also a reminder that Yahweh didn't just wipe out people who wanted to repent. By emphasizing that their hearts were hardened we see both Yahweh's sovereignty in accomplishing His plan and also that they chose for themselves to fight against Yahweh rather than to turn to Him!*

34. How then is this entire section concluded in chapter 12? What is emphasized? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again we are **reminded** of Yahweh's great victory. **Remembering** all the specifics of what Yahweh did should give us confidence to trust Him when we face future challenges! We also see the unity of Israel emphasized again in that the trans-Jordan tribes and the tribes on the other side fought enemies on both sides of the river and triumphed together!*

35. Application: What do we learn about faith and trusting God from Joshua?

36. Application: What do we learn about corporate solidarity and unity from Joshua?

## 2. Dividing the Land: Joshua 13-24

**Scripture:** Joshua 13-24

**Theme:** God gave Israel the land and called them to faithfulness to keep it

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged by the need for faithful trusting es with Yahweh
- To see the dangers of syncretism, forgetfulness, fear, and laziness to faithfulness
- To be encouraged by a zeal for unity of faithfulness among God's people

**Reading:**

- Read Joshua 13-21 *once* and 22-24 *two times*

**Questions:**

1. As we turn to the next section of Joshua in chapter 13, what is the situation in 13:1? So what does God have Moses do in chapter 13? What is then expected of the tribes in the future? What do we also see in 13:13 which is indicative of the future and what lessons are there from this? (1 paragraph)

*A: The conquest is over, they have fought long and hard and Yahweh gave them the land. Joshua is now old, but there is **much land yet to be possessed**. In other words, they have taken it, but not possessed it. So Yahweh gives each of the tribes their inheritance. It is the expectation that each of the tribes will drive out the Canaanites from their own inheritance. Yahweh's power was sufficient, as Yahweh would drive them out (13:6). We see a little note of failure in 13:13, it is a simple note of **incomplete obedience**. It seems rather harmless, yet we know from Judges that such incomplete obedience is **tragic!***

2. What then do we see in chapters 14-15 with Caleb, and how does this function within the book to drive the point of the book home to the original recipients? What points does the narrative stress in the particulars that make this so applicable? (1 paragraph)

*A: In chapter 14, we see the example of Caleb's **extraordinary faith!** He is an example of what the tribes were supposed to be doing in nailing down their inheritance by possessing the land that Yahweh had already given to them. Caleb held strongly to the promise of God (5 times he stresses what God had said/promised; verses 6, 10 [2x], 12 [2x]). Even as an old man, he goes out to battle against the Anakim. Notice how the Anakim which caused the 10 spies to fear from going in to the land are what causes Caleb to want the land to take it (14:12). The difference is one of faith. Caleb knew the greatness of His God and so threw Himself upon Him and said, '**Perhaps**' God will once again show how great He is and keep His promise! This is not doubt, but a **humility** that recognizes that God is God. He takes **initiative** and God shows up as the faithful God who keeps His Word! What courage of faith that is based upon the power and faithfulness of God. What an example for the Israelites, and for us!!! Note as well the parenthetical statement in 14:14 that Caleb was the son of a Kenizzite! Thus we see that Caleb has Canaanite blood, and that once again God is including Gentiles within His plan and displaying His amazing grace in them by granting them great faith in Him!!!*

3. What then do we see in chapters 16 and 17? Specifically, make sure to contrast the hesitation of the Joseph tribes in 17:14-18 with the example of Caleb. (2-3 sentences)

A: We see the Zelophad daughters who as a good example, **plead God's word** to them to receive what they had requested and been promised of Yahweh in Numbers 27:1-11 (17:3). As Caleb, they had boldness to request what was promised and they received it. But we also see more failures of faith. The sons of **Joseph** didn't drive out the Canaanites (16:10; 17:12-13). Note that in 17:12-13 they were able to subdue them to forced labor (which means they had the strength to obey but didn't!), but didn't follow through with God's command. They became **lax** in their obedience. This of course eventually became disastrous as the **cancer of Canaanite worship infected God's people.** Contrast as well the **complaint of the Joseph tribes** to the **initiative of Caleb.** Joshua tells them that they can just go in and take the land of the Perizzites and Rephaim, but they basically respond that they can't (chariots of iron)! The question of course for us is whether or not we really believe that God is as powerful as He says He is and if so, why won't we trust Him!

4. What do we see then in 18:3 which starts off the lots of chapters 18-19? What themes of the book does this bring to mind? (2-3 sentences)

A: Seven of the tribes were **putting off** taken possession of the land. They were being **slack** in obeying. The land was subdued and they just needed to possess it! Joshua was concerned that all Israel took their inheritance and thus the theme of unity is raised once again. Furthermore, as we mentioned, we see the importance of taking God for His Word and **acting** in faith.

5. Thought question: What women gain land rights in Joshua? Why would this stand out in that context? (1-2 sentences)

A: 6 women gain land rights in Joshua (the daughters of Zelophehad and Caleb's daughter). This sort of favor towards women in a patriarchal society sets the Bible apart in its **positive treatment of women.** This is especially true in comparison to other cultures of the ANE.

6. What final preparations does Joshua make in chapters 20-21 and what do these things teach us about Yahweh? (1 paragraph)

A: By Yahweh's direction Joshua sets apart cities of refuge so that **justice** will be upheld in the case of accidental death. This once again shows that God cares about justice, and indeed about the sanctity of life. The one who accidentally killed should not be senselessly killed, yet at the same time he had taken a life, and so had to wait until the death of the high-priest (presumably to reinforce the connection that it is only through blood that sin is atoned for). In this section we also see God's concern for the **sojourner** (20:9) as well as the Israelite. Finally, we see that God designed for the Levites to be spread throughout Israel's land, presumably once again so that they could teach and lead Israel in God's way and in the Torah.

7. How then does this section end in 21:43-45 and what is the point of these verses? (2-3 sentences)

A: We see so clearly that **God kept all His promises!** He did exactly what He said He would do! His oath was upheld! Not one promise failed! Yahweh is the faithful God! We should trust Him!!!

8. [Note that the last three chapters of Joshua are the three epilogues to the book. Each is marked off by Joshua summoning the people together (*qara'*) in three assemblies.] What happens in chapter 22? What key word occurs in 22:16 (2x), 20, 22, 31 (2x)? Where else have we seen this key word in Joshua? What does this word show us the 10 tribes were concerned about when it came to the altar the trans-Jordan tribes built? Why was building this altar such a danger? What are the emphases and lessons to be learned from this chapter? There are many! (2+ paragraphs)



A: As the two and a half trans-Jordan tribes have finished their duty in fighting with their brothers, they are now returning home across the Jordan to take possession of their cities. In doing so, they build a **huge altar** on the banks of the Jordan. When the ten tribes see it, they prepare to go to war with their brothers! But before they do, they send a delegation with one elder from each tribe, plus **Phinehas**. Then these 11 men go across the Jordan to confront their brothers with the seriousness of **breaking faith** with Yahweh. This word is the key word of Phinehas' sermon. They got the lesson from chapter 7 and the incident with Achan (the only other place this word is used in the book)! They understood that **all the tribes rise and fall together.** They got the lesson on **corporate solidarity** (22:18, 20)! And so out of concern that this altar was another place of worship, they **confronted** their brothers! The reason that building an altar was such a big thing is because of **unity**. Yahweh designed that there would be **one** place where He would be worshiped so that there would be **unity** and **purity of worship**. As places of worship multiplied, so did the danger of perversion and syncretism of Canaanite ways!

Notice the **boldness and courage** of Phinehas and the other 10 men who crossed the Jordan on this **mission of rescue and reconciliation**. With great faith and a willingness to take risks and sacrifice (22:19) they went to unify the nation by confronting their brothers. One of the key lessons here is that it's not enough to just not be unfaithful yourself! We must have a zeal for faithfulness for the whole people of God. Slack in this area is detrimental to all the people!

Furthermore, what is so great about this passage is that it turned out to only be a misunderstanding, and the imposing altar wasn't built for sacrifice, but as a **reminder**. The trans-Jordan's tribes were concerned for **unity** as well! They were concerned that the Jordan would form a natural border that would separate them from the other tribes and eventually they would be separated from Israel and the worship of Yahweh! So this altar was also built for the sake of unity! Thus by dual emphasis this episode stresses the importance of **unified faithfulness to Yahweh among all the people of God**, and even the importance of a **zeal for that unity!** So Phinehas et. al. conclude that Yahweh must be with His people because of this (22:31)! Oh that we would be this concerned that God's people be in faithful relationship to Yahweh and not be defiled by the apostasy which is a cancer among God's people! By the fact that the 2 ½ tribes were mindful of Yahweh and not apostasizing, they **saved** the nation (22:31). Just as Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, by keeping right relationship with God we save those around us. What a weighty responsibility!

9. What then happens in the assembly of Joshua 23? What does Joshua call them to? (1 paragraph)

A: As Joshua is old, this is his last will and testament as it were to the people. He exhorts them one last time to hold faithful to Yahweh. His primary concern is for **vigilance over the long haul** to stay faithful to Yahweh. He thus reminds them of how faithful Yahweh has been to them. They were eyewitnesses of God's power on their behalf (23:3, 10)! Yahweh has kept every single word to them (23:14)! Therefore, they need to be so careful to **be strong** (23:6), to **cling** to Yahweh (23:8), to **love** Him (23:11), and to **not associate or intermarry** with the nations around them (23:12). One way or the other Yahweh will keep His word, either His word to bless or to curse them, depending on how they keep relationship with Him (23:15). And so thus they need to be faithful to Yahweh to continue to possess the **promised land** (23:5, 13, 15, 16)! As Joshua exhorts the people to covenant faithfulness once again, we see the focus on **personal responsibility**. They need to do their part. Yahweh will be faithful, but will they?

10. What happens then in chapter 24? (1 paragraph)

*A: The people of Israel **renew covenant** with Yahweh (24:25). Chapter 24 has the rough form of an ANE treaty (although not in the particulars as it is not the covenant itself, but a narrative telling about the making of the covenant. But note how it begins with a review of their history with Yahweh in 24:2-13). Yahweh had been faithful to them. He kept His promise to Abraham and they are now in the land! Therefore, their responsibility is to fear Yahweh, and serve Him (24:14)! Joshua presses home that they will **not be able to follow Yahweh** (24:19), and yet they still affirm their desire to keep covenant with Him. And thus the covenant is sealed with witnesses (24:22, 27). The book ends with Joshua dying, his bones being buried in the land (as proof of Yahweh's faithfulness) and Joseph's bones as well being buried in the land (further proof that Yahweh keeps His word!)). Lastly, Eleazar the high-priest died, and he was buried in the land. Thus we see the point being hammered home that God indeed gave Israel the land! It was now **their responsibility** to keep **relationship** with Yahweh, and He would be with them!*

11. Thought question: Do you think the land promise was fulfilled in the days of Joshua? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)
12. Thought question: Comment on the ethics of Israel wiping out the Canaanites. (1 paragraph)
13. Application: What do we learn about unity and corporate solidarity from Joshua?
14. Application: Comment on the danger of forgetfulness and not persevering from the book of Joshua.

### 3. Trusting Courage Pleases God: Judges 1-9

**Scripture:** Judges 1-9

**Theme:** Those remembering Yahweh's faithfulness will courageously live in obedient faith

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged by how Yahweh's faithfulness motivates us to live courageously for Him
- To see the need of leadership who takes initiative by acting out of obedient faith
- To be humbled by the fact that God doesn't use perfect people, but people who trust Him

**Reading:**

- Read all of Judges *once*

**Questions:**

1. Who do you think the book of Judges was written to, what do you think their situation was at that time, and what do you think the purpose of the book is? (1 paragraph)

*A: Based upon the timeframe of events in the book (shortly after the events contained in the book is always a good start for trying to ascertain when the book was written) and also the themes that seem to be addressed (specifically the priority of Judah), it seems likely that the book is written in the early days of David. Thus a big part of the purpose of the book seems to be to establish the need for and reasons for David's kingship. If this is correct, the **unity** of the nation would be important, as would continued faithfulness in trusting Yahweh to possess the land and establish Israel as the nation they were intended to be.*

2. Come up with a brief outline of Judges. Note the following structural features- At the beginning of the book: See where the introduction begins and ends; Note where Joshua is alive and dead. Throughout Judges: Note where various judges are judging (or there are no judges!). How does Judges end?

*A:*

*Judges 1:1-3:6: In those days, there was no Joshua in Israel*

*Judges 3:7-16:31: In those days, there were judges in Israel*

*Judges 17-21: In those days, there was no king in Israel*

3. Look at 1:1-36 and 2:6-3:6. What is odd and/or different about these sections? How do each of these sections function in relationship to the book? Why does chapter 2 “feel” different than chapter 1 (it should!)? In other words, what sort of narrative technique does the author use in chapter 2 as opposed to chapter 1? How do each of them introduce Judges? (1 paragraph)

*A: Notice that Joshua is dead in 1:1, but alive again in 2:6! Obviously, this material is not chronological. Note as well that **2:1-5** is a key passage in the book where Yahweh is addressing His people separating these two 'introductions'. So we find that both 1:1-36 and 2:6-36 both serve as distinct sections introducing the book of Judges. Chapter 1 is a narrative retelling of conquering (both successes and failures). In Chapter 2, the author recaps the context of Joshua, his death, and Israel's future. Chapter 1 is more of a prologue (like the first scene of a television show, brings you up to speed on what happened last time), followed by 2:6-3:6 as an introduction to the contents of the book. It is also clear that chapter 1 is more 'objective', giving the bare facts of history, while 2:6-3:6 is more 'subjective', giving a **theological interpretation of history**, giving the*

reasons 'why'. Chapter 1 deals with events immediately after Joshua's death while 2:6-3:6 summarizes the entire period of the judges. Chapter 1 is more open-ended—maybe Israel will repent and obey God; 2:6-3:6 closes the door on this possibility.

4. How are the different tribes portrayed in 1:1-36 and what does that key us in to look for in the rest of the book as this section introduces the book? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how **Judah begins fighting first**, and they did the best out of all the tribes. The story of **Caleb** is repeated from Judges, as it was exemplary of faith and trust in Yahweh. There is the little failure in 1:19, but even there it seems to say that they 'could not' rather than that they 'did not' (1:27, 28, 29, etc.). It's even possibly an allusion to Joshua 17:18, and that this land was not even their responsibility to possess! Furthermore, Caleb even drove out three sons of Anak (giants!). However, when we move to **Benjamin** in verse 21 (the tribe of Saul!), we don't have a great report. Likewise, the other tribes in the rest of the chapter have more and more negative reports. 21 cities were not conquered! Some were even put to forced labor (Jos 9)! Thus it appears that part of the purpose of the book is to be **pro-Judah**, quite possibly to argue for the establishment of the Davidic line and need for the **final righteous king**! We also of course in this section see the continued theme of trusting Yahweh and thus being courageous to obey Him!

5. Comment on the function of 2:1-5 within the introduction structurally and then also how it helps to inform the purpose of the book. Where else do we find similar passages to 2:1-5 in Judges and how do they function? (1 paragraph)

A: There are 3 "confrontation" passages in Judges (2:1-5; 6:7-10; 10:10-16). The rest is narrative except for the song in chapter 5. These confrontation passages show that a major purpose of this book is to **establish the faithfulness of Yahweh in contrast to the faithlessness of the people**. Yahweh is always faithful, and He simply asks His people to **trust** and be in **relationship** with Him! They should fear Yahweh and not the nations! Faith and trust are major issues in Judges!

6. Comment on how 2:6-10 sets the stage for the book of Judges. Then comment on how 2:11-3:6 is paradigmatic for the book of Judges. What key themes are introduced here that will be important for the rest of the book? Comment on the cycle pattern of Judges we see in this section and then throughout Judges. What key word is used in 2:21-3:6 which describes why Yahweh left the nations in the land? What does this teach us about what Yahweh was trying to do? Compare Judges 2:14-15 with Judges 2:18 and summarize a theological principle about our God from these verses. (2+ paragraphs)

A: We see in 2:6-10 that while Joshua was alive, the people trusted Yahweh and followed Him. However, after Joshua and the rest of the elders died who had **seen** (2:7) Yahweh's great power, the next generation did not know Yahweh or the works He had done (2:10). Thus we see the great importance (emphasized in the Torah! See Deu 6), of **retelling Yahweh's great works** and passing on from one generation to the next the testimony of who Yahweh is. **Remembering** is so important to faith!

Then as we come to 2:11-3:6 we see the **pattern** for the entire book of Judges. The people forgot Yahweh and so forsook Him for other gods (2:11-12)! So Yahweh's anger burned against His people and He gave them over to foreign nations (2:14-15). God always keeps His promises, both to bless and to curse! But then (out of His great mercy and compassion! cf. 2:18) Yahweh would raise up judges for them (2:16, 18). But as soon as the judge died, the people would turn back to following after foreign gods (2:19). So the **cycle** would continue and God would once again be angry with His people (2:20).

So we see in 2:21 through 3:6 one of the key reasons why Yahweh kept sending the nations against His people. The key word in this section is **'test'**. God cares that His people **depend upon and trust Him!** When times are good, it's unclear whether or not people are trusting God, or just going along with the flow. But when the hard times come, who will you call upon!?! Who will you lean on and trust??? Yahweh tests us because He wants us to believe in how great and faithful He is and thus to trust Him! We also see by comparing 2:18 with 2:14-15 another key element of the book of Judges: **Yahweh often interrupts law with grace**—even though he metes out rightly deserved punishment, he will also often give grace in the midst of that punishment. In biblical terms, Yahweh is slow to anger and rich in loyal love. His mercy and compassion run throughout this book, especially in light of how wicked His people were! Notice one last key concept in this introduction, that of intermarriage with the Canaanites (in 3:6). All throughout the Torah this danger is mentioned, and as we see in this introduction, intermarriage with the Canaanites is what often and inevitably led to Israel's turning to their gods. We see this again and again in Judges (and the rest of Israel's history)!

7. As we turn to the first judge, Othniel, what do we see emphasized in this section (3:7-11)? In what ways is Othniel the “paradigmatic” or model judge? List things about Othniel that characterize him as a model judge. (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice this section once again begins with Israel **forgetting** Yahweh. Thus Yahweh was angered and sent a foreign nation against them. Israel **cried** to Yahweh, and Yahweh raised up Othniel (this is only said about Othniel and Ehud). The **Spirit** comes upon him to **empower** him (we'll come back to this) and defeat Israel's enemy. Othniel actually marries from within his tribe and not a foreigner (1:13)! Notice that he is from **Judah** and is Caleb's younger brother who has already been highlighted for his faithfulness. Everything is generic and pattern-like.

8. What is your first reaction to reading the story of Ehud (3:12-31)? What do you think the point of this story is? (2-3 sentences)

A: This story is funny! Really, this one man goes in and kills the fat king and escapes by himself. The point of the story is that Israel really **shouldn't** be subject to such nations! Israel should simply trust Yahweh! (Side note, possibly the point of including Shamgar in 3:31 is that he seems to have a foreign name, thus a foreigner saving Israel!).

9. Summarize the theological point you draw from the story in Judges 4. (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice how God is using **weak and unlikely people** to save His people. **Women** are obviously prominent in this story. Barak is weak in faith (won't go without Deborah in 3:8). Yet God still uses all of them and saves His people! See the summary in 4:23-24: again we find divine sovereignty using human actions. God uses Jael, who breaks faith with her tribal connections to kill Sisera, Deborah is used by God as his prophetess though she is an unlikely candidate, and God uses Barak to command the Israelites though he is weak-willed.

10. What do you think the point of Deborah's song is in Judges 5? (2-3 sentences)

A: The song begins with a theophany, reminding us that Yahweh is the one who fights for His people. Thus He deserves the praise! Notice as well how Jael gets the praise (5:24) that Barak gave up (4:9) because of his weak faith (4:8)! Not all the tribes were even involved. Gilead, Dan, and Asher sat silently. Even Meroz is

cursed because they didn't come to help (5:23). Yet those who **volunteered** (5:1, 9) were victorious. **Those who courageously took faith triumphed.** This song elevates faith and courage to trust in Yahweh despite the odds. But all in all, Yahweh deserves the praise because He is the Victor! **He uses weak, few people!** He uses few people who have weak faith!

11. Gideon is often thought to be a "hero" of the OT. But many scholars disagree, viewing him as more morally corrupt; yet used by God. First, give several reasons for viewing Gideon as good, and second, list several reasons for viewing him as corrupt. Then what do you think the point of the Gideon narrative is? (1 paragraph)

A: The Good: he is generally obedient, leads the army in conquest, and denies the kingship in favor of Yahweh being king (8:23). It is even later said of him that he risked his life for the people (9:17). Notice Gideon's name change to Jerubbaal to highlight that he was fighting against Baal. That name is what he continues to be known by throughout the story and not Gideon. The Spirit also comes upon to enable him (6:34). The Bad: he has lots of fear (cf. 6:27), asks for signs multiple times (6:17, 37), takes out the altar in cover of night, and lives like a king though he denies it (Abimelech = 'my father is the king'). As we continue to move through Judges, we see how God uses people who are weak of faith, and yet have some vestige of faith! God wants not perfect people, but people who will step out in trusting Him. He continues to show Himself faithful despite the weak vessels He uses! This appears to be a major point of Judges! This is of course why Yahweh only wants to use 300 men to deliver Israel, so the power would be shown to be His (7:2)! And this is also why He uses weak and sinful men (there are no others)! We can't please God by being good enough! How do we evaluate people? Faith or how sinless they are.

12. What do you think the point of chapter 8 is? (2-3 sentences)

A: We see tribal disunity (8:1-9)! Unity continues to be a major theme of Judges, just as it was in Joshua. We also see Gideon refuse the kingship! This is noble, but then he names his son 'Abimelech', 'my father is king!' We continue to see as well the major theme of the **need** for a righteous king! Notice as well how the Gideon narrative ends and the Abimelech one begins: when Gideon died, Israel played the harlot, and did not **remember Yahweh** who had delivered them! And they didn't show loyal love (hesed) to Gideon's household!

13. Describe the character of Abimelech. Which future king of Israel do you think he foreshadows, and why? What do you think the point of this narrative is? (1 paragraph)

A: Abimelech continues to go way downhill, even from Gideon. Note that Abimelech (somewhat?) gets his authority from being Gideon's son (although he was not a son of his wives, but of his concubine). Thus we are seeing a subtle rebuke of kingship as an institution where kings get their authority from being children, not from their character. We see this also in Samuel where the Israelites want a king like the nations. The emphasis here seems to be that the **oppressors are inside Israel!** Violence is done **in Shechem against Israelites**, the place where Joshua read the blessings and curses (Joshua 8)! Furthermore, as we already saw, he didn't show **loyal love** to his **brothers** (9:5, a key verse of this chapter, cf. 8:35). This is one of the most important thing Israel's leaders should have cared about! The kingship of Abimelech seems to **anticipate that of Saul** in both the way the Spirit interacts with him and in the way he dies. Note, for example, the 'evil spirit' sent between, not on, Abimelech (see Hamilton, 136). Both request to be killed after being fatally wounded (Judges 9:54; 1 Sam 31:4). His death is filled with **irony**. The one who killed seventy brothers 'on one stone', was killed by 'one' (a certain) woman who (lit.) 'threw' 'one' 'stone' 'upon' Abimelech. The language is deliberate (see Hamilton, 137). The irony points to poetic justice. In any case, his kingship is definitely not ideal and continues to establish the need for a righteous king!

14. Application: What are ways that we need to step out in faith in obedience to Yahweh by courageously trusting Him?
15. Application: What do we learn about leadership from this section?

#### 4. God is Still Working when People Fail: Judges 10-21

**Scripture:** Judges 10-21

**Theme:** Despite the nation's plunge into sin and her leaders' failure, Yahweh mercifully still saves

**Objectives:**

- To be overwhelmed with Yahweh's patience, grace, and compassion on sinful people
- To see how Yahweh's faithfulness results in pursuing His rebellious people
- To hope for the day when the anticipation of a righteous King is fulfilled

**Reading:**

- Read all of Judges *once*

**Questions:**

1. Comment the function of the 'minor' judges in 10:1-5 and 12:8-15. How are the judges portrayed? (1 sentence)

*A: Their primary function seems to be literary, in breaking off one section and continuing the next (secondarily, it is possible that they are intended to show the judges continuing the downward spiral, in that they are **living like kings**?). Note that from here on out (really starting in some senses with Gideon and Abimelech), the judges become more and more questionable, as we see more and more blatant sin in their lives! As a side note, this is also an illustration of the principle of **literary selection**. Although undoubtedly there were many stories associated with each of these minor judges, only those that advanced the overall message of the author were included.*

2. Noticing that chapter 10 is transitional, comment on the important section in 10:10-16. What does this section teach us theologically? There is an important phrase in Judges 10:16b which says literally “His soul was impatient with Israel's misery.” Although it's possible this phrase is negative (ie. Yahweh is fed up with Israel), when comparing to a similar phrase in 16:16 and the use of misery (Heb: 'amal) here, it seems best to take positively. What does this phrase teach us in light of verses 10-16? (1 paragraph)

*A: Here we see that even though Yahweh kept saving them and they kept turning to other gods, when they kept crying to Yahweh, He couldn't bear their suffering any longer! Here we see the compassion and grace of God for His people. **Over and over and over they kept rebelling, but when they earnestly turned to Him, His unfailing and faithful love was always there for them!** This also seems to be a major purpose of the book, to show Yahweh's unfailing loyal love for His people, **despite their sins!***

3. How is Jephthah portrayed in 11:1-12:7 (include what you think of Jephthah's vow: noble, neutral, or inherently bad)? What do you think the point of this section is? Make sure to comment as well on the theme we see again in 12:1-6 that has been elsewhere in Judges. (1 paragraph)

*A: Jephthah is definitely portrayed as a mixed bag! While he does fight for Israel, and even displays faith by 'taking his life in his own hands' (12:3), his rash vow and otherwise questionable actions really bring into question if he is trusting Yahweh as he should! He even **slaughtered 42,000 Ephraimites!** Thus in 12:1-6 we continue to see tribal **disunity** as the tribes are fighting against one another! This definitely is a downward spiral, there is **no unity** and no faithfulness to Yahweh! This is not a good situation! Furthermore, there is*



the whole question of his vow, which on the whole seems most likely to be taken as **human sacrifice!** We can debate about the ethics of following through with it!, but certainly the vow itself should never have been made! Yet once again, we are seeing how Yahweh is using imperfect people to accomplish His will. Little faith is still faith, and as we are seeing the nation spiral down into more and more sin, we are seeing the faithfulness of Yahweh all the more clearly. What grace and mercy and compassion that God would even use such people as Jephthah! **But really, are we any better!?!**

4. After another transition in 12:8-15, we begin the Samson narratives in 13:1. Discuss the birth narrative in chapter 13 and the purpose of this chapter. Try to imagine how you would feel when reading this chapter if you didn't know how the story with Samson ended. (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice how the Samson narrative begins before he is even born! He will be supernaturally born and will deliver the Israelites! This chapter creates an unbelievable **anticipation** that finally, a righteous deliverer is coming! He is set apart from birth to serve Yahweh! As he grew Yahweh was blessing him, and the **Spirit of Yahweh** began to stir in him!

5. Find out the literal rendering of 14:3b (NASB: "for she looks good to me) and 14:7b (NASB: "and she looked good to Samson"). What does the literal rendering communicate (in a very creative way!) about Samson's moral compass in light of the moral situation in Judges as a whole (HINT: there is a popular refrain throughout 17-21 that corresponds to these two statements in chapter 14). (2-3 sentences)

A: Note the ESV's rendering: "she is **right** in my eyes." **Samson is the perfect example of the fact that everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes (cf. 17:6 and 21:25)!** These two verses use the same word for 'right' that is used in the refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did what was **right** in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). This is a major theme going all the way back to Genesis and the Serpent in the garden! Are we going to trust Yahweh, that He knows what is best for us, or are we going to make ourselves king and do what is right in our own eyes!?! We need to trust Yahweh's way is the best, He alone is wise and knows the right way. We should simply trust Him!

6. What do you think the point of the Samson narrative as a whole is? Comment on similarities between Samson's life and the nation of Israel and the fact that his life may be an illustration of Israel. Comment as well on how each of us are much more like Samson (and Gideon, Jephthah, or Barak) than we care to admit. Comment on how each of these 4 judges made it into Hebrews 11 as well (think about this!)(1-2 paragraphs)

A: Note that once again the point of the Samson narrative seems to be that Yahweh will use who He will and will accomplish His purpose for His people through them. Samson didn't set out to attack the Philistines for righteous reasons! God setup the events to use Samson's selfishness to accomplish this! It is all Yahweh's **grace** that He moves and uses us to accomplish His plans. His sovereign choice to use who He will seems to be especially highlighted in Judges. We see that the people He uses do have faith at times, but we also see all their failures! Note especially 14:4 in this regard which shows that it is **Yahweh's plan** that is going to happen! We also see the major theme of how foreign women enticed the Israelites and the snare that was for them to follow foreign gods. The **foolishness of being seduced** by foreign, pagan wives is strongly highlighted in this narrative!

Note also how Samson's life is possibly intended as an illustration of the nation of Israel:

- 1) Samson is miraculously born by the will of God

- 2) Samson is called to a high life of separation/devotion to Yahweh
- 3) Samson is inexorably drawn to foreign women, like Israel was drawn to foreign gods (both 'play the harlot')
- 4) Samson experiences bondage and oppression of the enemy
- 5) Samson is blinded (cf. 1 Sam 3:1-3)
- 6) Samson is abandoned by Yahweh and does not know it
- 7) (Block, 392)

*Far too often each of us like to think of ourselves as the heroes of the story, when in reality God is the only hero of any story! All of us who are believers do indeed have moments of faith, but just like Samson, we all are driven by our eyes and our **lusts** far more often than we would desire people to know! This all points to God's grace! **He uses us despite ourselves.** Notice how Hebrews 11 even lists Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah in the hall of faith! Each of these judges had serious sin issues! They feared and lacked faith at so many points. And yet, they each also displayed faith in Yahweh because Yahweh chooses to use weak people for His purposes!*

7. How are chapters 17-21 different than the rest of the book? How do these differences help us to discern what point(s) the author is trying to make in this section? Comment as well on the mention of Bethlehem in this section and how the Benjamites are portrayed and how that may be influential in seeing the author's purpose(s) in this section. Are there any other themes or repeated phrases that help us understand this section (hint: yes!)? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: First of all, we see that these chapters are not in chronological order which definitely helps us to discern that they are different from and a distinct section of the book. We also see that there are no judges whatsoever during these chapters (which obviously also sets these chapters apart and also ties into the next point)! The key refrain about there not being a king in Israel and so everyone did what was right in their own eyes runs through this section (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), and fits in with the concept that there were no rulers. These emphases seem to be establishing the **need for a righteous ruler!** Even priests were doing their own thing! Notice as well the repetition of Bethlehem through this section (in 17:7, 8, 9; 19:1, 2, 18; and not really mentioned elsewhere in Judges except incidentally in 12:8, 10). Along with the theme of there not being any king, this mention of Bethlehem (and the negative references to Benjamin!) seems to be good reason for seeing this section along with elsewhere in Judges as being justification for the Davidic line. Notice as well that the narrative simply describes the events, as '**objective history**'. The point is for the reader to simply read and be **disgusted** by what he sees (notice the comparison between the Benjamites and Sodom and Gomorrah in 19:22!!!!). Since Saul was from Benjamin, all of this adds together to be a rather strong polemic against Saul and for David's reign...*

8. Where have we seen a statement similar to 20:18 before? Why do you think this is significant and what is the point? (1 sentence)

*A: 20:18 reminds us of 1:1. Judah is being emphasized once again and so just like at the beginning of the book, this statement forms a **bookend** and continues to show this emphasis on Judah, the tribe of David!*

9. Thought question: Summarize the role of women in the book of Judges. (They not only play a pervasive role, but a quite ironic one at that). List the key passages. (1 paragraph)

*A: Deborah (Judges 4-5)  
Jael (Judges 4-5)*

*Timnah and Delilah (Judges 14, 16)*

*A “certain woman” (who killed Abimelech; Judges 9:53)*

*Concubine (Judges 19)*

*Women in Judges tend to function as unlikely actors who step in and accomplish Yahweh’s will when their more likely counterparts fail. Deborah is stronger than Barak, whose cowardice leads to Jael receiving glory for killing Sisera. Abimelech is killed with “one” stone by a woman, receiving the punishment for his killing his brothers on “one” stone (cf. 9:5,18). Timnah and Delilah, though they do not know it, function in much the same way: they are instruments in Yahweh’s hands to incite the Philistines. Finally, the concubine’s story is tragic—now, instead of simply failing to protect women, the men of Israel are actively harming them. All in all we see that women are used of God in powerful ways!*

10. Thought question: Comment on the presence of the Spirit in Judges. What can we learn from the emphasis of this theme in this book? Is the function the same as the NT function of the Spirit? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)

*A: God's Spirit is very active in the book of Judges! From this we see that **God is actively at work** in His people! In Judges, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon individuals in order to empower them for a particular activity. In the NT, we find the Spirit has a similar ministry (cf. Acts 4), but additionally has a different kind of durative/progressive filling (Eph 5), a ministry of conviction (John 15), a ministry of gifting (1 Cor 12). Related to the promise of the Spirit in the New Covenant (Eze 36:26-27), in the NT we find that all believers are actually indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and not merely empowered at this or that moment!!*

11. Thought question: Reflect on God’s sovereignty displayed in the book of Judges. How would you summarize this aspect of God’s character? How does it relate to the themes of God’s mercy and compassion and also His faithfulness in the book of Judges? (1 paragraph)

*A: God’s sovereignty is displayed most prominently in the Samson story (from his birth to his death, working together a seemingly random set of circumstances to accomplish his stated purpose in 14:4 despite no one seeming to notice Yahweh’s hand). The book of Judges shows us that God is completely sovereign, and that His sovereignty isn’t dependent on human response—sometimes He intervenes when the people don’t ask, sometimes he doesn’t intervene when they do ask! All in all, He is shown to be very gracious and merciful to His people! He works with those of weak faith, He responds to those who have forgotten and forsaken Him when they finally turn back and plead with Him!!! He always keeps His promises, even when **all** of His people fail Him. But because of His faithfulness, He is always there calling Israel back to Himself and working with her, despite all her failings. We see so clearly in this book the tender mercy, compassion and patience of Yahweh to His people!!!*

12. Application: What do we learn by continuing to see Yahweh's faithfulness to His people despite their downward spiral into sin? How should this affect our hearts?
13. Application: What should the effect be of seeing how Yahweh uses sinful people to accomplish His purpose? How does seeing God use people with huge blemishes and yet trust in Him at times change our view of what God is looking for in us? What does this teach us about our relationship with Him?

## 5. The Establishment of the Monarchy: 1 Samuel 1-15

**Scripture:** 1st Samuel 1-15

**Theme:** God hears the cry of the lowly who trust in Him and establishes leaders to stand for justice

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged to trust in God fully and not in ourselves even in the midst of hardship
- To be reminded and encouraged of God's great power and eagerness to help the weak
- To be exhorted to care for the lowly as God does, and thus to care about justice
- To see the example of both good and bad leadership, and what characterizes each

**Reading:**

- Read 1st Samuel 1-15 *twice*
- Skim 1st Samuel and 2nd Samuel quickly

**Questions:**

1. Give a brief outline encompassing both 1st and 2nd Samuel.

*A: Samuel's rise and Eli's demise; the journeys of the ark (1 Sam 1-7)*

*Rise and fall of king Saul (1 Sam 8-15)*

*Rise of David (1 Sam 16-31)*

*David becomes king (2 Sam 1-7)*

*Rise and fall of David (2 Sam 8-20)*

*Conclusion (2 Sam 21-24)*

2. Throughout the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel, note the passages that are NOT narrative. What themes are contained within these poetic passages? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Three key poetic passages (1 Sam 2, 2 Sam 1, 2 Sam 22-23) are carefully placed at strategic points within the book to act as structural markers, highlighting the theme of human and divine kingship and also the lowly and the mighty. In 1Sa 2, the emphasis on **God humbling the mighty but exalting the lowly is clear**. 1Sa 2:4 "The bows of the might are shattered, but the feeble gird on strength." 1Sa 2:7 "Yahweh makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts." It ends in 2:10 with the theme of kingship, "Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth, and will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed." Likewise, the key refrain in 2Sa 1 is, "Oh how the mighty have fallen." In the final poem at the end of the book we see these same themes. 2Sa 22:28- "You save an afflicted people, but your eyes are on the haughty who you abase." 2Sa 22:51- "He is a tower of deliverance to His king, and shows loyal love to His anointed, to David and his descendants forever." 2Sa 23:3- "He who rules righteously, who rules in the fear of God..."*

3. What do you think telling Samuel's birth narrative in chapter 1 does for the reader? How does it introduce the book of Samuel as a whole? What themes are introduced here? What story does this one remind us of that we have already encountered thus far in Scripture? (1 paragraph)

*A: Just like the Samson narrative (no razor to touch his head, dedicated to Yahweh), the narrative about Samuel's birth raises a great sense of **anticipation**. Notice as well from the outset of the narrative how Hophni and Phinehas are brought into the story to later be compared and contrasted with Samuel and establish the need for **righteous leadership**. The story of Peninnah and Hannah also sets up the anticipation*

of Yahweh helping the lowly. Notice how in 1:19 Yahweh **remembered** Hannah (key covenant term), showing His **faithfulness** to care for those who are lowly and who call out to Him!

4. Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 2:1-10 is considered the "theological introduction" to the book. How would you articulate the theme or themes expressed in this prayer (especially in light of how they play out in the rest of 1-2 Samuel)? Later on in biblical history, what other woman sings a song about the reversal of fortunes as a result of the miraculous birth of a child? (1 paragraph)

A: The major themes in this prayer include God's sovereignty in using the weak/humble to shame the strong/proud, and emerging victorious over his enemies in delivering His people. Yahweh will judge the earth in righteousness, and will establish His king to stand for righteousness and justice. EOT, 106: "Hannah's prayer for a son seems to symbolize something much deeper: the yearning of the righteous within Israel for Yahweh to bring about deliverance." This piece of poetry sets off the narrative, giving some reflection upon what's happening and setting the stage for the rest of the book, in which Yahweh institutes a new phase in the plan of redemption to bring them out of the era of Judges.

This theme is what then plays out in the following story: 2:11-4:1 What God did in the birth of Samuel (hear the prayers of the weak in deliverance from the strong), he will do in the life of Samuel = the young boy in the temple worshiping will be vindicated over the priests with all the social power.

5. Notice the alternations between Eli's sons (2:12-17, 22-29) and Samuel (2:18-21, 26; 3:1). Why do you think the author is making these contrasts? What in particular is being contrasted and what is the point of this contrast? How does 2:35 sum up what Yahweh is looking for? (1 paragraph)

A: Samuel is innocent and worshiping in the temple—exactly how Eli's sons were supposed to be innocent and worshipful! Eli's sons were priests, and yet did not know Yahweh (2:12)! They were oppressing the people **instead of standing for justice!** They were abusing their power instead of using it to stand up for the weak and lowly! The fact of their wicked leadership establishes the need for a **faithful** priest and leader of the nation. This is the key word used in 2:35. The word faithful comes from the same root (Heb: aman) from which the word 'believe' occurs in Hebrew and is an important concept in the OT. This term denotes someone who is **reliable**. Yahweh wants leadership who are reliable in giving Him glory and honor and living for His purposes, standing for righteousness and justice for the people!

6. What key word is repeated in 2:29-30 that shows the key issue at stake with Eli, Hophni and Phinehas? How does this key word tie into the theme of the book? (2-3 sentences)

A: The key word repeated is '**honor**'. We here find out that Eli honored his sons above Yahweh (2:29). What is at stake of course is **Yahweh's honor** or His glory! Yahweh will not permit people to rob Him of glory, only those who understand they are poor and lowly will be exalted by Yahweh! God wants the glory for Himself and so will not compete with those who try to take it from Him, those **He will make small (2:30)!**

7. What do you think the point of chapter 3 is (hint: look at the last 3 verses of the chapter)? (2-3 sentences)

A: This chapter shows how Yahweh was speaking directly with Samuel, even though at that time it was rare for God to speak. Thus Samuel is confirmed as a true and faithful prophet of Yahweh, he said exactly what Yahweh told him **even when it was hard**. Thus Yahweh established Samuel as His prophet and didn't let any of his words fail, so that everyone would know that Samuel faithfully represented Yahweh!

8. Within the theological flow of 1 Sam 1-7, what is the purpose of the “ark narrative” in chapters 4-6? Talk specifically about what we learn about God's presence as it relates to this narrative. Why did the Israelites bring the ark to battle? Why didn't that 'work'? Why do you think Yahweh caused the disasters on the Philistines who had the ark? What does this teach us? Also, what is the significance of Dagon's hands being cut off? (1 paragraph)

*A: In chapter 4, Yahweh confirmed His prophecy that Hophni and Phinehas would die. We also see the ark of Yahweh depart Israel, signifying that Yahweh is no longer with His people. They thought that bringing the ark would **magically** cause them to win, in a **superstitious** way, like the pagan gods who could be manipulated. Yahweh is not like those gods and cannot be manipulated! He is the king! Yes, as we saw in Joshua, His presence assures victory. When Yahweh is for us, no one can oppose us. However, we need relationship with Yahweh and His presence of which the ark is merely a symbol! So when His people are not in relationship with Him, having the ark as a way to manipulate Him **will not work!** He wants faithful obedience and humble trust. When we are living this way He will be with us and we have victory. But when the Philistines took the ark, Yahweh would not allow them to triumph over Him! Yahweh would not be subject to Dagon! The cutting off of heads and hands signified victory and domination over an opposing king. So Yahweh showed that indeed He is the king who will not be manipulated or conquered by anyone (Israelite or Philistine!)!*

9. What is the point of chapter 7 (note what is emphasized in the text)? What does Ebenezer mean, and what does it signify in the flow of the narrative? (1 paragraph)

*A: We see in chapter 7 how Israel **repented**, they **humbled** themselves and mourned over their lack of trust in Yahweh (7:2). Samuel continually interceded (7:8-9) for them when the Philistines attacked and because of their humble trust and prayer, Yahweh delivered them! Yahweh loves to save the humble who cry out to Him! They named the place of victory Ebenezer, meaning Yahweh helps. It is a reminder of Yahweh's faithfulness!*

10. How is Samuel described (job description) in 7:15-17 and how does this fit into the purpose of the book? What then were Samuel's sons jobs in 8:1? What was their problem and how does this further progress the narrative and fit into the major themes of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Samuel is described as **judging** over all Israel for his whole life. Thus Samuel is not only a prophet, but the last judge! This sets up the need (and **anticipation!**) within the book for a **leader (judge)** who is faithful and in relationship with Yahweh (priest/prophet). We see of course in later biblical revelation that there is a need for a righteous king, and there is a prophecy of a coming king-priest! As we come to Samuel's sons, we are hopeful that they will follow in their faithful father's footsteps. But instead, we find that they are appointed judges over Israel but were not just and righteous! They once again abused their power instead of using to care for the lowly!!! They were **pervverting justice!** God cares about the poor and lowly and wants faithful leaders who do the same. We see how these themes of **power** and **greatness, pride** and **humility** are constantly weaved throughout this book. Since God wants all the glory, He wants people who are humble and trust in Him. He is the defender of such poor and lowly people, He hears their cries and comes to save and deliver! And He wants a leader who will be faithful to His purposes and glory, and thus stand for justice and righteousness.*

11. As we come to chapter 8 and with Samuel's sons not being just judges, the people cry out for a king. Explain how the topic of kingship is key within the book of 1st Samuel. 1st Samuel 8 seems

to be anti-kingship, and yet Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and the book of Judges seem to be pro-kingship. We also see within 1st Samuel texts like 9:1-10:16 and 11:1-15 which appear to be pro-kingship and others like 8:1-22; 10:17-27 and 12:1-25 which appear to be against kingship. How do you explain this apparent tension? Make sure to include the key verses of 8:7 and 8:20 in your explanation. Please also include the concept of kingship from elsewhere in the Torah. Along with this, was Saul chosen by God (contrast 8:18 with 9:16; 10:1, 24)? (think about this, understanding this topic is key to the book)? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: All throughout the book of Samuel, the topic of kingship is central. Yahweh is the king, and yet there is a need for a human ruler over God's people. We have seen this theme clearly established in Judges! It seems clear from passages going all the way back to the Torah (Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17) that God intended for a ruler to come from the tribe of Judah to rule righteously over His people. We have seen so far in Samuel that Samuel himself is shown to be a righteous and just judge, one who ruled over God's people for Him. Yet notice how like Moses before him, Samuel and all the great leaders of Israel up to this point **were not kings**. Even the passage in Deuteronomy 17 doesn't necessarily put kingship in a positive light. God gave directions for the kingship so that it would be done in the right way, but this doesn't mean that kingship (as an institution) is ideal. In my opinion, the OT up to this point has presented kingship as an inevitable and yet non-ideal reality. However, that doesn't mean that the OT was against Israel having a singular leader. Samuel and Moses were clearly leaders of the people, and yet not kings. The question then we need to ask ourselves is what makes judges/leaders different than kings?*

*While there may be different aspects to this answer, one of the important differences lies in succession. Judges were raised up by God on the basis of their **qualifications (relationship with Him, heart after His)**, whereas kings are appointed on the basis of their pedigree. The people of Israel wanted a king because they didn't trust God to raise up leaders for them! They wanted the assurance that they would always have a king. They didn't want to have to trust God. And so they got what they wanted. Israel's history showed how the kingship worked out for them! Even for Judah's line descended from David (way better than Israel's without a single good king!), often times a son of a good king would be a bad king! Contrast this situation with the succession between Moses and Joshua, where Joshua was chosen on the basis of his faithfulness!*

*In other words, the primary problem with kingship was that of authority. With kingship, the king always had the authority until he died, at which time authority was transferred to one of his sons, whether or not he was qualified for such a position! There was a constant and clear line of human authority [Note how with authority comes responsibility. He had the authority to take from them 8:11-17, but then had the responsibility to care for them]. Note how in 8:20, the issue at hand is that they would have a king so there would always be someone to turn to, someone with authority, someone where the buck stopped. In contrast to that, the great leaders of Israel's past had **no inherent authority** and were selected and raised up because of their humble trust in Yahweh. God certainly made clear who was leading His nation, but **Yahweh was always the only one with authority, He was the true king of Israel!** He would lead and take care of them by selecting and authorizing good leaders for them. Notice that this seems to fit well with the concept in 8:7, where the fact that the people wanted the kingship is seen by God as a rejection of His kingship and authority over them. Thus the text establishes an anticipation and expectation of a righteous king who would come, one who would be qualified on the basis of his faithfulness and relationship with Yahweh! Thus like Moses and Samuel before, this king would be a prophet and a priest, one who communicated and communed with God and led the nation on that basis!*

*So leaders over God's people (whether kings or judges) as such weren't bad per se. It was more the desire for institution of kingship, an institution where the people wouldn't have to trust God, which was bad. God of*

course had planned all the way back in Deuteronomy to work through this concession. And so ultimately the need for a righteous and just king is being established: a king who indeed had a relationship with Yahweh and lived in faithfulness to Him, not seeking his own glory and reputation, but seeking the will of the only true King of Israel!

12. Explain how Saul is described in chapter 9. Is this positive, negative, or somewhere in between? (2-3 sentences)

A: Note the emphasis on Saul's **height**. In Samuel, there is such an emphasis on God humbling the proud (notice how 2:3 uses the word 'height' negatively in Hebrew). Notice as well how **Saul is from Gibeah** (same root as 'height' and is Israel's 'Sodom' from Judges)! Note the poetic irony here: After falling "full length to the ground" (1 Sam 28:20), the "Israelite giant (geboha) from Gibeah (gib'a) dies on the mountains of Gilboa (gilbo'a)" (Dempster, 141).

13. Despite the peoples' error in wanting a king, what does Yahweh do in chapter 10 (make sure to comment on 10:1, 6, 9)? Why does Yahweh do this according to 9:16? (2-3 sentences)

A: Yahweh selects Saul to be a king for His people and has him anointed. He sends His Spirit upon Saul and changes him and his heart. Thus God enables and empowers Saul to lead His people. Yahweh does this because of His **grace** (as always!) and faithfulness to hear His people when they humble themselves and call out to Him! When people humble themselves and call to Yahweh, He loves to deliver! And this despite Saul, who is afraid to tell he has been anointed king and even hides at the time of anointing!

14. How is Saul portrayed in chapter 11? (2-3 sentences)

A: Saul is portrayed very positively as God uses him to deliver Jabesh-Gilead. God sent His Spirit to enable him and God worked powerfully through him to save. He acts wisely in 11:13 by not acting out of vengeance. All in all God is working through him and all seems to be well.

15. How would you summarize Samuel's farewell speech in chapter 12? (1 paragraph)

A: Samuel emphasizes his **faithfulness** as leader over Israel. Certainly from this we continue to see the need for such a leader over Israel, one who isn't abusing his power over the people. We also see how he is emphasizing Yahweh righteous deeds (12:7). They needed to remember all that Yahweh had done for them to continue to trust Him! God is always faithful. If they trust and obey Him they will be blessed, but if not, they will be cursed! Yahweh will be faithful either way! He ends by confirming for them how wicked it was for them to choose a king rather than to trust Yahweh as their king (12:17) by having Yahweh perform a sign for them. Yet, when they confess their sin Samuel, Samuel reassures them to simply fear and trust Him! He ends by exhorting them to fear Yahweh and serve Him with all their heart!

16. What key event happens in chapter 13? What is the result of this? How does this relate to the rest of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: In chapter 13, Saul **doesn't wait** for Samuel! He didn't trust God. While this seems like such a minor thing, it shows how big a deal it is for the king to trust Yahweh! As a result the kingdom is taken away from Saul. Notice how Yahweh says if he wouldn't have done this God would have established His kingdom forever! Thus Yahweh is going to find a king after His own heart (13:14)! This is the first key turning point within the book as we are transitioning to David as the king after God's heart.



17. Why is the account of Jonathan's victory (14:1-23) and Saul's rash vow (14:24-46) placed where they are and what is the main point of this chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: Notice how the story of Jonathan's victory makes his father look bad. Even the first sentence of the story gives us some parenthetical information which sheds light on how we are to interpret the story, his father didn't know. Notice Jonathan's trust in Yahweh, while his father with his 600 men hide in fear! This is further confirmed when we see Saul's rash oath about not eating any food. Jonathan then even sharply critiques his father in 14:29-30. Then Saul makes another rash vow in 14:39 which he doesn't follow through with. Thus we see that **Saul and Jonathan are contrasted** in this chapter to show Saul's foolishness and lack of faith (especially compared with Jonathan's great faith in 14:6-7, 12).*

18. What key event then happens in chapter 15? Comment especially on what we learn from Saul's own testimony in 15:13ff. What key word runs through this chapter that explains what Yahweh wants? What was the motive or reason for Saul's action? What then is the result and how does this then effect the rest of the book (and Saul's life)? (1 paragraph)

*A: In chapter 15 we have the second main event of the disobedience of Saul, the one that confirms that the kingdom is taken from him and given to David. This time he doesn't fully follow through with the Lord's command to wipe out the Amalekites (note that 15:9 states that they 'spared' Agag and the best of what was good and **were not willing to destroy them fully**). We see from his own testimony, that he rationalized his lack of full obedience. He thought his own way was better than God's and made excuses to Samuel. The key word that runs through this chapter is the word 'obey'. **God wants people who trust Him fully and thus obey Him fully**. Verse 22 is clearly the key summary of the chapter, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Notice the reason for Saul's disobedience in verse 24, it was because he feared the people that he listened to them rather than to Yahweh! Thus Saul is rejected from being king and from here on out, he changes from being a good king to a bad king. Also note God's kingship emphasized by 15:29 that His plans **always** are brought to fruition! He never changes His mind, He is not like us! Notice as well that although Saul admits he has sinned, what he is ultimately most concerned about is his own glory/reputation (15:30)! This shows that really, he wasn't concerned with what God was and that his repentance isn't really genuine.*

19. Application: What do we learn about trusting God from this section of 1st Samuel? How do our concepts of power, greatness, and lowliness fit into our understanding of trust?
20. Application: What do we learn about justice and leadership from this section of 1st Samuel? How do our concepts of power, greatness, and lowliness fit into our understanding of justice?

## 6. The Rise of David: 1 Samuel 16-31

**Scripture:** 1st Samuel 16-31

**Theme:** God raises up and tears down in His time

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged to never exalt ourselves but to humbly seek God's glory alone
- To be encouraged to trust in Yahweh, waiting upon Him for vindication
- To be instilled with a fear of Yahweh that is reticent to question His sovereign choices
- To be humbled by the fact that we don't often understand God's purposes and timing

**Reading:**

- Read 1st Samuel 16-31 *twice*

**Questions:**

1. Comment on the fact that Samuel grieved over Saul (15:35), Yahweh was sorry He made Saul king (15:35), and Yahweh told Samuel to stop grieving over Saul since Yahweh had rejected him (16:1). Why do you think the author includes these statements and what do they teach us? What effect does having these statements here have on the flow of the narrative? (1 paragraph)

*A: The rejection of Saul as king was a major event within Israel's history. Even though it was sinful for the people to want to have a king like the other nations, none-the-less Yahweh chose Saul as king and allowed for this concession and even transformed it into something good. We see that Yahweh's rejection of Saul was not a mere desire to communicate to him that he needed to change. No, Yahweh had made a firm choice to reject him and he was done. Yahweh wasn't going to change His mind (cf. 15:29)! Thus Samuel's sorrow over Saul highlights the **sadness that sin** brings into situations. What could and should have been glorious had been spoiled by sin. Yahweh Himself says that He was sorry or regretted making Saul king. Rather than pointing to a lack of planning or sovereignty in Yahweh (cf. 15:29 which we just mentioned!!!), this further highlights the sadness of the situation. We shouldn't think that Yahweh doesn't care about sin, He cares about it a lot!!! But, as we come to chapter 16 we see that Yahweh tells Samuel to stop grieving for Saul. God's choice has been made and ultimately it is for the best. So we see that these two verses form an important hinge in the book with the transition from Saul to David. Yahweh raised up Saul, and now because of his pride and self-sufficiency, Yahweh is tearing him down and raising David up.*

2. What key event then happens in 1st Samuel 16? Why do you think verses 1-13 play out like they do and what does this emphasize (especially in contrast to Saul)? What is it particularly mentioned about David as the reason God selected him? What happens in 16:14-23 and why is this key to understanding the rest of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh tells Samuel to go and anoint David the new king of Israel. God's reason for doing so is that He has rejected Saul (as seen in chapter 15). Especially emphasized in the selection process of David is how he is the youngest, smallest, and least likely candidate! Yet David is selected because he is a man after God's heart (16:7). Then the **Spirit** comes upon David from that day forward. We also see immediately afterwards that God's Spirit leaves Saul and at that point an **evil spirit** begins to pester Saul. From here on out in the book, Saul is a bad king. Once Yahweh had rejected him, he would have been better off just handing the kingdom over to David!*

3. Thought question: 1 Sam 16:14 says “an evil spirit from Yahweh” which “terrorized Saul.” Does God cause evil? Talk as well about the interaction between this evil spirit and Saul's own spirit (1 paragraph)

*A: The spirit of Yahweh departs from Saul and in His absence Yahweh **sent** the evil spirit. This certainly shows that God was not for Saul any longer! Since God is not responsible for evil, we must assume Saul had every opportunity to act against the desires of the evil spirit. Perhaps the spirit would have abated if Saul had graciously given up the throne? It is also interesting to note the correspondence and interaction between Saul's own spirit and this evil spirit. Saul often appeared to have a **spirit of anger, jealousy, etc.**, which the text seems to say was affected by this evil spirit and thus the spiritual warfare that was going on. Notice how when David would play the harp, the evil spirit would go away. There is definitely an interaction going on here between the **physical** (music) and the **spiritual** (an evil spirit and Saul's spirit). We should simply confess that we do not understand the spiritual realm very well and acknowledge that it is **real** and that what Scripture says about it is true. We should be aware of the spiritual battle going on all around us all the time. “It seems... that one aspect of what is going on in Saul's mind as the ‘evil spirit’ afflicts him is suppressed guilt at continuing as king even though Yahweh's prophecy has rejected him... and later, intense jealousy of David's successes against the Philistines” (EOT, 116). Saul's **willful rejection** of Yahweh opens the door for the evil spirit's torment of him and for his guilt and jealousy to drive his own spirit into darkness. It's hard to overstate the damage to one's heart of **living with a guilty conscience**. As we will see in the rest of the story, this will destroy Saul.*

4. What famous event then happens in chapter 17? What do you think the text is emphasizing in this chapter and why (be sure to include key verses, phrases, and words)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 17 is the story of David and Goliath! Everything in this chapter highlights the great **faith** of David because of the strength and faithfulness of Yahweh! The battle is Yahweh's! Notice how much description is given of Goliath! He was indeed a giant! This all goes to show the greatness of God. The key verses of course are 17:45-47. **Yahweh's reputation** were on the line, that's what motivated David to act in faith and how he knew God would show up! God cares about **His glory!!!***

5. Thought question: How do you explain the seemingly “double introduction” of David in 1st Samuel 16:14-23 and 17:31-40, 55-58? Why is it that Saul doesn't know who David is in chapter 17, even though he's been playing music for Saul in chapter 16?

*A: One should quickly observe that, in 1 Sam 17, Saul is asking about David's father (“Whose son is this youth” 17:55; cf. also vss. 56, 58). In 16:18-22, Saul most likely wanted to know a few scant facts about David. In 17:55-58, Saul is concerned with a full family background check—David is about to become his son-in-law, and therefore his family is going to be allied by marriage with the royal family. “And we as readers must at this point be made aware that David is of the house of Jesse, for it is the house of Jesse that has at this moment eclipsed the house of Saul in military prowess, and is destined eventually to supplant it as the reigning house” (Gooding, Story of David and Goliath, 80).*

6. What does 1st Samuel 18-20 say about David and Jonathan's relationship? Why do you think the author includes this part of the story? How does this fit into the larger purpose of the book? What do we learn from Jonathan that is exemplary for our lives as well (think about this!)? Also, what does each of their relationships with Saul look like in this section? Also, what do you think the point of Saul prophesying is? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Jonathan **loved** David, and this love was based upon David's love for God (notice how Jonathan began loving David 18:1 **because of** the David and Goliath incident). See how Jonathan gives David his robe, armor, sword and bow, this is a virtual abdication by the crown prince (18:3)! The word 'love' is used throughout the text to describe their relationship. Moreover, the word 'covenant' occurs multiple times to describe their relationship. Obviously, love and covenant go together in faithful relationship in the OT (see the following verses about these concepts: 1Sa 18:1, 3; 19:1, 4; 20:14-17; 20:23, 41-42). It seems the author is purposefully trying to show us that those who are in proper covenant relationship with Yahweh will also be in proper and loving covenant relationships with one another as well!!! We should love those who cause us to love Yahweh more! Notice the contrast between Jonathan and Saul. Jonathan recognized and submitted himself to Yahweh's plan. Think about this for a moment, Jonathan should have been David's rival! He would have been the **heir to the throne**. Yet he **loved Yahweh more** than himself. He cared more about Yahweh's glory than his own, and thus he loved him who loved Yahweh, even to his own detriment!

Thus Jonathan becomes a literary **foil** to compare with Saul. This is how Saul **should have responded** to David, the one whom God had chosen. Saul continues to be **jealous** of David (18:8-9), and even **afraid** of him (18:12, 15, 29) as God is clearly **blessing everything** David does (18:14, 28; 19:8). Saul is constantly conspiring against and trying to kill David. Yet everyone besides Saul loves David (18:3, 16, 20, 22?, 28)! "Saul, the master politician and manipulator, falls into his the traps he lays for David; David, the humble innocent, by living out his faithfulness ends up winning the power game without ever knowing he was playing. Again, the Lord raises the humble (1 Sam 22:28)." Saul has obviously gone **off the deep end** when he tries to kill Jonathan (20:33). Note as well that Saul's messengers and even Saul himself cannot do his own will in the presence of the **prophetic word**, which stands above all (19:20-24). Thus we are reminded that ultimately, it is Yahweh who is delivering David, He is finally sovereign!

7. What is the point of the story about the priests at Nob in chapters 21-22? How are David and Saul each portrayed in this story? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how Saul is so concerned about self, that he has the priests at Nob killed, even when no Israelite would do it (22:17). Finally, he is able to get Doeg, the Edomite to do it, killing women, children, infants and all (22:18-19)! Note that Saul kills the priests even when they weren't trying to help David to hurt Saul, they were thinking they were helping Saul in the process! This is a great **injustice**. But Saul only cares about himself and his jealous grab for power. Yet notice David's response, he takes **responsibility** for the act and is sorrowful about it, even though obviously he wasn't for it nor involved in it (22:22). Note as well the reoccurring theme of David's lowliness, it is all the **outcasts** who are his friends (22:2).

8. What do you think is the point of chapter 23, and especially of David's rescuing Keilah? (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice how David, the **fugitive**, **rescues** an Israelite town from the Philistines (23:3)! This is what Saul should have been doing instead of chasing David around!!! David is **humbly inquiring** of Yahweh and living in humble trust of Him. And yet, even after he does so he has to flee from Keilah because they would hand him over to Saul, right after being rescued (23:12)! Note that we see Jonathan's ongoing care for David once again as well (23:16-18).

9. What is the point of chapter 24? What does the author emphasize in this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: The point of this story is obviously the **righteousness** of David, who doesn't kill the man who is pursuing him to kill him, even when he had the opportunity! It would have been so easy to rationalize this, he was

after all the one Yahweh had anointed to be king in place of Saul. Yet David is **patient** in trusting Yahweh, and in **waiting** for His time and His way. Note especially 24:6, which shows the tenderness of David's conscience that even cutting the corner of Saul's robe bothers him. The key phrase in this chapter occurs twice in 24:7- Saul is Yahweh's anointed. Notice how in **24:12**, David **will not vindicate himself**, but calls upon Yahweh to vindicate him! From Saul's own mouth comes a major point of this chapter, "You are more righteous than I" (24:17). David's righteousness consists in his humble trust in Yahweh, not willing to live for himself, but to wait for Yahweh to act on his behalf!

10. What do you think is the point of the story of Nabal and Abigail in chapter 25? What key words are used in this section? (1 paragraph)

A: Obviously, we see **wisdom** in action when we see Abigail (25:3)! And we see great **foolishness** in Nabal, whose name means 'fool' (25:3, 25). Notice what we see about David as well from this section. For one, even as an outcast he was righteous, and didn't steal from Nabal's men (25:15-16). Notice Abigail's humility, which took full responsibility for the sin (25:24, 28). And so, by her wisdom, she kept David from sin (25:28, 31). Thus **Yahweh kept** David from avenging himself (25:33). Thus we see Yahweh's graciousness is keeping David from acting out of self in this chapter (25:32-33)! And then in the end of the story, we see that Yahweh **vindicated** David in killing Nabal for him (25:38-44). It's always best to trust Yahweh and not take self vindication into our own hands!

11. What do we see emphasized again in chapter 26? Comment on how 26:23 is key to this chapter, and how the truth in this verse helped David to live righteously here. (1 paragraph)

A: Once again David has an opportunity to kill Saul and he doesn't do it! The key phrase, Yahweh's anointed is emphasized again in this chapter. David recognizes that Yahweh has made Saul king, and thus it is our job to trust Yahweh's choice. Notice again how David is trusting in Yahweh for vindication. The key verse in this chapter is 26:23, "**Yahweh will repay each man for his righteousness and faithfulness...**" If we truly believe this, we don't have to take things into our own hands, but we can **wait** for Yahweh to repay! We never need to vindicate ourselves, for in the end, God will uphold justice and vindicate the righteous!

12. What do you think is the overall point of chapter 27 is? Hint: Why do you think the author points out how long David was there (27:7)? (1 sentence)

A: Here, David is living with the Philistines! He has been run out of the country so to speak, and is a fugitive. Over and over he has been gracious to Saul, and yet Saul won't relent. So David continues to **wait**, this time for a year and four months in Philistine territory...

13. What is the main point of chapter 28 and where is this emphasized in the chapter? (1 sentence)

A: Yahweh had completely **abandoned** Saul (28:16-17)!

14. What potential problem is going to arise in chapter 29 and how it is resolved? (1 sentence)

A: David is almost put in the position of fighting against Israel because he has been deceiving the Philistines, but **God graciously works** out the circumstances so that he doesn't have to (who knows what would have happened then!!)

15. Contrast David's dealings with the Amalekites in chapter 30 with Saul's in chapter 15. Why do you think the author weaves this chapter in the middle of the Philistine battle with Saul? (1 paragraph)

*A: By putting the story of David's fight with the Amalekites right in the middle of Saul's battle with the Philistines, it certainly invites **comparison** between the two men. After being reminded of Saul's failure to obey the Lord in his dealings with the Amalekites, David's hot pursuit of them and **faithfulness in difficult circumstances** is no coincidence. Note some differences: 1) When David's men grumble against him, he does not rush a sacrifice but strengthens himself in the Lord his God (30:6). 2) David inquires of the Lord (30:7-8). 3) David is thorough in the battle. 4) After the battle, David argues that, since the battle was the Lord's (30:23), then the spoil belong to both combatants and non-combatants. We continue to see David faithful in the little and in the big things of his life!*

16. What does ending the tragic story of Saul with Jabesh-gilead remind us of? What effect does this have on the reader? (1 sentence)

*A: It reminds us of the beginning of Saul's life when he was a good king (this is the first city Saul bravely saved!) and thus points out the **tragic end** for someone who didn't trust Yahweh in everything and thus whom Yahweh had left... We **need** the presence of Yahweh!!!*

17. What do you think the overall point of chapters 16-31 is? What happened in chapter 16 and what happened in light of this in the remaining chapters of the book (think about this!)? Comment as well on the theme of vindication in David's life and what we learn from him. (1 paragraph)

*A: David was anointed king in chapter 16, and has been **waiting this entire time** to be made king! Notice his amazing trust in Yahweh. He had multiple opportunities to kill the man who was trying to kill him. He clearly was waiting upon Yahweh to exalt him, and **did not seek to exalt himself**. This of course is the **main theme** of the book! Ultimately, **his humble trust in Yahweh was vindicated**. God is the one who exalts the lowly!*

18. Application: What do we learn about trusting and waiting from this passage of Scripture? What do we learn about how to handle hardships, trials, and otherwise being a 'sojourner'? What do we learn about vindication?

## 7. The Reign of David: 2 Samuel 1-10

**Scripture:** 2nd Samuel 1-10

**Theme:** God honors the humble who trust in Him by always out-giving those who serve Him

**Objectives:**

- To see the great importance of not seeking self, but trusting in God to vindicate us
- To be encouraged to give everything to God, because we can't outgive Him
- To be reminded of His omnipotent power to enact His plans
- To be encouraged to wait, knowing that God's plans and timing are always best for us

**Reading:**

- Read 2nd Samuel 1-10 *twice*

**Questions:**

1. When 2nd Samuel begins “Now after the death of Saul...” what other book introductions are we reminded of? What do you think is the point of starting in this way? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Joshua and Judges begin in exactly the same way (now after the death of Moses... and Joshua...). This introduction establishes continuity with the past and shows that God is not done with His nation after the death of a prominent leader. This is a new phase in God's plan.*

2. Comment on how David responds to the Amalekite in chapter 1. Why do you think the narrator includes this story and what is the point of it? How is David portrayed? (1 paragraph)

*A: This story shows very clearly (to everyone!) that **David is innocent** of Saul's death! He kills the one who claims to have killed Saul! Notice as well the repetition of the phrase, “Yahweh's anointed” which highlights the significance of this concept. It was a big deal to be Yahweh's chosen king over His chosen nation! Furthermore, notice how different David is than Saul. Saul prefers Doeg, who will go above and beyond to do things in Saul's interest (even when they are clearly wrong!). While David, kills the Amalekite who makes up a story (notice that Saul committed suicide according to the narrator in 1 Samuel 31:5) he thinks is in David's interest! David is definitely portrayed as a **man of justice!***

3. What theme or concept is emphasized in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (note what word is repeated in this lament)? Why is this significant and how does it tie into the purpose of the book? What is significant in the fact that David mourns at all? (1 paragraph)

*A: The word 'mighty' is repeated five times in this short lament! The Hebrew word means one who is strong, a warrior. The main refrain then is that the mighty have fallen. This fits into the main theme of the book, that Yahweh is the one who exalts the humble and brings down the proud. We will continue to see this theme throughout the book! Think about how significant it is that **David mourns the death of his arch-enemy** Saul, the one who has been trying to kill him for years, who has been **opposing God's plan to make David king!** This is one of the most amazing displays of **humility**, and one of the ways that David is truly shown to be a man after God's own heart!*

4. Give a brief description of the following characters: Joab, Abner, Ishbosheth, Abishai, Rechab & Baanah, Ahinoam, Asahel, Amnon, and Absalom. Please include family connections and mode of death if applicable. (1-2 sentences each)

A:

*Joab: The brother to Abishai and Asahel who was David's chief commander. He murdered Abner for killing his brother Asahel.*

*Abner: Saul's chief commander who killed Asahel after warning him. He turned Saul's kingdom over to David after Ishbosheth accused him falsely of taking Saul's concubine, and after doing so was killed by Joab and Abishai.*

*Ishbosheth: Saul's son who was made king, then murdered by Rechab and Baanah (2:8-10; 4:1ff).*

*Abishai: Joab's brother, who was somehow involved with Abner's death (3:30) and was one of David's chief commanders.*

*Rechab and Baanah: Two Canaanite mercenaries (sons of Rimmon the Beerothite) who killed Ish-bosheth, told David expecting reward, and were killed by David (4:5ff).*

*Ahinoam: Saul's wife (1 Sam 14:50), who became David's wife (1 Sam 25:43); and bore David's son Amnon (3:2).*

*Asahel: Brother of Joab and Abishai who was killed by Abner when chasing him (2:19ff), known for his speed.*

*Amnon: The firstborn son of David, from Ahinoam (3:2) who tricks and rapes Tamar, Absalom's sister who is then later killed by Absalom.*

*Absalom: The second son of David, from Maacah (3:3) who is banished from David after killing Amnon, is later returned but not allowed to see the king for a long time. He later turns the heart of the people and successfully takes the throne, but is killed in battle when he takes Hushai's advice (a spy for David) over Ahithophel's (who defected to Absalom).*

5. What happens in 2 Samuel 2-4? Summarize the narrator's view of the violence that happens here? What do you think is/are the point(s) of this section (ie. why is each part of the story included, what does it show?)? Specifically, what do you think is the point of including the few verses about Jabesh-gilead? Why include the story about Asahel's death? Etc. (2 paragraphs)

*A: After the events surrounding Saul's death, David is made king over Judah, and Abner makes Ishbosheth king over all Israel. But before the story of war breaking out between them, there is a short snippet about the men of Jabesh-gilead. The key word repeated there is the word **hesed** (2:5-6). These few verses highlight once again David's view of faithfulness to God. David blesses them for their loyalty to Saul (his enemy!), and he promise to bless them for it. Thus we see **David is not vindictive and self-motivated, but loyal to God and His justice and truth above all!***

*Then we return to the battle and see Joab the commander of David's army, and Abner the commander of Ishbosheth's begin a long battle that continued for years. In this story we see how David comes to be king over all Israel, but it wasn't through his own violence and treachery, but that of others. He was completely*



**innocent** of Ishbosheth's death. He even once again killed the men who murdered Ishbosheth (whom he calls a righteous man!), showing his **care for justice and righteousness above his own personal interests**. Moreover, he was also innocent of Abner's death by the hand of Joab his commander, and even invokes a curse on his own commander because of the vengeance he took on Abner (3:29)! Once again, he mourns the death of Abner, showing that he was not responsible. Indeed, Abner had turned the kingdom over to David through no trickery of David, but from the foolishness of Ishbosheth in accusing his commander wrongly! Thus this section serves to highlight David's **patient trust** in Yahweh, **zeal for righteousness and justice**, and yet Yahweh's hand in making him king through all these events (through no politicking of his own!)

6. Why are the events of 2 Samuel 5 described quickly, while those of chapters 6-7 described in greater detail (ie. why does the narrative slow down here)? (1 sentence)

A: The reason that chapter 5 is relatively shorter than 6-7 are because the political aspects of David becoming king are not nearly as important as the **theological** aspects of David's kingship!

7. What happens in chapter 5? What is emphasized in this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: Finally, after years and years of waiting, David is made king over all Israel! He then captures Jerusalem and makes it the new capital of Israel (Hebron was far too South to administer the whole kingdom...). We see David grow and grow (5:10), exemplified by even **foreign nations** (Hiram) building a palace for David. Very significantly, notice David's realization that Yahweh had made him king for the sake of His people (5:12). This is a very significant theological concept. The purpose of the king is not to live for himself, but to be the man to **stand for justice and righteousness and the care of the people**. This is a sober reality, not to be taken lightly! David continues to have success (more wives and kids and triumph over enemies). And notice how in his triumph over his enemies, he obeyed the Lord precisely (5:25).

8. Why was bringing the ark to Jerusalem so significant? What theme is prevalent in this entire chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: The ark clearly communicates God's **presence** with His people! He is with them! He is for them! The leadership is walking in relationship with Yahweh and submitting to Him. David realizes that he needs God's presence! This is Yahweh's kingdom after all, and **David is Yahweh's king!** Notice as well the prevalent theme of **rejoicing!** Is is joyful to be Yahweh's people, in right relationship with Him!

9. What is the theological point of the "Uzzah incident" (2 Samuel 6:6-11)? (2-3 sentences)

A: This story seems to bring out two themes. Primary is the theme of God's **awesomeness**. As much as Yahweh is a kind and merciful God, that bringing the ark to Jerusalem was a great occasion for **celebration**, He is still holy and awesome! The key word that seems to hit on this theme is the word '**fear**' which is David's response. (Unfortunately, the other main word that would shed much light on the purpose of this section is a Hebrew word that is only used here in the Old Testament, and so we don't really know what it means. The NASB translates it **irreverence**, and that may likely be the point: While Yahweh is good and it is good to rejoice before Him, we must always uphold His awesome holiness in the process!). Furthermore, we also see in this narrative God's **blessing** upon Obed-edom, which shows that indeed **Yahweh's presence is a blessing** and something we should rejoice in and long for!

10. What is the point of the Michal story in 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23 (remember who she is)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Michal and David represent two opposing views of the kingdom, Michal emphasizes **royal dignity**, while David emphasizes **humility** before Yahweh. Notice that Michal is Saul's daughter. This is the very thing Saul wouldn't do, to **be contemptible, abased, open to humiliation and embarrassment** (cf. 6:22). Thus we see again how very important humility is in this book.*

11. Comment on the word play between David wanting to build Yahweh a house, and Yahweh responding with His promise to build David's house. What does this interplay (of the word 'house', find how many different ways it is translated in the chapter!) show us (especially in 2nd Samuel 7:1-8, and 11, 13)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh is **always** the benefactor! As much as David wanted to give to God, God always **gives us more than we give Him!** He is the one who is gracious and giving, not us! We can never out-give God! Dynasty!*

12. List 5 or more of the significant features of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7 (What does God promise)? What stands out as significant? (1 paragraph)

*A: God **promises** to: 1) Make a great name for David. 2) Appoint a place for Israel. 3) Give rest from all their enemies. 3) Raise up offspring and establish his kingdom. 4) Have him build the temple. 5) Cause His throne to be established **forever**. 6) Despite iniquity, to cause steadfast love to not depart from him. Of great significance is the eternal nature of the promise. The last sentence of the promise bears enormous freight, “Your house and your kingdom will endure before Me forever; your throne will be established forever.” In other words, God promised David a **permanent** dynasty. **Peace** will also characterize this kingdom!*

13. What is meant by God's promise that David's descendants will form a dynasty which will last forever? How do you reconcile the apparently unconditional promise with more conditional aspects of it (for example in 1 Kings 9:4-5)? (1 paragraph)

*A: As with God's other unconditional covenant (the Abrahamic), the covenant is not in question of being kept! God always keeps His promises! However, the timing and particular individuals who will get to participate in the blessing are in question. We see as the rest of Samuel-Kings unfolds, that many of David's descendants were wicked, and eventually the temple and the kingdom destroyed. Yet, there was always a successor to the throne, and thus **always hope that God would keep His unconditional promise**. Indeed, there would certainly come a descendant of David in which God's promises here are fully realized! We already know that Jesus is the Davidic king (descended straight from David!), and that He is coming again to reign forever, just as God promised here!*

14. How does David respond to God's promises? What does David acknowledge about God's reasons for making this covenant? (1 paragraph)

*A: David's first and immediate response is one of humility ('who am I', verse 18). David notes that Yahweh acted **for the sake of His Word** (to show Himself faithful!) and according to His own heart (it is His sovereign grace)! The purpose of God making this impossible promise, is so that Yahweh can **show by His omnipotent power how great He is**, and that His **name may be magnified forever** (7:26)! Thus God's blessing (key theme of the Abrahamic covenant! God is blessing the world!) would be on the house of David forever to magnify His faithfulness and His name, to His glory!*

15. Comment on what then happens in chapters 8-10? What key features stick out of this section? What is the author intending for us to think? In particular, why do you think the author includes the story about Mephibosheth? What connects this chapter (9) with the following one (10)? (1 paragraph)

*A: We see David had great military victories, and **Yahweh helped him wherever he went** (2x: 8:6, 14)! In his victories, David dedicated all the spoils to Yahweh as was right (8:4, 8, 10-12). We also see that he reigned as a **just and righteous king (8:15)**! The story about Mephibosheth highlights David's **faithfulness (9:1, 3, 7: hesed)** to his word, and especially to the promise and covenant he made with Jonathan. We once again see that he is not vindictive, nor concerned with his own power. Notice that as we turn to chapter 10, we see David once again wanting to **show hesed, this time to a foreign king (10:2, 2x)**. Notice how Yahweh honors faithfulness, and David's commanders trusted greatly in Yahweh ('Be strong and courageous, and let Yahweh do what is right!' in 10:12)!*

16. Application: What do we learn about not seeking self, but trusting in God for everything from this section?

## 8. The Downfall and Demise of David: 2 Samuel 11-24

**Scripture:** 2nd Samuel 11-24

**Theme:** The lure of sin has tragic, messy, and lasting consequences yet God is still gracious

**Objectives:**

- To be sobered by the tragic, messy, and lasting effects of sin
- To be warned against the temptation of sin
- To be encouraged by the pervasive grace of God and be reminded to show mercy

**Reading:**

- Read 2nd Samuel 11-24 twice

**Questions:**

1. How does chapter 11 begin? What does this key us in to? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Notice how the chapter begins with a statement that it was normal for kings to go to war in the Spring, and indeed Israel went to war, but that David stayed behind. He didn't have a good reason for doing so, he should have been out **leading the battle as the king!** Notice as well that David arose from his **bed/couch** in the evening to go onto the roof! Instead of fighting, he's kickin' it on the couch! Being in a place of obedience is always the safest place to be! **God's battlefield is always the safest place for God's children!** Contrast how safe David was in the battle with Goliath vs the dangerous consequences of him being safe!*

2. What do we learn about Uriah through this account in chapter 11? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Uriah is portrayed as extremely **righteous**. He chose to **identify** with the people (11:9-11) rather than go home to be with his wife (who was obviously very beautiful)! Even after David gets him **drunk**, he doesn't go home to sleep with his wife!*

3. List David's different sins in chapter 11? Contrast verses 25 and 27. (2-3 sentences)

*A: David lusted/coveted, committed adultery, lied, manipulated (getting Uriah drunk), murdered, and possibly the worst: **used his position of power to hurt the weak!** The last thing that David says is that the thing shouldn't be **evil** in Joab's eyes, while the thing is very evil in God's eyes! Sin always **deceives** us, and it always corrupts our perspective on reality!*

4. Thought question: Why do you think God sends Nathan to tell David a parable, rather than to confront him directly? What do we learn from this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is amazing how **stories** draw us in and get us to make **value judgments** without us even realizing it! It keeps our defenses down until at the end of the story, David realizes that this is about him! We all can relate to stories, and I think that's one of the reasons the Bible is so full of them. But stories always have a point!*

5. What are the most significant features of Nathan's story and how does this fit into the message of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: More significant than the theft, is the **power difference** between the two parties. As we've been seeing all along in this book, God helps the lowly and opposes the proud. Being in a place of **power** is a place of great **responsibility**. We've seen one of the key things that makes David the king after God's heart is the fact that he didn't live for his own glory, but stood for righteousness and justice. And here he violated that... Note the key word here out of David's own mouth, he did not have '**compassion**' (12:6). It is very important for those in a place of power to have compassion, and a sense of justice and righteousness for the lowly!

6. What do we learn from God's message to David (12:7-12)? How does David respond (cf. also Psalm 51)? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice that God lists all the things that **Yahweh had done for him**, and thus primarily his **sin is one against the grace of God!** God had given him everything! Wouldn't he simply trust God? In fact, God would even have given him more (12:8)! We also learn that even though God will forgive David, there are still consequences for his sin. In this case there are big consequences. Yet despite the heinousness of his sin, **David humbles himself** and shows **godly sorrow** for his sin. He **repents**, even though he could have had Nathan killed as well. He understands that he has primarily offended God by what he has done (cf. Psalm 51)!

7. What do we learn from the rest of the chapter (verses 15-31)? What do we learn from David fasting and praying for the child while alive, and then worshiping when he dies? What is David's logic? Why do you think the author emphasizes that Yahweh loved Solomon, and what does this teach us? (1 paragraph)

A: We see right away the **tragic consequences** of David's sin: the child must die! But then, as the servants point out (12:21), David does something **unusual**. He **fasts and prays** and pleads for the child while the child is alive, but as soon as the child dies, **he worships**. There is much for us to learn from this. Yahweh is a gracious and compassionate God, and David knows this well (12:22). He often relents and shows mercy. Yet after the child dies, David sees that God's decision is firm, and worships God. This is such a clear evidence of **David's submission and trust in Yahweh**. Yahweh knows what is best, and while He is gracious and allows us to plead with Him, ultimately we must submit to Him, for He alone is the King! **God doesn't always do what we want**. Notice also the emphasis that Yahweh loved Solomon. This shows so clearly **Yahweh's compassion**. Here, in the midst of so much sin and consequences for sin, Yahweh cares for David and Bathsheba and gives them a child and loves him! **What a tender and compassionate God!**

8. How are chapters 13-21 connected with what precedes? What do we learn from this connection? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how 12:10-11 explicitly say what the consequences for David's sin is going to be, and that is what we see play out in these chapters! Just when everything seemed good, God was blessing on every side and it looked like David could do no wrong, his sin plunged him into trouble! Yet we still see David as a man after God's heart and a just king, but not the perfect king that was needed! This should cause us to think long and hard before we sin against Yahweh!

9. What happens in chapter 13? What is the primary sin here? Why do you think Amnon is then so infuriated? (2-3 sentences)

A: **Just as** David lusted after Bathsheba, so Amnon lusts after his sister! The main issue here is not so much the incest, as the rape and the ensuing **disgrace** (13:12-13). Notice as well all the **scheming** involved, much in

the same way that David schemed against Uriah! Amnon, seemingly then driven by shame, sends her away in shame! Notice as well that 13:14 states that he was **stronger** and so **overpowered** her in this, and thus used his position of power to hurt the weak.

10. How does David respond to Amnon's crime? What do you think about this? (2-3 sentences)

A: When David hears of what happened, he is angry, and so definitely not complicit in what happened. And **yet he did absolutely nothing.** There seems to be some level of **favoritism** (ie. **not justice!**) because Amnon is his oldest son. The consequences for this are tragic, as we will see... We are quite possibly seeing the **effects of David's sin** on the way he is treating the situation. He goes easy on his son who does the same thing as he did...

11. What literary similarities do we see between verses 13:1-22 and 13:23-39 and what do these point out? (1 paragraph)

A: The literary similarities between these two stories seem to communicate a **cause and effect** between Amnon's crime and his death. Both of these are in effect the result of David's sin as we saw, and we continue to see a **tragic 'chain reaction'** through this section.

vv. 1-22	vv. 23-39
1. Amnon invites Tamar to have sex with him (v.11), but she refuses (v. 12)	Absalom invites David to join him in Baal-hazor or sheepshearing (v.24), but David refuses
2. Tamar responds with a double refusal: 'No, my brother, do not force me' (v. 12)	David responds with a double refusal: 'No, my son, let us not all go' (v.25)
3. Jonadab counsels Amnon (v.5), and Amnon accepts his counsel (v.6)	Jonadab counsels David (vv. 32-33), and his knowledge turns out to be accurate (v.35)
4. The way to set up Tamar focuses on food and eating (vv. 5-10)	The way to set up Amnon is at a feast (vv. 27-28)
5. Absalom says to Tamar after she had been raped, 'Do not take this to heart' (v.20)	Jonadab, after informing David of Amnon's death, says to David, 'Do not let my lord the king take it to heart' (v.33)
6. In grief Tamar tears her clothes (v.19)	In grief David tears his clothes (v.31)
7. Tamar remains (v.20)	Absalom flees (vv.34, 37, 38)
	Literary Comparisons (Hamilton, 337)

12. Note that modern translations of 13:39 and 14:1 are most likely wrong and should be translated along the lines of, "For the spirit of King David had stopped going out to Absalom because he was feeling sorry about Amnon, since he was dead. Now Joab the son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart was against Absalom." What happens in chapter 14? Comment on what you think of David's actions? What in the text helps us to decipher what God's opinion on the matter is? What's the point? (1 paragraph)

A: David's punishment of Absalom is portrayed as **excessive** (once again, **not just**, but based upon emotion). When David did nothing to Amnon for rape, he doesn't see Absalom for three years because he is pitying himself and the death of Amnon. And even when Absalom comes to Jerusalem, he doesn't see the king's face for two more years! until he has to **light Joab's field on fire, just to talk to him!** The speech of the lady who tells David another parable (similar to Nathan in that regard... a rebuke "the king is as one who is guilty in

that the king does not bring back the banished one.”) shows God's opinion when she says that “God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from Him (14:14)” Thus the emphasis is on **God's grace**, whereas David appears to be **self-pitying** and **retributive**. God forgave David for his sin, but he appeared to be holding this against Absalom (14:32). Thus we see the need for those who have experienced God's grace to be ready and willing to show it!

13. What then happens in chapter 15 and how does this connect with what precedes? Note who goes with David? What key words are in this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: In chapter 15 Absalom enacts his plan to seize the throne, something he was **plotting** for a long time. This follows on the heels of David's treatment of him and is indeed meant to be seen as a **consequence** (or at least result) of it. Absalom **steals** (the key word in 15:6 showing his unfaithfulness, they were not his people!) the heart of the nation, claiming that he would care for them more than David does (and maybe he would if we're just looking at this section!) and provide **justice** (key word, 15:4)! It's unclear from the Hebrew text how long Absalom waited, but it appears to have been many years (15:7) of scheming! Then he deceives his father and seizes power. Note how different Absalom was from David in not being willing to touch the Lord's anointed! Note as well that it is all the **foreigners** who go with David: Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites who came with him from Gath!!! In fact, Ittai the Gittite showed him amazing faithfulness (15:20-21)! We also see the Levites and Hushai are for him. Note as well **David's submission** to Yahweh through the ordeal (15:25-26). Yet David is also shown to be a man of wisdom in making provision for himself by leaving Hushai, Zadok and his sons there...

14. What do we learn from the Ziba and Shimei episodes (16:1-13)? (1 sentence)

A: Take note of David's **humility**! He is the Lord's anointed, and yet he accepts cursing from Shimei when he could have killed him, saying that maybe it was from Yahweh! We also see how people will shift allegiances when they are longing for power. Both Ziba and Shimei are associated with Saul, and were happy when David was out of power.

15. As Absalom arrives in Jerusalem 16:15-23, who greets him and what does this set us up for in 17:1-14 and then also in 17:15-29? (1 paragraph)

A: Hushai, David's (older?) friend greets Absalom as he enters Jerusalem. Ahithophel always gives golden advice, and so Hushai is there to counter that advice. So Ahithophel counsels Absalom to sleep with David's concubines publicly (as fulfillment of 12:11), to make David odious in the eyes of Israel. But this then sets us up for a battle between Ahithophel and Hushai's counsel. Ahithophel suggests that Absalom immediately go for the jugular, while Hushai advises him to take his time. Hushai's plan allows time for Hushai to get a message to David (through an unnamed **housewife** who saves his messengers!) so David can prepare for battle. In the end we see that Yahweh uses several different means to spare David! For ultimately, this was **Yahweh's will** (17:14)! You can politic, you can try manipulate, you can plan, you can use intrigue, but ultimately God is the one who chooses the results!

16. What then happens in chapter 18? What is significant about the way Absalom dies? (2-3 sentences)

A: There is civil war and Absalom is killed by Joab, against the explicit instructions of David. Who was right here? David appears to be portrayed again as being driven by emotion still rather than caring about what is best for the nation. Absalom committed high treason! But was what Joab did right in going against the king?

Notice that **Absalom's long beautiful hair** is the means of his demise! His pride/glory leads to his death, so appropriate for this book!

17. What do you think the point is of David's intense mourning over Absalom? What is the author trying to communicate? (2-3 sentences)

A: It is very interesting to contrast the way David mourns over Absalom and the way he mourns over the child who died of Bathsheba. Possibly what we are seeing here is David's intense mourning is due to the fact that Absalom wasn't in right relationship with Yahweh, and David knew it! In any case we see that Joab's words in verses 19:5-7 emphasize how **irrational** David's mourning was. David was loving those who hated him and hating those who loved him. If David wouldn't control himself, he would **lose the entire kingdom!** **Self-focus** always distracts us from truly caring about the good of others. There is a huge need for leaders to be **strong** to stand up for what is right, **no matter what the cost personally**. We see the effects here of sin on David's own self-consciousness as well. Sin affects us! We also see the **boldness** and **courage** once again of **Joab**, who tells the king what he needs to hear, even when it isn't easy!

18. When David returns to Jerusalem and is made king over Israel again, what does he do? (2-3 sentences)

A: David makes Amasa (whom Absalom had made commander in place of Joab) commander above Joab (is this **fair** to Joab?!? Is David being vindictive?). He doesn't kill anyone (19:22) (even treasonous and cursing Shimei!), but returns and seems to try to treat people justly in the aftermath of the **mess** that has been created (which is probably the point!).

19. What then happens in 20:1-22? (2-3 sentences)

A: Then there is another revolt! One follows after the other, as consequence is piled upon consequence! Sin is always trying to deceive us and tell us that it will be so sweet to indulge and there will be no consequences. But sin always has devastating consequences! Sheba convinced the north not to follow David. So Amasa leads the battle against him, but Joab murders Amasa (he is **vindictive!**), and then surrounds the city to which Sheba has fled. A wise woman kills Sheba and delivers the city!

20. Compare the summary of David's latter years in 2 Samuel 20:23-25 with the summary of David's previous years in 2 Samuel 8:15-18. What is the difference in the accounts and why? (2-3 sentences)

A: The lists of officials bookend the story of David's kingdom (chs. 9-20). The statement that "David administered **justice and righteousness**" is of course missing from the second summary. The "external trappings of leadership are all in place, but national trust in that leadership has severely waned" (Hamilton, 359). Things have changed since chapter 8...

21. What is the point of chapter 21:1-14? (2-3 sentences)

A: The sins of Saul and David bookend the final chapters of the book. Years after Saul's death, Yahweh brings a **famine** (covenant curse) on the land and the cause is a sin of **Saul!** Sin indeed does have lasting consequences! **All sin needs to be made right!** Once David made atonement and made everything right, God was moved by prayer for the land (21:14)!



22. What do we see in 21:15-22 and in 23:8-39? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see David's accomplishments against the Philistines and David's mighty men struck down giants! Notice how these bracket David's psalms which hit on the main theological themes of the book. These mighty men of course highlight God's great strength, and the need for courage and faith in Him!*

23. What is the emphasis of David's Psalm in chapter 22? (1 paragraph)

*A: The fact that **Yahweh saves** (22:3 [3x], 4, 28, 36, 42, 47 + many synonyms!) is emphasized greatly in this psalm! When David was in distress he called to Yahweh, and Yahweh rescued him! Notice that David's righteousness (22:21, 25) is the basis of God's vindication of him. Here, David's righteousness should not be seen as we often think of it in the NT (imputation), but his righteousness as we have seen is his humble living by faith in the care of **justice** for others and not himself. We see this major theme in 22:28 as well, that Yahweh **saves the afflicted!** But He abases the haughty! Thus God shows up to those who in humble dependence upon Him call out for help! Furthermore, he ends the psalm with an emphasis on the **Davidic covenant**, that Yahweh is faithful to His word to work through David's descendants to accomplish His plan!*

24. What then is the emphasis of his last words in 23:1-5? (2-3 sentences)

*A: David's last words emphasize the **blessedness of a righteous ruler, who rules by the fear of Yahweh (23:3)!** The fear of Yahweh is living in **humble dependence** upon Him and not on yourself. This indeed is the major theme of the book! There is such a need for a righteous ruler, who cares for justice and the weak! This is the kind of ruler that God wants and the people need!*

25. Identify the theological problem in 2 Samuel 24:1. How would you solve this problem (if it is meant to be solved)? What makes taking a census **so** wrong? Why go into detail in including the story about Jerusalem? What's the point of ending the book like this? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: Why would Yahweh incite David to sin?! This passage, like so many in the OT affirms the **complete and total sovereignty of Yahweh**. As we see by comparing with 1 Chronicles 21:1, we see that Satan was the intermediate means by which Yahweh incited David. But as with Job, we see that because Yahweh is completely sovereign and it was His plan that Israel should be judged, the biblical authors have no problem **attributing the act to Yahweh!***

*The reason that David took the census was to determine the number of fighting men (24:9). This census was to be able to know what fighting strength the nation had. What was so wrong about this (Joab knew immediately!) is that it showed a **lack of trust in Yahweh!** Yahweh was the one who fought their battles for them! Didn't David remember Goliath! Humble trust in Yahweh is better than a million Goliaths!*

*And as before, sin always has consequences. Yet this time, David chose to fall into the hands of Yahweh because He is **merciful**, and so the plague was chosen. And just as David knew, God indeed was merciful and stopped the plague as David made the sacrifice and prayed for the land (at the future temple mount no less, cf. 1 Kings 8:29)! So the last verse in the book ends on a note of God's great mercy! We also continue to see David's **humility** (I have sinned, verse 17; and I will not sacrifice what costs me nothing, verse 24). Thus the book ends with the theme of the book, Yahweh is merciful and will help those who humbly trust in and call out to Him for salvation!*

26. [Optional] Thought question: David is a very complex character in the Bible, but nowhere is this better demonstrated than in 2 Samuel 12-21. Describe in detail how David is portrayed here. Please include a description of his emotional, spiritual and physical state.
27. Application: What do we learn about dealing with peoples' sin from this section (ours and others)?

## 9. King Solomon: 1 Kings 1-11

**Scripture:** 1st Kings 1-11

**Theme:** God Exalts David's Son to Reign over the Greatest Kingdom on Earth

**Objectives:**

- To be amazed at the awesome blessing of the presence of God
- To be encouraged by the unflinching faithfulness of God
- To be challenged to use our blessings for justice and righteousness
- To be warned by the deceptive appeal of sin

**Reading:**

- Read 1st Kings 1-11 twice

**Questions:**

1. Who do you think the books of Kings were written to? What were the recipients like at that time and what do you think the point of the book was to them? (1 paragraph)

*A: Most likely, the books were written to the Israelites **during the exile**. Assuming the books of Kings were written together (or at least compiled and brought together for a single purpose), then we see that the last event in these books is Jehoiachin being brought into the king's presence in Babylon. We also see a huge emphasis on the **covenant** in these books. As their position in the Former Prophets keys us in to, they are calling the nation as a whole back to covenant faithfulness. The nation had rebelled and now was in exile as a result of their sin. Yet God wasn't done with the nation and so they are called back to faithfulness to Him!*

2. Comment on Yahweh's sovereignty as displayed in Kings. (1 paragraph)

*A: **Yahweh alone is the one true God** and Israel's fundamental mistake is their failure to recognize this fact. Religious unfaithfulness is the greatest failing of the kings. This is expressed in the regnal formula at the end of each reign. Whether or not they were a good king is determined **not** by their economic or political accomplishments, but by their faithfulness to Yahweh. This comes to clearest expression in the exile. Israel is exiled **not** because they were defeated by Assyria and Babylon, per se, but because their God was punishing them for unfaithfulness. This may seem like a basic point, but it simply shows that Kings is religious or theological history, not simply "scientific" or "factual" history.*

3. Comment on how Kings differs from other royal annals. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Kings is very different from other "royal annals" in that it highlights the **failure** of the kings, not their successes. This of course is related to the theological point of Kings, that **Yahweh is faithful** to keep His Word!*

4. Note where we see the continued emphasis on David in Kings.

*A: 1 Kings 15:3-4; 2 Kings 8:19; 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 19:32-34; 22:2. Many times kings are spared punishment or their punishment is reduced for the sake of David (1 Kings 11:34; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19). Hezekiah is delivered and Jerusalem is saved not because of Hezekiah's righteousness but because of David (2 Kings 19:34; 20:6).*

*Conditional Aspects. 1 Kings 2:2-4. 1 Kings 8:25. 1 Kings 9:4-5. **God is faithful to His covenant to David despite the people.***

5. How do you think the author intends to portray Solomon in the story of Adonijah (ch 1) and the other events in his coming to the throne (ch 2)? Think about how Solomon treats Adonijah, Joab, Abiathar and Shimei. What point do you think the author is making and how is he portraying these events? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Notice that the author explains that Adonijah didn't consult with certain of David's officials. This is very different from how David became king, who never did anything of **deceit** or **manipulation**, but **waited** until Yahweh made clear that he was the king. Thus the author seems to portray Adonijah's ascent as not good. Furthermore, Nathan the prophet (the one with direct access to God!) wasn't consulted and is against the plan, and moreover, we learn that David was against the plan when reminded of his oath. So David keeps his word (1:30) and plans for Solomon to become king.*

*Now while it is against our sensibilities that Solomon kills Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei, notice that there are details surrounding these executions. For Joab and Shimei, it is David that tells Solomon that they deserve to die (and indeed we see the reasons for this in the books of Samuel). Moreover, we see that Solomon gives Adonijah and Shimei a chance to prove themselves, while with Joab, he deserves to die as we've already seen (2:32; cf. 2Sa 3:29). Abiathar isn't even killed, even though he deserves to for his treason (2:26-27). So it appears that Solomon is being portrayed as wise, gracious and righteous in his dealings with these men.*

*Think for a moment of how other kings ascended to the throne. They quickly killed anyone who **might possibly** be a threat. And yet Solomon didn't kill anyone without (good) reason. We need to remember that Solomon is the king and is responsible for the entire country. Civil war and many deaths result from mismanaged and mangled leadership, and so it appears the author is showing Solomon's wisdom in his dealings. He is firm and yet reasonable, gracious and just. It is also a big deal for the author that David is in favor of what happens (1:48; 2:5-9) and indeed his command to kill Joab and Shimei is directly connected with his charge to Solomon to **be a man and act courageously**, following Yahweh (2:2-4). Thus everything appears to bear Yahweh's stamp of approval. A righteous leader has to stand up and make the hard choices to stand for the good of the people.*

6. 1 Kings 2:3-4 seems to indicate that the "Davidic covenant" is conditional, that David's sons must obey God to maintain the Davidic dynasty. But 2 Sam 7:12ff seems to indicate that God's promise to David is unconditional. Disobedience from the Davidic kings will be met with divine discipline (2 Sam 7:12-13), but not a cessation of God's promise to keep a Davidic king on the throne. So, is God's promise to David conditional (1 Kings 2:3-4) or unconditional (2 Sam 7:12ff)? And why the apparent tension? (1 paragraph)

*A: As we have seen elsewhere with the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant, we see the same tension here. God will certainly bring about His unconditional promise (Abrahamic covenant), but must use people who are in relationship with Him (Mosaic covenant). Indeed, the Davidic covenant is clearly given as unconditional, and this understanding of the covenant as **everlasting** and **unconditional** is repeated frequently in Scripture (especially in Psalms!). Thus, when we see 'conditional' aspects of the Davidic covenant, we are reminded that God will certainly keep His promise, but He will certainly fulfill it with a perfectly righteous king! **There will one day be a king who fulfills but the conditional and unconditional aspects of the covenant, who will walk before Yahweh with all their heart and with all their soul and thus reign over Yahweh's righteous kingdom forever!***

7. How does chapter 3 begin (1-4)? What do we see then in the rest of the chapter and what is emphasized? (1 paragraph)

A: We see that Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter. Solomon loved Yahweh, but kept the high places... There may also be a hint in that he was to build 1) his house, 2) God's house, 3) the wall around Jerusalem. The order should have been 2, 3, 1! We see good about Solomon, yet there are cracks which hint at his eventual downfall. As Yahweh meets Solomon, he acknowledges Yahweh's great hesed (3:6). He also responds in **humility** (3:7) and asks **for wisdom and discernment to judge righteously** (3:9). This was obviously good (3:10)! Note as well he didn't just ask for wisdom in general, but wisdom to judge righteously (3:11). This is confirmed in the episode of the **two women**. As we come to the end the episode is summarized as showing that Solomon had wisdom to administer justice (3:28). Thus we see the importance for the king to be **just**! Not living for himself but **caring about the lowly** and standing for them!

8. What is emphasized in chapters 4-7? Do you think that the author is trying to make an implicit point by comparing the amount of time spent in building the temple and palace of Solomon? If so, what is that point? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how **grandiose** everything is! There were numerous officials (4:1-19), numerous people (4:20), much land (5:1, 4), much food (5:2-3), many horsemen (5:6), much wisdom (5:9-14)! Yahweh has **blessed** beyond measure! Notice one of the major themes in this section is the inclusion of outsiders. Even Hiram blesses Yahweh (5:7)! But we also see that Solomon's house took 13 years to build, almost double of the temple! It was also bigger! So it does appear that there is at least a subtle point here that Solomon put more work into his house than God's! All the grandeur of Yahweh's blessing also appears to be the source of his fall! We won't see that until chapter 11, but there are hints of it here. Notice as well the Word of Yahweh inserted in **6:11-13**. It is a reminder of the conditionality of God's promise, and thus a subtle warning and hint that all is not perfect!

9. Chapter 8 obviously contains the bulk of the theological weight of this section. So, break up chapter 8 into its various sections (five). Then highlight the major theological truths in each section. (5 paragraphs)

A:

1-11: The ark is brought into the temple and Yahweh's glory filled the temple (8:10-11)! Obviously, the primary significance of the ark, and then also of the temple, is that of the **presence of God**. In a very real way, although not completely, Yahweh dwelt within the temple in Jerusalem! He identified thus with His people, and **His reputation was bound up with them!** The Davidic Covenant has further clarified and narrowed how God planned to bring about the Abrahamic Covenant, and thus **God's glory is now bound to the Davidic Dynasty and the Davidic Capital of Jerusalem!**

12-21: Solomon **blesses** the people. Solomon begins a lengthy series of speeches by blessing the people. When **Yahweh's presence is with His people, they are surely blessed!** Not only are the people blessed, but Yahweh is blessed (8:15)! He deserves all blessing for what He has done. And central to those blessings is Yahweh's election of David (8:16)! **God's election is the foundation of His grace from which all other blessings flow!**

22-53: Solomon's prayer. Note the chiastic structure of this chapter. This is at the heart and center of the chapter. The prayer begins with an emphasis on **Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and His hesed** (8:23)! He is the one who deserves the **glory**, because He keeps His promises to fulfill His good and gracious plan! He has

chosen to dwell with His people Israel because of His **grace**, even though the temple cannot even begin to contain Him (8:27)! Yet since He chose Israel and Jerusalem to be the place where His name dwells (8:29), it is His **covenant faithfulness** which is the basis for answered prayer (8:30)! Then in 8:31-53, Solomon begins a series of 'if' statements, asking Yahweh to be faithful to His promises in different situations. Note in this section especially, there is a huge emphasis on the **Torah**. Many of the covenant curses in the Torah are brought up and yet Solomon appeals to Yahweh that even when His people disobey, and are under covenant curse, **because of His faithfulness, when they return to Him that He hear and forgive them!** The section in 8:41-43 is especially noteworthy in its emphasis on the foreigner. The reason that Yahweh should hear the foreigner is so that all the peoples of the earth may know Yahweh's name and fear Him (8:41-43)! This prayer ends with the ultimate covenant curse, the **exile** (which of course was mentioned even in Deuteronomy!). Yet even then, may God hear their prayers to Him because they are His chosen people! Thus His covenant faithfulness and His election of His people are the basis for His ongoing answers to prayer!

54-61: Solomon's benediction. As before the prayer, Solomon blesses the people again. As before, Yahweh is to be blessed, this time because none of His promises have failed (8:56)! Thus he prays again that Yahweh be with His people, for His presence is the ultimate blessing. And he prays that their **hearts** may be inclined to Yahweh, because that is what is needed. And as always, the ultimate basis for this is the **glory** of Yahweh, that all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh is the only true God (8:60)!

62-66 Sacrifices and feast: After the prayer Solomon makes an absolutely massive sacrifice (22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep!) and they celebrated a huge feast to Yahweh! And all the people went home **rejoicing** in the goodness that Yahweh had shown to David! What a celebration of the goodness of God!

10. What do we then see in 9:1-9? How does this fit into where the narrator is moving us? (1 paragraph)

A: Then in chapter 9, after this great celebration, Yahweh affirms that He has heard Solomon's prayer and indeed again affirms the promise that He will put **His name there forever!** and that He will put His heart and eyes there **forever (9:3)**! Yet, God then continues by giving the conditional aspects of the covenant (9:4-5), "If you obey, then ." But then Yahweh even gets even more strong with His warning. If they rebel they will be cut off and Israel will become a byword! Notice however that the promise itself is unconditional in that Yahweh will forever have His name dwell on His temple, but Solomon and his children's inclusion is dependent upon their actions (9:4- "as for you"; 9:6- "If you or your sons..."), and Israel will indeed suffer for their rebellion.

11. What do we see in 9:10-10:29 and why do you think the author emphasizes this? Compare chapter 10 with what we saw earlier in chapter 4. Is there a different emphasis, and if so what? And if so, why? (1 paragraph)

A: We see the absolute wealth of Solomon in this section. However, when we compare with chapter 4, it's likely the author is purposefully emphasizing something different. In chapter 10, there is a massive emphasis on gold and on the greatness of the army. Whereas chapter 4 emphasized the greatness of the people and the abundance of provision for them. This could be a subtle way of the author moving our focus and showing that Solomon was wrong headed in his pursuits. Was he amassing gold and other treasures, when he **should have been seeking to bless the people and strengthen the weak???** It seems much more extravagant and not focused on the people like earlier. Certainly we are about to come to the turning point of the book. There is opulence and excess...

12. What key theme do we see then in 10:1-13 with the Queen of Sheba? Why do you think the author includes her in the story? (1 paragraph)

*A: As with earlier in the biblical account (and earlier in this passage with Hiram), we see that outsiders are hearing of Yahweh's fame! Here the Queen of Sheba is completely shocked at how great Solomon's kingdom is and of all the wisdom Yahweh gave to him (10:7), and ultimately, she blesses Yahweh for it (10:8)! Notice as well the ongoing theme of justice and righteousness in these books that continue (from Samuel) to establish the need for a righteous king (10:9).*

13. What then happens in chapter 11? What was the cause? What is the result? (1 paragraph)

*A: This chapter is where everything goes downhill! It all begins with Solomon's love for foreign wives (11:1)! And in turn, his love for these women turned his heart after other gods (11:4). Thus we see the importance of our **hearts!** We need to love Yahweh with all that we are! And so, Yahweh is going to tear the kingdom from Solomon and give it to another. **Yet**, because Yahweh had chosen David and Jerusalem, He would not utterly forsake them. There is still hope because of Yahweh's faithfulness! And so, Yahweh raised up enemies for Solomon (Hadad the Edomite, Rezon from Aram, Jereboam)... Indeed this theme is emphasized again when Yahweh promises to give the north to Jereboam, but once again the David covenant is brought up as the reason why there will be one tribe left to David, and the lamp will not go out forever! David will always have a dynasty and a line, and Jerusalem will forever be the city of the king (11:34-36)! And so, Solomon dies (11:41-43).*

14. Thought question: By 1 Kings 11, Solomon seems to have violated Deuteronomy 17 by multiplying horses and wives, and “greatly increasing silver and gold for himself” (Deuteronomy 17:17). However, God promised to give him “riches and honor” in 1 Kings 3:13. Was Solomon’s riches, wealth, etc. a bad thing, a blessing from God, or what? How do you resolve this apparent tension? (1 paragraph)

*A: Solomon indeed has violated Deuteronomy 17, and the wives in particular were clearly wrong (they did exactly what Yahweh warned they would!). Yet God indeed did promise to bless him with riches. But the wrong here appears to be in how Solomon hoarded the riches for himself. There doesn't appear to be any emphasis on him using his riches to help others. When blessed immensely by God, we should be using these blessings to stand for justice and righteousness and help others!*

15. Thought question: List and describe all the incidents in Solomon’s life *prior to 1 Kings 11*, which are cast in a more negative light by the author. Some of these may be explicit, but others may be implicit (i.e. pseudo-objective narration). (1 paragraph)

16. Application: In what ways has God been faithful to us and has blessed us immensely?

17. Application: What do we learn about the dangers of blessing and the deceitfulness of sin from this passage?

18. Application: With the emphasis on justice and righteousness in this passage, what do you think the lesson is for those who have been blessed by Yahweh?



## 10. The Decline of Israel and Judah: 1 Kings 12-22

**Scripture:** 1st Kings 12-22

**Theme:** Yahweh is the Real King, whose Word has Ultimate Authority over every Human King

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged to submit to the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh
- To be encouraged by the absolute faithfulness of Yahweh to His Word
- To be strengthened by the power of God available to those who trust Him
- To be vitalized by grace of God towards those who are weak

**Reading:**

- Read 1st Kings 12-22 twice

**Questions:**

1. Comment on how the prophetic Word is portrayed in Kings. (1 paragraph)

*A: **Yahweh's Word** has final authority and all power in Kings! All of the kings were subject to Yahweh's prophetic Word! Note how often kings were paired with prophets, as if to say that they were under those prophets and needed that direct access to God for proper rule (Samuel & Saul, Nathan & David, etc.). **Kings are servant rulers in submission to Yahweh.** Note also prophecies and their fulfillments: 1 Kings 22:23 – 22:37; 2 Kings 1:6 – 1:17 ; 1 Kings 21:21-23 – 2 Kings 9-10; 1 Kings 13:2 – 2 Kings 23:15-20.*

2. What key words are repeated multiple times in the incident of Rehoboam being made king that show us what the author is emphasizing (12:1-19)? What is the narrator trying to get across in this? As a side, note the implications about Solomon as well and not just Rehoboam in this section. What does this teach us about Solomon's use of his great wealth and what the author is trying to impress upon us as it comes to kings? (1 paragraph)

*A: The key words **service/serve**, yoke, and discipline occur many times in this section. The key question at hand is whether **the people will serve the king** or whether or not **he will serve them** (12:7)! Indeed it seems to be a key point that the author is making that kings should be servants to the people. We even see the implication here (as we already noted in the previous section) that Solomon was a hard taskmaster over the people! Thus we see that he used the people for the sake of his riches, rather than the other way around! Note that it is Rehoboam's **taskmaster** that is killed. Thus we are continuing to see the need in Kings for a **righteous king, one who cares about justice and righteousness and cares for the lowly!***

3. What then does Rehoboam plan to do in response and what happens in 12:20-24? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Rehoboam plans a civil war to regain control over all Israel, but Yahweh sends a prophet to stop him from fighting against their brothers. We see how Yahweh is directing events and how **His Word has ultimate authority**, not the desire of kings!*

4. What does Jeroboam do in 12:25-33? What is the significance of this for the rest of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: Because Jeroboam fears that the people continuing with their current religious practices (ie. going to Jerusalem for the feasts and sacrifices) will turn their hearts back to David (12:27), Jeroboam institutes an entirely new religious and sacrificial system (new priests and all!) that he devised himself (12:33)! At the heart of this religious system he creates **two golden calves** at the very north and south of his kingdom (Dan and Bethel), that will “keep his people” within Israel. This plunges the entire northern kingdom into idolatry and sin, and all of the kings of the north from here on out continue to follow Jeroboam's false religion and thus none of the northern kings are good (cf. 13:33-34)!

5. The narrator includes an extended story about an unnamed prophet in chapter 13. Why do you think this story is included? What point is the narrator trying to make? Note especially why the author includes the extended part of the narrative in 13:11-32. What key word is repeated 14 times and what is emphasized by this repetition? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Obviously, Jeroboam's new religion was not approved by Yahweh, so Yahweh graciously sends a prophet to confront him at Bethel! Jeroboam, being hardened in his rebellion, doesn't listen to the prophet but calls out for the prophet's seizure. But Yahweh's Word is authoritative, and His prophet has power, so Jeroboam's hand dried up as he called out the command and the altar split! Jeroboam asks the prophet to pray for him and his hand is restored. So we see that even **kings are subject to Yahweh's Word**.

But as the prophet is leaving, Jeroboam asks him to stay and eat, and we are introduced to an important command that Yahweh had given him, that he isn't to eat or drink (13:9). But as he continues home another prophet comes to him and invites him to eat and drink at his house, and lies to the first prophet that Yahweh had told him so. The first prophet believes him and eats and drinks with the second prophet. The point of the narrative is that **Yahweh's Word never changes!** The prophet should have known that the man was lying to him, because Yahweh's Word has such inherent **authority** that it never changes! This of course is an ongoing lesson throughout the ages! We see that the prophet was indeed in the wrong in 13:26 which shows that He went against God's command.

The key word that is repeated is the word 'turn' (13:4, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 29, 33). The majority of these uses are physical, but in the last one, Jeroboam, who is desperately trying to prevent his people from returning to Jerusalem, **refuses to (re)turn**. But the only way he could have any future is by (re)turning to Yahweh!

6. How then does the account of Jeroboam end in 14:1-20? What is emphasized in this account? Yahweh had promised Jeroboam that he would have a “sure house” if he obeyed (1 Kings 11:38-39), yet Jeroboam fails (14:6-16). Why? (1 paragraph)

A: Jeroboam's son becomes sick, and because he wanted to know what would become of him, he had his wife disguise herself to visit one of Yahweh's prophets! Yet the prophet **knows** what she is doing, and **predicts** the downfall of Jeroboam and all his house because Jeroboam didn't follow Yahweh with all his heart as David had. Moreover, he had chased after foreign gods and thus provoked Yahweh to anger. Once again, we continue to see the **authority** of the prophetic words emphasized in Kings. What the prophet says, happens! The kings are subject to Yahweh, whether they are righteous or evil!

7. How then does the account of Rehoboam end in 14:21-31? What is emphasized here? Compare and contrast the two dynasties (which continue on from this point forward). (1 paragraph)

*A: Rehoboam also does evil and builds high places and worshiped foreign gods, committing many abominations to Yahweh! Thus Yahweh sent Shishak king of Egypt to take everything gold away from Rehoboam. Thus we see that Rehoboam isn't any better than Jeroboam! But as we'll see, **the temple is still in Jerusalem**, and Rehoboam's line is still the **Davidic line**. In the north there is a constant change of dynasties, while in the south, while there are ups and downs, the Davidic line continues on unbroken. All of Israel's kings are bad, while only most of Judah's kings are bad...*

8. From chapter 15 on, the narrator uses a “regnal formula” to introduce each king. Write as many elements of this formula as you can find. Name several purposes for this formula—what does it tell us about the kings it describes? What makes a king good or bad according to the narrator? (1 paragraph)

*A: As we see in 15:1-3, we see in what year the king became king (usually in the year of the opposing dynasty), who is his father and mother, how long he reigned, and whether or not he followed after Yahweh like David or not! This of course emphasizes that the most important part of a king's rule was whether or not he was in right relationship with Yahweh! We continue to see an emphasis on the high places, to what extent did the king follow Yahweh wholly, or was there compromise in his devotion (cf. 15:14).? Especially for the northern kings, all of them are compared to Jeroboam and it is noted for all of them that they continued the false religion started by the first king of Israel... The fact that they are evaluated shows that there is a higher authority over them.*

9. What else stands out in chapters 15-16? What do you think the author is emphasizing? (1 paragraph)

*A: One thing that stands out is how the Davidic line continues, even when its kings are wicked. This is due to Yahweh's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant (15:4-5)! Yet we also see God's grace in that the son of an evil king was a good king who trusted in Yahweh (15:14). Each king can choose whether to trust in Yahweh or not, because of Yahweh's faithfulness, there is always opportunity to repent. Also note the major emphasis that **Yahweh's word always comes true**. Yahweh's word has authority! The author is sure to point out when a **prophecy is fulfilled (15:29)**! Notice the ongoing interjection of the prophets who deliver Yahweh's words and verdicts to the kings. When a prophet speaks for Yahweh, we can wait to see that fulfilled later in the story (16:1-4, 10-13; cf. also verse 7, 18-19, 34)...*

10. What stands out as we are introduced to Elijah in chapter 17? What do you think the author is trying to impress upon us from this chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: Obviously, right from the start we are presented with the authority of the prophets in Elijah's word that there will be no rain except by his word (17:1)! Then Yahweh's word comes to Elijah and tells him to hide by the brook, for Yahweh has **commanded** the ravens to care for him there (17:4)! God has **absolute authority**, even over the birds! Then God's Word came to him and told him to go to Zarephath, for Yahweh had **commanded** a widow to provide for him there (17:9)! Not only can Yahweh command the birds, but He also has the power to command poor and helpless widows that don't even know Yahweh has control over their lives!!! We are amazed at the display of **faith** of this widow who gives her last bit of food to Elijah (17:12), and are left with the impression that it could only by the omnipotent power of God that could instill such faith in someone, a foreign widow no less! Thus we see that Yahweh has authority over Israel in bringing drought upon them, while at the same time has authority in Zarephath, Jezebel's home country! **God can command even without words**! And Yahweh upheld his Word to this foreign widow (17:16)! Thus we are once again shown Yahweh's **care** for **outsiders**, for the **weak, poor, and lowly**! Finally, at the end of the story we are*

*shown the power of prayer in that Yahweh **hears** the voice of His prophet (17:22)! Thus we see that there is a two way relationship between Yahweh and His prophet and indeed this miraculous answer to prayer (raising the dead!) vindicates that indeed Elijah is God's man and he speaks Yahweh's words (17:24)!*

11. What do you think is emphasized in the intro to the story of Mount Carmel with Obadiah? Contrast Obadiah's and Ahab's treatment of Elijah. What are the major points of emphasis in the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel? What do you think the postscript to the story in 18:42-46 emphasizes? (1 paragraph)

*A: It seems that Obadiah and Ahab's responses to Elijah are being contrasted. Obadiah **respects** Elijah, while Ahab doesn't! So as we come to the story of the prophets of Baal vs Elijah on the mountain, we see the ultimate **showdown between Yahweh and Baal**! Of course of note is that Baal is the 'storm god', so what Elijah proposes is on his 'home turf'. We see that Baal is no god at all, and Elijah mocks their foolhearty trust in nothingness (18:29)! When it is Elijah's turn, he pours buckets and buckets of water on the sacrifice, to display the amazing power of Yahweh! What is at stake is Yahweh's name and reputation (18:36-37), and clearly, Yahweh loves to vindicate His own glory! But it is also important that Elijah asks that he would be **vindicated** in the process as well, for he truly was Yahweh's servant (18:36). And so Yahweh displays His power once again! We see **Elijah's faith** in the postscript to the story in that even though Yahweh had promised rain and there is no sign of it, **Elijah anticipates** the answer to Yahweh's Word and prays for its fulfillment! What a lesson for us as well. We can be sure that God will keep His promises, even when it doesn't appear so. And at the very smallest sign that the promise would be fulfilled, **Elijah was confident** that Yahweh was doing what He said (18:44)!*

12. After all that, what do you think the lessons of chapter 19 are? What do we learn for ourselves from this (especially about our weaknesses and about our God)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yet even after such an amazing display of Yahweh's power, Elijah is **weak** in chapter 19 and fears Jezebel (19:3)! As is true of so many of us, in a moment of despair he becomes **dramatic** (19:4) and loses faith. Yet it is beautiful how **gracious** God is with Elijah in this! God understands our weakness (Elijah had just run a long, long way 18:46, 19:4), and so God strengthens and helps him. There are so many lessons for us here! We are all so **fickle**. Even the best of us, who have demonstrated great faith are weak at times. We need to be **patient** and **caring** and help each other to trust Yahweh more and more! Yahweh was so gracious with Elijah, and met and helped him in his weakness, rather than blasting him for it. Moreover, we see so clearly here how the physical and spiritual are often so closely tied together. It is no coincidence that he loses faith when he is so weak and tired... And yet, in his weakness, Yahweh meets Elijah on the mountain. And Yahweh doesn't meet him in a display of His omnipotent power, but in a display of His **gentleness**. What a **gracious and caring** God, even while Elijah is still struggling with faith (19:10)!!! It is also in this moment of weakness, that Yahweh gives Elijah help (19:17-18)!*

13. What do you think the point of chapter 20 is? Specifically, why do you think Yahweh allows wicked Israel to be victorious (hint: which two verses in the text give explicit reasons for this that then keys us in to the purpose of the whole chapter)? (1 paragraph)

*A: The two key verses in this chapter that give us God's purpose in allowing Israel to defeat Aram are 20:13 and 20:28. **Yahweh wants to make Himself known**! In this case, He even does it through wicked and rebellious Israel! However, His name is still attached to Israel in some ways (at least to the Arameans!), and thus it is His **reputation alone** which is the basis for His action here. Notice as well the involvement of other prophets in this chapter. This reinforces again that Elijah isn't alone! But it also continues to emphasize the*

authority of God's Word. Notice how in 20:35-36 the man who refuses to obey the prophet is instantly killed by a lion. As this unnamed prophet gives a prophecy of Ahab's death, we know it is only a matter of time before Yahweh's Word comes to pass...

14. What do you think the point of chapter 21 is? Think about who the main players in this chapter are and how each of them are being portrayed? How does the chapter end and what does this teach us? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how the really evil one in this story is Jezebel! Certainly, Ahab is no good king, but she is shown to be completely **vicious** with no sense of justice whatsoever! Obviously, part of the lesson here (as we have already seen in Kings), is to show how pagan wives and their gods can be the downfall of good men (think Solomon). Obviously there are huge lessons for all of us, **what are we allowing to influence us!** But of even more importance is the way this chapter ends. Even despite **all the evil that Ahab had done**, when he is rebuked by Elijah, **he humbles himself and repents!** Thus Yahweh is gracious to him and **s pares** him! This is Ahab no less, one of the worst kings of the north in many ways. This is such a great example for us of the **mercy** of Yahweh, and that He **always hears** those who humbly call out to Him!

15. How then does the book end in chapter 22? What do you think is emphasized in this chapter? Who is introduced? (1 paragraph)

A: Interestingly, although Jehoshaphat agrees to ally himself with Ahab (**compromise!**), yet he still insists on seeking Yahweh first. Yet then he goes anyway, against the prophet's advice. **That is bound to turn out badly** (yet note how Yahweh spares him and only kills Ahab! What grace!)! Notice the huge emphasis on the prophets in this chapter. There are tons of **lying prophets** who predict their success, yet the one prophet from Yahweh **boldly** declares their imminent ruin. Note that Yahweh is the one who initiates Ahab's destruction by sending a lying spirit to his false prophets to encourage him to fight! Thus we continue to see Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over all events and yet at the same time, the real and fierce **spiritual battle** that is going on! Micaiah is thrown in prison for declaring their demise until Ahab returns, but insists that if he returns alive, then Yahweh has not spoken by him. This continues to emphasize the **absolute certainty** of Yahweh's Word. When Yahweh speaks, it will surely come to pass. And so it does. And the book of 1st Kings ends on that note. Ahab dies as predicted and then Jehoshaphat later dies, and new kings reign in their place...

16. Thought question: We have seen that the relationship between prophet and king is very important in the book of Kings. Summarize the nature of that relationship. (1 paragraph)
17. Application: What do we learn about God's Word from this section of Scripture? How should this understanding effect the ways that we relate to God on a daily basis?

## 11. The End of Israel: 2 Kings 1-17

**Scripture:** 2nd Kings 1-17

**Theme:** Yahweh Works in and Warns His People, but Finally Upholds His Word in His Threats

**Objectives:**

- To be stunned by the long-suffering of Yahweh towards even openly rebellious people
- To be sobered by the reality that the judgment of Yahweh finally comes
- To be challenged to remain faithful to Yahweh in the midst of wickedness

**Reading:**

- Read 2nd Kings 1-17 twice

**Questions:**

1. Even though there haven't been **any** good kings in Israel (the golden calves are still at Dan and Beersheba from Jeroboam I!), what do we learn about Yahweh's view of the northern kingdom from 2nd Kings 1? Is any phrase repeated that helps us to understand what the author is emphasizing? How does the chapter wrap up and what does this emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Even though the north has completely abandoned Yahweh, He still views the kingdom of Israel as His kingdom! Notice the repeated phrase, “**Is it because there is no God in Israel...**” (1:3, 6, 16)! Ultimately, we see that Yahweh is completely sovereign even over the north, and the third captain of 50 finally realizes that he better show Yahweh some respect! Ultimately, we see the point made again that we have seen throughout Kings, the Word of Yahweh happened (1:17). Yahweh has ultimately authority, and what He says always happens, even in the North!*

2. What does chapter 2 emphasize about Elisha? What do you think the significance of the double portion from Elijah is and how does this tie in to the point of this chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: Notice Elisha's **persistence** (2:2, 6)! Ultimately, what Elisha is seeking is a double portion from Elijah. At first, we might expect that a double portion means that Elisha will do twice as many miracles or something to that effect. In reality, what this emphasizes is that Elisha will be the **heir to Elijah's prophetic ministry**. Elisha didn't just want to be another prophet, but a prophet that continued bearing Elijah's torch. And that is what is emphasized in this chapter. Notice how Elisha strikes the water just as Elijah did (2:14). He is thereby confirmed in this chapter to be Yahweh's man, His prime representative to His people, Yahweh's voice to His people. Other prophets of Yahweh may have had words from Yahweh, but Elisha was to be Yahweh's **spokesman** just as Elijah had been. Notice how Elisha speaks and it is Yahweh's word, and He curses in Yahweh's name, and Yahweh puts action behind what Elisha says (2:21, 24)!*

3. Summarize chapter 3. Note in particular the alliances of the various people in this chapter and what that emphasizes? How do each of the various people relate to Yahweh? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jehoram (the almost good king of Israel, 3:2) got Jehoshaphat (the king of Judah) to go with him through Edom (and pick up their king) to fight against the king of Moab to make him continue to pay tribute. It is interesting that the king of Israel talks about Yahweh (3:10), and seems to think He has some control (3:9), and yet isn't following Him fully or even seeking Him (3:2, 11). Jehoshaphat on the other hand, is allying with the king of Israel (not good!), but at least seeks after a prophet of Yahweh when a problem arises (3:11)!*

Elisha immediately rails on the king of Israel since he clearly isn't following Yahweh (3:13), and yet helps for the sake of the king of Judah who shouldn't really be there in the first place (3:17-18)! Thus in this chapter we see Yahweh's sovereignty and once again that His Word always happens (3:20)! But we also see how **fierce Yahweh's loyalty to the line of David is** here as He acts on their behalf even when allied with a wicked Israelite king where he shouldn't be in the first place! The king of Moab even **sacrifices his son** at the end of the chapter which evidences his complete wickedness and rebellion against Yahweh, yet Yahweh still acted on behalf of His nation!

4. What do you think the point of chapter 4 is? Who do we continue to see Elisha (and Elijah before him) ministering to? (2-3 sentences)

A: Notice how the entire chapter begins with the plight of a **poor and helpless widow**. That seems to be a major point of this section, God helps the weak and the lowly! We see another woman also cared for in this chapter, this time a **barren woman!** We continue to see a correlation between Elisha and Elijah in caring for women that shows how Elisha is following in the footsteps of Elijah. As with so many of these stories, this chapter ends with a reminder that everything is happening according to the Word of Yahweh (4:44)! He is the one who is completely sovereign!

5. Who is chapter 5 now about? What verse do you think has the key point of the chapter? What do you think the point of including Gehazi's sin is? (2-3 sentences)

A: Chapter 5 then is about the salvation of a **foreign leper!** The high and mighty of Israel have rejected Yahweh, but Yahweh continues to work, but to the **lowly!** What a shame that His own people didn't trust in Him! Notice **verse 15**, how Naaman recognizes that Yahweh is the greatest and only true God. He will continue to sacrifice to Yahweh (5:17), and even asks for forgiveness when in fulfilling his duty with his king, he goes into the house of a pagan god (5:18)! We indeed continue to see that Yahweh is a global God and deserves to be worshiped globally! Notice how Gehazi is clearly **contrasted** with Naaman! Gehazi is an **Israelite** who should have trusted in Yahweh, and yet he is driven by **greed** when Naaman acted in faith in Yahweh (5:14)! The comparison is completed when Naaman's leprosy came upon Gehazi! Thus we see the contrast between the proud Israelite and the humble foreigner. God cares for the heart. It's not all just about being a descendant of Abraham, but having the faith of Abraham! Of course we also continue to see Yahweh's power and authority in that Elisha as His representative is able to see what Gehazi did and Yahweh's Word is performed through him (5:26-27)!

6. What do you think the little story about the borrowed axe head in 6:1-7 emphasizes? (1 sentence)

A: **God cares about justice, even in the little things! He doesn't just do miracles for no reason, He acts to uphold His values and character.** The fact that the axe was borrowed seems to be a very prominent point of the story. If the prophet had just lost his own axe head, then it is simply his own loss. But the fact that it was borrowed shows that God cares about not wronging others, even when it seems inconsequential to us (it's just an axe head, and he didn't even do it on purpose!).

7. Notice that eyes, sight, etc. are major themes running through chapters 6 and 7 that ties these chapters together. What point is the author making about these themes (think about this!)? How does this relate to what is emphasized about Yahweh's Word? (1 paragraph)

A: **Faith, sight and eyes** are a huge emphasis in this section! First, Elisha prays that God would open the spiritual eyes of his servant so that he would be able to see reality from the **spiritual perspective**. Then,

Elisha prays that the entire army would be blinded, and later that they would regain their sight. Then at the beginning of chapter 7, Elisha predicts the salvation of the city, and the messenger doesn't **believe**, and so he will **see** it with his **eyes**, but not eat of it! **Are you going to see with your physical eyes, or your spiritual ones!?! Will we believe the word of Yahweh, that is the question!?** What Yahweh says is reality, far beyond what we can see with our limited physical senses! **His Word has authority because it is ultimate truth!** And so the section ends with everything happening exactly **just as Yahweh said** (7:16, 20)! If only people had the faith to believe!

8. In many ways chapter 8 is transitional. What are some of the things that it emphasizes? When we look at this chapter in light of the change of dynasty of Aram (8:13-15), and the change of dynasty of Israel (chapters 9-12), what verse stands out in chapter 8? (2-3 sentences)

A: We continue to see more evil kings, and yet Yahweh will not wipe out Judah because of His **faithfulness to the Davidic covenant** (8:19)! Even though Israel is wicked, yet Elisha still weeps over their pain (8:12)! As before, we see Yahweh's completely sovereignty in raising up and tearing down kings. He establishes new dynasties, and yet there is one dynasty that will never end, and this seems to be the point!

9. What do you think the main points of the Jehu narrative in chapters 9-10 are? (1 paragraph)

A: First and foremost, we need to look at this section as a fulfillment of Yahweh's word way back in 1st Kings 19:15-21 (9:26, 36; 10:10, 16-17, 28). Yahweh despised the wickedness of Baal worship, and so even though it took a long time!, He fulfilled His Word to bring judgment on the house of Ahab! Yet in the end we see that: "Even though Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel (10:28), he did not wipe out Jeroboam from his own heart (10:29-31)" (Hamilton, 448). Thus we see that Yahweh used Jehu to accomplish His purpose, even when Jehu himself isn't perfect. **God's Word stands** and will be accomplished whether or not we are trusting Him!

10. As the story continues in chapters 11-12, what do you think the point of the story of Athaliah is (note the connection of Baal with the previous section as well as that we are now in the southern kingdom. Cf. 2nd Chronicles 22:2)? What then happens in chapter 12? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how Athaliah (connected to Omri's household as well!) shows how very connected the north and south had become and the terrible influence Baal had on both countries! Thus Yahweh eradicates Baal from the south as well. But notice as well that Athaliah almost wiped out the Davidic line except for one little baby boy (11:3)! Thus we see **Yahweh's sovereignty in preserving the Davidic dynasty and keeping His promise!** Note how then Yahweh uses Jehoash to demolish Baal worship in Judah and to restore the temple. There is still a glimmer of hope in the south as the Davidic line continues on...

11. What do we see in 13:1-9 about Jehoahaz son of Jehu (which verse stands out in this section)? (1 sentence)

A: He was an evil king, and yet we see in 13:4 that when Israel was being oppressed, he called out to Yahweh, and Yahweh heard him! How gracious and compassionate Yahweh is, even to evil kings!

12. What then do we see in 13:14-25? What does the author emphasize in this section and how? (2-3 sentences)

A: We continue to see Yahweh's grace. Even as Elisha is dying, Joash, king of Israel goes to Elisha and is given a command for his victory, yet the king's lack of faith means that there will not be total victory... **13:23** sums



*up the point that we have been seeing throughout this section well: Yahweh was compassionate upon Israel even when they had continually rebelled against Him. Thus we see that Yahweh's judgment upon Israel was only after much patience and compassion! Yahweh kept trying to call them back to Him but they would not listen!*

13. What was Amaziah's sins according to 14:1-18? (1 sentence)

*A: He was a good king, yet didn't do away with the high places. Yet the primary problem that seems to be emphasized in this section was his **pride** (14:10). He went to do battle with the king of Israel after his victory of Edom, yet he never consulted Yahweh!*

14. Explain what is emphasized about the reign of Jeroboam II (14:23-29). How do we understand this theologically? How would you explain this to someone who says, "But I thought God brought the wicked low, and raised up the humble?" (1 paragraph)

*A: Jeroboam II was a very **wicked** and **successful** king. He expanded the borders of Israel greatly, and yet walked in the path of his wicked namesake Jeroboam I. Note the key verses in **14:26-27** which once again gives **Yahweh's compassion** (not Jeroboam II's righteousness!!) as the basis for this reprieve. Yahweh saw the pain of His people! Over and over in this downward spiral of the north we continue to see God's grace woven into the story. **They had so many chances. So many prophets called them to return!** Yahweh even saved them and showed them His power. Yet they refused to trust Him but continued worshiping the Baals. Thus we do see that Yahweh brings the wicked low and raises the humble, but not always in the ways that we expect! There is grace in His judgment, and He even disciplines the sons who He loves (more on this topic in Job and Ecclesiastes)!*

15. What is emphasized by the quick progression of events in chapters 15-16? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Time speeds up as we approach the end of the nation of Israel: each king is given only a short account, and we see lots of conspiracy and death. But we also see **Assyria** introduced into the story (15:19, 29; 16:7, 9-10, **18**), and we see one king after the next walking in the sins of Jeroboam, being killed and replaced. Note the wickedness in even killing pregnant women (15:16)! Even the king of the south (Ahaz!) is causing their sons to walk through the fire (16:3)!!! We are seeing more and more intervention by these foreign nations, tribute being paid, and the end appears to be near!*

16. What then happens in chapter 17? What did this exile look like according to the passage? What are the theological reasons why the kingdom of Israel was sent into exile? According to this section (and this section alone), who is Yahweh holding responsible for the exile? What sins did he/they commit (number as many as you can find)? Who are these sins ultimately traced back to in verses 21-23? (1 paragraph)

*A: Finally, the northern kingdom is exiled in chapter 17. The reason stated for the exile is the idolatry of the Israelites, that they forsook Yahweh (17:7-18, 34-41). But notice that it wasn't **only** the kings that were guilty, but also the people ('the sons of Israel' in 17:7, 9ff.). So the people of the north were scattered and dispersed all throughout the Assyrian kingdom and people from throughout the kingdom were **mixed** into the northern kingdom (to break any homogeneity). Thus there is a huge emphasis in this text on mixing and **syncretism (especially in 24-41; cf. 17:24, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41).** Yahweh is the only true God who indeed powerfully saved them to be His special people (17:36-39) and He demands **exclusive** relationship! Thus there*

*is a huge emphasis as well on **fearing** other gods and **fearing** Yahweh! You shall **fear** Yahweh alone! He alone is great and worthy to be worshipped!*

17. Application: How does this section encourage us to trust God's word, both His promises and warnings?
18. Application: What do we learn about Yahweh's patience and also His judgment from this passage? How should this effect the way we view evangelism?

## 12. The End of Judah: 2 Kings 18-25

**Scripture:** 2nd Kings 18-25

**Theme:** Faithful Covenant Relationship with Yahweh is Everything, Externals are Nothing

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged that simple, trusting & humble faith are what Yahweh wants
- To be reminded that Yahweh's plan works through those who trust Him but will not be thwarted by those who don't
- To stand in awe and hope for the coming of Yahweh's righteous king/kingdom which this section of Scripture sets up a great anticipation and longing for

**Reading:**

- Read 2nd Kings 18-25 twice

**Questions:**

1. As we have finished with the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom is also on the brink of destruction when Hezekiah appears as king of Judah. What characterized Hezekiah and what was the result according to 18:1-8? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Hezekiah was marked by his **trust** in Yahweh (18:5)! He followed Yahweh with all his heart (18:6), and was zealous to tear down the idols in Judah (18:4). As a result of trusting fully in Yahweh, Yahweh was with him in whatever he did!*

2. What effect does repeating the summary of Shalmeneser's defeat of the northern kingdom (18:9-12) right before the story of Sennacherib's attack of the south have? (2-3 sentences)

*A: By repeating the story of the north's defeat, as well as the reason for it (the north did not obey Yahweh and didn't keep His covenant), it invites **comparison** with the attack of the south. When Hezekiah **humbled** himself, and called out to Yahweh, Yahweh saved them! It is a reminder that **Yahweh is faithful and just** and was so in His dealings with the north, they could have been saved as well! **Yahweh is so gracious and patient!***

3. What do you think of Hezekiah's actions in 18:14-16 in light of the story as a whole? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is not until Hezekiah is in utmost despair that he calls out to Yahweh for help! One wonders what would have happened if he had acted sooner, maybe verses 14-16 wouldn't have needed to happen! It is far too easy to only trust in Yahweh when we have no resources left of our own to trust in, but may we learn the lesson that we need to trust in Him always!*

4. What key words are repeated in 18:17-37? What does this show us is the key issue at stake in this passage? What is the essence of Rabshakeh's speech? What tactics does he try to employ in it? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice the repetition of the words '**trust**', '**confidence**', '**rely**' (all based upon the same root in Hebrew). We also see the word '**deliver**' repeated as Rabshakeh repeatedly insists that Yahweh will not be able to save them. The issue at stake here is in whom would Israel (and Hezekiah) **trust for salvation**? Would they trust in Yahweh for salvation, or in the king of Assyria? Notice propaganda at its best in Rabshakeh's speech. He reasons and argues with the people to try to **undermine their trust in Yahweh**. He reminds them of how Assyria had conquered all the other nations (true!). He also tries to twist the fact that Hezekiah had torn down Yahweh's altars (we shouldn't be too quick to simply write off the Rabshakeh as being wrong here, the **syncretism** was so ingrained in Israel that many of the Israelites probably viewed the high places as being a right way to worship Yahweh as well!). Notice as well the promise he makes them of happiness in 31-32. This is Satanic deception. **True happiness can only be found in trusting relationship with Yahweh!**

5. How then does Hezekiah respond in chapter 19? What is emphasized in this chapter and what can we learn from this? Note especially the basis upon which Hezekiah pleads (There is so much in this chapter, think about the great truths here). (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Hezekiah responds by **praying!** Hezekiah completely humbles himself and seeks Yahweh by casting himself upon Him! His statement in 19:3 emphasizes the utter hopelessness of the situation, it is as though the nation were a pregnant woman about to give birth without the strength to deliver! Notice that the basis of Hezekiah's prayer is the fact that the king of Assyria had **reproached the living God** (19:4, 16)! It is ultimately **God's reputation** that is on the line, and God loves to act for the sake of His name! Hezekiah's prayer begins with an affirmation of who Yahweh is, He is the only God, the only King, the Creator of heaven and earth (19:15). Thus He is able to act! And so Hezekiah prays that Yahweh would act so that all the earth would know that Yahweh alone is God (19:19)!!! This is the right basis to pray! And so Yahweh acts in miraculous power in defense of His great reputation and saves Hezekiah and Jerusalem!!!

**Yahweh will not share His glory** with another, **He humbles the proud** (19:22)! There is such a clear contrast, Sennacherib was arrogant in his pride while Hezekiah humbled himself in trusting Yahweh (19:22, 28). In fact, it was Yahweh's plan from the beginning that this should happen (19:25)! Because of the king's arrogance, he will be brought low before Yahweh (19:28). And ultimately, Yahweh will leave a **remnant** from Judah through which He will accomplish all His good plans and promises (19:31-34). And so Yahweh acts for the sake of His own name and **because of His everlasting covenant which He made to David** (19:34)! God will surely vindicate His faithfulness in demonstrating to the world that His plans will surely come about!

6. What then happens to Hezekiah, how does Hezekiah respond and what does God do and why in 20:1-11? (1 paragraph)

A: Hezekiah gets sick and is going to die, but when he **completely humbles himself** once again and prays to Yahweh, Yahweh answers him! Yahweh answers once again **for His own sake** and **for His servant David's sake** (20:6). This is very important to God. He cares a lot about His reputation and faithfulness! And God in His grace even gave to Hezekiah a miraculous sign that He would do what He said and makes the shadow go backward ten steps!

7. After both of these two stories (Sennacherib's attack and Hezekiah's sickness), what happens in 20:12-21? How is this event portrayed? Think about the (potential) motives why Hezekiah would show his treasury to the king of Babylon. (1 paragraph)

A: After two great triumphs of faith, Hezekiah, in a time of peace and prosperity, **fails to trust** in Yahweh. That is how it so often is in our own lives! When a great disaster comes upon us, we call upon Yahweh. But

when everything is going well, it is easy to **rely upon ourselves** and our human resources and planning. There really is no good reason for Hezekiah to show the treasure to the Babylonians. Here he is likely politicking with them, trying to win favor/impress them, etc. Hezekiah didn't need the Babylonians on his side, Yahweh was his strong fortress (how it's so easy to forget 185,000 Assyrians being killed in one swoop!!) And so in the end the Babylonians will be the ones that destroy Judah!

8. What then happens after Hezekiah's death in chapter 21? What do you think the author is emphasizing in this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: After Hezekiah's death, his son Manasseh becomes king. **Manasseh is the most wicked of all of Judah's kings** (21:9, 11), plunging Judah into the worst kinds of idolatry (21:6)! Notice the emphasis on verse 7, that Manasseh even introduced this horrid idolatry into the temple of Yahweh itself! Yahweh had chosen Jerusalem and **the temple** there to be the place where He Himself would dwell with His people. It was a holy place, the place His glory dwelt. And yet Manasseh didn't even have respect for this at all! And so, because of all of Manasseh's idolatrous wickedness in which he plunged the nation, **Judah too would be destroyed and exiled** (21:12-15)! Note that the author points out parenthetically that besides Manasseh's idolatry (which is the focus and heart of his wickedness), the author purposefully points out his injustice as well because this is also an important emphasis (and anticipation) in Kings (21:16). Amon his son is not much better, and so the nation is now deeply steeped in idolatry...

9. What do you think is the most significant event in Josiah's life from the viewpoint of the author (in chapters 22-23)? How does this event fit into the overall narrative and help emphasize what the author is trying to communicate (both **before** and **after** these chapters)? How is it portrayed and what can we personally learn from how Josiah handled it? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: The key event in Josiah's life was the **finding of the Law!** From the outset, we should be shocked that the very Law of God Himself was lost in the first place! The idolatry in which Manasseh and Amon plunged the nation into for so long was so bad that they had no regard whatsoever for what Yahweh said. Thus this section serves to reinforce how wicked the people had become in forsaking Yahweh and thus is justification for why the exile was needed. Furthermore, we see that even Josiah's sweeping reforms were not enough to change the hearts of the people! Note that the text itself emphasizes that Josiah's changes were not enough to avert God's wrath (22:16-17; 23:26-27). And as soon as Josiah died, the nation quickly and tragically was plunged right back into the same idolatries. Thus as we continue to walk through kings we are learning an important lesson that goes all the way back to the Torah and looks forward to the New Covenant: **the problem was with the peoples' hearts and so they needed radical spiritual transformation!**

We also can learn a lot from how Josiah personally responded to finding the Law. Note his **humility before God's Word.** This is what the text emphasizes about Josiah's response (22:11, 19). Even though he was the king, he recognized the heinousness of their rebellion before Yahweh identifies with the people and humbled himself. We also see something that has happened several times in the OT, Josiah makes a covenant to keep the covenant (23:3)! Thus we see the usefulness of reminding ourselves and committing to obey what God has said. While we want to obey everything in Scripture, sometimes it's helpful to summarize and commit to what He has specifically said, rather than vaguely be committed to obeying everything. Thus we see Josiah obeying different aspects of the Law, and they even kept Passover (23:21-23), something that apparently was quite rare in their history (23:22)! Josiah obeyed Yahweh with all his heart and soul like no other (23:24-25)! This is the kind of response that Yahweh wants from those who trust Him, **to humble ourselves before Him and have zeal to trust and obey Him!**

## 10. Summarize Judah's last leaders and the exiles that take place in chapters 24-25. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Jeremiah was born near the end of Manasseh's evil reign.*

*Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) - Wicked Judean king in Isaiah 7. He was Pro-Assyrian. So Israel and Syria attacked Judah because they were Anti-Assyrian. Ahaz called to Tiglath-Pileser [Pul] (745-727 B.C.) for help who then attacked Damascus. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) began sieging Samaria, and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) destroyed it in 722 B.C.*

*Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.) - Good king in Isa 36-39. Anti-Assyrian [Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.)] (Isa 36-37). Pro-Babylonian (Isa 39). Assyrian kings: Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) followed Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal [aka. Osnappar, the last Assyrian king] (669-627 B.C.) followed him.*

*Manasseh (697-642 B.C.) - Wicked king, long reign. Pro-Assyrian.*

*Amon (642-640 B.C.) - Wicked son of Manasseh. Murdered.*

*Josiah (640-609 B.C.) - Good king, long reign. Judah had independence during Josiah. -> reforms. Josiah sided w/ Babylonians against Assyria/Egypt. Josiah was killed at Megiddo (609 B.C.) by Pharaoh Neco when he tried to oppose the Egyptian/Assyrian attack on Harran. Book of the law found (622 B.C.). Josiah's sons: Johanan (not king), Eliakim, Mattaniah, and Shallum.*

*Jehoahaz [Shallum] (609 B.C.) - The people made him king when Josiah died. He was the youngest brother. After 3 months, he was summoned by Necho and sent in bonds to Egypt. He was wicked and Anti-Egyptian = Pro Babylonian. He died in Egypt.*

*Jehoiakim [Eliakim] (609-598 B.C.) - The brother of Jehoahaz, he was setup as Egyptian vassal in 608 B.C. He reigned for 11 years and was very wicked. Jehoiakim gave tribute to Pharaoh, but taxed the people heavily to do so. At Carchemish in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.) dominated the Egyptians, Philistines, etc. and Jehoiakim transferred allegiance to Babylon (though not really). This is when Daniel and some promising young leaders are taken to Babylon. Three years later he rebelled against Babylon. He was killed by Babylonian/Moabite/Ammonite raiders (2Ki 24:2).*

*Jehoiachin [(Je)coniah] (598-597 B.C.) - Son of Jehoiakim, made king after his father died. He was very evil also. He only reigned for three months (2Ki 24:8), when Babylon sieged Jerusalem. He was taken to Babylon along with all the high officials of Judah in 597 B.C.*

*Zedekiah [Mattaniah] (597-586 B.C.) - Put in power by Babylon after the siege. He was the uncle of Jehoiachin. He was also very evil and rebelled against Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar massively sieged and completely destroyed Jerusalem (586 B.C.). The king tried to escape, but was capture, his sons killed, and his eyes blinded and taken to Babylon. Everything in Jerusalem was burned (2Ki 25:9)! The walls of the city were torn down and **everything** was taken to Babylon (2Ki 25:13ff.).*

*Gedaliah (586 B.C.) - Good governor appointed by Neb. (pro-Babylonian) who encouraged the people to serve the king of Babylon that it might be well for them. However, he was murdered by Ishmael who was later pursued by Johanan (not oldest son of Josiah). Then most of the people fled to Egypt (fearing Babylon's response).*

*Three deportations in 605 B.C. (Daniel), 597 B.C. (Jehoiachin and Ezekiel), and 586 B.C. (Zedekiah).*

## 11. As we come to the exile of Judah, what are some of the theological lessons we learn from chapters 24-25? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again, we see that **Yahweh keeps His Word** (24:2)! His warnings are not idle threats! There are blessings and cursings in the Torah, and both should be taken equally seriously! We also see how sin defiles (24:3-4) and must be dealt with! When Israel had rejected Yahweh for the sake of idols, they had given up hope on the only cure. That is why there is no forgiveness, for forgiveness can only be found in Yahweh! We also see that Yahweh is a God of anger (24:20)! His **zeal for holiness** demands an anger and hatred of that which opposes righteousness. We also see how as important as the **temple** was in OT theology, ultimately*

*Yahweh's presence is beyond the temple! He destroyed His own temple to show the seriousness of covenant relationship with Him. It is more than just outward and external appearances! Yahweh demands right relationship!*

12. How does the book end and why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The book ends with **Jehoiachin** being brought out of prison and allowed to eat at the king of Babylon's table for the rest of his life. This shows that the **Davidic line** is still in tact and gives hope that God has not abandoned the Davidic (or Abrahamic) covenant. Ultimately Yahweh is faithful! This is one of the key themes in this book as well as all of Scripture. We can trust Him because He always does what He says!*

13. Application: What do we learn about Yahweh's sovereign plan from this passage? How does our faith or lack of it affect this plan and our interaction with it?

14. Application: What do we learn about what it looks like to trust Yahweh even when surrounded by sin from this passage?

### III. Latter Prophets I

Latter Prophets I is the middle class in the middle portion of the Hebrew Canon called 'The Prophets'. It consists of the pre-exilic prophets (Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk). Some of the major themes include God's glory, the fulfillment of God's plan, judgment, restoration, hope, and the salvation of Israel and the nations. This is a 2 unit class and consists of 14 lessons.



## 1. Yahweh will Have His Day: Obadiah/Joel

**Scripture:** Obadiah 1 and Joel 1-3

**Theme:** Yahweh will have His Day when He Comes and Acts in Power

**Objectives:**

- To grow in our fear of Yahweh
- To better understand how God's plan relates to His people and His covenant with them
- To understand the nature of true repentance
- To be anticipating Yahweh's Day

**Reading:**

- Read Obadiah and Joel *four times each*
- Read Chisholm's section on Obadiah and Joel

**Questions:**

1. Summarize the message of the Torah. Summarize the four primary Biblical covenants and their relationships. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: God created the world good and blessed it. It fell into sin through the pride and rebellion of Adam, but God had a plan to restore blessing to His creation from the beginning. He chose Abraham to be His means of restoring blessing to the world, through creating and calling a people to Himself, entering into covenant with them, so that as they were in relationship with Him through trusting obedience in Him and sacrificing for their sins, they would be a **light to the world** to tell the world how great Yahweh is. The four primary Biblical covenants are the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. See the handout on the covenants for their relationship. In short, the Abrahamic covenant is God's unconditional promise to bless the world through the seed of Abraham. The Mosaic covenant is the means for the people of Israel to walk in relationship with Yahweh and be used by Him to bless the world. There are blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience and in that way is conditional. The Davidic covenant is God's unconditional promise that the way the Abrahamic covenant will be worked out is through a righteous King who will rule over God's Kingdom forever. The New Covenant replaces the Mosaic Covenant as the means God's people walk in relationship with Him. The problem with the Mosaic Covenant from the start was with the peoples' heart, and so God promised that one day He would forgive and transform them from the inside out so that they would obey His law and be used by Him to bless the world!*

2. What is a prophet? What have we seen about them thus far in Biblical revelation (especially note Exo 7:1; Deu 13:1-6ff.; 18:14-22; 34:10)? What is the difference between the Former and Latter Prophets in Scripture? How is the genre different between them? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: A prophet is a mouthpiece for God. They were God's representatives to speak what God wanted to say. We have seen that one of the key marks of a prophet was their ability to predict the future. If they were **ever wrong** in their prediction, it proved that they were **not a true prophet**. Thus, true prophets always were clear in their understanding of what God revealed to them, and it was presumption punishable by death to ever claim to have a word from God that was not. One of the functions of the prophets was to be covenantal law enforcers. They called Israel back to the covenant they entered into with Yahweh. Both the former and latter prophets do this as their primary function. The Former Prophets do this through narrative which shows the need to be faithful to the covenant and the punishment for being unfaithful, while the Latter Prophets do*

this more explicitly through the writings of prophets who called the nation back to covenant faithfulness to Yahweh.

As we come to the Latter Prophets, the primary difference is one of genre. We are no longer dealing with narrative, and as such need to understand the distinctives of prophecy and poetry. These include: 1) Structure. Various structural arrangements factor greatly into prophetic and poetic type texts – chiasm, cycles, repetition, parallelism (synonymous, antithetical, staircase, etc.). 2) Poetics. Various literary devices also are very important to understand these genres – key word, refrain, contrast, comparison, climax, Janus/hinge, inclusio, irony, merismus, pictures, figures of speech, metaphor, changes in person, genre, style, etc. 3) The nature of prophecy. Prophetic texts weren't meant to give a timeline of future events. Each prophecy **always has a purpose in its context** beyond simply predicting the future. Thus it is important to recognize that prophecy often melds or blurs various events in the far reaching future, yet that doesn't mean that prophecy is inaccurate but that the prophet often couldn't distinguish multiple events in various stages. One analogy is that of a mountain range. When looking at the range from the front you can't see the valleys in between the peaks and can't tell that really you are looking at **several different mountains** and not just one mountain. For example in Isaiah 61, there would be no way to tell that verses 1-2a would be fulfilled in Christ's first coming and the following verses in His second. But that is what we clearly see as shown in Luke 4:21. All of Isaiah 61 will come to pass and as such it is accurate, but the prophet wasn't giving a strict chronology.

### Obadiah

3. Skim Psa 79; 83; 2Ch 21:8-20; Amo 1:11-12; Joel 3:3-6, 19 for background about Edom. What do these passages teach us about Edom and the backdrop to Obadiah? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Edom had participated in an attack on Israel. Although it's difficult to place the precise attack and commentators differ in terms of which attack on Israel is being referenced, the point remains the same. They stood by while other nations attacked God's people.*

4. Who is Edom? What is their relationship to Israel? How does this relationship affect the contents of this book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The Edomites are the descendants of Esau. Thus they are descendants of Abraham! They were **brothers**, and thus should have been faithful to one another. Moreover, Edom should have known what God was doing in the world through Israel and participated in that. But instead they continually opposed God by opposing His people all throughout their history.*

5. What were Edom's primary sins? Where all do you see these in the text? (2-3 sentences)

*A: One of their primary sins was **pride**: 1:3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13. Also betraying their brother: 1:10, 12.*

6. What word in the text describes the relationship between Israel and Edom? Why does this word describe their relationship? What are the implications of this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The word **brother** describes the relationship between Israel and Edom. It describes their relationship because they descended from Esau, while Israel descended from Esau's brother Jacob. The implication of this is that they should have treated Israel as a brother, with the closeness and **mutual responsibility** that that word involves.*

7. Who was this book written to? What is its purpose to them? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This book (as the rest of the OT) was written to Israel (not Edom!). Thus the purpose to Israel would be to **encourage** them of God's final victory and triumph over their enemies who opposed God and His people and plan. There will be **justice** one day.*

8. What does this book teach us about Yahweh, His people, His plan, and their interrelationship? What does it teach us about the other nations of the world and how they were to participate in God's plan? (2-3 sentences)

*A: To opposed **God's people** is to oppose God Himself. His plan is to work through the descendants of Abraham to fulfill His good purpose. He promised to bless those who bless Abraham and **curse those who curse him**. Salvation in the OT was only found in the nation of Israel, God's chosen nation. [correlation between pride, compassion and mutual responsibility. Pride and self-reliance]*

9. Application: What does this book teach us about pride? What about the relationship between pride and jealousy?

### Joel

10. What is the prime event about the book of Joel is about? What does this event relate to and represent? (1 sentence)

*A: Joel centers around a locust attack which relates to and represents the coming Day of Yahweh!*

11. What is the structure of the book of Joel? Where are the major breaks in the book? Where is there a major change in the tone of the book? What causes this change of tone? What does this teach us (think about this question!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Outline of Joel:*

- 1 Contemporary DOL (1)
 
  - A Details (2-12)*
  - B Call to Repentance (13-20)**
- 2 Impending DOL (2:1-17)
 
  - A. Impending Visitation of Yahweh (1-11)*
  - B. Appeal for Repentance (12-17)**
- 3 Eschatological DOL (2:18-3:21)
 
  - A. Promise of healing of land (2:18-27)*
  - B. Promise of outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-32)*
  - C. Promise of judgment of nations, restoration of Israel (3:1-21)**

*Joel has a major break at 2:18. Following 2:18 is hope, before is judgment. The whole book hinges on the repentance of 2:12-17 (and even the calls for repentance that come earlier). **Repentance is absolutely necessary for God's blessing.** He will indeed restore His people, but not unless they are in **right relationship** with Him.*

12. What words are repeated throughout chapter 1? Noting that the word for 'dry up' and 'ashamed' are very similar in Hebrew, note how many times these two words are repeated. What is the author emphasizing? (1 paragraph)

*A: The author uses many different words to tell of the **devastation!** Note words of lament - Weep (bkh): 1:5, 2:17. Howl (yll): 1:5, 1:11, 1:13. Lament (šfd): 1:13. Wail ('lh): 1:8. Mourn ('bl): 1:9, 10. Note also words for devastation/shame - Dry (Heb: ybsh, forming as hoviyysh): 1:10, 1:12 x 2. Ashamed (Heb: bösh, forming as hoviyysh with a play on words with previous word for 'dry'): 1:11, 1:12. Languishes (Heb: 'ml): 1:10, 12. Desolate (Heb: shmm): 1:17. Desolation (Heb: sh'mämäh): 2:3, 2:20, 4:19 x2. Note also the especially poetic statement in 1:10, "devastated is the field, the land mourns" (Heb: shuddad sädeh. 'äv'läh 'dämäh). Ultimately even hope itself dries up (1:12)!*

13. What other literary devices does the author use to emphasize his point? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see terse, punctuated statements in 1:14 - Sanctify a fast. Call an assembly. Gather the elders. Three two word sentences in a row, 2 2 2. Also we see sound plays in 1:15 - ük'shod mishadday. The language is picturesque and vivid. You can **hear** and **see** and **feel** the destruction.*

14. What should be the response to the event of chapter 1? (1 sentence)

*A: They need repentance!*

15. Are there any similarities and differences between how the event of chapter 1 is described and how the event of chapter 2 is described? If so, what are they? (1 paragraph)

*A: The locust attack of chapter 1 seems to be heightened in chapter 2. Now the locusts are described in metaphorical language (like, as). Some of the descriptions don't even seem to fit locusts. It is clear that the actual locust attack of chapter one, has prefigured the coming Day of Yahweh, when the devastation will be much greater, and there will be a massive attack. Locusts are 'like' horses anyway (2:4) (this natural correspondence is shown in that the German word for locust is 'heupferd' = "hay horse" and the Italian word is 'cavalletta' = "little horse").*

16. What should be the response to this event according to chapter 2? How is this response described? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again the response should be **repentance**. Blow the trumpet in Zion. Sanctify a fast. Call an assembly. Gather the people. Sanctify an assembly. Gather the elders. Gather the children. Seven short sentences (with only 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2 words). It is terse, with immediacy, lots of orders. A summons to repentance. Calling out to God. There is **staccato urgency**. Even nursing infants and brides and bridegrooms on their wedding night should listen. This is that important. It is a call for wholesale, fervent, national repentance.*

17. As you are reading through Joel, note the different verb tenses that are used. Look especially for past tense and future tense verbs and comment on how the use of verbs affects the interpretation of the book. (1 paragraph)

*A: See attached handout. The outline of the book can be clearly seen by the use of (Hebrew) verbs. The first section is predominantly perfects, while the second starts using imperfects, and the third uses weqatals.*

*Thus we see that the first section describes something in the **past** that is a harbinger of something that will happen in the **future**, the Day of Yahweh. Then in response, God will bless in the future as well after His people repent.*

18. What does true repentance look like according to Joel (Think about this!!! There is a lot here.)? What were the priests role in this and why is this significant? (1 paragraph)

*A: Repentance is: 1) Whole hearted: weeping, fasting, mourning (2:12); 2) A change in heart direction: shuv (2:12), a sorrow for sin, and **hatred** of it. 3) A true sorrow which is internal, not external (2:13). 4) The character of Yahweh motivates it (ie. He is gracious, etc., 2:13). True repentance is because of **who He is**. 5) There is no presumption upon God's grace (2:14), but a pleading for it. God calls for true sorrow and not **pennance**. It is so easy to get repentance wrong and not to be sad about what God displeases God. True repentance isn't sorrow about sin's consequences or affects, but how we have drug God's name in the dirt.*

*The priests were to be the intercessors for the people. They were to go between the porch and the altar, the place of intercession in the temple, and pray for God to be gracious to His people. They were to pray that God would not devastate His people and thus have His reputation marred among the nations.*

19. What reversals do we see in Joel at this point? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is no longer judging His people, but blessing them. He is going to remove the army and send grain, new wine, and oil. Their threshing floors and vats will overflow. He will bless abundantly. Moreover, He will **pour His Spirit upon them**.*

20. What will the Day of the LORD, ie. Yahweh's Day, look like according to Joel? Will Yahweh's Day be different for different people? How and why? What is the point/purpose of Yahweh's Day? What is He doing on that day? (1 paragraph)

*A: It will be a great and awesome day! When Yahweh appears, the earth will shake (cf. 2:10-11). Yahweh will act. He will save His people and judge His enemies (cf. 3:2, 12). The point of Yahweh's day is that He is going to act and **make Himself known** (3:17). In that day He will get all the glory. He will judge. No one will doubt how great Yahweh is on that day!*

21. What was the point of the book of Joel to its original recipients? How did the author stress and drive home this point? (1 paragraph)

*A: Repent, for Yahweh's Day is coming! He used vivid imagery and language to describe the awesome nature of Yahweh's day. It will be a fearful day. So it is important to be in right relationship with Him. If you are not, **you can still repent** and change your direction so that when Yahweh's Day comes, you will be saved and not judged.*

22. Application: How should we respond in light of Yahweh's coming day?

## 2. Where is Your Compassion: Jonah

**Scripture:** Jonah 1-4

**Theme:** God has a Heart for the Nations and Sovereignly Acts to Save them

**Objectives:**

- To Better Understand God's Heart and Plan for the Nations
- To Better Understand God's Sovereignty and Salvation
- To be Convicted by our own Lack of Compassion

**Reading:**

- Read Jonah *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Jonah

**Questions:**

### Chapter 1

1. When was Jonah written? Who was it written to? What was the setting? What were the recipients like at that time? There are two primary adjectives that can describe them, what are they (See 2nd Kings 14:23-29)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah was written to the northern kingdom during the reign of Jereboam II. They were very wicked and prosperous at that time.*

2. What was Nineveh like? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. They were **brutal**. They were the world power at the time. Lachish relief. They had conquered and attacked Israel in the not so distant past.*

3. Was Jonah a true prophet? Why or why not? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yes he was. We see his prophecy coming true in 1Ki 14:25, and Jonah 1:1 says that the word of Yahweh came to him. Also, see next question.*

4. How does the book of Jonah begin (the first two verses)? How does this beginning (especially verse 1) compare to other prophetic books? (1 sentence)

*A: Jonah begins just as we would expect a prophetic book to begin. God's Word came to Jonah.*

5. Where is God according to 1:2? Where do we see Jonah going in chapter 1? (1 sentence)

*A: God is **up** and we see Jonah going **down, down, down** (1:3, 5, 15).*

6. What happens in verse 3? Is this expected? What was Jonah's purpose/intent? Comment on his intention. Where is Nineveh? Where is Tarshish? Compare and contrast the two locations. What is repeated in verse 3? (Note: it is difficult to see in English, but 1:3 is one of the largest/clearest

chiasms [an X structure] in Hebrew. See if you can reproduce it and figure out what is emphasized. Remember that the emphasis is on what is in the center). (1 paragraph)

*A: Jonah goes in the exact opposite direction that God tells him to! He was trying to flee from Yahweh. This is impossible, and furthermore, ridiculous. As we'll see, you can't flee from God's presence. This is unprecedented. Jonah is the wrong-way prophet. Nineveh is north-east by land. Tarshish is south-west by sea. You can't go in a more opposite direction! **Tarshish** is repeated 3 times and is at the center of the chiasm. Also, going down is repeated twice. This verse strongly emphasizes Jonah's rebellion against Yahweh!*

7. So what does Yahweh do in verse 4 (Note, in Hebrew, verse 4 starts with a 'but')? What does this verse emphasize? Note how the author uses the verb in this verse throughout this chapter. What do you think the author is emphasizing by repeating this verb? What is the author showing by stating that the ship was about to break up (literally, 'thought to break up' in Hebrew)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh acted in response to Jonah. Jonah did this, **but** Yahweh did this. Yahweh hurled. He acted. The verb is a Hiphil, emphasizing Yahweh's causality. Yahweh in verse 4 intervened, and the rest of the events of the chapter are a result of His doing. The chain of verbs show that everything is linked back to Yahweh! He **hurled** the storm, so they **hurled** the cargo, so finally they **hurled** Jonah! Not only is this phrase, khishavah lehishaver rhymed, but also is personification. This emphasizes how severe the storm was that Yahweh brought, but that He was sovereignly bringing them to the edge of destruction..., but not over!*

8. What does verse 5 emphasize? Contrast the sailors with Jonah, what are they doing and what is he doing? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Verse 5 shows how severe the storm was. They had to throw their valuable cargo overboard! These were probably veterans, well trained for the long trip to Spain. The sailors are **praying**, but Jonah is **sleeping**!*

9. Thought question: Imagine you were in Jonah's situation. You're on a boat with a bunch of pagans that is about to go under. What do you think you would (or should!) be doing? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Praying and preaching! Telling them about the one, true God! And praying for His grace!*

10. What does the captain do in verse 6? What is so striking about the fact that the captain tells Jonah this? What does the similarity in phrasing between this verse and verse 2 emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This pagan sea captain rebukes Jonah, Yahweh's prophet, and tells him to pray! It should have been Jonah who was telling them to pray! How backwards! This pagan captain almost uses the exact **same words** as God in rebuking Jonah! It's as if the words of God are being echoed to Jonah in the mouth of this pagan sailor!*

11. What do the sailors do in verse 7? What makes them come to the conclusion that someone is responsible? What does the result signify? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They cast lots. The storm is so severe they come to the conclusion that a god must have sent it. This is a supernatural storm. The fact that the lot fell to Jonah signifies that Yahweh is sovereign. Jonah can't escape from His presence!*

12. Within the flow of the story, what has Jonah said or done up to verse 8? What is the point of all the questions within the flow of the narrative (transitioning from verses 1-7 to verse 9 and following)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah hasn't said or done anything except sleep. Here he has had this opportunity to proclaim the greatness of Yahweh to these sailors, but he hasn't even prayed! It takes a barrage of questions from the sailors to get Jonah to say anything at all! Jonah was a prophet and was supposed to be a mouthpiece for the living God, but he hasn't even said **one word**!*

13. What does Jonah finally do in verse 9? What is the irony here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Finally, the prophet speaks. This is a great **statement**. But it is ironic because his actions don't match his words. He says he fears Yahweh, but is trying to flee from Him!*

14. In contrast to what Jonah **says** in verse 9, what do the sailors **do** in verse 10? And **why** did they do this? Note the use of the word 'fear' throughout this chapter. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah **says** he fears Yahweh, the sailors **actually fear**. As we'll see the content of the sailors fear is changing. Eventually the chapter will end with a statement that the sailors fear Yahweh greatly. What an awesome statement of OT faith. Notice also that they rebuke Jonah once again. They knew you couldn't run away from the creator of the sea and the dry land!*

15. How do the sailors respond to Jonah in verse 11? What is amazing about this? How would you respond if you were one of these sailors? What would be the natural response? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They respond by asking him what to do. They **believed** him. The natural thing of course would be for them to immediately throw Jonah overboard. He was the one responsible, let's get rid of him!*

16. How do the sailors respond to Jonah's instructions of verse 12? What does this teach us about the sailors? How are they being contrasted with Jonah? How is Yahweh involved in this verse? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The sailors still don't throw Jonah overboard, even after he tells them to! This shows their great **compassion** for him which is in contrast to his compassion for them. They were the ones that really needed saving! Yahweh is still sovereignly overseeing the events, and doesn't allow their plan to work, so that He can work out His plan.*

17. What do the sailors do in verse 14? What do they emphasize? What does this teach us about them? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Now they are praying to Yahweh Himself! They stopped praying to their pagan gods, and now are relying on and trusting Yahweh. They were asking Him for mercy. They acknowledge God's sovereignty as well. They understood that sin has consequences, and so cast themselves on God for His grace.*



18. What does verse 15 teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: That Yahweh indeed caused the storm. As suddenly as it started, it stopped. There was clear **causality** in the storm being sent by Yahweh because of Jonah.*

19. What do we see so clearly in verse 16? (1 sentence)

*A: Finally, these sailors **fear Yahweh**! They get saved!*

20. [Optional] What is the fear of Yahweh in the OT? What does Psa 116:17-19 teach us relevant to this verse? What is a vow?

*A: Offering sacrifices and vowing vows were legitimate forms of OT worship. A true fear of Yahweh is salvific. The fear of Yahweh comes from an true understanding of His awesome nature. You will only fear one whom you believe to be great.*

21. Thought questions: What are the lessons we learn about God in this chapter? What did Yahweh do in this chapter? How is Jonah portrayed? How is he contrasted with the sailors? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is omnipresent and you can't flee from His presence. God is sovereign and you can't foil His plan. God sovereignly saved these sailors. He was in sovereign control of it all. He hurled the storm, preserved the ship, caused the lot, stopped the storm, and finally saved the sailors. Jonah was rebellious and not compassionate. He was indifferent. The sailors were compassionate. He had theology as clear as ice and twice as cold. Right doctrine without right living is worthless.*

22. [Optional] Thought question: How does chapter 1 foreshadow the main point of the book? How can a simple story/narrative have a convicting point? Who was this book written to again? Start to think about what the point of the book would have been to them. (2-3 sentences)

*A: While not as explicit, it hits on the major themes of God's sovereignty in salvation and compassion. A story can have a very sharp point, even though it is just a story! See the story Nathan told to David in 2nd Samuel 12:1-7a!*

## Chapter 2

23. Note that 1:17 is really 2:1 in Hebrew. What happens in 1:17? What is amazing about this? Take note of this verb and see if you can find it later in Jonah. What do you think this verb emphasizes? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh sovereignly **appoints** a fish to swallow Jonah! This truly is a great miracle. The verb appoint emphasizes God's calculating sovereignty. He works out all the details. He truly is in control. Think about the timing involved. God calculated many details for this to work out! God's calculating sovereignty! How many details God had to plan to make this happen!*

24. What does Jonah finally do in 2:1? (1 sentence)

*A: Jonah finally prays!*

25. What are some of the key themes that 2:2-7 emphasizes? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Although Jonah was helpless, God helped him. God was faithful and heard his prayer. God's temple is the place of His presence. Jonah who had fled from **God's presence**, is now thankful for it. Though he had sunk so low, God brought him up.*

26. What key word occurs in 2:8? What does this verse mean? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Hesed**. Those who follow after idols instead of after Yahweh forsake their opportunity for Yahweh's loyal love. Yahweh is faithful to those who trust in Him. He alone is the source of hesed, those who turn to idols will have none of it.*

27. What do we see Jonah say in verse 2:9? What does this remind us of? Why is the author drawing this comparison? What is he trying to teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah says the same things as the sailors. He was saved in the same way as they were. Yet, as we'll see, although he experienced the same salvation, he doesn't want others to experience it.*

28. What is the major point of this psalm of Jonah according to 2:9? But what is going to be the irony of this later? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah is so **thankful** for God's salvation. Yet, he doesn't want others to experience that same grace. This prayer is about salvation!*

29. What do we see emphasized again in 2:10? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh's complete sovereignty.*

### Chapter 3

30. How does chapter 3 begin (verses 1-2)? What does this remind us of? What does this suggest about the structure of the book? What do we know about Jonah's message from this introduction? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 3 begins just as chapter 1 did. We're starting over. The book is divided into two acts of two scenes, nicely fitting into the four chapters. We know that Jonah's message is straight from Yahweh. He is merely the mouthpiece.*

31. Jonah 3:3 literally says that Nineveh was a great city 'to God'. Why do you think it says that? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God cared about Nineveh. That is the point of the whole story! God has compassion, God cares! Nineveh was a large city, even by human standards. According to an ancient historian it was 60 miles in circumference, with 100 foot high walls, three chariots wide, with 1500 towers. While that is probably an exaggeration, it was a big city.*

32. Why does God have Jonah proclaim a message of destruction to Nineveh? Why is there a 40 day time limit? How would you characterize Jonah's message? Is the short quote likely all Jonah said? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The message of destruction was actually a call to repent. That's why there was a 40 day time limit. God wouldn't need to send Jonah all the way to Nineveh if He just wanted to destroy it. He would just send fire from heaven. Jonah understood this, which is why he fled in the first place. The people of Nineveh understood this as well, that's why they repent instead of fleeing. Thus, Jonah's message is not a prophecy, but a call to repentance. Furthermore, this short quote is probably just a summary of what he said...*

33. How does the city respond to this message? What do you think the significance is to the fact that the text says that they "believed in God", rather than just saying that they "believed God"? Optional: Where else in the OT is this key word for believe? (1 paragraph)

*A: The text seems to clearly state that the Ninevites, like the sailors, were saved. They believed in God, ie. they placed their trust in Him. This word for belief is a key OT word, the same word used in Gen 15:6; Exo 4:31; 14:31; Isa 53:1, etc. Not only did they believe and trust in Yahweh, but responded in humility. Notice also there is an emphasis on the widespread nature of the response, from the least to the greatest. Thus we see that now God sovereignly saved Nineveh!!!*

34. Does Jonah 3:6 strictly happen after 3:5 (chronologically)? Why or why not (This question will be important later)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: No. 3:5 is a summary statement, and now 3:6 comes back in and fills in the details. 3:5 states that all of Nineveh believed in Yahweh from the least to the greatest, and as an example 3:6 states what happened when the word came to the greatest of them, ie. their king.*

35. How does the king respond? What does his response show? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He responds by getting off his throne, taking off his robe, and covering himself with ashes. This shows great humility and true repentance. He even makes a proclamation that the whole city should respond in like manner. Amazing that the greatest king on the earth would respond in such a way!*

36. What does the statement in 3:9 show? (2-3 sentences)

*A: That the king wasn't presuming upon God's grace. Once again a statement of humility! God alone is sovereign. He alone saves!*

37. What words are repeated in 3:8-10 (there are several)? What does their repetition emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: return/turn (shuv), relent (nakham), evil (raah). The repetition of shuv serves to emphasize that they did a 180, and completely repented/turned around. It is a change of their thoughts and ensuing actions. Because they turn from their evil, God relents and turns from the evil He was going to do to them. It is consistent.*

38. So how does God respond? Does God 'relenting' mean that He changed His mind? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)

*A: God responds by relenting. Because they turned from their evil way, God relents from the 'evil' He was going to do to them. God acted consistently with how they responded. Because God is faithful, He must always judge sin and always forgives true repentance. Thus, God doesn't change at all, but His response to people changes when people change, it must because He must stay true to His word and be faithful!*

#### **Chapter 4**

39. How does Jonah respond to God saving Nineveh (in 4:1)? Note that when it says "Jonah was greatly displeased", in Hebrew it literally reads "So it eviled a great evil to Jonah." Why do you think the author repeats this word evil from 3:8 and 3:10 (2x)? What is the author trying to emphasize by this connection (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: When the Ninevites turned from their evil, God turned from the evil He was going to do to them, and this is evil to Jonah! **What is good to God is evil to Jonah!** Jonah's value system is all backwards.*

40. What do we finally learn in 4:2 that we didn't know all throughout the story? What did Jonah not want so badly? Why (think about this!)? What does this imply about God's purpose for sending Jonah to Nineveh? What was Jonah's [wrong] thinking that led him to this? Where in the OT is Jonah quoting? What part of this verse is not from the OT quote, but is found elsewhere in Jonah? What connection is the author making? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Here we finally learn the reason Jonah fled to Tarshish. It was because He knew God's gracious and compassionate character. Jonah so badly didn't want Nineveh to be saved. He was fiercely national. He was more loyal to Israel than to God! The Assyrians were against Israel, and therefore against God's plan. At least so Jonah thought. But he missed the main point of it all, which is for God's salvation to go to the nations! This shows that God's purpose all along in sending Jonah to Nineveh was to save them! Why else would he send Jonah? And Jonah knew this because it is at the heart of who God is. Notice Jonah quotes Exodus 34:6 about God's character. This is at the heart of who God is. The last part of the quote is actually not a quote from Exodus, but from earlier in Jonah (end of chapter 3). Jonah knew what the outcome at the end of chapter 3 would be (God relented concerning evil), which is the same phrase here. The author links the two to show that God's relenting of evil is part of His character that Jonah well knew. **We think we deserve God's grace! That's why we lack compassion.***

41. What other key word do we see in 4:2 that we have seen earlier in Jonah (hint: chapter 2)? What is the irony of its use here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Heseid is repeated from chapter 2. Jonah was so thankful for God's heseid to him. But now he is absolutely infuriated that God is showing His heseid to others... Jonah is glad for God's nature as it relates to Him, but doesn't want God to be of the same nature in reference to others. What a contradiction!*

42. What is the irony of 4:3? What is God's point in 4:4? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The irony of 4:3 is that God saved Jonah and Jonah was so thankful in chapter 2. Now he would rather be dead than God show that same salvation to others. The point of 4:4 is that Jonah didn't have good reason to be angry. But more about this reasoning as the story unfolds.*

43. Do you think 4:5 comes after 4:1-4 chronologically? Why or why not? Talk about the chronology of chapter 4 and why the author arranges his material as he does? What is the point? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As in chapter 3, there is a flashback here. 4:5 jumps back to fill in the details left out of the first four verses. The author places the material in 4:5 and following in this fashion so as to end the book with a rhetorical question. This way all the loose ends have already been tied up (specifically, 4:2 and why Jonah was so angry) and thus allows the author to end the book in this way.*

44. What phrase do we see in 4:6 that reminds us of something said in 4:1? What is the author trying to emphasize by using a similar phrase here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Jonah was extremely happy about the plant, but extremely sad about Nineveh being saved. The same grammar is used of Jonah's extreme happiness and sadness in 4:6 and 4:1. This is very intentional and the author is using this to set up how ironic it is that Jonah is happy about something so trivial, and cares so little about Nineveh.*

45. What verb occurs in 4:6, 4:7, and 4:8 that we have seen before? What is the author emphasizing by using it again here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God appoints (manah). God is sovereignly setting Jonah up. The whole point of the book is going to hinge on this setup. It's all a part of God's plan.*

46. What words/phrases do we see in 4:8-9 that we have seen before? What does their repetition signal to us here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see very similar phrases to earlier in chapter 4, most likely signalling that indeed we are in a flashback. This is a very similar grammatical construction to what we saw earlier in the chronology of the transition between 3:5 and 3:6 (see previous question).*

47. What is contrasted in 4:10 and 4:11? Why? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jonah and God are contrasted in 4:10 and 4:11. In Hebrew this contrast is made very clear via a disjunctive clause starting 4:11 (with emphatic personal pronoun). Jonah had compassion on that which he didn't work for and was very insignificant. Why shouldn't God have compassion on Nineveh, people made in His own image which He created and took care of. We should be like God! Moreover, they were ignorant. They didn't have God's law, and though still responsible, were in some senses morally unaware.*

48. What is God's point in 4:10-11? By what means does God make this point? Why does He make His point in this way? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Where is your compassion?** The point is made via a question. This is a very rhetorical and powerful way to end the book.*

49. Thought question: What is the overall point of the book of Jonah? How would/should the original recipients been affected by it? (1 paragraph)

*A: We need to have compassion. The original recipients should have been cut to the heart because of their lack of compassion for the nations. They had lost the purpose that God had created the nation of Israel for. They were wicked and rich, complacent and disobedient, much like Jonah was. But God cares for the nations. He wants to save them!*

50. [Optional] Thought question: Come up with chapter titles for each chapter of Jonah to help review/summarize the flow of the book. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 1- God sovereignly saves the sailors. Chapter 2- God sovereignly saves Jonah. Chapter 3- God sovereignly saves Nineveh. Chapter 4- Jonah gets mad.*

51. [Optional] Thought question: Who do you think wrote the book of Jonah? Why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Probably Jonah did. Most likely he didn't record his repentance because this made the point of the book so much stronger. He likely heard the point made by God at the end of the book and repented. Think how much humility it would have taken him to write it!*

52. Application: Think about what the Ninevites were like and think who would be the 'Ninevites' in our own lives? What does this book teach us about God and His desire for people? What do we learn about the character and purposes of God from this book?

### 3. Yahweh Roars: Amos

**Scripture:** Amos 1-9

**Theme:** Yahweh Roars in Power to Shake People out of Complacency

**Objectives:**

- To Fear the Awesome Nature of Yahweh
- To be Shaken out of our Complacency

**Reading:**

- Read Amos *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Amos

**Questions:**

1. When was Amos alive? Who is his letter to (hint: 1:1; 2:4-5, also 7:10-17)? What was the situation at the time? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Very similar background as Jonah. Amos lived during Jereboam II as well. A wicked and prosperous time. The letter seems to be predominantly to the north, but also includes the south as well (cf. Amos 2:4-5ff. which includes Judah but culminates with Israel).*

2. What is the structure of Amos? (1 sentence)

A:

*Introduction (Amos 1:1)*

*Judgment (1:2-9:6)*

**Yahweh Roars** (Amos 1:2)

*Judgment is Coming against All Nations (Amos 1:1-2:16)*

*Aram [Syria] (1:3-5)*

*Philistia (1:6-8)*

*Tyre (1:9-10)*

*Edom (1:11-12)*

*Ammon (1:13-15)*

*Moab (2:1-3)*

*Judah (2:4-5)*

*Israel (2:6-16)*

*Oracles Explain Judgment is coming for Proud Injustice (Amos 3:1-6:14)*

*Oracle 1 (3:1-15)*

*Oracle 2 (4:1-13)*

*Dirge (5:1-6:14)*

*Visions Show the Certainty and Unescapability of Judgment (Amos 7:1-9:6)*

*Locust swarm (7:1-3)*

*Fire (7:4-6)*

*Plumb line (7:7-9)*

*Historical Interlude (7:10-17)*

*Picked ripe fruit (8:1-14)*

*Yahweh by the altar (9:1-6)*

*Restoration (Amos 9:7-15)*

3. What was Amos' background? Where was he from (Cf. Amo 1:1; 7:14)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Amos was a shepherd and farmer from south of Jerusalem in Judah. He was not a prophet or the son of the prophet, but Yahweh called him to proclaim a message to His people.*

4. How does the book begin right off the bat in 1:2? How would you describe the tone? Does this tone continue throughout the rest of the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Amos begins with a powerful introduction that hits you between the eyes! He doesn't hold back, but tells it as it is. This is a very **vivid** and **rhetorical** book. The whole book follows the tone of the opening verse.*

5. Describe the pattern found in 1:3-2:16. Why do you think Amos uses this repetition? How would the original readers have felt as this section progressed? What would the repetition produce in the hearers? What receives the emphasis in this section? (1 paragraph)

*A: It begins with "Thus says Yahweh," and continues "For 3 transgression of X and for 4 I will not revoke its punishment." Then it gives the reasons they deserve punishment. This X/X+1 style of parallelism is frequent in Hebrew poetry and is used for poetic effect. Here it may be emphasizing the great number of transgressions. As Yahweh progressed through the various nations, Israel probably would have felt **justified** as her enemies will be judged by God. The repetition raises the tension of the section as it continues on. Then finally, **even Judah** will be judged! And moreover, the climax is reached in a lengthy section on Israel. The point is that God will judge His people, just as He will judge the other nations!*

6. Why is Judah held guilty? Why is Israel held guilty? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Judah is primarily held responsible for not keeping the law. As opposed to the other nations, God's people had His law. They should have kept it. With **more privileges** comes **more responsibility**. With Israel, the violations are detailed more specifically. They have a lot to do with being **rich** and **complacent, oppressing the poor**. The nations should have known that brutality is wrong, because of general revelation. But Israel is held to a higher standard. More revelation, more knowledge, and more blessing mean more responsibility to care for the poor, and further God's mission to the world.*

7. What is the result given for Judah in 2:5? How do verses 2:9-11 serve to reinforce what is being said to Israel? What is the result for Israel in 2:12-16? (1 paragraph)

*A: Even Judah will be judged, just as the other nations. As for Israel, according to 2:9-11, they are even more culpable, because God dealt with them so **graciously**. Yet even in light of all that Yahweh did for Israel, she still rebelled. So as a result there will be judgment for Israel. They will not escape. They can not trust in their speed or strength or horses. There will be nothing that will save from Yahweh in that day, the coming day of Yahweh!*

8. In 3:1-2, what is the reason stated that God will punish His people? Did they (and we also!) tend to think that being God's people increased or decreased their **responsibility**? What do these verses teach about this? (1 paragraph)



*A: This is one of the major themes of this book. They tended to think that since they were God's people, He wouldn't judge them. They rested and relied on their covenant status, rather than on their covenant God. Their being in relationship with God only **heightened their culpability**. Therefore God will judge them for their sin. They depended on externals. We need to rely on Yahweh Himself.*

9. What rhetorical feature(s) do we see again in 3:3-8? What is the point of this section? How does 3:3-6 add to this point? (1 paragraph)

*A: We see repetition once again in 3:3-8. Amos loves repetition. We also see rhetorical questions for effect. Amos begins by asking rhetorical questions that have an implied answer of 'no'. They all have to do with **causality**. There are **reasons** why things happen. People naturally can draw a conclusion from a result. The point is that judgment is surely coming because it was proclaimed by Yahweh's prophets. This isn't made up, it was revealed by God. God spoke and so the prophets by necessity had to speak. It's a simple matter of cause and effect. And yet the people heard the prophets speak, but didn't believe that God would actually judge His people. They missed the simple cause and effect! Lord Yahweh is a lion. He has roared. Do we **fear Yahweh** because of how He has revealed Himself to be in the prophets??*

10. What word is repeated several times in chapter one, that finds itself again in 3:9-11? Why is this emphasized? What is the point (cf. also 6:8)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: People trust in their **citadels**. But they are an empty trust. They can't save from Lord Yahweh! They will be judged.*

11. What was so significant about Bethel (3:14)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: That was where Jereboam I set up the golden calf (and one at Dan) to prevent people from going to Jerusalem to worship. Pretty much all the northern kings followed in his wickedness. Jereboam II specifically is stated to have followed in the wicked ways of his forefather.*

12. What do we see about people of Israel in 3:15? What about in 4:1? (2-3 sentences)

*A: In 3:15 we see Israel's **luxury** and **ease**. They were comfortable and didn't need God. They trusted in themselves and their citadels. They trusted in their covenant status. And so God will judge. We see the same thing in 4:1. Bashan was known for its greenness and so also the fatness of its cows. They were fat and happy, and oppressed the poor. They were domineering. And so God will judge!*

13. What rhetorical feature do we see in 4:4-5? What's the point? (2-3 sentences)

*A: In 4:4-5 we see thick **sarcasm**. Amos is in your face! The point is that God cares about the **heart**, and not merely going through the externals.*

14. What is the point of 4:6-11? What rhetorical features are used? What did God do? What was He 'trying to achieve' in doing so? Did it happen? Why or why not? What do we learn about God from this? (1 paragraph)

*A: God **sovereignly** punished them to teach them to turn to Him, but they didn't get the point. He kept calling them back to Him with circumstances, trying to show them that they needed to return. God sovereignly was behind all these 'natural' occurrences, and they should have realized He was calling them.*

He did such **obvious** and **selective** things, like making it rain on certain cities, or bringing severe judgment, but they still didn't return. Notice the repetition again. We learn God's patience in dealing with His people and also His sovereignty. Every event is under His sovereign control! Yet they didn't get the message!

15. What is the effect of 4:12-13? How would you describe these two verses? Note that the word 'prepare' is literally, 'brace yourself'. (1 paragraph)

A: This is the first of several awesome descriptions of God. You better be prepared. You better brace yourself. Lord Yahweh is a lion. He is completely sovereign. He is majestic. This book is about **pride**, **self-reliance**, **complacency**, and **dependence**. God wants to shake us out of our self-reliance and to rely solely on Him. We can easily relate. We are so rich and often so self-reliant...

16. What phrase/verb is repeated 3x/4x in chapter 5? What do you think one of the main points of this chapter is? (1 sentence)

A: **Seek Yahweh and you will live!**

17. What is the function of 5:8-9 again? (1 sentence)

A: Once again we see a glimpse of the awesomeness of Yahweh: He is the magnificent Creator who is sovereign over all of His majestic creation.

18. How is Israel described again in 5:10-12? (1 sentence)

A: Is shown to be rich, complacent and **oppressing the poor**, again!

19. What does 5:18-20 teach us about Israel? Were they looking forward to Yahweh's day? Why were they or why were they not looking forward to it? Should they have been looking forward to it? Why or why not? How does 5:21-27 reinforce this thought? (1 paragraph)

A: They were actually looking forward to Yahweh's day! They **thought** they were in right relationship with Him. They went through a lot of motions. They thought Yahweh's day would be when He would judge their enemies. But in reality, it would be the day in which **they** would not escape! This was syncretism. Yahweh, because of who He is, demands to be worshiped in a particular way. We too should fear that we are worshiping Him as He desires. Materialism + Christianity = Syncretism as well! Our idols = covetousness. In 5:21-27 we see that they went through many of the motions, thinking they were serving Yahweh. They sang songs to Him, they sacrificed to Him, they went to festivals for Him. But Yahweh wants **justice** and **righteousness**. He wants a humble heart that depends upon Him and has compassion on other people the way He does!

20. Who does Yahweh say 'woe' to in 6:1-6? How are they described? What does 6:3 mean? What does Yahweh tell them He is going to do? How does 6:9-14 reinforce this? (1 paragraph)

A: Yahweh says woe to Judah and Samaria, those in the capitals. Once again they are described in terms of **luxury**. They sing and drink, and recline and think they are safe. They put off the day of calamity and so bring near the seat of violence. By saying that destruction would never come, they in reality bring it near. If they would simply acknowledge their sin and **repent**, they would be spared. But they keep saying, 'peace, peace, peace', and trust in themselves. Yahweh tells them that they are no better than other nations who

*have been judged, and that they will be judged too. They will go into exile! **God hates their pride, arrogance of self reliance!** They will be exiled! They trusted in their own strength (6:13). Yet God is going to judge according to 6:9-11, 14.*

21. What is the point of the three visions in 7:1-9? (1 sentence)

*A: God is patient and He will spare; But there comes a point in which judgment must come.*

22. What happens in 7:10-17? Why were Amaziah and Jereboam upset with Amos? What does Amos tell them? What are good character qualities to learn from Amos here? (1 paragraph)

*A: Amos goes to Bethel in the north to prophesy against them. They were upset with him because he was prophesying judgment. They just wanted to hear peace. But Amos doesn't hold back. He tells Amaziah that his wife will be a harlot and his children die in the exile, and the nation will certainly be exiled. Amos has **hutzpah**, guts. Think of his boldness to stand up to the leaders, in their own city, and tell them these things! We need to **stand up for God** like Amos! Sometimes following God doesn't mean being nice!*

23. What is the point of chapter 8? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The end is coming! There is a pun here, 'summer fruit' sounds like 'end'. **The time is ripe!** We see the same things as earlier. They oppressed the poor. They cheat and break His law. So judgment will come. He will not forget.*

24. What is the point of 9:1-4? (1 sentence)

*A: There will be no escaping. Judgment is sure to come!*

25. What do we see again in 9:5-6? What does 9:7 emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Here is another awesome description of Yahweh. This is His name. This is His character. This is who Yahweh is. He is the sovereign over all creation. In 9:7 we see Yahweh's sovereignty over the nations. He moves and places them as He will. He is indeed Lord Yahweh. [Aside on how the Philistines came from Caphtor their Greek origin]*

26. How does the book end in 9:8-15? Why is this? What is the point of verse 9-10? What are the promises He makes to His people? (1 paragraph)

*A: Even though God is going to judge His people, He will not totally destroy the house of Jacob. God is still faithful to His promises. In 9:9-10 God will make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. God will only judge the wicked. He promises to restore them, and to not uproot them again. He promises to raise up the fallen booth of David, the **Messianic hope** that the **kingdom** would be restored. This alludes to the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast that celebrates the coming of God's Kingdom. The people would stay in tents as a reminder that this world is not our home, and to look forward to the permanence and peace that will characterize God's kingdom.*

27. Application: What do we learn from Amos that changes our daily lives?

28. Application: What do we learn about justice and complacency from Amos?

#### 4. Relationship with Yahweh: Hosea

**Scripture:** Hosea 1-14

**Theme:** God Wants Relationship with His People and will Bring it about

**Objectives:**

- To Better Understand what Relationship with Yahweh looks like
- To Create a Desire for Relationship with Yahweh

**Reading:**

- Read Hosea 1-3 *four times* and Hosea 4-14 *twice*
- Read Chisholm's section on Hosea

**Questions:**

1. When did Hosea prophesy? Who was the book written to? (1 sentence)

*A: Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jereboam II once again and his book was mainly written to Israel (cf. 1:4).*

2. What is the tone of the book of Hosea? What adjectives would you use to describe it? How does this tone fit into the message of the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This book is **passionate**, **emotional**, and **pleading**. This book is an emotional appeal to the people. He calls them to return to Him!*

3. How would you describe the difference between chapters 1-3 and 4-14? Describe the differences in style, tone, etc.? How do the two parts of the book fit into a consistent message (think about this!)? How does each section help interpret the other? (1 paragraph)

*A: The first half is more of a narrative/dialog, while the second half is more of a **diatribe**! They both speak about God's relationship with His people. One from an illustrative point of view, and the second from a more literal one. The second half of the book is almost like a diatribe by an enraged husband at his unfaithful wife. God is **jealous** for His people. The emphasis on '**knowing**' shows that both aspects of the book focus on God's relationship with His people.*

4. What (single) word would you use to describe what Yahweh wants from His people according to Hosea? Why do you think that? How do both sections of Hosea emphasize this? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh wants **relationship** from His people. The first three chapters are all about a marriage and marriage faithfulness. God views His relationship with His people as a marriage. He entered into **covenant** with them at Sinai. The second half of the book repeatedly repeats the word '**know**' which has relational and even intimate connotations. God wants a real relationship with His people!*

5. What does God ask Hosea to do in 1:2? Do you think Gomer was already promiscuous when Hosea married her? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)

A: God asks Hosea to go and marry a prostitute. The most literal reading of 1:2 is "take a wife of fornications and children of fornications." If Gomer already has children, then she was already promiscuous! This also seems to fit the analogy better with Yahweh, as Hosea says that Israel was already unfaithful when Yahweh married her. There is no command against this in the law (only for priests). How could Hosea's legitimate son in 1:3 be called a child of fornications???

6. How would you feel if you were Hosea? What do we learn from him? (2-3 sentences)

A: This is tough! One of the toughest commands in Scripture. Note his faithful obedience. Fulfilling Yahweh's plans is always more important than our personal plans/ambitions/desires!

7. What does God say He is going to do in 1:4-6? What about in 1:7? Why the difference? (2-3 sentences)

A: God is going to put an end to the kingdom of Israel, and have no compassion and no forgiveness for them. Yet, He will save the house of Judah. He will deliver them, but not by human means so that they will know that salvation comes from Him (1:7). Judah contained the line of David, and God will be faithful to His promises.

8. What is the significance of the names of Hosea's three children? (2-3 sentences)

A: The first is Jezreel, because that is where God is going to judge Israel because of the violence done there. The second is named Lo-ruḥāmāh, because God will not show compassion to His people to forgive them. The third is called Lo-ammiy, because they are not His people any more. The relationship is broken!

9. What happens in 1:10-2:1? Why does this happen? What references are there in this section to other Scripture? (2-3 sentences)

A: God states that His judgment will not be forever. He makes reference to the **Abrahamic covenant** (sand of the sea, 1:10). God will certainly keep His Word. There will be a complete reversal, and each of the three children's names will be reversed. Both Israel and Judah will be restored and reunited. They will have one ruler, the Messianic King!

10. How does 2:2 begin? What verb is used (twice)? What does it signify in terms of what the rest of the chapter is? Why is Yahweh going to do this? (2-3 sentences)

A: In English the first word of 2:2 is 'contend' (Hebrew 'riyb'). This is a **dispute**. It is an entreaty. It has a courtroom conotation. The dispute is over the fact that Israel has been an unfaithful wife.

11. So what is Yahweh going to do in 2:3-13? What did Israel think in 2:5, 8? How does 2:7 show what Yahweh's purpose was in doing this? What was the result of all the good things that Yahweh gave Israel in 2:15? (1 paragraph)

A: Yahweh is going to judge Israel, so that her sins are exposed and so she can't trust in her lovers, but **must trust in Yahweh**. He will take her back to where she was without Yahweh so she can see her need of Yahweh. Israel actually **thought** that her abundance came from Baal, when in reality it came from Yahweh. She ran after her lovers thinking that they were providing for her, when in reality the whole time it was Yahweh who was providing for her. So when **Yahweh takes these things away**, it will cause Israel to **go back** to her

husband! The result of all Yahweh's gifts was that Israel got **self-sufficient** and **forgot** the giver! Therefore He is going to take away the gifts so that she will seek Him once again.

*This is often what God has to do to us as well! He has to take away from us the things that we truly love to cut the ties that bind us to this world. In this way **discipline** is always loving, because Yahweh wants all of our hearts!*

12. Then what is Yahweh going to do in 2:14-23? What kind of language is used in 2:14? Where is Achor and why is it significant? What does 'Iyshiy and Ba'liy mean? Why does Yahweh say this? What culminates this in 2:19-20? What does this mean? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh is going to seek after His people! This is **bold** and **daring** language. Yahweh is going to **allure** His people. Yahweh is actually going to **pursue** His faithless people! Achor is where Achan sinned when the people first entered the land. It was a sign of sin and judgment as they first entered the land. But when they enter again, it will be a sign of hope. 'Iyshiy means 'my husband' while Ba'liy means 'my husband/lord' (with Baal connotations). Yahweh will **betroth** His people to Himself **forever**! And He will ensure that they will be faithful! The relationship will never be broken again. They will know Yahweh, there will be an intimate relationship that will never be severed. God will bless His people and the covenant blessings will flow upon them.*

13. What does God tell Hosea to do in 3:1-2? Where does he buy her from in 3:2? What is the lesson here about Yahweh and His people? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God tells Hosea to go and **love his wife** again. Presumably, Hosea has to buy his own wife back from the market where she is being sold as a slave/prostitute. Yahweh is going to love His people, even though they were unfaithful. He is the **initiator**! He is the **pursuer**! And He does this even for those who are unfaithful!*

14. What will be the end result of all this? (1 paragraph)

*A: So in the end, Israel **will return** to Yahweh! They will repent and there will be a change of heart. They will seek Yahweh and His king David. They will not seek false kings, but the true king, the Messiah, who will reign over them. They will come trembling, in dependence on Yahweh on not themselves. He will allure them and they will be in right relationship with Him once again. This will all happen in the last days.*

15. Note each occurrence of the words 'know' or 'knowledge' in Hosea. How are they used? How does this relate to the overall message of the book? What other related terms are used? What does it mean to know God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 'Know' is repeated all throughout the book. This is because this book is all about **relationship** with Yahweh, knowing Him. The problem is that they don't know Him. They **forgot** him (4:6). They didn't have an intimate relationship with Him. The word is not merely intellectual. It even has intimate connotations.*

16. Although hard to see in English, there is a word used in 4:1, 4:4 (2x), that we already saw in 2:2. What is it? What does it suggest is a major point of the section beginning in chapter 4? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is a **dispute** with Israel about her unfaithfulness. The key word is 'rib' in Hebrew.*

17. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 4:14-17. (1 sentence)

*A: In 4:14 we see that God won't punish Israel in judgment of them! He will just leave them in their sin! And as we see in 4:16, God can't even bless Israel, because they wouldn't appreciate His blessing. A prostitute wouldn't even appreciate the joy of godly submission to a husband! So God leaves them to their own devices (4:17, cf. 5:4).*

18. What is the significance of 6:1-6:3 for the point of the book (note also 5:15 which transitions from the previous section 5:1-14)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to judge His people (5:1-14). He will judge them and leave them until they recognize their need for Him and seek after Him (5:15)! **Finally**, in their **affliction** they will seek Yahweh. Even though He judged them, He is not done with them! The purpose of the book is to call them to return! God still loves and will pursue and change His people in the end! If God didn't care about His people He wouldn't get mad about them chasing after other gods!*

19. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 6:6. (1 sentence)

*A: God wants us to know Him, not do for Him. He cares about a relationship with Him rather than in sacrifice. Going through the motions just won't do! God doesn't need us to further His mission, He doesn't need our sacrifice. It is so easy to get focussed on **doing** rather than **being**. We need to just chill with God. We need to abide in Him. **He wants a relationship with us not what we can give Him!** How much time do we spend with God? Even Jesus, who as God's Son had so much to do, spent so much time alone with God.*

20. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 7:9-10 and 7:13-14 (1 sentence each)

*A: Though God has judged them and put their pride in the dirt, for all that God has done to humble them, they still don't recognize their need for Him! They don't **recognize or know or realize** what has happened to them! And as we in 7:13-14, they have sinned against their only hope and won't look to Him!*

21. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 8:14. (1 sentence)

*A: The issue is that Israel has **forgotten** how great their God is, and so God will judge so that they remember how great He is and how badly they need Him!*

22. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 10:1-2. (1 sentence)

*A: Israel's **prosperity** and **false security** is what caused her to trust in her riches instead of her God and so He must judge those things!*

23. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 10:12-13. (1 sentence)

*A: If they want blessing, the only way to **seek** it is to pursue righteousness in the hard work of planting. But they have worked hard at unrighteousness and so will reap injustice!*

24. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 11:1-4. (1 sentence)



*A: Yahweh so graciously lead Israel. Her history should cause them to love Yahweh for all that He did for them!*

25. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 11:8-11 (especially vs. 8!). (2-3 sentences)

*A: Notice the **passion** with which Yahweh entreats them! Yahweh loves His people. He wants a relationship with them. This is shocking in light of their unfaithfulness to Him.*

26. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 12:2-6. (1 sentence)

*A: Their forefather wrestled with God, recognized his need and fought for the blessing.*

27. Comment briefly on the meaning/significance of 13:4-6. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh is Israel's God. He redeemed them from Egypt and became their God! They should not have been in relationship with any other god. No other god can save like He! He cared for them so tenderly, but once they were secure they forgot their God! Being satisfied they became proud and self-sufficient. God is saying that **He is enough**. We don't need other gods! Is relationship with God all we **need**?*

28. Comment on the meaning/significance of 14:1-9. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Israel needs to return to Yahweh. **He will receive them if they do.** If they trust in Him, He will forgive. He will save. He will heal their apostasy and love them.*

29. Thought question: Can a husband and wife have a good relationship without knowing each other? If they never talk and spend time with one another, will their relationship be a good one? Explain.

30. Application: Do you have a **relationship** with Yahweh? How do you foster that relationship? How do you know Him?

31. Application: What does this book teach us about faithfulness and pursuing love in relationship?

## **5. The Holy God Saves Sinful People: Isaiah 1-5**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1-5

**Theme:** The Plan of The Holy God to Save a Sinful People to Demonstrate His Glory

**Objectives:**

- To understand the background and setting of Isaiah
- To understand the purpose, and message of the book of Isaiah
- To be humbled beneath the awesome holiness of God

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 1-5 thoughtfully *three times*
- Read Webb's Introduction (19-39) and section on Isaiah 1-5 (41-58)
- Read Oswalt's Introduction: II. A. (4-13), VIII (31-44), and X (54-60)
- Skim Isaiah *once* (trying to get a general feel of the contents of each chapter) [due at end of first full week]

**Questions:**

1. What is the basic structure of Isaiah?

A: Cf. Oswalt

1-5	<u>Introduction/Overview</u>
6	<u>Isaiah's Call</u>
7-35	<u>Book of Judgment</u>
7-12	Book of Immanuel (Ahaz)
13-23	Oracles against the Nations
24-35	Who will you trust?
36-39	<u>Narrative Hinge</u> (Hezekiah)
40-66	<u>Book of Comfort</u>
40-55	The Saving Servant (The 4 songs)
56-66	The Consummation of New Creation

2. When did Isaiah prophesy? Who did he prophesy to? Summarize what was Israel/Judah was like in those time periods? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isaiah was called as prophet in the year of King Uzziah's death (cf. Isa 6:1), and ministered during the reigns of 4 successive kings of Judah:

Judah's Kings

- 1) Uzziah (Azariah) [792-740 B.C.] - 1:1; 6:1; 7:1;  
cf. 2Ki 14:21-22; 15:1-7
- 2) Jotham [750-731 B.C.] - 1:1; 7:1;  
cf. 2Ki 15:5-7, 32-38
- 3) Ahaz [735-715 B.C.] - 1:1; 7:1, 3, 10, 12; 14:28;  
cf. 2Ki 15:38; 16:1-20
- 4) Hezekiah [729-686 B.C.] - 1:1; 36:1-39:8;

cf. 2Ki 18:1-20:21

5) Manasseh [697-642 B.C.]

cf. 2Ki 21:1-18

Israel's kings:

1) Menahem [752-742 B.C.]

2) Pekah [752-732 B.C.]

3) Pekahiah [742-740 B.C.]

4) Hoshea [732-722 B.C.]

So, Isaiah functioned as the official "court prophet" for over 53 years...

According to tradition Isaiah goes into retirement during Manasseh's evil reign and probably writes the book then.

Isaiah produced an official chronicle of Uzziah (2Ch 26:22) and Hezekiah (2Ch 32:32).

3. How would you describe the book of Isaiah? Do you think it was all written at one time? Do you think it is a collection of sorts? Why or why not? Why do you think chapter 2:1 begins with another 'introduction'? Are there different parts of the book with different settings? Why or why not? Do the various parts fit into a consistent message? (1 paragraph)

*A: Isaiah is an **anthology**, yet all written and compiled and put together into its final form with a consistent message from a single prophet. The various portions were written at different times and settings in his life and addressing different situations and times for God's people, but Isaiah has compiled it all together with a **definite flow, structure, and single message**. This will be clear as we analyze the book.*

4. What title is used of God in Isaiah that occurs throughout the book and is not very common elsewhere in Scripture? What does this title mean? Why do you think this is such a significant title for Isaiah? This could very well be called a technical term in his vocabulary. What can we learn about Isaiah, the nation which he is a part of, and the God that he serves *through the way that this term is used*? The key question is: why does this term, of all the possibilities, feature in the book so prominently (1:4; 5:24; 10:17-20; 12:6; 29:19; 30:11, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 15, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14)? What is God's Holiness contrasted with through the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Holy One of Israel is a title Isaiah frequently uses of God. God is Holy. He is different than people. **He alone is righteous and completely so**. God's glory and majesty fills the entire universe, yet His people refuse to see Him. They are obstinate, hard hearted, and even more bull-headed than an ox. In sum, God is high and lifted up while His people languish in sin and rebellion. As we will see, God will only be able to work through His people when He deals with the sin issue!*

5. How does chapter 1 begin in verse 2? Why does it begin this way? What type of setting is established with this opening? Where have we seen the heavens and the earth in Scripture up to this point in progressive revelation? Note how many of the Mosaic covenant curses are in this chapter. Which ones can you discover? (1 paragraph)

*A: Listen O heavens, and hear O earth. Yahweh is summoning them as witnesses and is establishing a **courtroom** setting. This is reminiscent of Deuteronomy where heaven and earth were called as witnesses to*

the covenant. See Deu 30:19; 32:1. Covenant echoes include: land desolate, cities burned (Isa 1:9-10, cf. Deu 29:23). **Isa 1:17** is very covenantal as it is calling Israel to live out their obligations laid out in the Torah.

6. What was the charge against them in chapter 1? What are the implications of verses 5-6 (ie. what does it imply that they were 'stricken')? (1-2 sentences)

A: That they forsook and rebelled against Yahweh, even though He was their Father. Verses 5-6 show that the **judgment** which has come upon them is **from Yahweh**. They have been stricken by Him in an effort to cause them to return, yet they still continued in their rebellion.

7. What is the point of 1:9? (1-2 sentences)

A: God has not allowed His people to become **completely** destroyed. It is only God's grace and mercy that His people are still alive. They deserve to be destroyed, yet God will fulfill His good plan for His people and so there will always be a remnant! There will always be survivors for the nation of Israel so that He can use them to fulfill His good plan!

8. How does the righteous lawyer break down the defendant's argumentation in 1:10-15? What does God think of their worship according to 1:13? Note what word He uses there and how strong of a word it is. (1 paragraph)

A: Their sacrifices by which they thought they were in good relationship with Yahweh meant nothing to God. The sacrifices are worthless because they are not from the heart, they are merely external. So the arguments that they brought to Yahweh that they thought proved they were in right relationship, in fact proved nothing to Him. More to the point, their whole external religion is an abomination to God, one of the strongest words in Hebrew. God cares about the **heart**! Salvation is about a relationship with God, not external rules and outward conformity.

9. Summarize the message of 1:16-20. How are these verses at the heart of the Old Testament? What are the promises here? What are the conditions? (1-2 sentences)

A: There is hope for people if they **simply repent**! There is a **means for sin to be forgiven**, for it to be atoned for. What amazing mercy and grace there is for people so undeserving! But God calls them to live in obedience to Him and His covenant. They simply have to **want** it (Heb: 'abah) and obey!

10. Why after this hopeful passage do we see 1:21-23 next? What then will God do in 1:24-31? How is He going to do this (see especially **1:25-28**)? (1-2 sentences)

A: God is going to judge them because they haven't repented yet, **but He will purify them in the process**. We will continue to see this theme of God's **purifying judgment** in Isaiah. God is going to fulfill His good plan for His people, but **He must make them righteous for that plan to succeed**!

11. What is prophesied in 2:1-4? How does this fit into God's purpose in the Torah? How does this section set the stage for the whole rest of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: This has been God's plan from the beginning: He wants to exalt His people so that through them the whole world may learn and know who Yahweh is. God is global and His plan is global. His kingdom will come, and His plan will be fulfilled in it as **He will rule in peace over all the earth**. In one sense this section

*asks the question that will be answered throughout the whole rest of the book: How is that going to happen when Israel is so rebellious??? Watch out for the answer!*

12. What is the primary sin at stake in 2:5-22? How is the message of this section at the heart of the message of the book? How does this theme relate to the title used of God by Isaiah? How does this theme relate to what is mentioned in 2:12? (1 paragraph)

*A: The primary sin in this section is **pride**. Yahweh is the Holy One of Israel. He alone is Holy, different, God. He **alone** is faithful to be trusted and worthy to be worshiped. This book is so much about trust (especially in the first half). God alone is worthy to be trusted and worshiped because He alone is Holy. People in contrast are so different than God, so wicked and sinful and not worthy, not to be trusted. We also see that **Yahweh's day** is coming! There will come a day in which God will vindicate His greatness alone over that of man and **will alone be exalted** (2:17)!*

13. Application: Read 2:22 five times slowly. Ask yourself in which way you still honor man and esteem man above God. What do you need to change?

14. Summarize the message of chapter 3. Which people and groups are primarily mentioned in this chapter? Why? How does this section and that answer relate to the previous section? (1 paragraph)

*A: God will judge His people because of their sin. He will judge both men and women. He will especially judge the **leaders** and will lay them low. The rulers were especially culpable because of the oppression of the poor and their overall responsibility for the nation. There continues to be a contrast between the high and the lowly (especially with the leaders), and the need to trust in God and not humanity (and its leaders). There continues to be a contrast between human glory and God's glory (cf. especially 3:2, 16, 18).*

15. In light of all of 2:5-3:26, what is so significant about chapter 4:2-6? What is God going to do and why? What is the Branch of Yahweh? What does this add to our understanding of what God is going to do for His people as begun in 2:1-4? How is this going to be accomplished in light of 2:5-4:1? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is going to accomplish His plan for His people **through washing them and making them holy!** God is going to bring about His plan to be worshiped and trusted globally, because He is sovereign and worthy. But God's people won't be at the center of His plan without **holiness**. It cannot be otherwise. God must cleanse them in order to have relationship with them. But He will cleanse them and be their God and so use them to declare His glory to the world. It's all His doing!*

16. What is the point of the song in chapter 5? Why sing a song? Note three reasons why this is such a fitting parable for the nation of Israel. As you read the imagery, note how descriptive it is. (1 paragraph)

*A: Isaiah sets up Israel to judge themselves! By learning a song, they will sing it and remember it even though it is about them. It will stay in the nation's consciousness. **Although Yahweh had planted a good vineyard, it only produced worthless grapes!** It is only right and fitting for the vineyard to be uprooted and destroyed. Even in light of the hope of chapter 4, the harsh realities of the present have not gone away and must be dealt with. They are still sinful and still need to repent. This song was there to remind them of that.*

17. Meditate on 5:15-16. How does this fit into the message of the book? (1-2 sentences)

*A: **God's Holiness never competes with man.** His glory alone will be exalted. His exalted moral purity is exalted in His judgment of sin. When He does what is just and right (in judging sin) it exalts His holiness. He is not like us...*

18. Application: How do we think of ourselves and how do we think of God? What does it mean to us that God is Holy?

## **6. In Whom shall we Trust: Isaiah 6-12**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6-12

**Theme:** Yahweh Alone Can Save and so He Alone should be Trusted

**Objectives:**

- To understand and long for the hope of Israel's coming King
- To see the need to trust in and fear Yahweh
- To better understand and revere the Holiness of God

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 6-12 thoughtfully *three times*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 6-12
- Begin memorizing Isaiah 52:13-53:12 [due at end of semester]

**Questions:**

1. Describe the setting of chapter 6. What is the significance of this setting and description of God? Describe the event, what event takes place? What is the sequence of events that take place in this chapter? Why is this order significant? How does Isaiah respond throughout this chapter? Why is this appropriate and what does it teach us? How does this chapter encapsulate the message of the whole book? What is holiness? How is it related to glory? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The setting is the throne room of God. God is the Holy King of the universe. His **glory** fills the earth, He alone is majestic in Holiness. God is different than humanity. Everything exists for Him. This is Isaiah's Commission. He is **sent** for the Holy God on **mission**. That God chooses to use humans to further His Holy plans is amazing! The order is significant in that it begins with God's Holiness, and then moves to Isaiah's **sinfulness** in light of God. In light of the **completely and total holiness of God**, we are utterly exposed for how different and **sinful** we are! But then He is **cleansed** and **atoned** for! Notice the hint that this atonement can only come by sacrifice: the coal comes from the altar. This is massive. There is atonement, and that must take place **before we can be used of God**. Then Isaiah is sent on mission to God's rebellious people, who won't listen to him. Yet, God's plan will still succeed, and the Abrahamic Covenant will be accomplished. **They won't be completely cut off** (6:13 - 'the holy seed is its stump'), but God will accomplish His good plan and promises for them. In one sense the message of the whole book is: God is holy, His people are sinful, they need atonement to be purified and to be in His presence, but then can serve Him by being a light to the nations... **Holiness** is God's differentness than everything else. He is completely set apart. The most significant aspect of this is His purity and righteousness, but He is holy in all His attributes. His holiness is related to His glory in that it is His holiness that makes Him glorious. He is so different than anyone/anything else that He is completely unique in His attributes and is glorious in those perfect attributes. Thus He is worthy of worship!*

2. Think about verses 9-10 of chapter 6. What are the implications of this for the rest of the book of Isaiah? Why does God do this to His people? (1 paragraph)

*A: Isaiah is primarily ministering to the remnant, the people as a whole will not understand. Much like Jesus speaking in parables, Isaiah would not be fully understood by all the people. It would take spiritual sight, **faith**, to be able to see what he was saying. The book moves from judgment to hope (generally speaking). As*

with Jesus speaking in parables, the audience narrows as people drop off as they couldn't get past the hard things he said...

3. Describe the setting of chapter 7? What is going on politically (described in 7:1-2 and also throughout the chapter)? How does Ahaz respond and how does God tell him to respond in verses 1-9? What were the Arameans/Israel trying to do according to Isaiah 7:6? (1 paragraph)

A: The Syrians (Arameans) and Israel were attacking Judah because Ahaz was siding with Assyria and they were rebelling against him. So they were trying to **depose the Davidic king (7:6)**. The Davidic line is at stake! Ahaz responded by being **terrified** and not trusting in God (7:2, 4)! He should have **trusted** and **believed**! "If you will not believe, you surely will not last (7:9)." God would not allow them to destroy the Davidic line and in fact will wipe out both of those countries. God alone is in sovereign control. He should be trusted! Also note the name of Isaiah's son (Shear-yashub, 'remnant will return').

4. What does God ask Ahaz to do in 7:11? Think about why God asks him to do this? How then does Ahaz respond in 7:12? Is this a good response? How does God respond to this in 7:13-16? What is the significance of what God asks Ahaz in verse 11, for God's answer in verse 14? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: God asks Ahaz to ask for a sign. He does this because God wants to show how powerful and trustworthy He is so Ahaz will trust in Him! But out of his self-centeredness Ahaz **refuses!** How **arrogant!** So God tells Ahaz that He is going to give him a sign anyway. The sign is that a virgin will give birth to Immanuel, which means God with us. The significance of this sign is that it is going to be as high as heaven, an amazing sign, according to what God said in verse 11. So this cannot be just a normal young woman giving birth. This was to be an amazing miracle to show how trustworthy God is. And God is going to destroy the two kings who Ahaz was terrified of, because God alone is King. As an aside - The Hebrew word here, *almah*, doesn't mean 'virgin' because they didn't have a word specifically for virgin. It meant a young woman of marriagable age, and in this context is a virtuous woman. It is never used in Scripture of a non-virgin. So in context it must be describing a virgin, especially in light of the greatness of the sign, even though the word doesn't strictly mean 'virgin'. Even before Jesus was born and some people translated the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint, a.k.a. the LXX), they translated this word 'virgin' here because that is what it clearly meant.

5. What is God then going to do in 7:17-25? Why? Who is God going to use to do this and why is that significant? Why are they going to be eating curds and honey? (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to bring **judgment** upon Ahaz, his father's house, and his people for their lack of trust in Yahweh. God is going to use **Assyria** to bring this judgment, the very one in whom Ahaz was trusting! God is going to bring siege and destruction on His people for their lack of trust in Him. Curds and honey are the food that you eat when you have no crops! Find a sheep here, a goat there... The land is overrun. This son of a king is not going to grow up in a palace! This is exile (conquerors would shave the exiles, cf. 7:20)!

6. What is chapter 8 about? How do verses 6-7, 12-14, and 19-20 fit into the point of this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: Who do you **fear** and who do you **trust**? You trusted in Assyria, you politic with Syria and Israel, and did not trust Yahweh. So we see in **8:11-15** Yahweh exhorts Isaiah to **trust** in Him **alone!** Yahweh will guard and protect those who seek refuge in Him. Yahweh has given His word for wisdom for those who are seeking Him (8:20). **God's Word** is what you should **trust**, and if you don't, you will have no hope/dawn (8:20)! So you will be judged by those you trusted in. Notice as well that the land is Immanuel's land (8:8). If Immanuel is



*Maher-shalal-hash-baz it would hardly be fitting that the land was his, so Immanuel must be the coming Messiah who will be God with His people!*

7. What is God going to do out of the midst of the darkness (8:22) in chapter 9:1-7? Is there any connection between this section and that of Immanuel in chapter 7? What is the significance of the description of the one given in 9:6-7? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is going to bring about His King, the child of chapter 7, Immanuel, who will **reign** over the world. After the exile will come **salvation!** This king will not merely be another Davidic king, but **THE** Davidic King, the Messiah. He will be by the **Mighty God** and **Eternal Father**, the **Prince of Peace** Himself! Yet, He will be born as a child! The connection with chapter 7 is the topic of a special child being born. This is no coincidence as Isaiah is laying out the hope for the nation!*

8. What then do we see in 9:8-21? Why is God going to do this? (1-2 sentences)

*A: There is judgment because of their sin, specifically their **pride** (8:9). They do not seek Yahweh although He strikes them to teach them to return. Once again the leaders are highlighted (8:15-16). The punishment was meant to be corrective, but they continue to reject Him.*

9. Who is the woe to in 10:1-4? Why is this woe to them? Who is the woe to in 10:5-19? What is God going to do to them and why? (1 paragraph)

*A: 10:1-4 is a woe to His people because of their wickedness. Specifically note as well their sin is their lack of **justice** (10:1-2). They will be judged. They will be captives because they have not kept **covenant**. The woe in verse 5 and following is to the Assyrians who God used to judge His people. Even though they were His **instrument**, they were not righteous in their deeds. In fact, they were extremely proud, boasting in their own strength, and not realizing that it was **Yahweh who enabled them**. So God will judge Assyria too for their **pride** when He is done with them (10:12-14)! God is sovereign over the king of Assyria and so he should not **boast** (10:15)!*

10. What is the theological significance of 'the remnant' (cf. 10:20-23)? How does the concept of the remnant relate to the Abrahamic covenant? What is God going to do with the remnant? (1 paragraph)

*A: The remnant will return after God's judgment! They are the ones who **trust** Him (10:20)! God has not forsaken His promise to Abraham. He will never wipe out the nation of Israel completely because He will be faithful to His promises. So while He does use Assyria to judge His people, eventually He will judge Assyria too in sparing His remnant (10:24-27)! That's why there will always be some Israelites left, the remnant. God will ultimately save the remnant, turn them into a great nation, and use them to fulfill His promises to Abraham! But how?!?... we'll have to wait and see!*

11. So then what will God do in 10:24-34 (1 sentence)?

*A: God will be done judging His people and will judge Assyria.*

12. Where have we seen the term 'branch' before this passage in 11:1-10? Is Isaiah connecting these passages? What is said about the branch here? What does it mean that the branch will "not judge by what His eyes see or what His ears hear"? How does this picture of what is going to happen

relate to the Torah? How does this relate to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants? Why such an emphasis on the nations here? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 4:2 is the other branch passage, and yes, Isaiah is making a connection! The Branch will be perfectly righteous in His justice, and will not base decisions on human wisdom (what He sees and hears), but will trust God. He will rule with perfect **strength, justice, and righteousness**. This is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant! God is using the descendant of Abraham to bless the world! The Davidic King will come who will reign over God's good creation and the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh! The Davidic King will setup **God's kingdom** in perfect justice and righteousness. The curse will be overturned and creation will be as God intended from the beginning. Indeed **all the earth** will **know** of Yahweh as He works out His plan through His seed to bless the world! God is a global God! This was the plan from the beginning!*

13. What is the significance of 'second time' or 'again' in 11:11? (1 sentence)

*A: There will be **two** exiles, but **after** the **second return** the Messiah will come!*

14. What is the purpose of chapter 12? What major key word is repeated in chapter 12? What is the point and message of the song? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 12 is **praise and thanksgiving** to God for His salvation. **Salvation** is the key theme of the song. Yahweh can be trusted because He is able to save. Therefore He should be praised and worshipped because the Holy One of Israel is great in the midst of Israel! His deeds and works should be **proclaimed to the peoples**.*

15. Application: What do we learn about the faithfulness of God from this section? What do we learn about the Holiness of God from this section? How should we respond in light of these attributes of God?

## 7. Yahweh has no Rivals: Isaiah 13-27

**Scripture:** Isaiah 13-27

**Theme:** God Opposes the Proud but Gives Grace to the Humble

**Objectives:**

- To understand the connection between pride and trust
- To feel the awesome nature of Yahweh and to live in light of His day
- To see God's plan for the nations and to have a heart for that same plan

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 13-27 *twice*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 13-27

**Questions:**

1. Who are the people described in chapter 13, verses 4-5 (they are named in the chapter, you may have to look!)? What event do we see described according to **13:6**? What will that be like according to this chapter? [Note the rhyme of 'destruction' and 'Almighty' for powerful rhetorical effect] What do we see is at the heart of this event according to 13:11? (1 paragraph)

*A: The people are the Medes (13:17), who will come and destroy the Babylonians. However, there is something bigger being described, **Yahweh's Day**. This day will be a day of **global upheaval and judgment**. God will punish the whole world for its evil and lay low the pompous pride of humanity. Yahweh **alone** will be **exalted** on His day.*

2. What do we see as one of the reasons given in 14:1-4 for the judgment in chapter 13? What does it mean that Yahweh will again choose Israel in 14:1? (1 paragraph)

*A: In judging Babylon who oppressed God's people, He is **freeing Israel** from their oppressor. He is having compassion on His people. Yahweh choosing Israel again is for Him to treat them as His chosen people once again (even though they were always His chosen people, they didn't reap the benefits of it), which He couldn't/didn't because of their sin.*

3. Who is being described in 14:12 and following? Why do you think so? What is the primary reason for the judgment in 1-23 (cf. especially 11-15)? (1 paragraph)

*A: It is the king of Babylon (cf. 14:16, the man who...) but he is described using language and pictures which are descriptive of Satan. In some senses it may be that the king of Babylon was inspired by Satan, or at least was like him in many ways. The language 'fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn' is hardly descriptive of a human! Once again **pride** is the primary issue at stake. The lowly will be exalted and the proud will be humiliated. The king of Babylon was as proud as Satan himself, the chief rebel who thought to make himself as God. God will not allow this!*

4. What do we learn about Yahweh's sovereignty from 14:24-27 (1 sentence)?

*A: Yahweh is completely sovereign and His purpose for the nations is what is being worked out in a way that **cannot be thwarted**.*

5. What is the only hope for Philistia's messengers who have been sent to Judah for help (14:32)? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh has founded Zion and in her the afflicted of His people find refuge.*

6. When Moab flees to Judah for refuge (16:3-4) what ultimately is Moab's ultimate hope as well according to 16:5? (1 sentence)

*A: **Moab's ultimate hope** is the righteous Davidic King! Note the sending of the lamb to Judah in 16:1 was probably sending of tribute as an indication of submission (cf. 2Ki 3:4).*

7. But what was Moab's problem according to 16:6 and 16:14 (1 word)?

*A: Pride!*

8. When God judges (Damascus) in 17:1-14, what will happen to God's people (in 17:4)? What will be the result according to 17:7-8? What is the reason for judgment according to 17:10? (1 paragraph)

*A: God will **humble the pride** of His people. But in Yahweh's day, man will look to his Creator. There will be nothing left to trust in but Him! The reason for judgment is that they have **forgotten** the God of their salvation, they have not trusted in Him, but have trusted in themselves. They didn't remember that God is a rock of refuge, but trusted in their idols instead!*

9. What is going to happen in 18:7? How does that fit into the major themes and purpose of the book (1 sentence)?

*A: Yahweh will be **worshiped globally** (which is a major theme in Isaiah)!*

10. What is one of the primary ways that God will judge Egypt according to chapter 19 (especially verses 3, 11-15)? Why is this significant? (1 sentence)

*A: God will confound their wisdom, for that is what they **trusted** in.*

11. Comment on what is going to happen according to 19:18-25. **Why is this so significant?** What do you think Isaiah's readers would have thought of this? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is going to save and make Himself known to the Egyptians. They will have a relationship with Him and they will worship Him. This is shocking in light of Egypt's long history of opposition to God! But this is perfectly in line with God's plan to bless the world. He will be worshiped globally, for He alone is God! The language here is quite shocking, **showing Egypt to be true worshipers of Yahweh just as Israel itself!** Never had language in the OT been so explicit and astonishing towards Gentiles, they would be on the same footing as Israel!*

12. What is the issue at stake according to 20:5-6? What key word do we see again in 21:16? What is at stake? Make sure to take mental note of the use of 'my servant' in 20:3. (2 sentences)

*A: What is at stake in 20:5-6 is what they have hoped and trusted in. The key word in 21:16 is 'their glory'. What is at stake is who will get the glory, Yahweh or the nations?!*

13. What are we learning about Yahweh from these oracles against the nations as a whole? How would you summarize them? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh is not a regional God. He is the Lord and Creator of the Universe. He is completely sovereign over the world and will **judge** it for its **arrogance** which is exalted against Him! He will be worshiped globally because He is worthy. He is in control and He is bringing about His plan to exalt Himself and to humble everyone else! It will happen on **His day**! He alone is glorious and He will get all the glory!*

14. Who is the oracle in chapter 22 directed at and what was the problem? (1 sentence)

*A: Now Jerusalem receives an oracle. They are called the "Valley of Vision" because Jerusalem was in a valley, and they received 'vision' from Yahweh. The problem is that they were not looking to Yahweh. He is in control, He is sovereign, they should have trusted in Him.*

15. What is the emphasis on in 22:20-25? What key term is used of Eliakim (cf. 2nd Kings 18:18)? What is important about this? (1 paragraph)

*A: The house of **David** is emphasized. God will fulfill His promise to David that his throne will **rule forever**. Ultimately there is the hope that the Davidic king will come, who will be the true tent-peg, firm and secure. The term 'my servant' is used here of Eliakim, but ultimately he will not be the Messiah and the tent-peg will fall, and he will not be the one to save the nation.*

16. How is Tyre described in 23:7? What is God going to do in 23:9? (Note that the word for 'glory' and 'hosts' in this verse sound alike, this is poetic and rhetorically powerful). What then will happen in 23:17-18? (1 paragraph)

*A: Tyre is the **exultant city**. Yahweh of hosts will defile the **pompous pride** of all glory. His plan will succeed. He will dishonor the honored. But then we see that God will visit Tyre, apparently in grace. We see once again that God will save the nations. **He will purify them**. Here prostitution is not speaking literally, but figuratively of Tyre's trade. So 'prostitution' is not a negative thing per se in this verse, but is used to say that her trade and wealth will be holy to Yahweh, not stored or hoarded, but used for Yahweh!*

17. What is God going to do in 24:1? Who is going to experience this according to 24:2? What word is repeated (16 times!) throughout this chapter? What then do we see in 24:14-16? Who is the emphasis on? What will they do? What day is 24:21 talking about? How does the chapter end in 24:23? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is going to **judge the whole earth** (16x in this chapter). **Everyone** will be included. This will be everyone globally. There will be global worship! From east to west, all the coastlands (emphasizing the remotest parts of the earth) will **give glory to Yahweh**. He will magnify His glory. All of the earth will praise Him. This will all happen on the Day of Yahweh, when He acts and shows Himself powerful. It ends with Yahweh reigning in Jerusalem. He will keep His promise! He will magnify His glory globally!*

18. What are chapters 25 and 26 about (think about this)? What are these chapters? How do they then shed light on the previous judgment passages (especially 25:12 and 26:21)? (1 sentence)

*A: Chapters 25 and 26 are **praise** to Yahweh for His judgment, and show that His judgment of the proud, arrogant oppressors is **good news to the lowly**.*

19. What key word do we see repeated in this section (chapters 25-26)? What is God praised for in these songs? What will He do in 25:6-8? Comment on the significance of 25:9. How does it summarize so much of the message of this whole section? What key themes are related to the idea of waiting? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Salvation** is the key word repeated. God is praised for His salvation. God desires to be praised and worshiped, that is the goal- global worship. He will swallow up death and mourning and sorrow. He will be praised worldwide for who He is and His great salvation. God will save those who **wait** for Him. Waiting is related to the idea of trusting and faith. It takes faith and trust to wait for something that you can't see and that isn't happening currently. It takes faith to wait for God and to not try to **save yourself**!*

20. What key word do we see in 26:3-4? How does verse 5 contrast with 3-4? What is emphasized in verses 8-9? What do verses 17-19 mean? What is God coming to do in verse 21? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Trust** is key in 26:3-4. Those who are high do not trust, they trust in themselves and are therefore proud. In 26:8-9 we see **waiting, longing, yearning** for God. In 26:17 God had judged them and they were in anguish because of Yahweh's judgment. Yet in the end God brought them through and accomplished salvation of His people through their travail. It will be as life to the dead. In 26:21 God is coming to judge the earth. It will be His day and He will act!*

21. What is chapter 27 about? What is Leviathan? What do we see in verses 2-3? What is the vineyard? How then does this section end? What is God going to do in verse 12? What about in verse 13? (1 paragraph)

*A: Leviathan is a **great sea monster** (a dinosaur really, see Job 40:25ff.), often symbolizing evil, like a dragon. The vineyard represents Israel. God is caring for it once again! God would fight against the briars that attack His vineyard. Israel will take root and flourish and grow. God will gather the people whom He has scattered, those who have been judged will be brought back and those who have gone to Egypt and Assyria will be brought back to the land to worship!*

22. Thought question: What do we learn about pride, humility, and glory in this section? How do these topics relate to trust [think about this!]? How does this relate to the gospel [think!]?

23. Thought question: What do we learn about the nations in this section? What about God's plan? What do we learn about Yahweh's Day, what will it be like? What will He do on it and why?

24. Application: What are things that you trust in instead of trusting in God? How is your pride manifested in trusting in these things?

## 8. Don't Trust the Nations: Isaiah 28-39

**Scripture:** Isaiah 28-39

**Theme:** Yahweh is Faithful so we can Humble ourselves and Patiently Wait and Hope in Him

**Objectives:**

- To see the need to trust in Yahweh at **all** times
- To better know Yahweh's faithfulness and power to save so that we will trust Him
- To understand what trust look like, and how it relates to faith, waiting, and hoping
- To become aware of how our pride causes us to trust in ourselves

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 28-39 *twice*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 28-39

**Questions:**

1. What is contrasted in 28:1-6? What is the point of this contrast? Who will Yahweh be for? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The proud crown of Ephraim and the crown of glory which is Yahweh. **Who/what do you glory in?** Who is strong? Where is your trust? Is it in Yahweh? He will be for the remnant, the lowly who trust in Him. Those who are righteous and in relationship with Him. **28:5-6** once again shows God's faithfulness to His promise!*

2. In light of judgment again in 28:7-8, what does God ask in 28:9? What is at stake in 28:9-13? What is God going to do in 28:16? (1 paragraph)

*A: Who will listen to His message? Who will accept His word? No one, they would not hear. God is going to lay a cornerstone as a foundation. He will be righteous, and therefore there will be judgment for God's people who have trusted in their covenant with death. They think they are safe because they have made an agreement with death, but they will be judged.*

3. What is going to happen in 29:1-8? Who/what is Ariel and what is going to happen to her? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Ariel is Jerusalem, and all the nations are going to siege her. Yet, in a moment they will be gone. Yahweh will visit His people and will **save them in an instant!***

4. What is emphasized about Israel in 29:9-10, 11-12, 14, 15, 16, 24? But then what will happen in 18-20? Who will this happen to? What will happen in 22-24? (1 paragraph)

*A: Understanding is emphasized in this section. They don't understand, they don't get it. Their idolatry was foolish. How can they claim they know more than their Creator (**29:16**)? It is sealed from them and they cannot read it. But then in **29:17-19 the deaf will hear, the blind will see!** The meek and poor will exult in Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. It will be they who will understand! The proud who trust in themselves are foolish and the lowly who trust in Yahweh understand. And in **29:22-24** we see that God will make Himself holy in the midst of His people. Ultimately, He will open their eyes so that they will understand (**29:24**)! This*

section has a huge emphasis on the **noetic effects of sin**. *Their pride won't allow them to listen. The foundation for knowledge is humility!* Those who proudly trust in their own knowledge can't be wise!

5. What is wrong with going to Egypt in 30:1-2? So what will God do to Egypt in 3-7? (1-2 sentences)

*A: They trusted in Egypt and not Yahweh! **They sought Egypt's protection and not Yahweh's!** They sought counsel from Egypt and not Yahweh! But God will judge Egypt!*

6. What were their sins according to 30:8-17? How could they have been saved according to 15? (1 paragraph)

*A: They were rebellious. They wouldn't listen, they only wanted to hear false prophets tell them what they wanted to hear and not listen to Yahweh. They trusted in perversity and not Yahweh (30:12). They would be saved if they simply repented, and trusted in Yahweh. **If they simply rested in Him they would have been saved, but they refused (30:15)!** God wants us to see our need of Him. He loves to come through for us!*

7. But what all is God going to do despite their sin in 30:18-33? When will He do this according to verse 19? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is waiting to show grace to them! He desires to. He longs to! **30:18!** Yet He is still just. As soon as they cry out in **humble dependence** He will show grace and mercy to them! He longs to exalt His mercy and grace and power by saving them. This is who God is! Then He will bless them. Then He will heal them. Then He will judge the nations who oppress them!*

8. What does God call the people to in chapter 31? Why? Think about this. (2-3 sentences)

*A: God calls them to trust in Yahweh and not in Egypt. Yahweh alone is strong. He alone is God and not man. And the day will come in which He will **show that He alone is strong enough to be trusted!***

9. What will then happen in 32:1-8? What will it be like under the rule of the righteous King? (1 sentence)

*A: Then good will be valued and folly dishonored, there will be peace and things will be as they should!*

10. But what is the current situation in 32:9-14? And what will change that in 15-20, and what will be the result? (2-3 sentences)

*A: But currently they should weep, because they are **complacent** and so will be judged. But when the Spirit is poured out, then there will be **justice and righteousness and peace (32:15)!** There will be trust, **quiet and peaceful confidence** in Yahweh (32:17)!*

11. What should the people call out to Yahweh as seen in 33:2? What was the trouble mentioned in verse 2 (see 33:1, 3, 19)? What does it mean for Yahweh to be their **arm** (sometimes translated 'strength') every morning in 33:2? What will Yahweh do in 33:5 and 33:10 and how does this relate to verse 2? How do these relate to verses 21 and 22? (1 paragraph)

*A: They should trust in Him, wait for Him, seek His grace seen in His **salvation!** The trouble in context appears to be the oppressing nation/people. For Yahweh to be their **arm** every morning means that He will*



act. His arm is almost always parallel and synonymous to His **salvation**. He will exalt Himself in **33:5** and **33:10**, and it seems that the message of this chapter is to trust in Yahweh daily, He alone is exalted and worthy to be trusted. The oppressing nation/people will be no more (33:19) because they trust in Yahweh and **He will be for them (33:21)**. Yahweh will be their judge, lawgiver, and King, **He will save them (33:22)**!

12. What do we see God doing in chapter 34 once again? Who is this chapter addressed to? How do you feel when you read 34:2-7? Who is not missing in verse 16 in context? Who has He apportioned the lot for in verse 17 and who is the 'they' in verse 17? What point is God trying to make by saying that? (1 paragraph)

A: Once again God is judging the **world, the nations**. That is who this is addressed to. This is fearful. Yahweh is fearfully awesome in His judgment. This is **gory, a day of vengeance** (34:6, 8). Those being referred to in 16-17 are the animals of verse 15 and previous! The point is that Yahweh has sovereignly portioned out that the nations like Edom that rebelled against Him **will be wilderness forever** (filled with animals with none missing, each of the animals taking his inheritance to possess it forever), just as He apportioned Israel. He is sovereign in His decree and it will not be overturned!

13. But then what will happen in chapter 35? How does this flow out of and contrast with chapter 34? How are His people described in this chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: **Once again** Yahweh will save! The desert will become **lush**. He will **undo** what He has done. He will **gloriously save in pouring out His vengeance** on your enemies and in paying you back for trusting in Him (35:4)! There will be springs and rivers in the desert. They will walk on the **highway of Holiness**, for they will all be holy (35:8). His people will be ransomed and redeemed, and will joyfully return to Jerusalem with **eternal** joy and gladness (35:10)!

14. What changes when we come to chapters 36-39? How does that help us with the structure of the book? (1-2 sentences)

A: We come to narrative and this section is an extended series of stories about Hezekiah. This helps us to see that this is the hinge of the book.

15. What is the setting we find ourselves in after 36:1-3? If you need to, cross reference with Kings and/or Chronicles to understand the setting. What year are we in? What is going on? Describe it. (1-2 sentences)

A: The year is 701 B.C. Sennacherib has completely destroyed the northern kingdom, and has destroyed all of the south except Jerusalem and Lachish which is being sieged (and soon will fall).

16. Where have we seen the phrase, "the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field" before? Do you think the repetition of this was purposeful? Why or why not? Where have we seen narrative before in the book of Isaiah? Do you think Isaiah is trying to draw out a comparison or contrast? Why and with whom? What is the point he is trying to draw out (you may need to come back to this question after finishing the rest of this section)? (1 paragraph)

A: This phrase and narrative occurred in the section about Ahaz. This is purposeful, Isaiah is definitely contrasting Ahaz with Hezekiah. Ahaz did not trust in Yahweh where Hezekiah did (although not perfectly as we will see!). Where is your trust!!! Hezekiah's faithful God definitely came through as trustworthy!

17. What does Rabshakeh say to Hezekiah in 36:4-10? What key word occurs in this section that shows us what is truly at stake? What are his arguments? What arguments does he specifically level against their trust in Yahweh? (1 paragraph)

*A: Trust is the key word in this section. Who do you trust? Rabshakeh seeks to dismantle their trust. He seeks to dismantle their trust in Egypt, their strength, and in Yahweh. He seeks to convince them that Hezekiah had dismantled Yahweh's altars. He is of course confused, but the point remains that many of the people were so syncretistic that they thought of those altars as Yahweh's altars! He furthermore argues that Yahweh had sent him, which of course is true. Yet these are twisted truths which do not prove that Yahweh cannot be trusted... Half truths are often the most dangerous lies of Satan!*

18. Then what does Rabshakeh do when the leaders don't listen to him in 36:11-20? What are his arguments? (1 paragraph)

*A: Then he addresses the people directly. He seeks to convince them that if they trust in Assyria they will be saved. He will give them peace. He is the strongest, no one can deliver out of his hand. Indeed he is correct that no god has been able to deliver out of his hand, but he has not confronted the power of Yahweh yet.*

19. How does Hezekiah respond in 37:1-4? What does the metaphor of verse 3 communicate? (1 paragraph)

*A: He **humbles himself** and **seeks Yahweh**. The two of these always go hand in hand. It is not until we despair of any strength of our own that we will seek strength from Yahweh. If we are merely requesting some help from Yahweh, we have not given up our pride and kingship in the situation. Here, Hezekiah is completely trusting in Yahweh. The metaphor of verse 3 shows that they are completely helpless. Jerusalem must be delivered but they don't have any strength to do it.*

20. How does Yahweh respond and what then happens in 37:6-7? How then did the king of Assyria respond in 37:8-13? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh calls them to trust him and not fear, and tells them that the king of Assyria will hear a rumor, go back to his own land, and die. So after being distracted by Tirhakah (king of Egypt), he writes a letter to Hezekiah, basically saying the same thing he had Rabshakeh say to him, to let Hezekiah know that he is merely distracted for a moment, but will come back and deal with him.*

21. What does Hezekiah then pray in response to the letter in 37:16-20? Note the different aspects of the prayer. Think about what he is praying! Describe his prayer. Compare this prayer with the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Hezekiah starts by acknowledging the greatness of Yahweh. He alone is God. He is the Creator. He is exalted far above the earth. Next he pleads with God to listen. Note the earnestness with which he pleads. He is asking God to hear what Sennacherib has said, because he has reproached the living God. That is what is at stake, God's name and reputation. And this is what Hezekiah is pleading, the glory of Yahweh. Next he acknowledges that Sennacherib indeed has destroyed all the gods of the nations, but recognizes that Yahweh is not like the gods of the nations. He is the Creator, not the created. As so he ends by pleading that Yahweh will save His people so that all the earth may know that Yahweh alone is God. This is what should be the basis for **all** prayer, the glory of God in the world. May we all learn to pray that God will act to reveal*

*His glory so that He would be praised. May we all learn to pray that God's name alone would be set apart as holy, and that His kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven - perfect obedience and perfect worship!!!*

22. What does verse 21 teach us about prayer? So what then did God answer in 37:22-35? What are the emphases on in God's response? Why is God going to act this way according to verse 35? What happens in 36-38? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: God answers prayer! God especially answers prayers like this that are humbly given solely for the goal of God's glory! Although God is completely sovereign, He has chosen prayer as one of the means to accomplish His sovereign will. What a privilege we have to participate in God's plan! The emphasis in 22-35 is on God's sovereignty. He is the one who planned it (26), everything is going according to His plan. Yahweh is the great king, not the king of Assyria. Yahweh is the Holy One of Israel. So Sennacherib's pride (23) will be brought low. God will keep His promises (to Abraham and to David) and will defend Jerusalem for His own name's sake. Then God did what He said and killed 185,000 Assyrians and Sennacherib was killed by his sons.*

23. Describe what then happens in chapter 38. What is at the heart of Hezekiah's reason for asking for life according to 38:17-20? Think about this! What is he saying? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: God told Hezekiah that he was going to die, but because Hezekiah humbled himself and prayed, God added 15 years to his life! God miraculously made the shadow on the stairs go backwards 10 steps as a sign that He would certainly do what He said. There is something special about our time in this life, on the stage of history, when we can choose to praise God, give Him the glory, tell others about Him and effect the rest of history! It is not that Hezekiah is denying the afterlife and that we will live and praise God after death (although their understanding of the afterlife was definitely not as clear as ours, but it was definitely still there!). Today is the day of salvation. Now is when you can hope and trust and show by your hoping and trusting that Yahweh is awesome. Now is when you can choose to follow God and in so doing manifest His glory! Now is when history is being changed through the decisions that we are making as sovereignly orchestrated by God. History was designed by God as a stage to demonstrate His glory and we have the opportunity to play it out, now, while we are living. After that the curtain closes and the play is over. God's glory is manifested in time and history, that's why God created the world in the first place! May we be a part of it!!!*

24. After all that, what do we see happen in chapter 39? Why do you think Hezekiah did what he did? Was what Hezekiah did right or wrong? Why do you think so? What then is the point of this chapter in light of 36-38? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Hezekiah showed the Babylonians all his treasuries. He did this to try to impress them. He had sided with the Babylonians against the Assyrians, and was now politicking with them. This was not right of him. Verse 6 makes this clear in that there will be punishment for his actions. The point of this chapter then shows how Hezekiah, although he trusted in God, was not perfect. It probably even more so shows the contrast of the first two instances where in deep distress he was humbled and called out to Yahweh, but in peace, he became complacent and started to subtly trust in things other than Yahweh! Oh how easy this is to do! May we learn to trust in Yahweh in the trials and in the successes of life! May we recognize that we always need Him and can never do anything of ourselves!*

25. Application: When can we trust God? When should we trust God? Think about in what situations you are tempted not to trust God and what times you become complacent and forget to. What

thinking do you need to change in order to recognize that you need to trust God all the time?  
What are four specific truths that you need to remember to bolster your continual trust in God?

*A: Mine- God can do everything. I can do nothing. God is always faithful. He is so ready and willing to help.*

## 9. The Awesome Creator Saves Alone: Isaiah 40-48

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40-48

**Theme:** Yahweh Alone is God and therefore Able to Save

**Objectives:**

- To understand Yahweh's complete sovereignty as the Creator
- To understand how God's salvation is for His own glory, and to be about that same purpose
- To see the purpose of the Servant and to see the ways we share that purpose

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 40-48 *three times*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 40-48

**Questions:**

1. How does this next section begin in 40:1? How does this set the tone for the latter half of the book? What is going to happen according to 40:3? What does 40:5 add to your understanding of this? What is the good news of 40:9? How do 40:10-11 reinforce this same message? Note the use of 'arm' throughout this whole section of Isaiah. What do you think is signified by God's arm? (1 paragraph)

*A: This section begins with **comfort** to God's people (40:1). This half of the book is much more filled with comfort and hope. Then we see that **God is coming (40:3)**! His glory will be revealed and **all flesh** will see it (40:5)! That's what the **good news** (40:9) is, that God is coming! He will come and be with His people and will shepherd them. Lord Yahweh is coming! God's arm is His saving power! He is strong and able to save! (Note how it is parallel in 40:10 with might. It will elsewhere be parallel with salvation in this section).*

2. What is 40:12-26 about? What do we learn about God? What is compared and contrasted in this section? How should we respond to this? What are the implications of what we see in 12-26 according to 27-31 (ie. what is the connection between 40:12-26 and 40:27-31)? Who will these blessings be for in 27-31? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: God is **awesome** in the truest sense of the word. He **alone** is the Creator. He alone is the sovereign of the universe. He is compared and contrasted to idols, who are nothing compared with Yahweh. He is the Creator, everything else is creation. Because He is so strong, we can trust and rest in Him. He gives strength to the weary. **Those who wait and trust in Him will be given strength (40:29-31)**! The concept of waiting is similar to that of trusting. You don't wait for someone you don't trust and expect to come and to help! This concept of waiting is also similar to the idea of 'the weary' and those 'lacking might'. Only those who recognize their total helplessness and therefore wait and trust upon the Lord will be helped by Him. It is only those who know they are weak will wait for someone who is strong! This is at the heart of the gospel and why the NT so emphasizes salvation by faith! We can only be saved in total reliance upon God and have **no** trust in ourselves!*

3. Note the use of coastlands and islands throughout chapter 41? Noting what are parallel to these terms in each occurrence, what do you think Isaiah is emphasizing by using these terms? What is God saying about His relationship to the nations in 41:1-7? (1-2 sentences)

A: He is emphasizing the ends of the **earth**, the **globe**, the **world**. God is global. He desires to be worshiped globally. The nations is another major term we see in this vein. God is completely sovereign over the nations.

4. What is the connection between 41:1-7 and the section in 41:8-20? How does 41:8 start? How does 41:9 help clarify this? What do we learn about God's servant from 41:8-9? (1 paragraph)

A: Out of all the nations on the earth, over which God is sovereign (41:9), He has **chosen Israel** to be **His servant**. They are **distinct** from the other nations, emphasized by the 'but you' of verse 8. They are a special nation, **chosen** by Him and will never be rejected. They were chosen **so that** they would serve. God's servant is Israel, Jacob, the descendant of Abraham. God has chosen her and will not reject her. God will strengthen and help her and uphold her. They **will accomplish His plan**, but only when they humble themselves in submission to Him (41:17). God will certainly use them to triumph over their enemies and be exalted above all other nations (41:10-16, 20)!

5. Who is God talking to in 41:21-24? What is the point? What is the point of 41:25-29 and how do these sections tie together? (1 paragraph)

A: God is talking to the idols and showing their utter futility. They **cannot predict the future** because they are not sovereign over it as Yahweh is (41:22, 26)! They cannot do anything, good or evil, because they are **nothing!** But Yahweh sovereignly ordains kings and kingdoms (41:25-29). He plans which nation will be great, idols are nothing (41:29).

6. What more do we learn about the Servant in 42:1-9? What is his purpose? What will he do? What will his character be like? Where have we seen an emphasis on worldwide justice before in this book, what does this link together in our minds? Think about these in detail! What is the significance of the Spirit being put upon him? What does it mean that the Servant will be a covenant to the peoples in verse 6? What does it mean that he will be a light to the nations? Who is the Servant identified as in this section? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: The Servant will bring forth **justice to the nations, justice to the earth**. His **law** will go forth to the **ends of the earth**. He will certainly rule and reign over the earth and will do so with perfect justice and righteousness (42:1-4). Yet he will do so with **gentleness** (42:2-3). He will succeed in his task and will not shrink back from it (42:4a). The theme of justice to the world is reminiscent of the work of the Messiah King in the earlier portion of the book. The fact that the Spirit is upon him reminds us that he is **anointed**, and also brings in Messianic overtones. The fact that he will be a **covenant to the people** (42:6) teaches that **He will be the means by which the world is in relationship with Yahweh!** That is what a covenant is, an agreement whereby two parties enter into relationship. The Servant will be that way to have relationship with Yahweh! He will be a light to the nations (42:6). Though the nations were in darkness, He will be the **means** by which they see and understand (42:6-7). He will open blind eyes and rescue prisoners from the dungeon, those who were captive to sin will be freed! **All of this** was to be the **purpose** of the nation of Israel, yet as we'll see as the Servant Songs crescendo, this was never accomplished by the nation, and so will ultimately be fulfilled **in the nation with the Anointed Messiah at their head!** The nation **failed** at their mission, yet since Yahweh promised that one day they would succeed at it, He will bring that purpose to pass. But they could not do it without transformation, and so as we'll see the Messiah will transform them and lead them in their task so that they will accomplish it! More on this to come... Note as well in this Servant song that there is a conspicuous absence of any identification of the Servant.

7. Who is to praise Yahweh in 42:10-17? Why should they praise Him (think about how 42:10-17 connects with 42:1-9, especially verse 8)? Even though God has been silent for a long time (42:14), what is He going to do now (42:13-17)? (1 paragraph)

*A: All the earth! the nations! are to praise Yahweh! They should praise Him for rescuing them from the dungeon! Salvation! In His **salvation**, working through the Servant to save the world and establish justice in the earth, **God is showing His glory** and worthiness to be praised! He will be victorious over His enemies (42:13)! It doesn't seem like God has been active, He has been silent (42:14), but He will act once again!! He will judge and He will save. Isn't it often like that now? We wonder why God seems silent. But we need to wait and trust Him, for He will act once again! He will save! Then we will see that **trusting** in anything except for Yahweh is utter **folly** (42:17)!*

8. What do we learn about the Servant in 42:18-25? Who is the Servant according to 22 and 24 (note the connection in vocabulary between these two verses with 'plundered' and 'spoiled')? (1-2 sentences)

*A: The Servant is blind! The Servant is Israel. They **failed** at their **mission**. It wasn't God's fault that they failed, His law was good and righteous! Their rebellion only highlights how utterly good God's law and plan was (42:21)! And so they will be judged.*

9. But even despite Israel's sin, what is God still going to do for them in 43:1-7? (1-2 sentences)

*A: God will **save** them. Because He has **chosen** them, He will never reject them. He will be with them! And He will bring them back from His judgment and use them to **magnify His glory** (43:7)! That's why He created Israel in the first place!*

10. What was Israel's purpose once again according to 43:8-13? What word is parallel to 'servant' that helps us to understand that purpose? How does this help us to understand what it means that Israel is Yahweh's servant? What were they to do in this section and how does that purpose relate to the nations as seen in verse 9? (1 paragraph)

*A: They were to be **witnesses** (43:10, 12). This idea is parallel to the idea of them being His servant. They were to **witness to the nations** (43:9) of who Yahweh is. They should have known Yahweh (43:10) so to be able to tell others about Him. Yet they were blind themselves (43:8).*

11. What is the flow of thought in 43:14-44:5 between 43:14-21, 43:22-28, and 44:1-5? What is the point of 43:14-21 (see especially verses 19 and 21)? Then what do we see in 43:22-28? So why will God save them according to 43:25 in light of 43:22-28? What is God going to do then in 44:1-5 and why? (1 paragraph)

*A: 43:14-21 emphasizes that God's claims are not merely based on the past, but that He will do something **new!** He will **save again**. They **will** declare His praise (43:21)! But as we see in 43:22-28, it is not because of them. They don't deserve it as they are guilty (43:22-24), **but God will forgive them for His own sake** (43:25). So we see in 44:1-5 that God has **chosen** Israel to be His servant. He **created** them for this purpose, so He will accomplish it. He will be the one who pours out **His Spirit** upon them so that they will belong to Him. This is His plan to glorify Himself despite them. Or in other words: 1) 43:14-21 God is going to do something new in saving His people, they will again praise Him in the future. 2) 43:22-28 But they are guilty and so He is not going to do this for their sake. 3) No, He is going to do this for His own sake. **He chose them to be His servant,***

*He will be the one that pours His Spirit upon them and transform them to be able to serve Him for His own sake!*

12. What is 44:6-20 about? What are God's arguments in this section (think about this!)? What should have been the effect of this truth on Israel in 44:8? (1 paragraph)

*A: This section is about the fact that Yahweh alone is God. The idols are stupid. They cannot predict the future. They are not in control of anything. People worship that which is created by people. How foolish! They should worship the One who created them! A man worships a wooden idol, the other half of which he uses to cook his own food (44:16)! They are blind and foolish. Israel should have been witnesses of this fundamental truth! There is a God who created it all and He alone deserves worship!*

13. Who/what is 44:21-28 about? What is God going to do with them? (1-2 sentences)

*A: God will **redeem** His people (44:22, 23, 24)! Because He formed them to be His servant, He will **not forget** them and thus will certainly **forgive** them (44:22)! God using Cyrus to redeem and save His people. God will use Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem (44:28). God sovereignly formed Cyrus for His own purpose (44:24, 26), to restore His people and to rebuild their cities (44:26-28).*

14. What is shocking about 44:28 and 45:1 (two things!)? What then is God going to do with Cyrus and **why** (in 45:6-8)? What do we see in 45:9-19? Think carefully about the point of 45:20-25? Especially expound upon Isaiah's use of the word 'righteous' in this chapter. How is Yahweh's righteousness connected with His salvation? (1 paragraph)

*A: It is shocking that Cyrus is given **by name**, and that **he is called God's anointed** are both shocking! God is going to use Cyrus to save His people. He will do it even though Cyrus doesn't acknowledge Him. Yet the fact that God predicted this shows that He is sovereign over it and that indeed He is the only true God. So we see in 45:6-8 that because Yahweh is sovereign He can accomplish His salvation in any way He chooses. And He does this so that **everyone** will know that He alone is God (45:6)! Yahweh alone is sovereign over all of the earth and always accomplishes His sovereign plan! And this salvation in verse 8 is equated with **righteousness**. By saving His people **Yahweh vindicates His righteousness** in showing that He always accomplishes His word and plan! Then in 45:9-19 we see that God is greater than any idol. He alone is God. The gods can't save, only Yahweh can. They are nothing, He is everything. We see so clearly in 45:20-25 that God alone is able to save. And He will save to **vindicate His righteousness globally**. Notice the repetition of salvation and righteousness in these verses. God's salvation vindicates His righteousness by showing that God's plan and promise for saving the world will certainly be accomplished. He alone is able to save and so calls for all the world to seek salvation only in Him (45:22-23)! So Yahweh will be acknowledged for His righteousness, **and will also make Israel righteous by saving them (45:25)!***

15. What is chapter 46 about? Who is God contrasted with here? How are righteousness and salvation related/connected in this chapter (and elsewhere in Isaiah)? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is greater than the gods of Babylon. He alone is God. He alone can save. He is the Creator, He is the sovereign Lord over His creation. God keeps His word! He judges sin! And so in His salvation He manifests His righteousness in that He shows He is faithful to save as He has promised, and He shows His righteousness in salvation in that He judges sin when He saves His people! Note especially **46:13** in this connection once again!*



16. What is God going to do in chapter 47? Why (see verses 6, 8, 10)? What is the connection with the previous chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to judge Babylon for their **pride, self-reliance, and lack of compassion** for God's people. In the previous chapter God shows how He is greater than the Babylonian gods, here he speaks of judgment on Babylon itself because of what they trusted in.*

17. What is the basic argument of chapter 48? What do we see should have been Israel's response to this as seen in 48:6? Why does God do 'new things' as we see in 48:6? What do we see as the reason why God has acted according to 48:9 and 48:11? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is completely sovereign over history as the only true God because He has planned it all in advance! He is the only one who can predict the future since He is in control of it. In fact, it is God's grace that He predicts the future **accommodating to Israel's hard hearts** (48:4)! So Israel, having been **witnesses** to this fact should have declared who Yahweh was. God does 'new things' so that it proves that history is not simply repeating itself. This would be like the gods predicting that it will get hot in the summer. But Yahweh does **new things** to show that He is truly in control. He predicts the future way in advance to show that He is not simply able to make predictions based on what He can see is happening. No, He is completely sovereign. And God has done all of this **for His own sake, for His own glory**. He wants to exalt His glorious name, so He is working out history toward that end! 48:11*

18. Thought questions: What do we learn about Yahweh in this section? What do we learn about the Servant of Yahweh?

19. Thought question: Summarize the main points of 40-48 and how they tie together.

*A: Yahweh alone is God. He alone is Creator and can predict the future because He has laid it all out. All the idols are created, He is Creator. Therefore, He alone is able to save. But the only reason why He does act and save is for His own glory. So we see in this section that the basis for His salvation is His own strength and power to save, His own grace to save, and His own desire to glorify His name through saving!!!*

20. Application: How should we respond to Yahweh in light of what we learn about Him in this section?

*A: We should be 1) thankful for His salvation, 2) trusting because He alone is God and able to save, and 3) humble witnesses and servants because that is the purpose for which He saved us.*

## 10. The Suffering Servant's Saving Substitution: Isaiah 49-55

**Scripture:** Isaiah 49-55

**Theme:** In the Climactic Servant Song God's Plan for Salvation is Finally Revealed through the Humble Work of the Suffering Servant's Substitution

**Objectives:**

- To understand the purpose and identity of the Servant
- To understand how the final Servant song fits into the purpose and flow of the book
- To understand the nature of the gospel according to Isaiah
- To rejoice in the greatness of God's salvation

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 49-55 *three times*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 49-55

**Questions:**

1. Who is being addressed in 49:1? By whom? What do verses 1b and 2 mean? But what do we see in verse 4 (think about this verse)? (1 paragraph)

*A: The nations are being addressed by the Servant. God has created him for a **specific purpose** and God will use him as an instrument to accomplish that purpose. God will **glorify Himself** by using the Servant (49:3). Yet the Servant will fail in some sense. Ultimately, the Servant's reward is with God and God will have **justice**. This certainly implies that the Servant will not see the success that would be expected, although we certainly know that God will use the Servant to accomplish His will to glorify Himself. **Mysterious**, yet more will continue to unfold about this Servant...*

2. What is at the heart of the servant's purpose according to 49:5-6 (think about this, there are at least two aspects of this)? What does this teach us about the identity of the Servant? What is said about the Servant in 49:7? What is he called there? (1 paragraph)

*A: Verses 5-6 make clear that the purpose of the Servant is to **restore the nation of Israel**. Thus in some way the Servant must be distinct from Israel. But we also see that his purpose was to be a **light to the nations** so that God's **salvation** would reach to the ends of the earth. Thus we are beginning to see that the Servant par excellence is in view (ie. the perfect example of a servant). As we see in 49:7, the Servant is called the **despised and abhorred one by the nation**. Notice that nation is singular nation here, thus referring to Israel, and not the nations of the earth. The Servant is going to be despised by the nation of Israel. Once again this shows that while closely related to the nation, he is **distinct** from it. Ultimately, he will be worshiped by the kings of the earth, because Yahweh has chosen him.*

3. What do we see God is going to do in 49:8-13? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to help, have compassion and save His people! God is going to use the servant to His people to be a **covenant His people of the earth**, the means of them being in relationship with Yahweh! People will come to Yahweh from afar (49:12). This is cause for rejoicing! Ultimately, it is God's **salvation** of His people (49:13) which will cause this.*

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4. What is the answer to Zion's question in verse 49:14? Have they truly been forsaken according to 49:14-26? (1 paragraph)

*A: God hasn't forgotten His people, indeed He cannot (49:15-16)! He will always be faithful to them. Even though they were bereaved, God will certainly bless His people once again. God will **assemble** and **gather** His people from around the world and then all the world will know that He is Yahweh (49:22-23, 26). And they will know that Yahweh is a Savior! They will know that Yahweh can be trusted (49:23)!*

5. Note that 50:1-3 goes a bit more with what preceeds that with what follows. What is the point of 50:1-3 (note especially verse 2)? (1 sentence)

*A: Even though they rejected God and so were rejected, He is able to save them.*

6. How is the Servant characterized in 50:4-11 (especially in 4-7)? What adjective would you use to describe him? What is his purpose according to 50:4-5? What is significant about the fact that the Servant claims he has never disobeyed (50:5)? (1 paragraph)

*A: The servant is **obedient**. He obeys even against **great difficulty** because He trusts in Yahweh and knows that ultimately his vindication (50:8) comes from Him. Ultimately he will not be ashamed. His purpose is further defined in this section as one who **speaks the word of God and ministers the word** (50:4). There will be opposition to that ministry, yet that will not deter him because his trust is in Yahweh. He is **faithful** to speak God's Word, because he has been faithful to listen to it. Ultimately, only the Messiah can be this Servant, as Israel could certainly never say that she never disobeyed (50:5), and not even the righteous remnant, nor even the 'best' prophets made such claims. This of course is very consistent with Isaiah saying that God was going to be born as a child and rule as the Davidic King (chapter 9) and now, we're being introduced to this Servant!*

7. What are the major themes and key words that reoccur in chapter 51 (especially in 1-11, although the themes continue through the chapter)? Note the use of 'arm' in this chapter. What is Yahweh's 'arm' in context? What is this chapter about? What is Yahweh going to do? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Salvation** and **righteousness** are the major themes of this chapter. In Yahweh's salvation, His righteousness is displayed! **How!?!** Yahweh's arm is His saving power. Yahweh is going to save the earth (51:4-5, 6-8)! His salvation is about bringing His justice, and thus showing His righteousness! He is going to save His people! Even though He has judged His people, He will save them and never judge them again (51:22)! There will be jubilant exultation as Yahweh saves once again!*

8. What is the purpose of 52:1-6 (see especially 52:1-2)? Why, what is the connection with 52:7-12? What is the good news of 52:7? What is Yahweh's arm in 52:10? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The purpose of 52:1-6 is to call Israel to wake up! They need to wake up because salvation is coming! The **good news** is Yahweh's **salvation** (52:7)! His arm once again is His **saving power** (52:8)! God's **salvation** will be revealed to the ends of the earth (52:8)!*

Note that Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is a five stanza poem, each stanza consisting of 3 verses. Note also the crescendo of the poem as each stanza is slightly longer than the previous line (probably one line longer for each stanza).

9. How does the poem begin in verse 52:13? But in light of that, what was astonishing about the Servant in 52:14? What is it that we learn about the Servant in 52:14? What is the first word of 52:15? How does this connect the first phrase of 52:15 with 52:14? What does it mean that the Servant will sprinkle many nations? Why will kings shut their mouths? What will they see and understand that they hadn't been told or heard? How does this first stanza introduce the whole poem? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The Servant will **wisely succeed**. He will prosper. He will be high and exalted. But it is **astonishing** how his appearance is marred. He will be very lowly and people will be shocked by how lowly He will be. This is the enigma of the Servant. How can one who is so high be so low? As 15 begins, we see that the Servant will sprinkle the nations. This clearly has sacrificial overtones, overtones of atonement and cleansing. Thus we see (and will continue to see in this poem) that the Servant will save the nations by atoning for them!!! The 'thus' shows that this atonement is connected with his humiliation. We don't know what these kings (emphasis on nations again!) heard and saw! The question is raised but not answered here. Thus we see that this opening stanza raises many questions but doesn't answer them. Thus it opens questions for the answers to follow. How can the Servant sprinkle the nations? What did the kings hear? How can such an exalted Servant be so shockingly abased? What will he succeed in? It draws us in to the poem and gives it powerful rhetorical effect.*

10. In light of everything we have seen up to this point (especially in the context of chapter 52), what is Yahweh's arm? What is the message here? What is the right response to that message? Why do you think verse 53:2 begins with a 'For' (think about this!)? What is the point of verses 2-3? What does the fact that the Servant 'grew up' remind us of? What other themes have we seen in Isaiah that are related to this? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Yahweh's arm is His saving power (all throughout Isaiah)! The message is the good news of salvation (cf. especially 52:7, but also 40:9 and elsewhere)! But who has believed that message? Belief is the right and necessary response. Isaiah asks who has had the message **revealed** to them, **because it takes God to open blind eyes to believe**. He asks to whom Yahweh's arm has been revealed, because revelation is necessary to see God's salvation. Verse 2 begins with a 'For' because it is the lowliness of the Servant that makes the message so 'hard' to believe. **How could such a lowly Servant provide salvation?!?** He grew up in a non-impressive way. Everyone could see his very 'normal' origins. He had no majesty or appearance that would attract people to Him. How could **he** save? He was so despised of men. He was forsaken. He was abhorrent and no one esteemed him. The fact that the Servant 'grew up' reminds us that this Servant, 'grew up'. It reminds us of the child who was going to be born from earlier in Isaiah, and indeed helps to establish the connection between the Suffering Servant and the Reigning King!*

11. Meditate carefully on 53:4-6, noting that this is the central stanza and therefore receives the emphasis. What is the irony of verse 4? Note how many times there are words for 'we/us' and 'he/him' in this section (very emphatic in the Hebrew!). How does that reinforce the main point of this stanza? What is the main point of this stanza (hint: what is the center verse of the whole poem)? What do the words 'pierced' and 'crushed' clearly imply? What was the cause of his crushing/piercing? What was the benefit to us? Who needs this according to verse 6? Take some time just to meditate on this stanza. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: He was carrying our griefs and our sorrows, yet we thought that he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. We concluded that he was being judged for our sin when in reality he was being judged for ours!*

The main point is **substitution**- He (8x) is contrasted with us (13x). He died for us! 'Pierced' and 'crushed' clearly imply death, in this case substitutionary, sacrificial death. He died a substitutionary death because of **our sins**! This is at the heart of the poem, and indeed at the climax of Isaiah. How is God going to accomplish the salvation of the world? **Through the substitutionary death of His Servant to save and transform His people to be the means of proclaiming Him to the world!** It is only through atonement that salvation can be accomplished. How could God use such a wicked people? How could God use such sinners to be the light to the world? **This** is Isaiah's answer. God will atone for His people through the sacrificial death of His Servant. Peace and healing are the result of the sacrifice of the Servant on behalf of his people! This is what atonement accomplishes and buys: peace with God and healing from wasting disease of sin. Notice the threefold repetition of 'all of us' and 'each of us' in verse 6. Everyone needs this sacrifice! And yet we see so clearly that this death was no accident, it was part of Yahweh's sovereign plan. Yahweh laid on this Servant the iniquity of us all...

12. Note that in verse 7, the nuance of the verbs is more like "He allowed himself to be oppressed, and kept himself in a state of humility." What is the emphasis on in verses 7-9? Did he deserve this treatment according to verse 8? What does 'cut off out of the land of the living' clearly mean once again? What about 'grave' in verse 9? What does verse 9 mean? Why was he assigned a grave with wicked men? Yet why was he with a rich man in his death? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: His **innocence** is clearly emphasized in this stanza. This death and sacrifice was **voluntary**! The sin was intentional, and so is the sacrifice! He didn't deserve it, in fact, his death was a grave miscarriage of justice (that's what the phrase 'out of oppression and away from justice He was taken away')! The Servant died for those to whom the stroke was due! Certainly, the Servant died for those whose sin he paid for! He was assigned a grave with wicked men because of the grave miscarriage of justice where the people who killed him actually thought him guilty! They thought He was a criminal and so assigned His grave with the wicked. Yet, because he had actually done no violence and was completely innocent, God ensured that he was with a rich man in death! The only commentary that makes any sense of this is its fulfillment! This whole stanza emphasizes that this death of the Servant was completely undeserved, and yet He **willingly** went to that death anyway. He was innocent and so died for the sins of others.

13. What is the final stanza about? Where have we seen this (these) topics before and what does that teach us about the structure of the poem? What are the implications of the Servant being a 'guilt offering?' What does it mean that the Servant will 'prosper'? Where have we seen the term 'many' before? What does it mean that the Servant will justify them? What is the connection between the Servant being righteous, and him justifying the 'many'? Why will the Servant inherit the great as a portion (note that the preposition 'with' is probably best left out)? What is the significance of the fact that the Servant will intercede for transgressors? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: The final stanza is (largely) about the success of the Servant, just as we saw in the first stanza. This is a case of *inclusio* (chiasm, really). The first and fifth stanzas have much in common (repeated themes and terminology), and the 2nd and 4th stanza do as well (they are both 'story' stanzas). The emphasis then is on the center (the substitutionary death of the Servant for sin). The guilt offering emphasizes the guilt and debt of sin. This particular sacrifice emphasizes that there is a need for payment and compensation, satisfaction (cf. Lev 5:15-19). The Servant will succeed in his task (just as we saw in the first stanza), largely because of his wisdom (cf. 52:13) and knowledge (53:10). He has the wisdom that it takes to accomplish His mission. The 'many' is repeated as well from the first stanza. There the emphasis was on the nations, as is implied here. The Servant will receive an inheritance, and that inheritance will be the many/strong! The inheritance for the Servant will be the nations, they will be his prize! [[Advanced info: to see this same

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*grammatical construction which suggests the translation "He will inherit the great, and divide the booty who are the strong", see Jos 13:7; Psa 22:19 for examples of bet with khalaq, and Jos 22:8 for 'im with khalaq]] The terminology of intercession shows that the Servant will not only be a sacrifice, but also a priest! The verb tense on intercede is different than might be expected, it shows that He will be interceding (future/ongoing action)!*

14. What should be the response to the final Servant song (in 54:1)? What is chapter 54 about? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Rejoicing! God will be their husband once again! He will not forsake them. He will be compassionate toward them and His covenant of peace toward them will not be broken. This indeed is salvation! 54:8-10!*

15. What is the point of chapter 55? What type of verbs are found in verses 1, 2, 3, 6, 7? Why should the reader do what is called for in this section (there are at least several reasons)? (1 paragraph)

*A: This is a call to enjoy Yahweh! It is full of **imperatives** (commands) to seek Him! Yahweh is good, **delight** yourself in Him. He is faithful, trust in Him. Call out to Him! Return to Yahweh and He will have compassion. We should seek Yahweh because He will have compassion, and He will pardon. There is forgiveness, and it is worth it to seek Him!*

16. Thought question: Summarize the message of the final Servant song. How does it fit into the purpose of the book as a whole?

17. Application: How does a better understanding of the nature of salvation effect each of us? How does understanding the purpose of the Servant effect each of our purposes in life? What does His humility teach us?

## 11. The Completion of God's Perfect Plan: Isaiah 56-66

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56-66

**Theme:** God's Perfect Plan of Salvation will be Accomplished

**Objectives:**

- To understand the nature of God's salvation and what it entails
- To better understand God's purpose and goal for His creation and how it will be accomplished
- To praise God for His marvelous salvation which will be accomplished

**Reading:**

- Read Isaiah 56-66 *twice*
- Read Webb's section on Isaiah 56-66

**Questions:**

1. In light of God's forgiveness of their sins in Isaiah 53, does God still care about their actions according to Isaiah 56? **Why** should Israel live righteously according to **56:1**? **Who** are mentioned in chapter 56? Why is this significant? What will they be doing? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yes!!! God's forgiveness and salvation are not to be presumed upon, but the **basis (56:1)** for us to obey! We should live righteously because Yahweh is about to bring His righteous Kingdom! Notice that eunuchs and foreigners are mentioned. **Outsiders** will be a part of God's people (56:6). Those who keep covenant will be righteous. God's temple is a house of prayer for **all peoples**! We see that salvation is intended to be global in nature. Isaiah 53 is not just for the nation of Israel, it is the hope of the world!*

2. What does chapter 57 emphasize? But even in light of that, what is God going to do in 57:14-21? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The rebellion and idolatry of the people are emphasized in ch 57. Yet even in spite of the worst of sins, God will not contend forever, He will **heal** them. God will **lead** and **restore** them. God will create the fruit of their lips (ie. God will cause them to praise Him). But His salvation of them must **humble** them, because Yahweh is exalted and He only helps the lowly. And there is no peace for the wicked.*

3. What kind of fast does God want according to chapter 58? What will God do for them if they keep His covenant? What is the point of the covenantal language here? What is righteousness according to this chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God wants a **fast** of wickedness (58:6). He wants them to obey and keep covenant. This is full of covenantal language. God cares about their faithful **relationship** with Him (when you think covenant, think relationship)! And if they do, it will be good for them. It will be joyful for them. When they delight in Yahweh, and not seek their own pleasure, He will bless them abundantly! **Righteousness** clearly cares for the **poor and needy**! It is the humility to be in right relationship with Yahweh that results in care for others.*

4. What is the problem in Yahweh's relationship with His people according to 59:1-2? How is the problem elaborated on in 59:3-15a? So what did Yahweh do in 59:16-21? (1 paragraph)

A: The problem is not with Yahweh. Yahweh is able to save. He is strong and powerful. But their sins have separated them from their God. **Sin separates (59:2)!** They are completely wicked. Their sin is piled up. **So Yahweh will go forth as a warrior. He brought about salvation by Himself. He brought about justice when they would/could not (59:16-21).** His Spirit (59:21) is what produces the change inside of us that actually saves and transforms us!

5. What is going to happen in chapter 60? Who is He going to do this for? Who else is involved? Describe what God is going to do in detail. (1-2 paragraphs)

A: God is going to bless His people. He will exalt them over all the nations of the earth. All the nations will go to Israel because **Yahweh will glorify His glorious house (60:1-3ff.!).** The nation which does not go to Jerusalem and serve Israel will perish. God will glorify His sanctuary. Not only that but all Israel's people will be **righteous**, they will possess the land forever, and they will be recognized as the work of Yahweh's hands so that He may be glorified! God is going to fulfill His good plan for the nation of Israel. They will be exalted over all the earth because Yahweh has saved them and made them righteous. Thus they will be a **light to the nations**. And so the good news of the praises of Yahweh will go forth to all the earth! Thus God will be greatly glorified as He will be the glory of His people! God's name, reputation, and glory are bound up with His people because of His promises to them, and so He will save and exalt them in order to glorify Himself!

6. What key words occur in 61:1? Who is being spoken of here and what is their purpose? What is God going to do in the rest of the chapter? Who is speaking in 61:10-11 and what do they say? (1 paragraph)

A: The key words are: anoint and good news. This is the Messiah, the Anointed One. **His purpose is to proclaim the good news, to bring about salvation, liberty to captives, judgment for enemies.** This shows what the nature of God's salvation will look like. It is healing and freedom! It is joy and praise! It is righteousness and justice so that God will be glorified! It is probably Jerusalem who is speaking in 61:10-11. God has clothed her in salvation. God has caused righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations in saving His people, Jerusalem, the wicked city who rebelled against Yahweh!. What an amazing work God has done in His people!

7. What is God going to do in chapter 62? Who will He do this for? Who will observe this and what will be their response? (1 paragraph)

A: **God is going to save.** He will save His people and make them righteous! The whole earth will see their glory, they will be a praise in all the earth. **Everyone will see God's salvation and righteousness of His people**, like a burning torch! God will rejoice over His people for all to see! This is why God is going to save His people. It will be in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, so God will bless the world through the seed of Abraham!

8. What happens in 63:1-6? What word describes what God is doing in this event? How/why does this word accurately describe this event (think about this!)? What is being described in 63:7-14? What word describes what God is doing in this event? Think about the correlation of these two sections (1-6 and 7-14). What then do we have in 63:15-19? How does this connect with the previous passage(s)? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: God tramples on the nations in His wrath in a **bloody day of vengeance**. But this event is described twice as salvation (63:1 and 63:5)!?! God's salvation includes destruction of enemies and judgment and wrath. It is



the **vindication of His holiness**. In God's salvation He not only will deliver His people, but also in the process judge those who are oppressing them. God's salvation is not one in which sin is looked over. Sin must be dealt with: either through the sacrificial death of the Servant, or through God's wrath being poured out. God's salvation is a holy and righteous salvation. In 63:7-14 the Exodus is described. This is also described as salvation (63:8, 9). Note the correlation. In the paradigmatic event of salvation, which is the Exodus, God powerfully saved His people but also judged Egypt and poured out His wrath on them. God's salvation is a magnificent display of His power over His enemies. We must never forget that salvation doesn't merely involve being saved from self, there is an epic battle being waged and the forces of darkness are conquered in God's salvation as well! In 63:15-19 we have a prayer. It is a prayer that once again Yahweh will act as He did in the past, as exemplified in the Exodus. God is a saving God, and so His people should pray (63:15-19) that He will act in the future (63:1-6) as he did in the past (63:7-14).

9. What do we have in chapter 64? What does Isaiah ask God to do in this chapter? Why? What does Isaiah confess and why? (1 paragraph)

A: Chapter 64 is another prayer. Isaiah is praying for God to act once again, to show Himself as mighty so that His name would be known among the nations (64:2)! God appears to be inactive and silent (64:9, 10, 12), but He will act once again and so Isaiah pleads for God to show Himself as great! Notice as well that Isaiah humbles himself before God and confesses their sins (64:6). They are not worthy, but in essence Isaiah pleads with God to **remember His promises**: they are in fact His people, Jerusalem is His city, and the temple is His house, even though they are so sinful. God was just in punishing them, yet will/may He be gracious for His own name's sake!

10. Even though God's people rejected Him (65:1-7), what is He going to do (65:8-16)? Who is God contrasting in 65:13-16? (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to act on behalf of His servants, to not destroy all of them (65:8). He will bring forth offspring and an heir to inherit His land (65:9). God will bless the land (65:10). But those who reject Yahweh will be rejected. God will make a **distinction** between His servants and those who forsake Him (65:13-16). He will act and there will be consequences based on your relationship to Yahweh! In other words, even though right now, the **righteous** may be under persecution while the wicked are prospering and you might be tempted to think that your relationship to Yahweh doesn't matter, in the future that will not be the case!!!

11. What is God going to do in 65:17-25? Describe what it will be like (think about this!). Who specifically in the context is the 'they' of verses 21-25? (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to create a **new heavens** and a **new earth**, and it will be completely new! God is going to rejoice in Jerusalem and in His people. The curse will be reversed and there will be extreme blessing! This is how creation was intended to be, and God will certainly bring it to fruition. The world is not functioning as intended in the present, but when God makes all things new, the old world living under the curse will be completely forgotten because of the new creation that God will bring about! **There will be joy forever!** The 'they' of 21-25 is God's people, Jerusalem!

12. What does God say in 66:1-2? What is contrasted in these two verses? (2-3 sentences)

A: God is the Creator and so **He calls for men to be humble before Him!** The Almighty Creator will look to the one who humbly and with contrition fears Him and His Word. This is only reasonable in light of the awesome distinction between the Creator Himself and His creation. What could we do or give to God? What

*does He want from us? He wants those who recognize who He is and who we are and humbly depend upon Him!!!*

13. What is the point of 66:3-9? (1 paragraph)

*A: Sin is sin and wickedness is wickedness. All are sinful before God and there is no fundamental distinction between those who are less wicked and those who are more. The wicked will be judged, but the humble vindicated. God will render recompense to His enemies. God will judge them, but it will be like the nation going through birth pains. The end will be the nation reborn! How great will that day be when the nation of Israel is reborn as the righteous nation they were intended to be!*

14. So then what will be the result in 66:10-17? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is going to bless Jerusalem. They will have peace. And God will use Jerusalem to bless the nations. This has always been the plan! And God Himself is going to come (15-17)! That's the ultimate blessing! But when He comes He will come in wrath and judgment for those who oppose Him. When God comes in power there will be blessing for those who humbly trust in Him, but wrath for those who in pride oppose Him. God's holy and righteous character is revealed both in the salvation of His people and in the judgment of His enemies. We see both of these themes continually running through this book! God's holy righteousness cannot tolerate sin, and so He deals with it one way or another!*

15. How does the book end in 66:18-24? What is the emphasis on? How will God be glorified in this section? Why do you think the last verse ends as it does? (1 paragraph)

*A: God will glorify His name among the nations. There is a large emphasis on God's glory. He will be glorified. He will exalt and save Israel as a sign of His glory. They will endure **forever** as a sign of His greatness, and ultimately He will be worshiped by all the earth! All flesh will worship Yahweh! And as a sign of His righteousness, holiness, and justice, those who rebel will be a continual sign of His wrath! This is an awesome ending to the book. God's glory is on display in saving His people and judging His enemies. God will vindicate His great name. He will come and He will act and His plan will prevail!*

16. Application: What do we learn about Yahweh and His salvation from this section? How should that effect us personally?

## 12. God is Faithful: Micah

**Scripture:** Micah

**Theme:** Although God Judges His People for their Sin, because of His Faithfulness there is always Hope in the End

**Objectives:**

- To better understand and trust in God's Faithfulness
- To better understand and participate in God's Plan for the World

**Reading:**

- Read Micah *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Micah

**Questions:**

1. When did Micah prophesy and who did He prophesy to? Why are the two locations singled out in 1:1? (1 paragraph)

*A: Micah is a little later than Jonah/Amos. He prophesied to both Israel and Judah (cf. 1:5) through Israel's destruction (Hezekiah). He was contemporary with Isaiah. Notice that Jerusalem and Samaria are the capitals of the two kingdoms, and there is definitely an emphasis on the capitals as that is where there was a concentration of wickedness, and the leaders of the nations were especially culpable.*

2. As you read through the book of Micah, note all the places where there is a **sharp** change in tone toward the recipients (it should be obvious). Based on these observations comment on the structure of the book. Where are its major divisions? Are there any verbal clues that also help confirm this structure? How do the various sections relate to one another? How do the parts with a sharp change in tone relate to one another? How do all these various sections contribute to the overall message of the book (Think about these questions! Answer before reading the commentary...)? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: There are 3 cycles in Micah. All start with 'Hear!' Listen. Let it sink in. All start with condemnation, end with hope. The hope is resolution to the specific problem.*

*Introduction (1:1)*

*Cycle 1: Chapters 1-2*

*Captivity (1:2-2:11)*

*Collection (2:12-13)*

*Cycle 2: Chapters 3-5*

*Capital Desolated (3:1-12)*

*Capital Exalted (4:1-5:15)*

*Cycle 3: Chapters 6-7*

*All are guilty (6:1-7:6)*

*God is merciful (7:7-20)*

*Cycle 1 God is going to judge Israel (especially) and Judah by sending them into captivity. Because they were idolatrous toward God and wicked towards one another. **But...** (2:12-13) God is going to gather and collect*

them. God is going to save them, and breach through the walls that surround them, and lead them out of captivity.

Cycle 2 God is going to judge the leaders (political and spiritual cf. 3:11) of Israel and Jacob. Jerusalem, the capital (where the leaders are) will be judged and will be desolate. **But...** (chs. 4-5) God is going to make His capital lifted up, and the source of truth and justice. Yahweh Himself will rule over them. He will shepherd them.

Cycle 3 Through a number of disputes and accusations Yahweh establishes the guilt of all the people. None follow His covenant. **But...** (7:10-20) God will vindicate those who look to Him for salvation. He will save them because of His great mercy, compassion, and faithfulness. God is a forgiving God.

3. How does the book begin? What is the scope originally? Why do you think the book begins this way? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It begins with a global introduction. God is the God of all the earth. He is global. And He calls for all the earth to be witnesses for His judgment.*

4. What is God calling for witnesses about? What specifically was their sin? What will be the result (1:6-7)? What is missing from 1:6-7? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is calling for witnesses about these nations' sins. Specifically, their idolatry (idols, 1:7; harlotry 1:7) will be addressed. And as a result Samaria will be laid waste. But what is missing is any reference to Judah... yet.*

5. Noting that there is a break in 1:8, what do we see in 1:8-16? Where are all the places named in this section located? What is the end result at the end of this section? Note that in 1:10-16 there are many word plays on the city names. What effect would that have had on the hearers (ie. Sunland will be scorched, terrible torrents will strike Torrence, and Oceana will be flooded...)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see that this wickedness even reach to Judah. All the places are Judean cities. At the end of this section we see that **even Judah** will be exiled for their sins. The dramatic effect increases the sense of awe and judgment at what God is doing.*

6. What sins does God change the focus to in 2:1-5? What is the judgment for this? What does 2:5 mean? (1 paragraph)

*A: The emphasis changes in 2:1-5 to their sins against one another. Specifically, the wickedness of oppressing the poor is addressed. The poor can't defend themselves, and the rich think they can oppress them without consequence. As a result, God will judge them in kind (lex-talionis). Their **inheritance** will be given to someone else and they will not have an inheritance in the future (kingdom) (2:5).*

7. What are 2:6-11 about? How is this section marked off? (1 paragraph)

*A: They tell God's prophets not to preach about judgment. The false prophets and people ask rhetorically, "Has the Lord grown impatient?" He **couldn't possibly judge us**, could He? He's such a patient God. These deeds of judgment couldn't possibly be from Yahweh, they are not His deeds. But Yahweh says, "My words*

do good to him who walks uprightly." They do wickedness (2:8-9) so they will be judged (2:10). Any winded lying preacher they would appoint over themselves, just not God's prophets. This section being set off by the Hebrew word *nataph*, the word for preacher in 6 and 11.

8. What do we see in 2:12-13? How does this section fit in with what comes before? (2-3 sentences)

A: Out of nowhere the tone changes and there is hope! This is in direct response to what came before. **After** exile comes the return. Then, the metaphor switches and God will break through the siege. He will save. He will deliver. God will be faithful to His promises! There will be a **remnant** (key word in Micah)!

9. Who is specifically addressed in 3:1? What is their primary sin? Who else do we see addressed in chapter 3? (2-3 sentences)

A: The leaders of the countries are addressed (3:1-4). Their lack of justice is paramount. We also see prophets addressed in 3:5-7, and other leaders again in 3:9-11.

10. What does 3:5 mean? What will happen as a result (3:6-7)? (2-3 sentences)

A: The prophets prophesy for material gain. If you pay them ('something to bite with their teeth') they'll prophesy peace, if not ('against him who puts nothing in their mouths'), war. God will cease speaking to these prophets.

11. What do we see in 3:8? How does this fit into the chapter? Do we see anything else like this throughout the book? Where? (2-3 sentences)

A: In 3:8 we see Micah's personal testimony. Several times we see him interject into a section (3:8; 4:5; 6:6-8; 7:7). Here Micah stands in stark contrast to the false prophets. He **boldly** declares what is right, empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh. It takes divine power to stand alone for what is right! We need to depend on the Spirit of God to do this in us!

12. How does the chapter end (3:12) and how is this in response to what we see in this chapter (one sentence)? (1 sentence)

A: The **capital** will be judged because of the wickedness of its **leaders**.

13. How does chapter 4 (especially verses 1-2) **specifically** come in response to chapter 3? What do we specifically see prophesied here? (1 paragraph)

A: The capital will be judged, but the capital will be exalted! Jerusalem will be the **capital of God's worldwide kingdom**. There will be peace in God's kingdom. The current leaders don't lead with **justice**, they don't teach the **truth**, but God will make Jerusalem the center of truth. He will silence the false prophets, but will make the law go forth from Jerusalem. God's kingdom will be centered in Jerusalem as He exalts His people and brings about worldwide peace in fulfillment of His plan (cf. also 4:8).

14. What is 4:5 about? (2-3 sentences)

A: Once again we have an interjection where Micah leads the people to **walk in trust** of Yahweh. Because even though this hasn't happened yet, it will... and those who trust in Yahweh need to walk with Him as they wait.

15. What key word occurs in 4:7 that we see throughout Micah (especially in chapter 5, and at the end of the book)? Why is this such a key concept for Micah? (2-3 sentences)

A: '**Remnant**' is a key word in Micah because although God will judge His people, He will not utterly wipe them out. He will not do so because He will be **faithful** to His promises. He will fulfill His plan through the seed of Abraham such that all the world will be blessed through them.

16. How does 4:9-11 fit into 4:1-8? And how does 4:12-13 help us to understand? (1 paragraph)

A: Once again we slip back into pain for Jerusalem and exile. But we see here that the pain has a purpose. The nations don't know that their opposition of God's people is under God's sovereign control, and that ultimately God is bringing all nations against Israel to judge those nations and exalt His people (4:12c-13)! It was **God's intention** all along! This is all part of the plan (4:12)! He will bring His people through the fire.

17. How does chapter 5 begin (5:1)? What then happens in verse 2 in response? How does the whole of chapter 5 **specifically** come in response to chapter 3? (2-3 sentences)

A: Once again we begin with doom before the hope. The judge of Israel will be struck. But there will be a response. God will bring **His leader**. God will judge the corrupt leaders in chapter 3, and will bring in His righteous King in chapter 5.

18. What is said about the ruler who is coming? What will he accomplish in 5:2-9? (1 paragraph)

A: The ruler comes from Bethlehem, **city of David**. This obviously has implications for the Son of David, the Messiah. Furthermore, this ruler's origin is from **ancient time**, thus He is no ordinary man. He is God in flesh, the Messiah, the King! He will rule and reign over all the earth and shepherd the people of Israel. He will be great over all the earth. **Even if** the greatest nation on earth should attack Messiah in His kingdom (5:4-5) the Messiah would conquer. Through the Messiah's kingdom the remnant of Israel will be numerous and blessed, dependent only on Yahweh. They will be great among the nations. God will certainly fulfill His promise (literally!) to Abraham!

19. Is 5:10-15 for or against Israel? Why or why not? (2-3 sentences)

A: While these verses initially look like judgment, in reality they are blessing! Cutting off their chariots, cities, strongholds, etc. is cutting of their dependence upon anything except Yahweh! And Yahweh will judge the nations that do not obey Him.

20. What is the setting that begins chapter 6? What word is repeated in verses 1-2 that clues us in? Why are the mountains in 6:1-2? (2-3 sentences)

A: Chapter 6 is a courtroom setting. The word that is repeated is the Hebrew word *riyv*, meaning 'dispute'. The mountains are in 6:1-2 because they were **witnesses** of God's covenant with Israel (cf. Deu 32:1).

21. How does 6:6-8 function within this section? What is the point? (2-3 sentences)

*A: In light of God's faithfulness and the people's sin, how will sin be forgiven? God doesn't want the externals. No number of sacrifices can do away with sin. God wants people to humbly trust and obey Him. He wants people who care about what He cares about, **justice and loyal love**, and who **walk circumspectly** (carefully doing what He wants!) with Him! We see once again the need to walk in right relationship with God always means to walk in right relationship with others. Right relationship with God always results in care for the lowly!*

22. What does 6:9 mean (see ESV for correct translation)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is **sound wisdom** to **fear Yahweh's name**. Listen up! Hear! - The rod is coming and the one who bears it! Wisdom is humility. And humility comes from the **fear of Yahweh**, an understanding of how **awesome** and **majestic** He is, especially in His wrath and judgement.*

23. How does 6:16 connect back to 6:6-8 and bracket in the intervening material? So what will Yahweh do because of this in 13-15? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They **walk** (cf. 6:8) in Omri and Ahab's statutes and not Yahweh's! They walk in their counsel, not **carefully** with their God. Everything in between (6:9-15) are examples of this **proud, self-exultant injustice**. Remember the example of Ahab and the field. It's the pride of thinking that we can do whatever we want. Note the connection between **humility, justice, wisdom**. True **humility** humbles oneself to listen to Yahweh (**wisdom**) and so cares about what He does (**justice** and care for the poor). So Yahweh will judge them.*

24. What is the point of 7:1-6? What is emphasized in each verse (it's the same in each verse, think about it until you see it!)? How does each verse emphasize this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **All** are guilty. They are **totally** corrupt. There are **no** gleanings left (7:1). The godly have perished with **none** left. **All** lie in wait (7:2). They are good at evil. Prince, judge and great ones are corrupt (7:3). Even the best of them is corrupt (7:4). You can't even trust close friends (7:5). You can't even trust close relatives (7:6).*

25. What do we see once again in 7:7? How does 7:8-10 connect to verse 7 and continue on from it? What is the point Micah is trying to communicate here? (1 paragraph)

*A: Micah interjects here once again. Here, as in other interjections, Micah interjects as the voice of and representative of the **humble**. In sharp contrast to the **unfaithful proud**, Micah **humbly** trusts in and waits for Yahweh and His salvation. Yahweh alone can save. But as He continues in verse 8, the humble not only waits for God's salvation from his distress, but from his sin. He trusts that though he falls, Yahweh will save him. He **admits his sin** and **looks to Yahweh to justify**. Yahweh gives him light to see what is right and to walk in it! We have to be humble enough to admit this! But we also see that God's salvation means that He will **forgive** and **vindicate**! God deals with the sin of the humble who trust in His salvation, but then also delivers him from the oppression of the wicked. Even though he has sinned against Yahweh, the humble will trust in Yahweh that He will plead his case, execute justice for him, and bring him to the light. The humble will see **Yahweh's righteousness**. Then (in the end!) God will **vindicate** His servant who humbly waited for and trusted in Him (7:10)!*

26. What will happen in 7:11-17? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Israel will be **exalted** and **vindicated**. God will shepherd His people once again as He did in the past. The earth will be ashamed in contrast to Israel. The nations will come trembling before Him.*

27. How does the book end in 7:18-20? How is this a response to what we saw in chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7? What is the basis given for what He does in 7:18-20? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There is no god like Yahweh! He alone is a forgiving God! Despite the universal guilt of the people, God is a forgiving God. He delights in **hesed**. It is God's hesed that allows Him to forgive, because if God wasn't faithful, but vindictive, He wouldn't forgive us for all that we've done to Him! What a beautiful response to the problem of sin! The basis for God's forgiving of Israel is His covenant with Israel. He will certainly forgive and save them!*

28. Thought question: How do we see resolution come to each of the problems presented in the book?

29. Application: What do we learn about Yahweh in Micah that effects the way we live today? What do we learn about His faithfulness?

*A: God's promise to restore Israel, guarantees the remnant, and that God will forgive that remnant. Since God also hates sin, and judges it, this guarantees that He will change their hearts. God's faithfulness. He keeps His word. It is sure. We can wait for it. It will happen. That is our hope. His faithfulness to His people. Those He has chosen He will not forsake. Incredible hope for sinners. God is gracious and forgiving. Passes over sin. Even though we are wicked and come from a wicked people, God saves those who trust in Him. This book, more than almost any in the OT, emphasizes the forgiveness of sin, and that the remnant need to be forgiven. That is the difference between the remnant and the rest, the remnant are forgiven. They trust in God, and He forgives them. This book about the faithfulness of God to His promises. He will bring them about despite the nation's sin. He will forgive because He promised to be faithful to Abraham. This book about the plan of God. Because of His faithfulness to His promises, He will bring about the kingdom at the end. Despite the current rebellion. It will surely come about. This book about the prevailing mercy and grace of God to His people. Always ends in hope. There is always hope for the people of God.*



### 13. The Avenger will Have His Global Day: Nahum/Zephaniah

**Scripture:** Nahum 1-3 and Zephaniah 1-3

**Theme:** Yahweh is An Avenging God and will have His Glorious Global Day

**Objectives:**

- To Understand and Live in Light of Yahweh's Righteous Judgment and Hatred of Sin
- To Rejoice in the Triumph of Yahweh
- To Understand the Global Nature of Yahweh's Glory and Plan
- To Grow in our Fear of Yahweh

**Reading:**

- Read Nahum and Zephaniah *four times each*
- Read Chisholm's section on Nahum and Zephaniah

**Questions:**

**Nahum**

1. Who is the book of Nahum written to (Think about this!)? When was it written? What is its purpose? What was Nineveh like? (1 paragraph)

*A: Nahum was written to Judah. Short history: Jonah was written 784-760 B.C. (2 Ki 14:25). Assyria had since recovered from Sennacherib's defeat in 701 B.C. (2 Ki 19:35-36; Isa 37:36-38) during the reign of Hezekiah. Asarhaddon had recently transplanted people into Samaria and Galilee (670 B.C., 2 Ki 17:24; Ezr 4:2). Nahum was then written around 664-612 B.C. before Nineveh fell (2Ki 21:1-18) during the reign of Manasseh. Its purpose is to encourage Israel with **God's ultimate triumph!** Here are some background verses on Assyria: 2Ki 15:19, 29; 16:7; 17:3-6, 23-**24**; Note also that Nahum quotes/alludes to Isaiah frequently: Nah 3:5, Isa 47:2,3; Nah 3:7,10; Isa 51:19-20; Nah 1:15; Isa 52:1,**Z**; Nah 1:8,13; 3:10 Isa 10:23, 27; 13:16. Nineveh was known for their **brutality** after victory: enslaved; cut off ears, noses, tongues and fingers; killed. Nineveh capital of Assyria. Massive palace complex alongside the Tigris, running thru heart of city. Walls 40 to 50 feet, miles around the perimeter of the inner city. 15 main gates, well-protected. Inside were many gardens, a zoo, the first ever aqueduct.*

2. How does the book begin (1:2)? What is repeated in this verse? How is this immediately followed up on (1:3)? What is the message of these two verses together? What does it mean that Yahweh is jealous? What is He jealous for? What does it mean that Yahweh is avenging? What does He avenge? How would you describe Yahweh's anger from this section? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh is an avenging God. Three times '**avenging**' is used in this verse. Yahweh **owns** wrath (cf. Pro 29:22 for this construction). It's part of His character. Yet although Yahweh is an awesome and holy God, He is gracious and compassionate. This is a great combination. The reason Yahweh is slow to wrath is **not** that He is unable to punish. He certainly will. **But His power is manifested in His patience.** He doesn't have to capriciously lash out. He is zealous & avenging, but always patient. His power is not unrestrained; it is righteous anger. God has jealousy for His people and anything or anyone that would threaten that relationship. Here it is against Assyria who stand against Yahweh's people. God's jealousy burns against His people **when** they seek after other gods, but His jealousy burns against other peoples **when** they touch the apple of His eye. Cf. Jos 24:19; Exo 20:5; 34:14 (Num 25:11-13 Phinehas); Deu 4:24; 6:15. That Yahweh avenges*

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*means that His wrath takes action in righteously judging those who have oppressed the one He loves and is jealous for. Yahweh's anger is strong and passionate, yet righteous and controlled.*

3. What is the overall tone of the book? Are there any verses that sharply differ from this? Which ones? How do they key us in to who the book was written to and its purpose? (1 paragraph)

*A: It is graphic and intense. It is fierce and fearful. It is very clearly a literary book, not a compilation of prophecies. It is a composition. Yet there are verses that sharply differ from this tone. They show the ray of light that this book is a book of hope for God's people. 1:7, 12-13, 15; 2:2. By including these verses of hope, we see the judgment of Nineveh in light of them. This whole book is about God's victory. **In this book we see the vengeance of God over the rebellion of men, the wrath of God over the wickedness of men and the triumph of God over the schemes of men.***

4. What physical objects are repeated throughout the book and how do they fit into the purpose/theme of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Water, lions, chariots, armies, walls, and ramparts are all things Nineveh/Assyria were famous for. (cf. 2Ki 15:19,29; 16:7; 17:3-6, 23-24). Nineveh was even destroyed by the Tigris which was diverted and flooded the city (cf. 2:6,8). Besides this introduction, the identification of Nineveh is delayed until 2:8, possibly to heighten suspense. In Nahum, God will destroy/humiliate these things which they were proud of.*

5. What is the point of 1:2-8 (especially starting in 3b)? What do we see here? How does 1:7 fit into this section? Who is the author talking about in 1:8? What is 'its site'? In what ways does this verse foreshadow what is to come? (1 paragraph)

*A: This section is a theophany, an appearance of Yahweh. It is an awesome display of Yahweh. Yet in the midst of Yahweh's awesome power, for those who seek refuge in Him **He is a stronghold**. He knows them and is in relationship with them. Verse 8 is an allusion to Nineveh. The author skillfully delays mention of them until 2:8 to build suspense. Notice also the foreshadowing of the theme of the flood which will be built on later.*

6. What is the theme of 1:9-14? What is repeated? Who are the different people being talked about? How does 1:12-13 help us to see the purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: There is an emphasis in this section on the wicked schemes of the wicked counselor (1:11). But it doesn't matter what he **schemes**, God will make an end of it and bring judgment. This is probably the king of Nineveh being talked about. In 12-13 we see that God's judgment of the wicked schemer is the deliverance of His people. Though they had been afflicted by him, it will end. God will remove the oppressor's yoke bar from upon His people.*

7. What is the good news of 1:15? How is Nahum using Isaiah 52:7 here? So then what happens in 2:2? (1 paragraph)

*A: The **good news** is that the wicked schemer is completely cut off! Now they are able to celebrate their feasts, which they couldn't do under oppression. Now they can pay their vows. This is God's **salvation as in Isaiah**, but here the salvation includes the judgment of their enemies. God is going to restore Jacob and Israel. Even though they were destroyed, God will restore their eminence and exaltation.*

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8. Who is 2:1 directed towards? What about 2:3-5? What is the impression these verses leave on the hearer? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is directed toward Assyria. They will be sieged. These verses leave fear. Prepare for the onslaught! It's coming. There is a flurry of action. Get ready for the siege of the wall! Everyone can picture this in their own street. See how visual the depiction is: Description of an attacking army. It is **concrete, visual, & physical**. There are colors and light: shields, army, chariots, spears; red, scarlet; flashing chariots, shaking spears.*

9. What does the imagery change to in 2:6-8? Why is this especially apt? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The imagery is now of water, which is especially apt because Nineveh was built on the Tigris and was destroyed through diverting the river. Halt! HALT! But nothing can stop the flood!*

10. Note that 2:10 starts with: "bükäh, üm°vükäh, üm°vulläqäh." Ie. Dessolation, devastation, and destruction. What is the effect of verses 9-10? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again fear and panic are described. This is very descriptive! A boqbuq is also the name of a jug, because it made that sound as water poured out. This also reinforces the rhetorical effect of destruction through being poured out like water!*

11. What imagery is then used in 2:11-13 and why is this apt? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Now the metaphor changes to that of **lions**. This is apt as that is how Assyria like to depict themselves as ravenous lions. But God is going to destroy their strength and all the plunder they had stored up for themselves.*

12. How would you describe chapter 3? What is the author doing here (especially in 3:12-14 but really all throughout the book)? What is depicted in 3:3? What is Nineveh's prime sins according to 3:4? What do we see in 3:8-10? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is a taunt. God is taunting them! This book is full of irony and satire. 3:3 shows a picture of multitudes of dead bodies. They are full of sorcery and harlotry. They were no better than other great cities that went into exile. God will judge them!*

13. How does the book end in 3:17-19? Who receives the focus? How does the final sentence give closure to the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Even their leaders flee. Notice once again how picturesque this is. They are picture as locusts who flee in all directions. The book receives closure as their wickedness is the reason for their complete and total destruction. They continually were wicked to all the peoples around them and so they will be judged.*

14. Thought question: How do you think the original readers would have felt after reading Nahum? Comment on it's style and how that effects the message of the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This book is full of irony & satire. They had a great army, by an army they will be destroyed. Lions strong, lions destroyed. Water surrounding for protection, flooding is what destroys. Locusts like charging armies, grasshoppers scattered. Everything turned on Nineveh.*

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15. Application: How should Nahum impact our lives? What does knowing about Yahweh's wrath and vengeance produce in us?

A: There is wickedness in the world at present. Wrongs are being done. It is not ours to avenge. Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay (Rom 12:19; cf Deu 32:35). It is important for us to understand God's justice and vengeance as well as His mercy. It frees us from vengeance. One day God Himself will make all wrongs right, but in His time. Nahum is like Revelation. It is picturesque and has joyful triumph at the end. It says a lot about the destruction of the wicked. The point: as we study the last two chapters, they are meant to give us a graphic picture of the destruction of Nineveh. God brings the high low. He reverses fortunes. He triumphs. He delivers people from the wicked oppressor. That is the picture. Rev 6:10. How long till you avenge?!? Yahweh will avenge, but at the right time. God gives full judgment, but is not capricious. God is full of patience, but not laxity (cf. Psa 94, esp 1). Rev 17-19:5; 19:1-3 (rejoice over judgment), 19:2d (avenge), 18:23d (sorcery), 18:20c (for you). Nineveh (like Babylon later) was the capital of wickedness, the center of the world, scheming against God & His people. If we don't understand this sentiment of rejoicing over judgment, we don't understand God. We need to be shaped to think like He does. Rev 19:11-16 (The Rider on the white horse, coming to judge with sword and blood). When we hear, "God is going to judge sinners," we tend to think, "that is terrible" (which is true in a sense). But we're too man centered in our thinking. We have too low a view of the holiness of God and the wickedness of sin. We tend to think in terms of what's best for mankind, not what glorifies God most and reveals His righteousness.

### Zephaniah

16. When was Zephaniah written? What happened during Josiah's time? Who were the recipients? What were they like? What was Zephaniah trying to produce in them? (1 paragraph)

A: Zephaniah was written during the days of Josiah. He was a good king and tore down the idols in the land. However, the repentance apparently wasn't deep within the heart of the people, as they quickly went back to their idolatry after Josiah died. So while during Josiah's day they were outwardly repentant, it didn't effect their hearts. So Zephaniah was trying to produce within them a **true fear of Yahweh**. There are many **quotes of Deuteronomy** in Zephaniah. This book was likely written after the discovery of the law in the temple. Zep 1:13 -> Deu 28:30; Zep 1:13 -> Deu 28:39; Zep 1:15 -> Deu 28:53,55,57; Zep 1:17 -> Deu 28:29; Zep 1:18 -> Deu 32:21-22; Zep 3:5 -> Deu 32:4; Zep 3:17 -> Deu 28:63; 30:9; Zep 3:19-20 -> Deu 26:19. Thus Zephaniah was probably written after the law found in 622.

17. Where would you divide the book into two sections? How would you further subdivide the first section? Think about **who** is being dealt with in each section. (1 paragraph)

A:

#### I. Day of Judgment 1:2-3:8

A.) Against All (including Judah) 1:2-1:18

\* Call to Humility 2:1-3

B.) Against Gentiles 2:4-15

C.) Against Jerusalem 3:1-8

#### II. Day of Joy 3:9-20

There is a clear major break in the book at 3:9 where judgment changes to hope, as often in the prophets. In the first section it is clear that there is a focus on both **Judah** and the **world**. This can be seen in the first chapter which so clearly deals with both, then in 2:4-15 where the focus is on the Gentiles, and finally in 3:1-8 where the focus is on Jerusalem. In the section on the day of joy, there is definitely a **global focus** as well.

18. What is the main theme of Zephaniah? How does this book differ from Joel? **Who** are the people being dealt with in this book and how does that help us understand Zephaniah's distinctive focus? How do we see this focus in both major sections of the book? See 1:2-3 for help. What other key themes run through the book (ie. repeated verbs, topics, etc.)? Note that the word for remove and gather are the same in Hebrew. (1 paragraph)

*A: The main theme is the day of Yahweh. It differs from Joel in that it is much more general, and **definitely more global**. Yahweh is a global God. He is the sovereign of the universe, and this book shows that clearly. We see that Yahweh is a **global God** in both the judgment and hope of this book in its two major sections. The whole world will be judged, and Zephaniah's vision for restoration is likewise very global. Zephaniah can almost be seen as a treatise on the day of Yahweh. God will bring about His plan for the world and make Himself great in His world. Key words/themes- **Remove: 1:2, 3; 3:8; 3:18 vs. Gather: 3:8, 19, 20. Pride: 2:8, 10, 15; 3:2, 11, 12 vs. Humility: 2:3; 3:12. Visit: 1:8, 9, 12; 2:7; 3:7 Global: 1:2, 3; 1:18; 3:9.***

19. How does the book begin in 1:2-3? How does this set the tone for the rest of the book? Where/how do we see themes introduced here throughout the rest of the book? Why does Zephaniah mention man and beast, and birds and fish? What effect does that have? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This book is very global. Yahweh is a global God. His plan is global. So He will judge the world for its rebellion, and then institute His plan which will include global worship. See above for global emphasis in the book. This is very reminiscent of **Genesis 1**. This goes back to creation, once again, this is global.*

20. Who is Yahweh going to judge in 1:4-6 and why? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh is going to judge Judah and Jerusalem for their idolatry.*

21. How is Yahweh's day described in verses 1:7-8? What does this image invoke? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh's day is a sacrifice with lots of blood. He will **slaughter** those who do not trust in Him!*

22. What does the Hebrew word for 'punish' in 1:8, 9, 12 mean? How is this same word used in 2:7 and 3:7? How does this word fit into the main theme of the book? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh is going to **visit**, and what happens when Yahweh shows up depends on what relationship you have with Him! Those who are not in right relationship with Him will be judged, those who are will be blessed.*

23. How are those who Yahweh will judge described in 1:12? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh will judge the **stagnant** and **congealed**. In making the best wine, liquid is poured from vessel to vessel to separate the wine from the dregs, otherwise the wine becomes harsh, after resting on its lees ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lees\\_\(fermentation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lees_(fermentation))): **Lees** refers to deposits of dead or residual yeast and other particles that precipitate). It also becomes **congealed**. Cf. Psa 75:9; Jer 48:11-12 (cf. for congeal Isa 25:6; Zec 14:6). They are **complacent** and don't think Yahweh will judge them. But He will!*

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24. How is Yahweh's day described in 1:14-18? Who are involved in Yahweh's day here? (2-3 sentences)

A: It is a global day of destruction. No one will escape. All will be **humbled** and **laid low**. The whole earth will be destroyed.

25. What is Yahweh's jealousy? What does the word mean? What is Yahweh jealous for in 1:18 (cf. also 3:8)? (2-3 sentences)

A: As we will see, God is extremely jealous for His own glory, and His own zeal will see it accomplished (Cf. Exo 34:14; Pro 27:4). His jealousy is His **intense energetic state of mind**, urging Him towards action. The cause of jealousy is **infringement** of someone's **rights** or **injury** to the subject's **honor**. This jealousy is no self-centered pettiness, but an awesome zeal for His own glory and reputation that He will accomplish. Cf. Zep 2:11, He will be zealous for His glory and will famish those who try to detract from it. That is why **pride** is such an emphasis in this book.

26. How does 2:1-3 function within the flow of the book? What is its purpose? (2-3 sentences)

A: 2:1-3 is a call to **repent** and **humble** oneself in light of the coming day of Yahweh. It is at the heart of the message of the book. **Humble** yourself all the earth in light of the glory of Yahweh. Note once again how righteous and humility are connected.

27. Trace the themes of pride and humility in the book? How are they central to the message of the book? Especially comment on 2:10-11. (2-3 sentences)

A: Pride: 2:8, **10-11**, 15; 3:2, 11, 12 vs. Humility: 2:3; 3:12. See above on Yahweh's jealousy. Yahweh wants all the glory globally. He is the only God.

28. Trace the direction of the peoples listed in 2:4-15. What is the author emphasizing by this (one sentence)? (2-3 sentences)

A: The author goes WESN to emphasize once again the global nature of Yahweh's judgment; He will judge the entire earth.

29. What do we see in 2:7 and 2:9 about God's plan? (1 sentence)

A: God will fulfill His plan to bless and exalt His nation!

30. Who is the rebellious city in 3:1? How does 3:5 flow from 3:1-4? (1 sentence)

A: Jerusalem is the rebellious city whose **righteousness** is contrasted with God's. In His righteousness He will judge. God cares about the lowly, but God in His righteousness does.

31. What is emphasized in 3:9-10? What about in 3:11-13? What about in 3:14-17? (1 paragraph)

A: 1) There will be global worship because **God will create global worshippers!** After God purified the earth by judging it, He will accomplish His plan to receive glory worldwide. 2) **God will purify and humble His**

## LATTER PROPHETS I LESSON 13. - THE AVENGER WILL HAVE HIS GLOBAL DAY: NAHUM/ZEPHANIAH

**people.** God will judge His people, but He will then purify them. He will certainly accomplish His plan. 3) God will **rejoice over His people.** He will be with His people. What greater joy!!!

32. How do 3:18-20 tie in with God's plan and purpose as laid out in the Torah? (1 paragraph)

A: God's purpose for Israel was for them to be a **light**. They were to shine forth the glories of Yahweh. His purposes for the world and for Israel will not be thwarted, even by their disobedience. He will be glorified. His zeal (jealousy) for His own glory will accomplish it. Cf. Deu 26:19; 2Ki 19:31; Isa 9:6; 37:32. God is global and He will accomplish His plan, detailed in the Torah, to gain **global worship** through His kingdom and His people. Yahweh has a zeal for this glory and stands opposed to any who are proud. Pride is the desire to see ourselves glorified, but He deserves all the glory.

33. Application: What do we learn about God's plan in Zephaniah? How should we respond to what we learn about God here?

## **14. Faith in the Unfathomable God: Habakkuk**

**Scripture:** Habakkuk

**Theme:** God Calls us to Trust in Him, even though we can't Understand His Ways

**Objectives:**

- To learn to trust in Yahweh even when we don't understand His ways

**Reading:**

- Read Habakkuk *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Habakkuk

**Questions:**

1. When was Habakkuk written? To whom? What was the point to the original recipients? How is this book different than the other prophets we've read? Who is the conversation between in this book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Habakkuk was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem to Judah. The message was one of trusting in Yahweh even when His plan seemed unfathomable. It seemed as though in the destruction of Jerusalem, God had completely forsaken His people and His plan. But the message of Habakkuk is that this is not so, His people simply need to **trust** in Him. The following passages give background for the wickedness of Judah that produced that exile: Jer 22; Jer 2; 2 Ki 23:31-37. This book is different than the other prophets in that it is a conversation between the prophet and Yahweh, not with the nation.*

2. Trace the conversation between Habakkuk and Yahweh through the book. Where is Habakkuk talking and where is Yahweh talking (don't forget to include chapter 3)? Use this to create an outline of the book. How does chapter 3 fit into this outline? (1 paragraph)

*A: Outline:*

*I. Oracle of Habakkuk (1-2)*

- A. Prescript (1:1)*
- B. Prophet's 1st Complaint (1:2-4)*
- C. Yahweh's Response (1:5-11)*
- D. Prophet's 2nd Complaint (1:12-17)*
- E. Prophet Waits (2:1)*
- F. Yahweh Calls for Patience (2:2-4)*
- G. Oppressor Denounced (2:5-20)*
  - i Prelude (2:5-6a)*
  - ii Five Woes (2:6b-19)*
    - a) Empire Builder (2:6b-8)*
    - b) Exploiter (2:9-11)*
    - c) Arrogant Slave (2:12-14)*
    - d) Demoralizer (2:15-17)*
    - e) Idolater (2:18-20)*

*II. Psalm of Habakkuk (3)*

- A. Prescript (3:1)*
- B. Prophet's Prayer (3:2)*



- C. Yahweh's Answer (3:3-15)
  - i. Yahweh's Answer of Theophany (3:3-7)
  - ii. Yahweh's Conflict with Enemies (3:8-12)
  - iii. Yahweh's Deliverance of His People (3:13-15)
- D. Prophet's Response (3:16-19)
- E. Postscript (3:19b)

3. Summarize Habakkuk's initial complaint. Whose 'violence' and 'iniquity' is he complaining about? Is his complaint a good one (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Why isn't God acting? His saints cry out for **justice** and see none. There is seeming inactivity of God on earth. The violence and iniquity he is complaining about is his peoples'. They were wicked and so Habakkuk cried out for **justice**. His complaint is a good one. He desired **righteousness**. He desired God to act and save. He desired God's righteous law upheld. This is the cry of all the righteous in wicked times. In every generation the righteous are **perplexed** over the evil that prevails despite a righteous and omnipotent God.*

4. What is God's response? What is the effect of 1:5? What is so unbelievable about God's response? What do we see in God's response that mirrors what Habakkuk said in his complaint (cf. especially 1:7, 9)? How does this answer Habakkuk's question? How does verse 11 fit into the previous verses? (1 paragraph)

*A: God's answer to Habakkuk's complaint is that He is going to use the Babylonians to judge His wicked nation! 1:5 serves to show how amazing and astonishing God's answer is. This doesn't seem like the answer Habakkuk was looking for. It is **unbelievable** that God is going to use a nation more wicked than His own nation to judge His own nation! Notice how Habakkuk calls out for justice and cries out because of the violence, and God's response states that the Babylonians' **justice** originates with themselves and they are **violent**! This doesn't answer his question but only makes it **more perplexing**! But even then, God will hold them guilty as well. Justice and righteousness will always be upheld in the end. Cf. Deu 28:49-50ff. that a fierce foreign nation was predicted to come upon them and judge them.*

5. What is Habakkuk's next complaint? What are the various aspects of it? Note his use of the word look in 1:13. How would you describe Habakkuk's tone? (1 paragraph)

*A: In 1:12-17 Habakkuk responds to God's response by asking more questions. God's answer is perplexing. How could God judge His people with a nation more wicked than they??? How could a holy God use Babylon who is so evil? Isn't this contrary to His character and plan? God is too pure to look on evil, that is clear from His character, but then how could He look with favor on treacherous Babylon? This is seemingly inconsistent and **incomprehensible**. Doesn't God bless the righteous and curse the wicked!? Why is God silent again in the midst of such wickedness, shouldn't He judge it? Habakkuk is certainly perplexed, but also is very clearly trusting in God through it all. It is a statement of **faith** when he says, "We will not die." He is affirming of God's character throughout but these are legitimate questions...*

6. What does it mean that they sacrifice to their net in 1:16? How are the Babylonians characterized in this section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They trust in themselves. Their strength is their god. It is the **pride** and **arrogance** of **self trust**. They worship their power and not the true and only God. They are fat and happy in their wickedness. And seemingly no one is able to stop them.*

7. How is this complaint different or similar than the first? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is very similar in that once again Habakkuk is questioning how God could allow such evil. Why is God silent? Where is justice? Yet his perplexity is definitely even higher as this is even more confusing than the initial situation. God is sovereignly going to use an **even more** wicked nation to judge **His chosen people**. How is this an answer at all?*

8. Note that 2:1-4 are key for understanding the book, think carefully about the next few questions! How does 2:1 function in the flow of the book? (Note that the end of this verse is better translated: "And how I may reply concerning my complaint"). What is Habakkuk doing here? Is he exemplary in doing so? (2-3 sentences)

*A: In **between** the questioning and answers, Habakkuk **interjects** a statement of waiting upon God. He knows that the answers must come from Him. This is an **earnest expectation** of an answer from Yahweh. This is clear trust in Him. This is waiting upon God for resolution. We don't always understand God's purpose. He alone has the answer. So we must **wait** till the end to see how God works everything out!*

9. What is the point of 2:2-3 (although 2:2 is difficult to interpret, use 2:3 which is easier to understand the point of these two verses)? What vision is God talking about in context (figure this out, this is important!)? What should then be the response to this vision according to 2:2-3? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God's answer will **certainly** come. It is inscribed in stone. It is written in large letters like a billboard. Therefore the right response should be **patient waiting**. God will bring about His ultimate plan. The vision is what we find in the rest of chapter 2. It is **God's answer of ultimate justice and judgment**. **One day** God will make all things right, but we must trust and wait. It will come in **His timing**, at the appointed time.*

10. What is the point of 2:4? Who is the proud one in context? What is faith in context here? What is it contrasted to? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Babylonians **trusted** in themselves. They were proud and arrogant and self-sufficient. They worshiped their own strength. In contrast to that, God calls the righteous to live by faith, a humble trust in Him. God calls for people to wait upon Him. God wants us to acknowledge that He will bring about resolution in time. In contrast to the self-sufficient pride in the context and even this verse, it is clear that **faith** and trust are meant and not faithfulness per se. This is about waiting and trusting in God and in His strength. That is how the righteous is to live. God is their strength. Who do you trust in? The righteous believe in God (cf. Gen 15:6) and therefore waits on Him.*

11. How does 2:5 contrast to 2:4? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is the **exact opposite of trust**: never satisfied, always wanting more. This is the opposite of waiting upon and trusting in God. Note that the Babylonians were known for their wine (ie. Dan 5).*

12. How does the rest of chapter 2 break up (ie. 2:6b-19)? What is the point of the rest of the chapter? What is repeated/emphasized? (1 sentence)

*A: There are 5 woes on Babylon (see the outline) with the repeated themes of **retribution & justice**.*

13. How does the chapter end? How is it ironic in light of how the book began? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The whole earth should be silent in light of the Holy Majesty of Yahweh! Habakkuk began by questioning God and **thinking God was silent**. God ends the section by **telling mankind to be silent**.*

14. Summarize the message of the first two chapters. Did God answer Habakkuk's questions? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is sovereign. He is incomprehensible. He is just, but we don't always understand His justice. There will be **ultimate justice in time**, but we will need to **wait** for His timing. We need to live by **faith in Him**. He will always do what is right. God never answered Habakkuk's questions. He doesn't need to justify His ways to us. Since we can't understand Him, we simply need to live by faith. This is a simple message of trust in God despite appearances and circumstances.*

15. Is chapter 3 about the past or the future? Why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 3 is about **both** the past and the future! The judgment of God in the future is couched in figurative language of God's acting in the past, ie. at Sinai, Red Sea crossing, Conquest, Wilderness Wanderings. The is a reminder of **God's great acts**.*

16. What is God's report (3:2)? Read Numbers 14:15 and Deuteronomy 2:25 which use the same word to get a better sense of the word. Why does this report cause Habakkuk to fear? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God's report is **His reputation**. It's God's work in the past. It is the **great deeds** He has done. Habakkuk **fears** because Yahweh is awesome.*

17. Note who is speaking in 3:1, 2, 3ff. What is Habakkuk praying for in this prayer? What is the response (and by whom)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Habakkuk prays that God would **act again**. He prays that God would once again show Himself as great as He did in the past. Habakkuk is calling God to do what He said He would do, to judge Babylon, save Israel, to act in power and to remember mercy. Yet as before it is in the **midst of years**. It calls for **patience** and **waiting** and **trust** upon God for His timing.*

18. What do we see in 3:3-15? What are key words/concepts that are repeated? Why is water such a major theme in this section? What parallels do we see to elsewhere in Scripture (there are many!!! See if you can find some)? (1 paragraph)

*A: This is a theophany. An appearing of Yahweh. He appears in majesty and power. Salvation is a major theme of this section. This is all couched in the language of the Exodus, the defining act of God's salvation power. There are many allusions to that event, hence all the references to water. Many of the Psalms also depict that event in similar language. Note many parallels to elsewhere in Scripture: Deu 33:2 (Moses refers Paran to Sinai there). God appears in the wilderness where He **first made Himself known** to His people. Psa 68:25. A procession, front and back. An entourage of judgment. Psa 68:4,7,8 Yahweh rides through the desert. March through the wilderness. Earth quaked. Heavens rain. One of Sinai. Psa 18:7-16 (cf. 2Sa 22:1-10). God's might deed in saving David, who also may be looking back... Psa 114 Water and mountains. Sea flees and mountains skip, when Israel left Egypt. Psa 68:17 Yahweh chariots, Sinai. Dividing the sea. Conquering*

*water. Rule the sea. Dried up Sea. Job 26:12-13 cf. Isa 27:1; Psa 74:12-14; Psa 89:8-10; Isa 51:9-10; Job 41 on Leviathan.*

19. How does Habakkuk respond to this theophany? Where else have we seen a connection between hearing and fearing in this book? Noting that the end of verse 3:16 is better translated, “So I must wait quietly for the day of distress to arise for the people who will invade us,” What is Habakkuk waiting for? How does this verse fits in with the whole rest of the chapter preceding? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 3:16 is connected to 3:2 by fear. Habakkuk responds in **fear** not to the Babylonians!, but to the awesome nature of Yahweh. Yet as earlier, his fear of Yahweh is linked to trust. Habakkuk is **patiently waiting** for **Yahweh's salvation**.*

20. What is the point of 3:17-18? Is the description given in 3:17 linked to anything? How can he exult in God in the midst of those circumstances? (1 paragraph)

*A: Even though God in His righteous judgment is going to judge Babylon, first God is going to use them to judge Judah. That judgment will be fearsome. The Babylonian invasion was terrible. Yet even in the midst of that, Habakkuk will **trust** in Yahweh. Moreover, he will **rejoice** and **exult** in Him. God is the God of salvation! No matter what the situation, we can **exult** in Yahweh. Habakkuk's **sufficiency** and **joy** are in Yahweh alone. He embodies the response of the righteous, who live by faith in the midst of difficult and perplexing situations.*

21. How does the book end in 3:19? What is the point of this verse? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God enables Habakkuk to walk in the midst of very difficult circumstances as a deer (ibex) on a cliff. Yet God enables us to not fall in the midst of such danger. We simply need to trust Him!*

22. What is the message of chapter 3? How does it fit into the message of the first two chapters? (1 paragraph)

*A: The connection between the first two chapters and the third is that chapter 3 is Habakkuk's **personal reflection** on what God has revealed in the first two chapters. There are similarities between Hab 3 and Job 38-41: theophany, storm, God over nature, responses to questions, silence after. When in perplexity and questioning God, what we need is a good look at the awesomeness of God. **Look at God and not our problems**. Put things in **perspective**, to assure us that He is in control. God is a just God. He is a saving God. He is an awesome God, fearful and mighty. God is inscrutable. God alone is our strength. He enables us to walk on high places, difficult and dangerous. Yet we trust in Him. If you trust in Him you will not fall because He does not fail. We need faith in the faithful God.*

23. Application: How are we encouraged to trust God more from this book? What are reasons given to trust God given in Habakkuk?

#### IV. Latter Prophets II

Latter Prophets II is the final class in the middle portion of the Hebrew Canon called 'The Prophets'. It consists of the post-exilic prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). Some of the major themes include God's holiness, the fulfillment of God's plan, judgment, restoration, hope, and the salvation of Israel and the nations. This is a 3 unit class and consists of 12 lessons.

## 1. The Punishment for Prostitution: Jeremiah 1-20

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 1-20

**Theme:** God will Judge His Whoring Nation, although they Claimed to Know Him

**Objectives:**

- To see the heart of God for righteousness, not religion
- To see the importance of covenant relationship with Yahweh and how to have it
- To understand our need for strength and faithfulness amidst persecution and rejection

**Reading:**

- Read Jeremiah 1-20 twice

**Questions:**

1. Review the history of the nation of Israel from the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B. C. to Jeremiah being taken into Egypt. Focus on the kings/rulers/governors of Judah and give a brief description of them. Also try to include at least briefly the political/world situations at the time (I know this is difficult, but really is necessary to understand Jeremiah). (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: Jeremiah was born near the end of Manasseh's evil reign.*

*Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) - Wicked Judean king in Isaiah 7. He was Pro-Assyrian. So Israel and Syria attacked Judah because they were Anti-Assyrian. Ahaz called to Tiglath-Pileser [Pul] (745-727 B.C.) for help who then attacked Damascus. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) began sieging Samaria, and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) destroyed it in 722 B.C.*

*Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.) - Good king in Isa 36-39. Anti-Assyrian [Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.)] (Isa 36-37). Pro-Babylonian (Isa 39). Assyrian kings: Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) followed Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal [aka. Osnappar, the last Assyrian king] (669-627 B.C.) followed him.*

*Manasseh (697-642 B.C.) - Wicked king, long reign. Pro-Assyrian.*

*Amon (642-640 B.C.) - Wicked son of Manasseh. Murdered.*

*Josiah (640-609 B.C.) - Good king, long reign. Judah had independence during Josiah. -> reforms. Josiah sided w/ Babylonians against Assyria/Egypt. Josiah was killed at Megiddo (609 B.C.) by Pharaoh Neco when he tried to oppose the Egyptian/Assyrian attack on Haran. Book of the law found (622 B.C.). Josiah's sons: Johanan (not king), Eliakim, Mattaniah, and Shallum.*

*Jehoahaz [Shallum] (609 B.C.) - The people made him king when Josiah died. He was the youngest brother. After 3 months, he was summoned by Necho and sent in bonds to Egypt. He was wicked and Anti-Egyptian = Pro Babylonian. He died in Egypt.*

*Jehoiakim [Eliakim] (609-598 B.C.) - The brother of Jehoahaz, he was setup as Egyptian vassal in 608 B.C. He reigned for 11 years and was very wicked. Jehoiakim gave tribute to Pharaoh, but taxed the people heavily to do so. At Carchemish in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.) dominated the Egyptians, Philistines, etc. and Jehoiakim transferred allegiance to Babylon (though not really). This is when Daniel and some promising young leaders are taken to Babylon. Three years later he rebelled against Babylon. He was killed by Babylonian/Moabite/Ammonite raiders (2Ki 24:2).*

*Jehoiachin [(Je)coniah] (598-597 B.C.) - Son of Jehoiakim, made king after his father died. He was very evil also. He only reigned for three months (2Ki 24:8), when Babylon sieged Jerusalem. He was taken to Babylon along with all the high officials of Judah in 597 B.C.*

*Zedekiah [Mattaniah] (597-586 B.C.) - Put in power by Babylon after the siege. He was the uncle of Jehoiachin. He was also very evil and rebelled against Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar massively sieged*

and completely destroyed Jerusalem (586 B.C.). The king tried to escape, but was captured, his sons killed, and his eyes blinded and taken to Babylon. Everything in Jerusalem was burned (2Ki 25:9)! The walls of the city were torn down and **everything** was taken to Babylon (2Ki 25:13ff.).

Gedaliah (586 B.C.-) - Good governor appointed by Neb. (pro-Babylonian) who encouraged the people to serve the king of Babylon that it might be well for them. However, he was murdered by Ishmael who was later pursued by Johanan (not oldest son of Josiah). Then most of the people fled to Egypt (fearing Babylon's response).

Three deportations in 605 B.C. (Daniel), 597 B.C. (Jehoiachin and Ezekiel), and 586 B.C. (Zedekiah).

## 2. What is the structure of Jeremiah? (1 paragraph)

A:

I. Prologue - Jeremiah's Call (1)

II. Prophecies to Judah (2-45)

A. 10 Messages of Judgment (2-25)

- i. Judah's shocking forsaking of Yahweh (2:1-3:5)
- ii. Judah will be punished and Yahweh avenged (3:6-6:30)
- iii. False trust in empty externals will not save (7-10)
- iv. Opposition to the Covenant and its messenger (11-12)
- v. The humbling warning of the worthless wasteband (13)
- vi. Judgment will come because of self-trust (14-17)
- vii. Submission to Yahweh's sovereign plan (18-20)
- viii. The way of life is to flee and live (21)
- ix. Warning to wicked kings and hope of Messiah (22-24)
- x. Seventy year desolate exile is sure for not listening (25)

B. Opposition to Jeremiah (26-29)

- i. Death to Jeremiah for the Shiloh warning (26)
- ii. Take the yoke of Babylon and serve him (27)
- iii. Hananiah predicts the yoke broken, Jeremiah mocks (28)
- iv. Shemiah opposes Jeremiah and dies (29)

C. Messages of Consolation (30-33)

- i. Return and Restoration under Messiah (30)
- ii. God will rebuild and replant with joy (31:1-22)
- iii. God will put His New Covenant within all of them forever (31:23-40)
- iv. Jeremiah buys a field as a sure sign of God's promise (32)
- v. Healing, cleansing, and righteous peace will be in God's kingdom (33)

D. Judah's Kings are rebellious (34-36)

- i. During siege Zedekiah captured released slaves (34)
- ii. Rechabites' generational listening contrasted with Judah (35)
- iii. Baruch reads Jeremiah's scroll in the temple, Zedekiah burns it (36)

E. Final days of Jerusalem (37-39)

- i. Jeremiah imprisoned, thrown in pit, and secretly inquired of (37-38)
- ii. Jerusalem breached and burned, Zedekiah captured and sons killed (39)

F. Rebellion after the Fall (40-44)

- i. Jeremiah freed to Gedaliah who is wickedly murdered (40-41)
- ii. Jeremiah petitioned, yet people flee to Egypt in defiance (42-43)
- iii. Jeremiah rebukes foolish idolatry and predicts further death (44)

G. God's message to humble and encourage Baruch (45)

## III. Prophecies against the nations (46-51)

A. Prologue (46:1)

B. Egypt (46)

C. Philistia (47)

D. Moab (48)

E. Ammon (49:1-6)

F. Edom (49:7-22)

G. Damascus (49:23-27)

H. Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33)

I. Elam (49:34-39)

J. Babylon (50-51)

## IV. Appendix - The Fall of Jerusalem (52)

3. In light of the background, what is the purpose and main themes of Jeremiah? (1 paragraph)

A: Jeremiah was written before, during, and after the Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon from Jerusalem where Jeremiah lived. Jeremiah experienced it all. And the purpose of the book is to call Israel to **repent** and **return** to Yahweh through warning, but also to call them back to Him with the hope that God was not finished with His people even though they **forsook** Him. Jeremiah focusses on the **covenantal** nature of their **relationship** with Yahweh which is likened to **adultery/prostitution**. They were faithless, but God is faithful. God wants them to **delight** in Him. Jeremiah is one of the most **autobiographical** books in the Bible, and we see so many of Jeremiah's personal struggles come through, and yet how God sustained him and was faithful through the midst of such extreme difficulty. Another major theme in Jeremiah is the battle between him and the false prophets who deceived the people into thinking they were safe.

4. Describe the opening of the book of Jeremiah (1:1-10)? What do we learn here? Meditate on 1:5. What are the implications of this verse for each of our purposes in life? (1 paragraph)

A: Jeremiah was **called** by God to be a prophet, he didn't sign up for the task. God set him apart for this task and **created him for it (1:5)**. God would send him and God would tell him what to speak. He would be God's instrument to tear down and build up. God is the one who plans our lives. He purposes them out. It is our job to be **faithful** to what God calls us to! Thus, Jeremiah needed to trust God as he lived out what God called him to amidst opposition (1:8)!

5. What was God's word to Jeremiah in 1:11-19? How was it going to be received and so what did God call Jeremiah to in 1:17-19? (1 paragraph)

A: God was going to use Jeremiah to pronounce judgment. This wasn't going to be well received and so God was going to make him like a **fortified city**. He calls Jeremiah to **brace himself** for what God was calling him to, yet God would be his strength. How important it is for us to have assurance that our mission is from God when we face opposition! But when we know that we are being **faithful** to what God calls us to, we can stand fast in our mission with the strength that He supplies!! Note the wordplay between 'Almond' and 'watching' in 1:11-12 to emphasize that God is watching over His word and will certainly perform it!

6. What was Israel's problem according to 2:1-13? Why was this so appalling? (1-2 sentences)

A: They had forsaken Yahweh! It was so **appalling** because of all that Yahweh had done for them (2:5-8). They switched Yahweh for an empty idol! Not even other pagan nations switch gods, how much less should



*the people of the God of the universe (2:11)! They forsook the fountain of living water for broken cisterns (2:13)! Oh how easy it is for us to do the same! Don't forget Yahweh's **goodness**!*

7. According to 2:17 and 2:19 whose fault is their sin? What did Israel claim in 2:23 and 2:35? But what does God think about that? (1 sentence)

*A: They have brought their own punishment by rejecting and forsaking Yahweh and not fearing Him (2:17, 19)! So their gods will not be able to save them from Yahweh (2:28, 37)! They claim to be innocent, but they are very polluted (2:23, 35)! God points out the folly of them calling out to Him for help after running after their lovers (3:1-5).*

8. What does God compare Israel to in 3:6-10? Yet in spite of this what does God say in 3:11-18? (1 sentence)

*A: They are compared to a harlot, yet God will be gracious to them **if they will only return to Him** (3:12-14, 22, 23)! And the result of their return God will send His righteous King and will save His nation (3:15-18)!*

9. What does God call them to in 4:1-8? What theme do we see in 4:10 that runs throughout the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God calls them to return to Him and to circumcise their hearts (**4:1-4, 14**). They have responsibility in this, and if they don't do it destruction will come (4:5-9)! We see in 4:10 that destruction will come upon Israel, and people will feel like Yahweh has deceived them because they assumed that He promised peace. But they forgot that He promised peace **if they were in relationship with Him**, but cursing if they were not! So Yahweh will certainly bring the judgment (**4:27-29**)!*

10. What (genre) is 4:19-31? (1 sentence)

*A: This is a **lament** over the great destruction coming on God's people.*

11. What do we learn about the people in 5:2? How does this relate to 5:12-13? (1 sentence)

*A: They swear by Yahweh, yet do not know Him but they think they do (5:2)... Oh how dangerously easy is **self-deceit**! The prophets thought they were speaking Yahweh's words, but in reality it was just lies (5:12-13)! As we see in 5:31, the leaders lead from their own desires, but the people love it that way!*

12. In the midst of all the judgment, what do we about Yahweh in 5:18? (1 sentence)

*A: God will not utterly forsake His people. He is always faithful! Yet He will certainly judge His people for their wickedness which is especially seen in how they treat the **poor** (5:28-29)!*

13. What is the point of chapter 6, and how does 6:14 fit into it? (1-2 sentences)

*A: People say '**peace, peace**'. They think that they are Yahweh's people and so won't be destroyed! They have presumed on God's grace without being in relationship with Him! But the whole chapter is a call to prepare for war, for destruction is coming (6:1, 19, 22, etc.)!*

14. What has been the main point of chapters 2-6? (1 sentence)

*A: Israel is like an unfaithful wife who **will** be judged because of their sin.*

15. What are the people doing in 7:2? What are they trusting in in 7:4, 8, 10 (think about this!)? What is God's argument about Shiloh in 7:12-14? (1 paragraph)

*A: They are going to the **temple** to worship Yahweh! They were trusting that they would not be judged because they were God's people and went to the temple (7:4, 8, 10)! God will **destroy Jerusalem** just as He did Shiloh (which is now a waste). Shiloh used to be where God's people worshiped Him. Oh how easy it is to **trust in externals** and to mistake trust in them for trust in God Himself! Do we trust in our going to church and doing good or God alone!?! But their wickedness was so profound that they even sacrificed their children (7:31) so God will certainly judge them (7:32) to vindicate His holiness and faithfulness (7:28)!*

16. What do we see the people claiming again in 8:8? What do we see again in 8:11? But what does God think? (1 sentence)

*A: They claimed that they had God's law and so they were ok, they had peace (8:8); but God will judge them for their wickedness (8:11).*

17. What is the point of 9:23-26? (1 sentence)

*A: God will punish those who are circumcised physically, but not spiritually. The chapter as a whole emphasizes **deceit**. It's not about the **externals**, but the internals. God delights in **loyal love, justice, and righteousness** and wants His people to boast in knowing Him! God cares about the heart! These are the heart issues that show that we humbly care about the lowly and are not proudly elevating ourselves to be like God!*

18. What is the point of 10:1-16? (1 sentence)

*A: God is not like idols, but He is the Creator who alone is powerful and wise! Don't **fear** idols (10:2, 5), but Yahweh (10:7).*

19. What key word is repeated in 11:1-13, and how does it relate to their sin (1-2 sentences)?

*A: Covenant is key. They broke the covenant relationship with Yahweh and did not heed His words! To be in faithful relationship with Yahweh means to **listen to His voice (11:4, 6, 7, 8, etc.)**! How can you have a vital relationship with Him if you **don't care what He says**!?!*

20. What do we learn about Jeremiah in 11:21? (1 sentence)

*A: The people of his hometown were trying to kill him!*

21. What does Jeremiah pray in 12:1-6? Why? (1-2 sentences)

*A: He pleads God's righteousness to judge the wicked. An awesome thought, but one that is true nonetheless. **God's righteousness demands that He judge**. The fact that we don't think this way shows that we don't understand holiness like that... Remember that Jeremiah was (nearly) alone in caring about righteousness and was oppressed and opposed all his life. He cries out in his pain and humility for God to vindicate righteousness.*

22. What does the illustration of 13:1-11 intend to communicate? (1 sentence)

*A: Although God made Israel to cling to Him so that they would be a people for glory, they were totally worthless (13:7, 10). God had given them everything, and yet they forsook it all...*

23. What were the false prophets saying and what does God say to them in 14:13-16? (1 sentence)

*A: They were prophesying peace but God will judge their lies!*

24. What is Jeremiah's prayer for in 14:19-22? (1 sentence)

*A: He acknowledges their sin and prays that Yahweh will keep His covenant with them! Even despite their rejection and rebellion against Yahweh, He alone is their only hope!*

25. What is shocking about 15:1-4? (1 sentence)

*A: Not even Moses or Samuel could save this people, they will surely be destroyed!*

26. What is Jeremiah's prayer about and God's answer in 15:15-21? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jeremiah prays to Yahweh that He would judge his oppressors as he is being oppressed for speaking God's word. He is pleading with Yahweh as he stood firm and alone amidst the wicked. God answers that He will strengthen Jeremiah to be His spokesman, a fortified wall of bronze and will save him from the wicked to whom he is preaching. **Are we willing to stand alone?***

27. What does God tell Jeremiah to do in chapter 16 and why? (1 sentence) What will happen in the future according to 16:14-21? (1 sentence)

*A: God tells Jeremiah not to marry because God is going to kill the children and parents of the land. This is obviously a **hard calling** for Jeremiah. Can you put yourself in his shoes? But in the **future** God **will bring** His people back from the land of the north and in so doing will make them know His power and His name (16:14-15, 19, **21**)!*

28. What is the issue in 17:5-8? (1 sentence) What about 17:9-10? (1 sentence)

*A: Will you trust Yahweh or man? The heart is desperately wicked. Our **hearts** are so **fickle**. It is so easy for all of us to go back to **relying** upon ourselves, our strength, our wisdom, our plans. We constantly need to be reminded of who God is and that He alone is trustworthy! And so Jeremiah prays in 17:12-18 and confesses that Yahweh is his hope!*

29. What is God's condition in 17:19-24 and His blessing in 17:25-27? (2-3 sentences)

*A: If they keep the sabbath, God will bless His temple and people will come to worship, even kings on David's throne! The sabbath is significant as an important aspect of the covenant and thus this is all about covenant relationship with Yahweh. If they are in a **vital covenant relationship** with Him, blessing will be restored. Praise God for the day that this will happen!*

30. What is the point of the analogy of the potter in 18:1-12? (1 sentence)

*A: The analogy of the potter teaches that Yahweh is completely sovereign over His creation and it is His right to do with it as He wishes. **Think about that for a while!** Yet, **because** He is sovereign, if people repent, He will relent, or if they turn to evil, He will judge (18:8, 10)!*

31. What are the people going to do to Jeremiah in 18:18? (1-2 sentences)

*A: The people planned to devise plans against him to **have his words ignored and to slander him**. Continue to meditate on all Jeremiah is going through. When you face trials, remember His life of faithfulness and be reminded that it is worth it! And so **once again** in 18:19-23 Jeremiah calls out to Yahweh and prays for vindication!*

32. What is the point of the analogy in chapter 19? (1 sentence)

*A: God is going to break Israel like a broken jar! How much is it going to take to get it through their thick skulls that **they are not safe** and will not avoid judgment while living apart from relationship with Yahweh! This all takes place in the valley of Ben-hinnom which was the height of their evil and will be known as the valley of slaughter (19:6, etc.)!*

33. What happens to Jeremiah and by whom (what do we know about him?) in chapter 20:1-6? What is Jeremiah's psalm about in 20:7-18? What are the different aspects of it? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jeremiah is beaten and put in stocks by Pashhur, the priest and false prophet, and so Jeremiah pronounces judgment upon him and his family. Jeremiah's psalm is about how even though he is **derided all day long** and constantly oppressed, Yahweh is with him and delivers him like a **fearful warrior (20:11)**. He feels the **inner compulsion** to proclaim God's Word, even in spite of the consequences. So he praises God for His salvation. Yet he also curse the day of his birth as his life is one of constant pain... He is going through a lot. And this book doesn't **whitewash the depth of his struggle**. Yet he still is faithful to God's word and continues to hope and praise God for His salvation! May we learn from his example!*

34. Application: What do we learn about ministry and people's response to the Word from the life of Jeremiah? What do we learn about God's purpose in ministry? Opposition in ministry?

35. Application: What do we learn about external worship in Jeremiah? What is important to God? What is God's heart for?

## 2. The Shocking Restoration: Jeremiah 21-33

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 21-33

**Theme:** God Must Judge, but God will Restore

**Objectives:**

- To understand the seriousness of sin and necessity for God in righteousness to judge
- To be challenged by the faithfulness of Jeremiah in light of persecution and rejection
- To be amazed at God's promises of restoration in light of the peoples' sin
- To understand the promise of the New Covenant and its significance in Biblical revelation

**Reading:**

- Read Jeremiah 21-33 twice

**Questions:**

1. What is Jeremiah's basic message and advice in 21:1-14 to Zedekiah? (1 sentence)

*A: The Babylonians are going to destroy you, so go out to the Babylonians (21:9). Their primary sin was their lack of **justice** once again (21:12).*

2. Who is 22:1-17 directed toward and what were his sins? (1 sentence)

*A: King Shallum, son of Josiah, was not just and righteous (22:3), but **oppressed the poor** so that he could be rich (22:13-17).*

3. Who was 22:18-23 directed towards and what were his sins? (1 sentence)

*A: King Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, he too was prosperous (22:23) and didn't obey.*

4. Who was 22:24-30 directed towards and what is said of him? (1 sentence)

*A: This section is against King Jehoiachin (Coniah), son of Jehoiakim. He too will be judged.*

5. But in contrast to these three men, who is mentioned in 23:1-8? What is God going to do through him? How is he contrasted with the previous three kings? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Messiah is going to come as the **righteous King**! Notice the emphasis on His righteousness, especially in **contrast** to the wicked and **oppressing** kings of Judah! He will be the Davidic King. He will save the nation, and they will live on their own soil! He will be called Yahweh (is) our righteousness. His **righteousness** is specifically **contrasted** to the self-centered injustice and oppression of the previous three kings. God cares for people and wants kings who do the same! So the Messiah is going to care about justice and righteousness and His reign will be characterized by these things!*

6. What is said about the false prophets in 23:9-40 (especially in 16-17, 25-40)? (1 sentence)

*A: They were prophesying falsehood and claiming it came from Yahweh. They proclaimed peace, when in fact Yahweh was bringing destruction.*

7. What is the point of the analogy of the figs in chapter 24? (1 sentence)

*A: God was going to do **good to the captives** in Babylon, but evil to those who **stayed behind**.*

8. What is God going to do in chapter 25:1-11 and why? (1 sentence) But what will happen in 25:12-38? (1 sentence)

*A: God is going to **judge Israel** by Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar! 25:9) because they hadn't heeded all the prophets He sent to turn them back from doing evil. God will **judge Babylon** too and all the other nations with them! Note as well that the exile is prophesied to last 70 years, so God isn't done with His people (25:12)!*

9. Summarize briefly chapter 26. What is significant about 26:3 and 26:13 and what do they teach us about God? (1 paragraph)

*A: God told Jeremiah to go to the temple and to prophecy of its destruction (26:2-3). So the people wanted to put him to death. He ended up being spared, but not so another prophet named Uriah, who was killed by Jehoiakim (26:20-21). We see in 26:3 and 26:13 a key word (Heb: n̄hm, see also Gen 6:6-7), which signifies God 'being sorry' for what He has done. Because God is **unchangeable** in His character (cf. Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17; etc.) God will always change in His interaction with man when there is **repentance**. Since God always judges sin and always blesses humble repentance, when men repent and change, God changes what He will do to/for men. He is unchanging in His character, and so when we change in relation to Him, His stance towards us changes! God is not in time!*

10. Summarize the message Jeremiah was to tell king Zedekiah in chapter 27 (what did he tell them to do and what would be the results)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Serve the King of Babylon, God has appointed him as His servant. Don't listen to the false prophets who are prophesying peace. If you do not submit to the King of Babylon you will be punished with sword, famine, and pestilence. If you submit, God will let you remain on your land. Not what they wanted to hear, but if they **trusted** God it would have been **good** for them... This is the constant refrain in Jeremiah. They simply wouldn't trust God that submitting to Babylon would be best for them, they thought they knew better than God and trusted in their own plans, strength, etc. more than Him! God pleads with and reasons with His people, and yet they do not listen (27:13)!*

11. What did Hananiah prophecy in chapter 28:1-4? How did Jeremiah respond in 28:5-9? How then did Hananiah respond in 28:10-11? What was Jeremiah's response in 28:12-17 and the final result? (1 paragraph)

*A: Hananiah prophesied that Yahweh (28:2a!!!) was going to break the yoke of the king of Babylon within two years and bring back all the exiles and the articles from the temple within that time. So Jeremiah sarcastically said, 'Amen' but countered by saying that the prophet is shown to be true when his prophecy comes to pass as a **confirmation of Yahweh's word** (28:6, 9). Then Hananiah broke Jeremiah's yoke and repeated his claim that Yahweh would break the yoke of Babylon. But finally, Jeremiah responded that the wooden yoke that Hananiah broke would be replaced with an iron yoke! Moreover, Jeremiah predicted Hananiah's death, and he died in that same year (28:16-17)! Oh how careful we have to be to not just listen to*

people who are saying what we **want** to hear! There will always be those who say what people like, how hard it is to stand alone and say and listen to and say the hard things that no one wants to hear!

12. What did Jeremiah's letter to the exiles say in chapter 29? Who was Shemaiah? (1 paragraph)

A: Jeremiah told them to take root in Babylon, to take wives, build houses, and pray for the nation of Babylon, for they will be there a long time (70 years, cf. 29:5, 7, 10). God would do good and had **good plans** for the exiles as He will accomplish His plan (29:11-14), but for those who stayed in the land there would be further punishment for not listening to Yahweh. Shemaiah was another false prophet who was seeking to deceive the people that the exile would be short. But once again God predicted his punishment and he would not live to see the return (29:32).

13. What does God predict in chapter 30? What are some of the specific aspects of this (especially 30:9, 18, 19)? (1 paragraph)

A: God will accomplish the return (30:3)! God will bring them back to the land. God will raise up **David their king**, and they will serve **Yahweh and their king** (30:9)! But before that happens, there will be **great distress for Jacob**, but God will save them out of it (30:7)! The city will be rebuilt, and God will multiply their people. They will no longer be oppressed and God will judge their oppressors. This is going to happen! Can you believe it? In light of all this people has done against Yahweh, in light of who they are, God has still not forsaken His promise to Abraham (30:22). What a glorious day the final fulfillment will be (30:23-24)!

14. What will happen in 31:1-26? Notice what is specifically said in the introduction in verse 1, what is significant about this? What other specifics are mentioned? (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to restore His people! He will be the God of **all** the families of Israel (31:1)! God has **everlasting love** for His people and that is why His **faithfulness** towards them always pursues them (31:3)! God will save the remnant (31:7). He will bring them back (31:10). They will finally trust in Yahweh and get to enjoy Him (31:14, 17)! This means that the whole nation of Israel will be saved, just as God has promised! Yes, the nation will be judged, but God always leaves a **remnant** through which He will fulfill His promises, and through that remnant He will grow the nation and save the entire nation to be all that He intends for them to be!

15. What is God going to do in 31:27-34? Why is this so significant? What is the "Old Covenant"? What is the difference between the "Old Covenant" and the "New Covenant"? Who is God going to make the New Covenant with? Explain the significance of the New Covenant in relationship to all the Biblical Covenants and its significance for all of Scripture (Think about this question, this is one of the most significant passages in the whole OT). (2-3 paragraphs)

A: God is going to sow His people in the land. People will not be judged for their father's sins, but each man will be responsible for his own sins (31:29-30). God is going to make a **New Covenant** with His people! The Old Covenant is the Mosaic Covenant. The difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is that God will actually put His law on their **hearts**! The law will not be merely external, but internal! God will make this covenant with Israel! **All of them** will know Him and **all of them** will be forgiven (31:34)! The New Covenant is made with the nation of Israel (31:31). God has promised to use them to bless the world in the Abrahamic Covenant. But for them to be used by Him, they must be faithful to the covenant relationship He made with them. That first covenant was the Mosaic Covenant, made at Sinai. That was how the people were to live in obedience to the law, forgiven by the sacrifices, and as they were faithful, God would use them to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. But there was a problem, the problem was with them and their rebellious

hearts! And so since God must still keep His word to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, He promised a New Covenant to replace the old Mosaic Covenant. The difference with the New Covenant, is that it actually has the power to transform peoples' hearts! And so, **everyone** who is in the New Covenant will have God's law on their heart and they will **all** know Yahweh! And at the heart of that covenant will be forgiveness. It is only through God forgiving and transforming His people can His people be in relationship with Him and be used by Him to accomplish His purpose! But God will certainly bring this about through the nation of Israel. We of course know that this New Covenant is all about Jesus. He is the One who inaugurates this New Covenant by His death. More about that to come!

16. How does 31:35-40 relate to what just preceded? What is the point of this section? (1 paragraph)

A: God will **never** abandon His people. He will surely bring this about. If the sun ever doesn't rise in the morning, then it will be a bad day for Israel... They will **always** be a **nation**. God cannot forsake His promise to Abraham. It is so clear that the future holds a restoration for Israel as God will use them to bless the world! God's promises never fail, and so the nation of Israel will never cease to be a nation forever, as long as the sun, moon, and stars continue to keep their fixed order (31:35-37)!

17. Why was Jeremiah in prison in 32:1-5? Why did God want Jeremiah to buy a field in 32:6-15? What was Jeremiah's praying about in 32:16-25 and what was God's answer in 32:26-44? Note especially the particulars of what God says in 32:38-44. (1 paragraph)

A: Jeremiah was in prison because he was prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, and so Zedekiah locked him up (32:2). God wanted Jeremiah to buy a field to signify that in a long time God was going to bring the people back and land would be bought and sold once again. Jeremiah prayed to God acknowledging His greatness, but also asking Him why He would have him buy a field when the city is given over to the Babylonians. God answers that indeed He is going to judge His people for all their wickedness (32:26-35), but that He is going to gather them and bring them back. He will be their God and they will be His people! He will make an everlasting covenant with them, to do them good and to put His fear in them so that they will never turn away from Him again! God is going to plant them in the land, and do this with all His heart! Men will again buy and sell in this land because God **WILL** restore their fortunes (32:36-44)!

18. What is God going to do in chapter 33? Note especially the particulars of what God is going to do according to 33:8-9 and 33:14-26. (1 paragraph)

A: God will **restore** His people. He is the Sovereign Creator, He will bring it to pass (33:2-3). God is going to save His people (33:6-7). He will cleanse them from all their sin (33:8). Jerusalem will be a name of **joy, praise, and glory** before all the nations of the earth (33:9) and all the nations will fear when they hear of all the good and all the peace that Yahweh will do for Jerusalem. God is going to bring in His King, the **Messiah**, the son of David who will execute justice and righteousness on the earth (**33:15**). Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety and will be called Yahweh is our righteousness. 33:14-26.

19. Application: In light of the absolute hardness of heart of God's people, what do we learn about His faithfulness? How does the New Covenant fit into this?

20. Application: What do we learn about ministry from Jeremiah's personal life?



### 3. The Judgment Comes: Jeremiah 34-52

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 34-52

**Theme:** Israel is Judged for their sin by Babylon

**Objectives:**

- To see the need to trust and obey Yahweh, even when it doesn't make sense
- To see that Yahweh always keeps His word
- To see the need for faithfulness in ministry

**Reading:**

- Read Jeremiah 34-45 and 52 *twice* and 46-51 *once*.

**Questions:**

1. Summarize chapter 34. (1 sentence)

*A: God is going to judge Jerusalem, but Zedekiah (the Davidic heir) would not die by the sword and those who violated covenant by taking back their slaves would be judged.*

2. Who are the Rechabites according to chapter 35? What did they do? What is the point of mentioning them in this chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The Rechabites were Israelites who descended from one Rechab, whose son Jonadab commanded them not to drink wine, nor to live in houses, nor to have vineyards. They obeyed their father. God uses them as an example in contrast to His people who would not obey His commands, even though He sent so many prophets to them to command them to turn from their evil ways that it would be good for them! How much greater is Yahweh than Rechab, yet His people aren't as obedient as Rechab's descendants!!*

3. Summarize chapter 36. Note especially 36:24-26. What was on the scroll according to 36:1-3? What was its purpose according to 36:1-3? How does that help us to understand the purpose of the book of Jeremiah as a whole? What does that teach us about the role of sin/repentance in forgiveness/salvation? What does 36:32 teach us about the new scroll? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Jeremiah dictates everything Yahweh said concerning Israel and Judah and the nations, from the day Yahweh first spoke to him until that day to Baruch who wrote it down. The purpose was that as they read the words to the people, **perhaps** they would hear of the great calamity God was bringing and would repent, and God would forgive them (36:1-3). This explains why there is so much judgment in the book of Jeremiah, its purpose being to **convince the people to repent**. It is so easy for us today to minimize sin and judgment, but repentance is absolutely necessary for salvation.*

*But when Baruch read the scroll in the temple (Jeremiah couldn't enter), it was reported to the officials who had it read to them, and then they took the scroll and told Baruch and Jeremiah to hide. It was then read to the king who burned the scroll! But God had Jeremiah recreate a new scroll with all those words on it and also many other words. This new scroll is probably the book of Jeremiah or its precursor as we know it and teaches us about how it was composed.*

4. Summarize chapter 37. What is its setting? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Babylonians are finally sieging Jerusalem, as Jeremiah had predicted. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to ask if there was a word from Yahweh, even though he hadn't listened to Jeremiah. Yahweh told Jeremiah to tell him that even though the siege was lifted temporarily because of the Egyptians, that Jerusalem would certainly be burned with fire. When the siege was lifted and Jeremiah left the city to buy land, he was captured, beat, and put in prison. But King Zedekiah took him out, and put him in the guardhouse and gave him bread until all the bread was gone. Zedekiah kept inquiring of Jeremiah of Yahweh's word, even though he wasn't willing to follow it! So often people want advice, but submitting to it is another thing entirely, giving up your own sovereignty!*

5. What was Jeremiah saying in 38:2-3? How did the officials respond to this? What did they say Jeremiah was doing (and what key word did they use) in verse 4? So what did they do to Jeremiah? But then what happened with Jeremiah? (1 paragraph)

*A: Jeremiah was saying that anyone who went out to the Babylonians would be saved, but those who stayed would die. They said that Jeremiah was not seeking the **peace** of the city, but its harm! But of course the reality is that the false prophets kept proclaiming peace, but look at the destruction that they brought upon the city! Sometimes the **hard thing** to say is what is needed the most! So they threw Jeremiah into a cistern filled with mud. But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian eunuch went to the king and got Jeremiah lifted out of the cistern. So the king brought him to the palace to once again seek his counsel, once again not to heed it! Jeremiah keeps telling him to submit to the king of Babylon, and he won't!! **How careful we need to be not just to hear the word of God but to heed it!** Zedekiah tells Jeremiah not to tell anyone...*

6. Summarize chapter 39? What happened to Zedekiah? What happened to Jeremiah? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Babylonians **breached** the city wall, and Zedekiah tried to escape. But he was captured, all his sons killed in front of his eyes, his eyes were poked out, and he was taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that Jeremiah was to be taken care of, and so he was entrusted to Gedaliah, who was setup as governor over the remaining people.*

7. Summarize chapter 40? What happens with those left in the land? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Gedaliah is setup at Mizpah over those left in the land, and they gather in summer fruit and wine in abundance, and those who were scattered come back to Gedaliah at Mizpah. This looks hopeful, but...*

8. But what then happens in chapter 41? What happens to Gedaliah and the people remaining? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As Gedaliah was warned, Ishmael gathered some men and killed Gedaliah and the Babylonian garrison. Ishmael also killed 80 men from Shiloh who came to bring offering to the house of Yahweh. But finally Johanan fought Ishmael and kicked him out. Even after the destruction they still won't do what is right and keep getting plunged deeper and deeper into judgment! Oh how thick skulled we sinful people are!*

9. What do the people ask Jeremiah in chapter 42? What does he say? How do they respond to it in chapter 43? So what does Jeremiah then say to them in 43:8-13? Think about the logic of the people in chapter 43 that drove them to what they did. What does this teach us about God's plans and our plans? (1 paragraph)

A: The people ask Jeremiah what to do. He tells them that if they stay in the land, God will bless and protect them from the king of Babylon. **But they do not listen to him!** They go to Egypt instead! How often will people ask Jeremiah for advice, only to not follow it!!! So Jeremiah tells them that the king of Babylon was going to come to Egypt and destroy them in Egypt. They should have trusted Yahweh and not Egypt! Where is your trust! They thought that they knew best and their plans would save them. If we just go to Egypt... But they didn't trust God. **His plans are always best, even if they don't make sense to us!!!** Over and over they refused to listen to and trust Yahweh. They should have got the point after Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, just as Jeremiah said... but no... This is definitely a heart problem!

10. What does Jeremiah tell the people in Egypt in chapter 44? How do they respond? So what is God going to do to them? (1 paragraph)

A: He warns them of how God judged them in Judah for their idolatry, and how they are still practicing idolatry in Egypt. He warns them that God will judge them there if they don't turn to Him. But those whose wives were worshiping idols said that they wouldn't listen to him but would continue to sacrifice to the queen of heaven (**44:16-19**)! So God is going to wipe them out in Egypt! The plunge keeps going deeper!

11. Summarize chapter 45. What does it teach us about Baruch? What do we learn for our own lives and ministries? (2-3 sentences)

A: Just like Jeremiah, Baruch faced oppression for his ministry. Yahweh tells him not to seek great things for himself. **Great things are not what ministry is about!!!** God is going to bring disaster on all flesh, but will spare the life of his servant! What do we seek in ministry? Are we about seeking great things for ourselves, or faithfulness to Yahweh?!

12. Summarize the point of chapters 46-51. (2-3 sentences)

A: God is going to judge the nations. He is the only one who is **sovereign and powerful** enough to do so. He is a global God and all of history is in His hands.

13. Comment on the significance of the following verses within this section: 46:27-28; 48:47; 49:6, 39; 50:4-5, 19-20, 33-34, 51:5, 10, 15-23. (10 short sentences- 1 sentence per reference)

A: 1) God will save His people. He will judge their enemies. 2) God will restore Moab. 3-4) God will restore Ammon & Elam. 5) God will cause Israel to seek Him and will join Him in an everlasting covenant! 6) God will totally do away with the sins of Israel, and will pardon the remnant. 7) God will plead Israel's case. 8) God will not forsake His people. 9) God will vindicate His people. 10) Yahweh alone is Creator; He alone has wisdom; He will use Jacob to shatter the nations of the earth; What an awesome God!

14. How does the book of Jeremiah in in chapter 52. What is the significance of what happens to Jehoiachin at the very end of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: We see how the end came to Judah. We see the destruction of Jerusalem with fire, destruction of the walls, temple, king's house and every large house. At the end of the book we see **Jehoiachin eating from the king of Babylon's table**. This is significant as it ends on a note of hope for the Davidic line. God has not completely wiped out His people, although that is what they deserved! **One day the true Davidic King will come, and then things will be right!**

15. Application: What do we learn about trusting in God from this section?
16. Application: What do we learn about ministry among people who reject?

#### 4. Yahweh's Glory and Holiness: Ezekiel 1-11

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 1-11

**Theme:** Yahweh is Glorious and so calls His People to Holiness for Him to Dwell among them

**Objectives:**

- To understand the background, setting, and audience of Ezekiel
- To understand the structure and purpose of the book of Ezekiel
- To be humbled and overwhelmed by Yahweh's awesome nature
- To be challenged by Yahweh's holiness and incompatibility with sin

**Reading:**

- Read Ezekiel 1-11 *two times*
- Read Wright's Introduction and section on Ezekiel 1-11
- Skim Ezekiel *once* (trying to get a general feel of the contents of each chapter)  
[due at end of first full week]

**Questions:**

19. Summarize the historical background leading up to Ezekiel's exile to Babylon (cf. Wright, pp. 17-21; Block, pp. 1-8). Include the significance of the following events and names as it relates to the book of Ezekiel: Josiah's Reforms (cf. 2 Kings 23:5-6, 15, 24-25 Jer 7:1-7, 11), Jeremiah, the rise of Babylon as a world power, different waves of exiles from Judea, Ezekiel's exile, and the spiritual state of Judea (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

697-642 Mannasseh was the worst king to sit on David's throne (2 Kings 21:1-18; 24:3-4), introducing all kinds of paganism into Israel. So upon his death, Israel was steeped in sin.

640-609 Josiah reigns in Judah and introduces reforms. Eradicated the external signs of paganism in Israel but these external reforms possibly fostered a sense of hypocrisy among the people.

627 Assyria had been the major empire for quite some time, but after the death of Ashurbanapal (669-627 B.C.), the Assyrian empire began to crumble, and the Babylonians were on the rise.

612 In 612 Babylon sacked Nineveh.

609 Josiah died in 609 by Pharaoh Neco (2nd Kings 23:28-30).

609 Jehoahaz, Josiah's successor, reigns 3 months, and then exiled to Egypt

609 Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, installed as king by Egypt. A wicked king, who reversed the reforms of Josiah.

605 Battle of Charchemish (Jer 46:2). Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt (both were trying to take Assyria's crumbling empire). Babylon is now in charge! Shortly after (605/4), Babylon comes back through Palestine on offensive against Egypt and takes some nobility of Israel in the 1st Exile (ie. Daniel).

598-97 Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon and dies in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem.

597 Jehoiachin (Coniah) succeeds Jehoiakim but is quickly carried off to exile. This is the 2nd Exile of which Ezekiel partakes. His uncle, Mattaniah (renamed Zedekiah) is installed as a puppet king in Jerusalem.

593 is then the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin's exile. Ezekiel receives his vision (Ezekiel 1)

588-6 Zedekiah revolts, trusting in Egypt, and Babylon sieges Jerusalem for 2 years and destroys them. Zedekiah is blinded, his sons killed, the temple is destroyed, etc., and the 3rd Exile takes place.

20. Come up with a general outline of the book of Ezekiel. Where are the major shifts in the topic/style of the book? Comment on the significance of 33:21 in the structure of the book. What

two topics are introduced in chapter 3 of the book that resurface in chapter 33? Why is this significant structurally? Comment on how the theme of glory is used throughout the book and helps form the structure of the book. (2 paragraphs)

*A: 33:21 is significant as it is the hinge of the book. The first half of the book is Ezekiel's ministry before the destruction of the temple, and the 2nd half of the book forms his ministry after. We also see chapter 33 as transitional in that it repeats two key themes from chapter 3 at the beginning, Ezekiel as a Watchman and Ezekiel as mute. Finally, we see the theme of glory being the primary topic in the book. The whole first chapter is about the glory of Yahweh. We then see the glory depart in chapters 8-11 and then return in chapter 43, where obviously a focus on the restored temple is a focus on God's glory returning to His people.*

*I. The Vision of the Glory of Yahweh (1)*

*II. Messages of Judgment (2-32)*

*A. The Call of Ezekiel (2-3)*

*B. Signs and Visions of Judgment for Israel (4-11)*

*C. Prophecies of Judgment against Israel (12-24)*

*D. Oracles Against Foreign Nations (25-32)*

*III. Hinge: The Watchman (33) [The Watchman and Muteness themes reoccur from chapter 3. There are 7 years of ministry before the destruction, and 15 years after]*

*IV. Messages of Salvation (34-48)*

*A. Future Salvation of Israel (34-37)*

*i. Shepherds (34)*

*ii. Mt. Seir (35)*

*iii. Mts. of Israel (36a)*

*iv. New Covenant (36b)*

*v. Dry Bones (37)*

*vi. Future Defeat of Gog and Magog (38-39)*

*B. Vision of Future Temple and Return of Glory (40-48)*

21. Highlight aspects of Ezekiel's personal life from the book. How do these features tie into the message of the book? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: In the "30<sup>th</sup> year" (cf. Eze 1:1) probably refers to Ezekiel's age at the beginning of his ministry (cf. Num 4:30). His call was one that was hard to swallow (Eze 3, esp. 14-15). Ezekiel's ministry was quite bizarre. We will touch on this later, but it has a lot to do with God trying to get His people's attention and **shake them up** however possible (this is their last chance so to speak before the exile). Some strange features probably intended to shake Israel up include: Strange vision (Eze 1), weird symbolic acts (Eze 3 "eat the scroll", 4-5, 12:1ff), commanded to eat bread cooked over human dung but begs God to cook it over cow dung instead (4:12-15), housebound and mute (3:22-27), God grabs him by the lock of his hair and carries him up (8:3), Explicit sexual descriptions (16, 23), his wife dies as a sign (24).*

22. How would you define (Yahweh's) glory? Trace the main theological theme of 'glory' in Ezekiel. What key concepts are conveyed about Yahweh's glory in these passages? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh's glory is the sum total of His awesomeness! Or, more eloquently, it is the sum total of His character qualities on magnificent display. Glory is repeated many times in this book (1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23; 20:6, 15; 25:9; 26:20; **39:21**; 43:2, 4, 5; 44:4)! Yahweh is by nature glorious. The introductory vision shows us this very clearly. Yet we also see so clearly that God's glory cannot dwell among sinful*

*people. God desires to be glorified in this world! God will be glorified in this world, but only after He cleanses His people and so can dwell among them!*

23. Trace the concept/phraseology “That they/you may **know** that I am the Lord” (or similar) through Ezekiel. What types of things precede this phrase in Ezekiel? What does God do so that they may know who He is? How does this relate to the main theme of glory? (1 paragraph)

*A: Know that I am Yahweh or something similar occurs roughly 86 times!!! This is obviously a major theme in Ezekiel. God is going to act so that His people, and indeed the whole world, knows who He is! In the beginning section of the book, obviously about judgment, God will powerfully and clearly judge His people so that they will know that He is and does what He says. Later we see that He will judge the nations so they know that Yahweh is God. Finally, when Yahweh powerfully saves His people, everyone will know that Yahweh alone is God. God cares about His **reputation**! He cares about His **name**. So He will act to bring about His **glory** in His people and in the nations! He will vindicate the holiness of His great name among the nations (Eze 36:23) and everyone will know who Yahweh is!*

24. Trace the theme of divine agency in salvation and the Spirit in Ezekiel. How does this relate to the main concept of glory? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Spirit is very active in Ezekiel (1:12, 20-21; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 19, 24; 36:26-27; 37:1, 14; 39:29; 43:5). God is the one at work in Ezekiel. He is the one who saves. He purifies His people so that His glory can dwell among them. And so ultimately, He is the one who works out His plan to glorify Himself. **It's all His doing by the work of His Spirit**, and so He gets all the **glory** for what He does!*

25. Note the key word 'land' in Ezekiel. We will come back to discuss this key concept later, but for now begin to note how many times and where it occurs and start thinking about how such diverse topics as 'land' and 'glory' interrelate.

*A: Depending on how you count 'land' is 157 times in Ezekiel (NASB), everywhere in the book. We will come back to discuss this key concept later...*

26. How do you think you would *feel* if you saw Ezekiel 1 in person? What adjectives would you use to describe it? What had wheels in Ezekiel's day? Why eyes? What does 1:28 say Ezekiel saw? What is the theological meaning of the vision in chapter 1 (c.f. Wright pp. 51-54 gives 4 different aspects to the vision; Block pp. 106-109 gives 7 implications)? What do you think is the *main point* or points being conveyed by the vision? (**Note:** Since the vision is at the beginning of the book, it certainly conveys something fundamental to the book as a whole) (2-3 paragraphs).

*A: We see many adjectives having to do with **light**: Fire, burning, lightning, gleaming, brightness - glory! This would be **terrifying** and we would feel confused, overwhelmed, and perplexed. Here Ezekiel says he sees the glory of Yahweh! This vision first and foremost conveys the transcendent glory of God. God is not like us! Everything about this vision is **spectacular**! God's glory emanates from His person. He is by nature glorious. By nature of His transcendence, the clear distinction between Yahweh and His creation is emphasized. Wright: “Carrying the divine throne, the four-headed cherubim declare that Yahweh has the strength and majesty of the lion, the swiftness and mobility of the eagle, the procreative power of the bull, and the wisdom and reason of humankind” (Wright, 48). By implication and application, if Yahweh is so glorious, it is only fitting and right that He be given the glory He deserves by the whole earth (cf. the refrain 'may His name be **known**!'). Secondarily, we also see the sovereignty of Yahweh emphasized. He is sitting on a flaming*

chariot-throne (cf. wheels, and a throne, 1:26)! He reigns and rules! He goes where He wants and does what He wants (1:20). He is omniscient (eyes everywhere) and so knows what is going on! He is in complete control. We also see the imminence of God, He lives outside the boundaries of a temple. Moreover, while man is made in the image of God, here God is “pre-incarnated” and looks like a man. Although He is fundamentally different than His creation, yet He still relates to His creation and dwells among them.

27. What word is repeated several times in chapters 2-3? What does this chapter teach us about how the people will respond to Ezekiel's message? How does 3:12, 23 connect Ezekiel's call to the preceding chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: The word 'rebel' is repeated in chapters 2-3. They have constantly rebelled against Yahweh! They won't listen! Yet the **glory of Yahweh** compels Ezekiel to fulfill his prophetic call nonetheless (3:12, 23). He is standing for and **supported by God's glory**. When ministry is tough, we need this reminder! This is not an exciting call to ministry! Yet the problem was not with Yahweh or His message but with the people's hearts. Yahweh sent a prophet to warn them, yet **they** were the ones who wouldn't listen! Notice also the **Spirit's involvement** in Ezekiel's call (3:12, 24). We need God's help to minister!

28. Why do you think God has Ezekiel act out his messages in chapters 4-5 (1-2 sentences)?

A: God has Ezekiel act out his messages to try to shake the people out of their complacency! They simply wouldn't listen. Ezekiel was **graphic**, he tried to impress God's message upon them. God would not spare them!!! God will judge them!

29. What is a major purpose of the judgment in chapters 4-11? How do the "know" passages (ie. Eze 5:13) throughout this section help show this purpose (1-2 sentences)?

A: God's people didn't think of Him as great, they didn't think He was present. But when He indeed judged them, then they would know that Yahweh was **real**, that Yahweh was **holy**, and that Yahweh was **powerful**! He did just what He said He would do (cf. Eze **5:13; 6:10**, 13-14; 7:27)!

30. Comment on what 6:8-9 says in the midst of all this judgment.

A: Even though the judgment is completely sure as Ezekiel has been pointing out and trying to convince them, the judgment will not be total. A **remnant** will be left, and that remnant will repent and recognize the wicked they have done to Yahweh and will genuinely feel sorrow over their sin. God will work out His original plan to get glory for Himself, He will do it!

31. Ezekiel 8-11 has a “departing glory” motif throughout. Regarding this theme, list all the verses in this section that mention “the glory” and its movement. Where does it end up? When and how do you think the glory of God will return? What else is going on in chapters 8-11 that explains why the glory is departing? (1 paragraph)

A: Note **8:1-4**; 9:3; 10:1-22 (esp **1-5, 18-19**); 11:22-23. The glory begins in the temple, and eventually leaves to the Mount of Olives to the East of Jerusalem. We can expect the glory to return in the same way! The glory is obviously departing because of all the wickedness and sin that we see going on all around (and even in the temple itself!) amongst which God's glory **cannot dwell**! Here we see great and grotesque idolatry (seat of jealousy, 8:5-6; 70 elders worshiping creepy things, 8:7-13; mourning over Tammuz, 8:14-15; 25 men worshiping the sun 8:16-18) is clear evidence of why God cannot dwell among His people!



32. Note what happens in chapter 9. When did/does this happen and how? (1-2 sentences)

*A: We have a vision of the destruction of Jerusalem and shows the behind the scenes theological picture of the Babylonian invasion, "At one level of reality, the swords would be in the hands of Babylonian enemies; at another level of reality, they would collectively constitute the sword of divine justice" (Wright, 111).*

33. What were the people saying in 11:15? What was correct and incorrect about what they said? How does God respond to this in 11:16-17? What is then going to happen after that in 11:18-20? Note how the key concept of **land** in Ezekiel functions within this argument. (1 paragraph)

*A: They were saying that the **land** was theirs by divine right (correct), but that therefore they didn't need to follow Yahweh (incorrect!). God is indeed going to kick them out of the **land**, yet He will surely watch over them and bring them back to the **land** (11:17)! When He brings them back to the land, He will purify their hearts, and cause them to walk in His ways! Thus they will truly be restored to the land! God was indeed going to keep His promise to Abraham which involves **land**, however, that generation that rebels may indeed not partake of the blessing! Notice what God must do with them in order to fulfill this promise, He must give them a **new heart** and place **His Spirit** within them (11:19)!*

34. Application: How should meditating on the glory of Yahweh and the vision of chapter 1 effect our daily lives? How should God's glory effect our view of sin? How should it effect our purpose and mission in life?

## 5. Judgment against Israel and the Nations: Ezekiel 12-32

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 12-32

**Theme:** Yahweh will Make His Name Known through Judging both His People and the Nations

**Objectives:**

- To be overwhelmed with Yahweh's patience and grace
- To be shaken out of things we depend on or sins we become comfortable with
- To be challenged by a radically Yahweh centered worldview

**Reading:**

- Read Ezekiel 12-32 *two times*
- Read Wright's section on Ezekiel 12-32

**Questions:**

1. Why do you think Ezekiel uses so many images, metaphors, allegories, pictures, etc.? Wright describes the allegories in Ezekiel 16 and 23 as “long...lewd, and their language in places is, frankly, pornographic.” What do you think is the purpose for Ezekiel using such edgy language? What does Ezekiel 12:3 suggest in this regard? Do you think we can and should use edgy or shocking rhetoric today? If so, when/where is it appropriate? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Once again, it seems that Ezekiel is trying to shake the nation out of their complacency and self trust. 12:3 seems to confirm that this is the purpose, **perhaps** they will understand! He is trying to emphasize over and over that they are trusting in a false hope. Maybe, just maybe, if he keeps preaching and acting and demonstrating their wickedness, the point will sink in! Additionally, such actions raise many questions. Why is Ezekiel doing this?!? What's going on? (cf. Eze 12:9) Hopefully this will draw them in to listen to a message that otherwise would be easily ignored. It seems that if it was appropriate for Ezekiel to use such language in his situation, it could be appropriate for us as well given a similar situation. What we have to be careful of is when it is appropriate, and what are motives are for using it. It is so easy for us to seek to be provocative solely to try to get attention, not because of a deep care for those to whom we are ministering. Certainly even Jesus at times used strong and harsh language to get His point across as well. We need to be careful that we are motivated by love and not just seeking attention or worse for ourselves. As a side note, 12:3 seems to confirm that Ezekiel did all of his acting as his “**day job**” when it says, “**by day**”.*

2. Comment on 12:16 and 12:27. (1 sentence)

*A: God is not going to completely wipe out Israel so that they will be a testimony for Him among the nations. They thought that the judgment wouldn't come to them, but God assured them that it would!*

3. Who is chapter 13 against and why? What do we learn about unity from how God deals with the false prophets? (1 paragraph)

*A: It is against the false prophets because they gave the people a false sense of peace **in** their wickedness! Remember that the false prophets claimed to know Yahweh, and yet led the people to a false God. They lead the people to persevere in their sin, rather than repenting to be saved (13:22). God always deals very severely with those who lead people away from Him!*

## 4. What is the main point of chapters 14-15? (1-2 sentences)

*A: God is certainly going to judge them and not even the most righteous men could deliver them by their righteousness. They are useless and so will be judged (ch. 15)! Others' righteousness cannot save, only relationship to Yahweh can save! They have personal responsibility, not just corporate responsibility.*

## 5. Summarize in your own words the allegorical retelling of Israel's history in Ezekiel 16. Use any commentary of your choice to help explain certain metaphors that are difficult to understand. What is the point of this story? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: Israel was like a rejected baby squirming in its own blood, but Yahweh came and took her and cared for her and clothed her Himself. Then when she was at the time for love, He entered into covenant with her and adorned her with everything good. She became very beautiful and advanced to royalty and her fame spread to the nations because Yahweh bestowed His splendor on her. But she trusted in her beauty and played the harlot and took the good things Yahweh had given her and played the harlot with them. She went so far as to sacrifice her own children to be devoured. And she forgot the days of her youth and all Yahweh had done for her. She became bold in her harlotry and committed adultery with many nations, going from one to the next. Her heart is feverish, always longing after another. In fact, she was a harlot who actually paid others to take advantage of her!*

*So Yahweh is going to gather all her lovers and expose her nakedness before them. Then they will cut and burn her and she will be judged by them so that she will not play the harlot anymore. Yahweh will pour out His wrath so that His jealousy will be pacified against her. She was worse than her sisters (Samaria and Sodom). Once Sodom had been the paradigm of evil, but now she has taken that place. She should feel ashamed that she makes Sodom look righteous!!! And so when God restores them all it is humbling to her, showing that ultimately God can restore anyone and it's not because she is better in any way!*

*But in the end, God will restore her. He will enter into covenant with her, although this time it will be an everlasting covenant. She will be ashamed of her wickedness, and will return to Yahweh. Then they will know Him! And then they will never be ashamed again, because Yahweh will forgive her for all she has done!*

*This story should pull at Israel's **heart strings** like no other. Think about all the Yahweh has done for her! How gracious is He with her. How jealous for her love! And yet she rejected Him. But while His holy jealousy demands that His wrath be poured out on her, yet He is always faithful to His promise and will forgive and bring her back to Himself once again! What an amazing picture of our God!!!*

## 6. What is so shocking about Ezekiel 16:49-50 (in context of 16:45-58)? Give your own impression, response, and application of this verse. (see Wright's powerful discussion on pp. 147-49; see also Block, pp. 509) (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Note that this is Sodom being talked about! Lack of care for the poor is not what we typically think of when we think of this prototypical wicked city. Yet this is what Yahweh rails on her for! Certainly also the abominations (16:50) that they commit are heinous in God's sight, but ultimately what is the most offensive before God is **pride**! Everyone should be completely humbled in light of the glory of Yahweh and His awesome majesty. We should all realize that all humanity shares in a common plight. If we reflect properly on the Creator-creature distinction that Ezekiel displays so clearly for us in chapter 1, we should understand that none of us are better than another! We are all poor wretched sinners in comparison to the awesome*

God. Even unbelievers should recognize this fundamental equality of humanity, and to try to exalt ourselves above others in order to think highly of ourselves is the **ultimate affront to the awesome majesty of God**. Thus we should care for the poor!

7. Write a personal response to Ezekiel 16's portrait of sin and grace.

A:

8. What is the point of the riddle in chapter 17? (1-2 sentences)

A: Although Israel (this is about Zedekiah... cf. 17:19) sent to Egypt for help against Babylon with whom she made a covenant, she will still be judged. Yet, God will not utterly destroy her, but will replant her in the land. He will do it and get all the glory for doing it (17:24)!

9. What is the point of chapter 18? How does 18:9 define righteousness? (1 sentence)

A: Each person is **personally responsible**! God isn't judging people just because He likes to judge, but because they deserve it, so repent! The only way to be saved is to **personally and humbly** have relationship with Yahweh! Righteousness is seen as living in right relationship with God and with others. "The fathers bite the popsicle and the children get brain freeze" (Ernesto).

10. What is the point of chapter 19 being a lament? (1 sentence)

A: Once again probably to get their attention, Ezekiel is showing how sad their rebellion and its consequences are. **It's happy to obey! He's trying to invoke their emotions.**

11. What is the point of Ezekiel retelling Israel's history again in chapter 20:1-44? Comment especially on 20:9-14, 33-38, and **39-44**. What is the point! Think about this great chapter! (2-3 paragraphs)

A: God reminds Israel that He is the one who chose her, and that He chose her for His own name's sake. He is going to accomplish His plan for her, the only question is whether or not any particular individual/generation will participate in His plan. God is a good God who called them to faithfulness in relationship with Him, and yet they rebelled and didn't forsake their idols from Egypt. But God saved them for His own name's sake! It is about His **reputation** and His **glory**! He gave them His law, so that they could live, He gave them His Sabbaths, so they would remember that He sets them apart. But they rejected and forsook His good plan, and yet He didn't wipe them out for His own name's sake. God did not wipe them out in the wilderness for His name's sake! God cares about His reputation among the nations!

They continually rebelled and walked in the ways of the nations. But God will have His way! He will be king over them!!! By His power He will rule over them. He will scatter them, but then will bring them back. He will enter into judgment with them and bring them back into covenant relationship with Him! He will purge the rebels from among them. They may serve their idols now, but in the end they **will** listen to Him! God will bring the whole nation back to the **land** (20:40) and they will serve Him there. When He brings them back from the places He has scattered them He will prove Himself holy among the nations! Everyone will know that He is Yahweh, when He brings them back into the **land** in fulfillment of His promises to their forefathers! Then they will repent over their sins and truly know Yahweh is God, when He acts for His own name's sake!!!

12. What is the topic of 20:45-21:32 and what's the point? (1 sentence)

*A: God's sword is coming! Claiming to be God's people won't save you. God is always faithful to His word, He will certainly judge!*

13. What is the topic of chapter 22 and what's the point? Also comment on 22:30. (2-3 sentences)

*A: This chapter is largely about Jerusalem. Her sins are enumerated and God calls for her judgment. Knowing God's law isn't enough, they need to obey it. As God is condemning the leadership, **God wishes that there would be a man who would stand in the gap for the land**, but none could be found! It is siege terminology, there is a whole in the wall the needs to be guarded to keep the whole city safe, but there was none would would be brave and stand up for what is right!*

14. What picture is given of Israel and Judah in chapter 23? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Israel and Judah are like two sisters who are harlots, chasing after their lovers. The younger sister (Judah) followed in the ways of her older sister (Israel), and even surpassed her!*

15. What happens in 24:1-2 and then what picture is used to describe that event? (1 sentence)

*A: The siege on Jerusalem began and God likened it to a boiling pot, because the whole city and everything in it would be burned!*

16. What happens in 24:15-27? What was the point of this!?! (1 paragraph)

*A: God tells Ezekiel that He is going to **kill his wife** and Ezekiel was not to mourn for her!!! This was because Yahweh was about to destroy His temple and not mourn over its destruction! Ezekiel was to be a sign for them of what Yahweh was doing. Yahweh was going to destroy His temple, which was the pride of the people's power, the desire of their eyes and the delight of their souls. It was the place of His dwelling among His people, but He would judge them for the sake of His holiness!*

17. What do you think are the main point(s) in this section of judgment on the nations chs. 25-32 (think about this)? Make sure to include all the 'know' statements in this section in your answer. Also make sure to comment on Ezekiel 28:24-26, noting that it is *exactly* in the middle of this section of judgment on the nations and therefore central/important (25:1-28:23 = 97 verses and 29:1-32:32 = 97 verses). (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: Pronouncing judgment on Yahweh's (and thus Israel's) enemies, was one very powerful way of assuring Israel that Yahweh is for them! "To know that Yahweh was acting against your foes gave you reassurance that he was acting for you" (Wright, 232). This section serves to magnify God's name before all nations: "That they/you may know that I am Yahweh" (17x in chs. 25-32 - 25:5, 7, 11, 17; 26:6, 14; 28:22, 23, 26; 29:6, 9, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15), and 2x in 28:24-26. God is a global God. He desires to be known globally.*

*In the center of this section on God's global desire to be known is this section on the restoration of Israel **to the land (28:24-26)**. In so restoring Israel, God will vindicate His holiness in that He will purify them first, and that He showed His holiness in judging their sin. But possibly most important is God's faithfulness to His promise that He will not forget. This section shows that in Yahweh's judgment of the nations He was*

*saving His people. Why does God judge the nations, and why does he proclaim this judgment to the exiled Israelites? "The judgment makes known Yahweh's nature. But here it becomes clear that full knowledge of Yahweh's nature can only be reached when the desire to save is seen behind the act of judgment...[T]his is the center around which all of Ezekiel's words revolve: Yahweh's glory is revealed in Israel, and beyond Israel to all the world" (Zimmerli, "The Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel," 106).*

18. [Optional] Using any commentary in the list, (1) identify the interpretive problem in Ezekiel 26:1-14 regarding the prophecy about the destruction of Tyre and the identify of its destroyer, and (2) give one possible solution to this problem.
19. Do you think that Ezekiel 28:12-19 describes the fall of Satan, the fall of Adam, the fall of the king of Tyre, a combination of the 3, or something else? Why? (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: Note the clear Satanic language in the passage: "you were in Eden" (13), "every precious stone was your covering" (13), "you were the anointed cherub" (14), "you were blameless in your ways" (15), "I cast you ... from the mountain of God" (16). But note how 28:12 begins, "take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre..." Given these two clear points from which the debate stems, and seeking to not minimize either of them will probably lead us to good harmonization. Possibly the following is a good synthesis: This section is written about the (literal) King of Tyre. But in it, Ezekiel describes him in Satanic language. Thus we do learn things in this section about Satan, even though it's not written specifically to or about him. This could be merely satirical in order to mock the King of Tyre, but quite possibly this was Ezekiel's way of saying that the King of Tyre himself was satanic. Thus Ezekiel is quite possibly implying that the King of Tyre was empowered/indwelt/? by Satan himself. We certainly learn in other biblical books (ie. Daniel) that angelic beings play key roles in global/national events (Michael the Prince of your People, Prince of Persia, Prince of Greece, etc.).*

20. Application: What do we learn about God's plan to glorify Himself from this section? What does this teach us about how we can live for His glory?

## 6. The Salvation of the Nation: Ezekiel 33-39

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 33-39

**Theme:** God will Vindicate His Holiness and Show His Glory in Saving His People

**Objectives:**

- To see how salvation is ultimately doxological in purpose
- To have hope in God's future restoration and God's coming King
- To be humbled by the fact of Divine agency in salvation
- To worship at the amazing power of God to save, restore and transform

**Reading:**

- Read Ezekiel 33-39 thoughtfully *three times*
- Read Wright's section on Ezekiel 33-39

**Questions:**

1. What was the watchman supposed to do according to Ezekiel 33:1-20? What are the consequences for not obeying? What is the point of appointing Ezekiel as a watchman according to Ezekiel 33:11? What does Ezekiel 33:13 teach us about righteousness and what we trust in? (1 paragraph)

*A: The watchman was to **warn** the city of impending doom. He is **responsible** for those in the city that they receive the warning message. However, if they don't heed the warning, their blood is on their own heads. Likewise God tells Ezekiel that he is responsible for delivering God's message faithfully to the people. The point of all this of course is that the people be actually **warned**, and **flee from their destruction**! God doesn't delight in their destruction! So He calls them to **repent and live** (33:11)! In 33:13 we see that the righteous man cannot trust in his righteousness! If we are simply trusting in ourselves and in our own righteousness, we will certainly become **complacent** in that false trust and fall into sin. We must always trust in Yahweh and keep a sense of **vigilance** in our faithful relationship with Him!! God is just and will certainly punish those who sin against Him!*

2. What significantly happens in 33:21-22? Why is this important within the structure, purpose, and message of Ezekiel? What else do we see in this chapter that shows us this is a turning point in the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Here we see the refugees came from Jerusalem and told Ezekiel about the destruction of the city/temple. This was the key event in Ezekiel's life (his wife died so that God could emphasize this point!). It's hard for us to understand how significant this event was in Biblical history! This point forms the hinge of the book, everything previous to this point was Ezekiel's ministry prior to the fall of Jerusalem, and everything after is his ministry after this point. We also note that the **tenor** of the book changes at this point from warning of judgment to hope of restoration. Before this point, Ezekiel is warning and trying to convince them to repent before the judgment comes. They obviously refused, and were decimated. Once the temple and Jerusalem were utterly destroyed by the Babylonians, no longer were the Jews trusting in the temple and that their 'chosen' status would save them. God went so far as to destroy His own temple, they were certainly under His condemnation! He proved His point! So now Ezekiel turns to show that **God has not utterly rejected His people and plan**. He will still fulfill His promise to Abraham! He will bring them back to the land!*

*We also see the two key themes of the watchman and muteness reoccur from chapter 3. This forms a nice inclusio to this section and shows that chs. 3-33 form part one of the book.*

3. What key theme do we see in 33:23-26? What does this show once again they were trusting in? (1 sentence)

*A: **Land** is a major theme throughout Ezekiel that shows up in 33:23-26. They were trusting in God's **promise** that the **land** was theirs, yet forgot that God called for faithfulness on their part (33:24-25)!*

4. How does this chapter end in 33:30-33? (1-2 sentences)

*A: The people came to Ezekiel to hear Yahweh's words, yet they would not listen and obey! They heard the words like nice music, but didn't take them to heart, but when they **come to pass** then they will know that God's words always have meaning (33:33)!*

5. Ezekiel 34:1-24 is a very powerful passage about God's critique and judgment on Israel's leaders and the future Davidic leader who will restore his people. Summarize the main critique or critiques being made and the future hope that God offers. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Their shepherds fed themselves instead of the sheep! They used the sheep instead of caring for them! The imagery is **graphic**! They eat the fat, clothe themselves with the wool, slaughter the sheep and don't feed them. Moreover they didn't do the work of shepherding: strengthening the sick, healing the sick, binding the broken, bringing back the scattered, and seeking the lost! This teaches us a lot of what leadership and shepherding should look like!*

*So because they didn't do these things, God Himself will shepherd His flock (34:20)! He will send the Davidic shepherd, the Messiah, to take care of His flock (34:23-24)! God will take care of them in the **land** and they will be secure in it! They will be a blessing (34:25-27). They will have a **name** and not be a **reproach** anymore (34:29)! God will be their God and they will be His people (34:31)!*

6. Why do you think Edom is singled out in chapter 35? Why is this section here and not with the other oracles against the nations in chs. 25-32? How does this pair with 36:1-15? What is the point of what God says in 36:1-15? What is the reason for what God is going to do? How does the key concept of **land** fit into this whole section? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Here we see an oracle against the mountains of Edom right next to an oracle against the mountains of Israel. So stylistically, these passages go together and form a pair. Edom seems to be singled out here because of their relationship with Israel: they were a brother nation. Yet they rejoiced over Israel's destruction and plotted to possess their **land**, even though Yahweh was there (cf. 35:10 and 36:5)! This seems to be the key to this passage which is very focused on the land. We can't forget how God's promises are tied up not just with the nation of Israel but also with the land. So God will judge Edom and they will know that He is God!*

*Yet in parallel we have the prophecy to the mountains of Israel of what God will do to them. Because the nations have boasted over Israel that they have taken possession of their land, and Israel is mocked, derided, scorned, and insulted, Yahweh will in His **jealousy** turn their insults back on themselves! God cares about His **reputation** which is bound up in His promises about the **land** of Israel (36:6)! God will bless His people and cause them to be cultivated, grow in the land and bear fruit and multiply! No longer will they be*



insulted, no longer will they be disgraced. Notice how God talks to the land in this section, it will be inhabited and possessed and no longer will it be bereaved of children (36:12).

7. How does 36:16-38 build right off of the previous sections and the concept of land? Why is the land so important to Yahweh? Comment on how 36:20 helps make this connection. What about 36:28? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice how the next section begins right again with the concept of land. When Israel lived in the land, **they defiled the land** (36:17). God's name is bound up with His promises; note what the nations said in 36:20-"These are the people of Yahweh, yet they have come out of His land." God made promises to Israel about the land, it's His land, and so when His people aren't flourishing in the land it reflects badly on His Holy name (note the first part of 36:20). So God will bring them back to their own **land** (36:24) which He promised to their forefathers (36:28). **The land will flourish because God cares about His reputation established by keeping His promises!**

8. Why is God going to act in 36:16-38? Note especially 36:21-23. Make sure to comment on how God's name, glory, and holiness relate. (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to act out of concern for **His holy name**. It's His reputation on the line. It's His promises that He made. If Israel is cut off and rejected and His land lies desolate, He is the one who looks bad! When they sin and rebel, they are **profaning His name** and giving the impression that God doesn't care about sin! So verses 22 and 23 make so clear that He is not going to save them for them, but for Himself! God cares a lot about His glory! This world is about Him and His plan, not us and our plans! When He acts in power to save His people and to keep His promises, then He will **vindicate His own holiness**: that He keeps His word and that He purifies His people because He cannot dwell amongst sin. Then the nations, the world, will know who Yahweh is. He is the **holy God** who keeps His promises and acts in power to transform His people. Ultimately, all people who **know** who Yahweh is after He acts in such a powerful way on behalf of His people (Eze 36:23, 38)!

9. How then is God going to vindicate His holiness according to 36:24-31? What is He going to do and why? (1 paragraph)

A: God is going to vindicate His holiness by keeping His promise concerning the nation of Israel and working out His plan! In short He is going to **save** them! God promised Abraham that He would make his seed into a great nation, to give them the land of Israel, to bless them, and to use them to bless the world. Yet God could not use Israel unless they were faithful to Him. **So God needed to transform them** so that He could use them for His plan. After He transforms their hearts, then they will keep His law and be used and blessed by Him to be the **light to the world** of how great Yahweh is! God is also going to **restore His land** to be like the Garden of Eden! Later in the book we will see the River of Life flowing through the land (Eze 47)... God is bringing about His original plan for His creation!

10. How many times does God say "I will..." in 36:22-37:14? Why? (1-2 sentences)

A: Roughly 21x... God is going to act! He is the one who going to bring all of this about. He is the **agent of salvation**! He is **sovereign** in it and He does it for His own name's sake!

11. Which key words in 36:26-27 are also used repeatedly in 37:1-14 (cf. also 11:19-20)? Describe the connection between 36:26-27 and 37:1-14. How would you describe the relationship between

Divine action and human action in salvation according to Ezekiel 36:26-27 and 37:1-14? Describe in your own words the main theological point in 36:26-27 as it relates to salvation. (1 paragraph)

*A: The key and related concepts of **Spirit/spirit**, and **wind/breath** are used in these sections. We also see the word 'flesh' repeated, albeit with a different connotation. We can see that chapter 37 is describing what God said He was going to do in chapter 36. In other words, the New Covenant being fulfilled is like Israel being raised from the dead! These passages make it very clear that God is the one who must transform the heart! People are dead until He takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh. People are dead until He breathes life into them and His Spirit comes into them. Thus these passages emphasize how completely **necessary divine action is for salvation!** Certainly we can see that in the Old Covenant. The people of Israel **never** had the heart to obey! They needed to be transformed! Now while God definitely is the one who saves and who is the main actor in salvation, He never saves apart from someone's willingness and desire as well. He does give them a new heart, and a new spirit, so He actually transforms their desires, not just their actions!*

12. What does the army of dry bones represent according to Ezekiel 37:11? What does the symbol of the dry bones coming to life then represent according to 37:12-14? (1 paragraph)

*A: The army of dry bones is the **whole house of Israel**. 37:12-14 says that the dry bones coming to life represent the nation of Israel being restored! God will place **His Spirit** within His people and will place them in their land (2x in 2 verses)! Thus this is indeed salvation of individuals as they have their hearts transformed and the Spirit indwells them, yet this is also very **corporate**. God is going to do this for the nation of Israel as a whole!*

13. What is the point of the two sticks in 37:15-22? (1-2 sentences)

*A: God is going to restore His people from the nations where they had been exiled and restore them together into a **single** nation! No longer would there be a divided kingdom, but **one kingdom with one king!***

14. What will that look like according to 37:23-28? (1 paragraph)

*A: The nation of Israel will be **forever** (notice how many times this is repeated) restored to the land (37:25)! The **Messiah**, the Son of David will be ruling over them forever! God will **dwell** among them forever! And their hearts will be transformed so that they obey Him forever! Finally, the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled! God will transform them so that they are able to do it! **God's plan will not fail.** We greatly look forward to the fulfillment of these promises, when the Messiah Himself will rule over His saved and restored people and will dwell among them forever. Then all the nations of the earth will know how great Yahweh is who has so powerfully saved and transformed His people (37:28)!!!*

15. What covenant is 37:26 speaking of? Where else have we seen this up to this point in Scripture? What is the significance of this covenant? Explain the relationships between the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants which all come into play in this section. How do all these covenants fit into what we are seeing play out in chapters 36-37? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Ezekiel is here talking about the **New Covenant**. We have seen this explicitly mentioned already in Jeremiah, and alluded to all the way back in the Torah. God made a promise to Abraham that He would make his seed into a great nation, and God gave the promised land to that nation. God promises that He would bless that nation and that through that nation all the earth would be blessed. God made it very clear*

in Genesis that this covenant was unconditional and eternal. But then God made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Sinai (the Mosaic covenant) that was the **means** for them to participate in this Abrahamic Covenant. If they obeyed God's good law and participated in the sacrificial system, they would be in relationship with Yahweh and would be used by Him to be a light to the nations. The problem however was with the peoples hearts! They never had the heart to obey God's good law. Yet God never forsook His promise to their forefathers (the Abrahamic Covenant) and kept reminding the people that He was going to bring it about. He even went so far as to further elaborate on and expand on that promise to David, promising that when God used the nation to bless the world, it would be through a righteous King who would come and rule over God's kingdom forever! Yet as David died and his son took the throne, the problem continued to show itself. The people didn't have a heart to obey! The problem wasn't with the law but with their rebellious hearts. As so as the Old Testament unfolded, eventually God had to kick His people out of the promised land in judgment for their sin. Yet as the prophets show, that didn't abrogate God's promise. God was still going to use the nation of Israel to bless the world! He was still going to bring His righteous King to rule over His righteous kingdom. But God had to transform His people for this to happen! You can't have a righteous kingdom without righteous people! So God took it upon Himself to purify His own people. It was His doing! He would send His Spirit. He would remove their hearts of stone! He would save them, but save them both individually and corporately so that He would fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and plan to bless the world through the nation of Israel! That's why we continue to see such a huge emphasis in this section on the **land** of Israel. It's because God's promises were bound up with a particular people and a particular land! God promised the land to the nation of Israel. When they were rebelling and defiling the land, God's name was in the dirt. His promises were lying unfulfilled! And so when God brings all of this about He will restore the nation of Israel as He promised to the land, transform and save them individually and corporately, and bring about His righteous King to rule over His righteous kingdom! What a glorious fulfillment that will be!!! And He will do it all in power so that all the nations of the earth will know who Yahweh is! He will get all the glory for all that He will do!!!

16. Summarize in one sentence what is described in chapters 38-39? What is the setting/timing of this according to 38:8 (cf. 39:29)? Explain the purpose of all this according to 38:16 and 38:23? How do 39:7-8, 13, 21-29 add to and clarify that purpose? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: A battle is described involving Gog and Magog. According to 38:8, this will happen **after** the nation of Israel is restored to the land and is living **securely** (repeated several times, 38:8, 14). The purpose of this battle is for Yahweh to show Himself **holy** among the nations by powerfully destroying those who come against His land! It's all about His **glory**! He will **magnify** Himself! He will **sanctify** Himself (ie. show that He is set apart, no one is like Him!)! He will act so that **all the nations will know Yahweh** because they have seen His **amazing saving power on behalf of His people**! Once God has saved His people so that they live securely, once He has **given them His Spirit** (39:29), He will **never again** allow the nations to come in and reproach His people! While it is true that the nations took Israel into exile, that was because of their impurity and sin (39:23-24). Once God purifies His people and transforms them, He will be jealous for His people and will forever be for His people from that time and forever! Thus when the nations come against His people, He will powerfully vindicate His holiness in a show of His glory (38:16, 23; 39:7, 13, 21-22, 25, 27, 28)! He will be known among the nations! [While there is debate about how and when this invasion will happen, notice that Revelation 20:7-10 mentions Gog and Magog and situates their invasion of Israel at the end of Christ's reign on the earth. This fits well with the constant refrain in Ezekiel that this invasion happened while Israel was resting securely, after God had given the nation of Israel His Spirit...]

17. Thought question: How does the New Covenant apply to us since it was so clearly given to and about the nation of Israel? When is the New Covenant fulfilled? You will need to think through New Testament passages about the New Covenant for this one... (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Although the New Covenant was given to the nation of Israel, the New Testament makes it very clear that Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant, and that the Gentiles can partake and participate in the New Covenant through Jesus. Romans 11 uses the language of 'grafting' to show that Christians are grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant and God's plan. More explicitly, Jesus, partaking of the last supper and instituting communion says, "This is the New Covenant in my blood..." (Luke 22:30). The book of Hebrews also goes into great depth to show that the Old Covenant is gone, and so the clear implication is that the New Covenant is the only way to be in relationship with God (cf. Heb 8:13; 9:15; etc.). In 2nd Corinthians 3:6, Paul states that His ministry to the Gentiles is a ministry of the New Covenant. So as believers, the New Testament is clear that we participate in the New Covenant, and thus have relationship to God through what Jesus did on the cross to inaugurate that New Covenant to provide the transformation of heart, indwelling of the Spirit, placing God's law on our hearts and other blessings that the New Covenant promises. Yet, as we look clearly at the promises of the New Covenant, we should clearly see that these promises were made **to** the nation of Israel corporately. So, while we as Gentiles can participate in the New Covenant, we don't fulfill it. God will certainly keep His promise to save and transform the nation of Israel, praise Him that we get splash over blessings and get to experience that same salvation and transformation! Oh how glorious it will be when the nation of Israel itself is saved in fulfillment of the New Covenant (cf. Rom 11:25-26)!*

18. Application: What do we learn about the relationship between God's glory and salvation in this passage? How does this relate to the topic of Divine Agency in salvation? How should having a God centered as opposed to man-centered view of salvation effect us on a daily basis?
19. Application: What do we learn about God's glory as it relates to His promises and faithfulness in this passage? How should this encourage and challenge us?

## 7. The Presence of Yahweh: Ezekiel 40-48

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 40-48

**Theme:** God's Glory will Return to His Temple and He will Forever Dwell with His People

**Objectives:**

- To be encouraged by Ezekiel's vision of what the kingdom will be like
- To be exhorted to holiness in light of God's glory
- To be encouraged to trust in God's faithfulness to His promises
- To be encouraged to long for the presence of Yahweh

**Reading:**

- Read Ezekiel 40-48 *two times*
- Read Wright's section on Ezekiel 40-48

**Questions:**

1. Who is the 'prince' in this section? Why do you think so? (1 paragraph)

*A: Although this is a widely debated issue, I believe that these references to the 'prince' are references to the Messiah. In light of the key emphasis in Ezekiel on the Davidic King who is coming (**Eze 34:24** and **37:25**, and note that both of these passages call the Messiah the 'prince!'), it would be odd that there would be no emphasis on the Messiah in the passage so focused on the culmination of God's good plan for His people. Besides the huge emphasis on the prince in chapters 40-48 which would be somewhat odd in this section for someone who is not the Messiah, one reference in particular seems to point to the exalted position of this prince in a way that suggests he is the Messiah. **Ezekiel 44:2-3** says that no one may enter the East gate of the temple because the **glory of Yahweh** entered through it, only the prince may sit in the gate and eat bread before Yahweh and go in and out the same way. Obviously this prince is quite special and exalted.*

2. Note the following brief outline of chs. 40-48: 1) Dimensions of the new temple (40-43), 2) Description of new priesthood and sacrificial system (44-46), 3) Division of new land (47-48). What do chapters 40-43 begin to describe (40:5)? Where is it (40:2)? Why is this significant within the larger context of the book of Ezekiel? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Chapter 40 begins describing the temple in the land of Israel. Obviously the temple is a major topic within Ezekiel because Yahweh had just destroyed His temple. Yet He wasn't done with His people, He would restore them and return to them, and so this new temple is a picture of **God's renewed presence** with His people!*

3. After the physical dimensions of the temple are described, what do we see happen in 43:1-9? Why is this so significant? (1 paragraph)

*A: Now we see the **glory of Yahweh returning from the East**, in the same direction it came from! It returns to His temple and fills the temple! God's glory returns to His people and He dwells among them! He states that now He will dwell with them **forever!** Israel will never again defile God's holy name from that day forward! Thus the book of Ezekiel has gone full circle. The glory departed, but now the glory returns!*

4. What is the purpose for describing the temple to the people according to 43:10-12? (1-2 sentences)

*A: As we saw in the Torah, the temple symbolizes the presence of Yahweh. But it also strongly emphasizes His holiness in that He cannot dwell among a sinful people and there needed to be separation between Him and His people. Here as Ezekiel describes the temple to the people it was meant **to shame them of their sins** (43:10) as they think about the great holiness of Yahweh.*

5. What response does Ezekiel have to seeing the glory of Yahweh in 44:4? What does this teach us about Yahweh's glory? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Ezekiel falls on his face because Yahweh's glory is so magnificent it causes us to realize how unworthy and unlike God we are!*

6. What does this section as a whole (esp. chs. 44-46, the description of the new priesthood and sacrificial system), and particularly the following verses remind us is key to the purpose of the temple and the sacrificial system: 43:20, 26; 45:15,17,20? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again, as in Leviticus, the whole temple system reminds us of the **need for atonement** to enter into the presence of Yahweh. He is all glorious and completely holy and sinful people cannot be in His presence, nor He in theirs. There is a need for sacrifice a need for forgiveness, and as the future picture of Yahweh's restoration of His people is painted this whole temple brings the reminder that God will not and cannot bring about the future restoration and salvation of His people apart from forgiveness, atonement, and sacrifice!*

7. What does the river in chapter 47 remind us of elsewhere in Scripture? What is the point and emphasis about this river? What is communicated by these emphases? (1 paragraph)

*A: This river begins at the temple of God, starting as a trickle and flowing into a might river. The emphasis is on the **life-giving** qualities of the river. Notice how the whole land will be restored as a result of the life that this river gives to the whole area. This is **reminiscent of** the rivers in **Eden**, and also Revelation picks up on much of this terminology and symbolism (cf. Rev 22:1-3). This points to the restoration of creation and the accomplishment of God's intended goal in creation. Death has been conquered and life is reigning. There is peace and prosperity and all is well.*

8. Summarize what we have learned about 'land' so far in Ezekiel. Why is the land so important in Ezekiel? How is it tied to the key concept of glory? How does this relate to what we see in this section in chs. 40-48? What do we learn from the section about the division of the land in 47:13ff.? (1 paragraph)

*A: The land has been a very important topic for Ezekiel. It's importance stems from the fact that Yahweh promised the land of Israel to Abraham's descendants. Thus, His name and reputation are bound up with this particular patch of ground, and in keeping His promises to Abraham. That is why the key concept of 'glory' relates throughout Ezekiel to the concept of land. When the people were sinning in the land, they were defiling His land, and dragging His name in the dirt. Thus we see the glory depart from the temple, from the land of Israel in chapters 8-11. But since God is always faithful to His promise, He will certainly keep it and has promised to save and restore the nation. Thus we see God will save and restore the nation, and then will come back and dwell among them. His glory thus returns to the temple in Ezekiel 43. Thus*

*Yahweh's glory dwelling in the land is a major emphasis of chs. 40-48. Furthermore, we see other emphases in the division of the land to Israel. We see that Israel will indeed possess the land as promised. They will receive their inheritance! Even the **alien** will receive **land and inheritance in the kingdom!** Thus the inclusiveness of the kingdom is emphasized. If we look at the distribution of land in ch. 47 one thing we notice is the straight line division of the land. This emphasizes **equality** of distribution. Finally, the fact that Israel will be **secure** in the land emphasizes the **peace** that comes with Yahweh's **salvation!** All things will finally be right and as God intended in the kingdom!*

9. How does the entire book of Ezekiel end, and what does that emphasize to us? (1 sentence)

*A: Ezekiel ends with a statement that the city is to be called 'Yahweh is there', emphasizing the **presence of God** with His people is of great importance and indeed in many ways can be seen as the **sum goal** of what God is doing in His creation.*

10. Explain your understanding of the timing of the events in Ezekiel that are yet future to us in relation to other events that the Bible prophecies for our future. In other words, give a rough overview of your understanding of eschatology. (1 paragraph)
11. Application: What encouragement do we receive from seeing Ezekiel's picture of what the kingdom will be like?

## 8. Serving Yahweh: Haggai

**Scripture:** Haggai

**Theme:** It is Worth it to Give Everything to Serve Yahweh in Light of the Coming Glory

**Objectives:**

- To learn the priorities and principles for serving Yahweh
- To learn to serve in light of God's empowerment, by the power of His Spirit
- To learn to serve in light of eternity

**Reading:**

- Read Ezra 1-6
- Read Haggai *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Haggai

**Questions:**

1. Note the dates of all the prophecies in Haggai. Fit each of these into the chronology of Ezra. How many years were there between the foundation being laid and the work being restarted? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Work on the temple is restarted **16 years** after the foundation was laid (cf. Ezra 3-5). The people returned, and began to work, but then **feared** men and so stopped.*

2. What is the essence of what the people are saying in 1:2? Why is this so wrong to God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Notice that they do not say that the temple shouldn't be built, but just that **it isn't time**. They don't say 'never', just 'not now'. They knew the temple should be built, but now they had **more important** things to do. This is about **priorities**, not knowing what is right.*

3. How does Yahweh respond to this in 1:4? What words plays and contrasts are there within the verse and tying to 1:2? What is the implied answer to God's question and what point is He trying to make? (1 paragraph)

*A: There is a great word play here. You say it's not **time**, is that so? It hasn't been time for 16 years? What kind of time is it? Shouldn't God's house **always** be more important? It's so easy to put ourselves first, and not God. Why then do you have time to work on your house and not mine? You yourselves are living in nice houses, but don't care about my house. Without the article the word 'paneled' stands as an emphatic apposition (paneled ones!), not adjectivally modifying. Isn't it the height of **selfishness** to do **extravagantly** for ourselves, but not for God. Not only are you putting your priorities in the wrong places, but greatly so. It should be the other way around, the temple should be paneled, and their houses desolate. (Cf. 4x paneled in 1Ki 6-7 of the temple and palace; 1x in Jer 22:14- Luxurious, and 1x here). Reality is flipped upside down. Contrast paneled and desolate.*



4. What does God say in 1:5? How does the verse begin? Note that this verse contains a refrain that God says that continues throughout the book. What does this refrain mean? Look carefully at the contexts and you will find it has quite a specific meaning. (1 paragraph)

*A: Now **is** the time. Don't delay any more, get your priorities right. 'Put your heart upon your ways' is a key phrase (refrain) in this book. Think! **Consider** what you are doing. Is this right? This phrase is followed in Haggai with a description of their situation and a reminder of the sovereignty of God. They should have considered their situation in light of who God is and what He was doing. They should look at life from God's perspective!*

5. What is the point of 1:6? What should they have deduced from what 1:6 describes? (2-3 sentences)

*A: You would normally expect to reap much if you sow much. You are working hard and naturally you would expect great productivity. But it's not happening. Everything you are trying to do for yourselves is **frustrated**. Did you think about why? You should. The Torah speaks of God's covenant blessing for covenant obedience. You should make the connection! Results are always from God!*

6. 1:8- Why is the temple so important to God? How is His glory tied to the temple? Note that the temple is called 'the house' again. What connection is the author continuing to make? (1 paragraph)

*A: The temple is God's house (cf. 1Ki 8). Haggai continues to contrast **God's house** and their **houses**. We forget how central the temple is to authentic OT worship. It is the symbol of the God's presence, His blessing, and His name/reputation. With His house desolate it **reflects badly** on Him. God's house is a significant topic in Haggai, mentioned 11x. (Cf. 1Ki 8:10-13, 43, 60). It signifies God's dwelling with His people, making His name known, and His honor among the nations. It signifies His presence with His people, His blessing, protecting, and being for them. It is the dwelling of His great name (all in Deuteronomy) and the presence of His Shekinah glory. The glory of this house will continue to be important in this book. **God's glory is inextricably tied to His house**, the place of His dwelling. It signified His presence and blessing, and for the house to be desolate was for His glory to be defamed. It's all about God's glory. **Put God first and seek to glorify Him!** He is worthy. Life is all about pleasing God. Nothing else matters. This is why we work, this is why we serve!*

7. What is God emphasizing in 1:9? Think about his reasoning. What causal connections is He trying to make? (1 paragraph)

*A: The fall harvest ought to shortly be under way. You **depended** on yourselves and assumed your losses were from natural causes. Have you thought about the reasons why? What's the cause? **The real reason is because of My house, because of Me!** This is classic cause and effect. You didn't put Me first. We forget that God is who prospers us and not ourselves! God is the ultimate cause!*

8. Note the author's use of 'house' again in 1:9. What point is he trying to make? What does he mean when he says they were “running to his own house”? (2-3 sentences)

*A: You are characteristically and continually **busying yourselves with yourself**. You are trying to make yourself happy/secure/safe/whatever. You are busy, busy, busy. This could be a commentary on our own times. We are just continually busy with ourselves, instead of with God. There is a very individualistic focus*

here: **Each one** is running to his **own** house. You are looking out for numero uno. You forget who is truly number one.

9. What are verses 1:10-11 reminiscent of? Where do we see this kind of language in the OT? (2-3 sentences)

A: These are the **covenant curses** of Deuteronomy. God's Word is held true (cf. Deu 11:17; 28:12, 23-24). There is blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience.

10. Note that the word for 'drought' in 1:11 is basically the same word for 'desolate' used several times thus far. What connection is the author trying to make? (2-3 sentences)

A: Because God's house was **desolate**, He sent **drought**. The **drought** was as a direct result of, and a logical consequence of the **desolate** state of God's house. This is fitting. Here is the cause. You left My house desolate, so I called for desolation on your labors. You wouldn't work for Me, I frustrated your work for yourselves.

11. How did the people respond to Haggai's first message? What two verbs describe their reaction in verse 12 (Note that the first verb is better translated 'heard', than 'obeyed')? What is the connection and significance of these verbs here? Notice what is said about Haggai in this verse. Why is this emphasized about him? (1 paragraph)

A: The people listened to this message. They heard it. They took it to heart. It was not just with their ears, it sunk in. This is the biblical idea of hearing, not just in one ear and out the other. They believed, and it **changed their hearts**. Then their **hearing** affected the way they thought of God. It caused **fear** in them, belief that God truly is as great as He says He is. They wouldn't have feared unless they truly believed. They believed the message that came from Haggai. There were no miracles here, just the word. Haggai spoke God's message and they believed and were changed. Notice the description of Haggai as the prophet of Yahweh. He brought God's own words.

12. So how then does God respond to the people in 1:13? Why is this significant? (1 paragraph)

A: God responded by telling the people that He was with them. He assured them of His presence. There was an immediate response. **'I am with you'** sums up the totality of blessing. God is for and not against His people. He will bless and prosper you. He will protect and defend you. He is on your side. **The presence of God** is a **major theme** in the Old Testament, it is the **central blessing, from which all other blessing flows**. Being with God is the greatest hope that God's people have!

13. Then what did God do in 1:14? Why is this significant? Notice the chain of events in verses 12-14? What is significant about the chain (Notice the chain of 'so')? What is the final verb in the chain? (1 paragraph)

A: So God **stirred up** the people. God is the one who changes hearts. He motivated them (by His Word and His Spirit?). God's reassuring them of His presence takes action by means of His supernatural movement among them. God didn't just assure them of His presence and then do nothing. **His presence has real meaning and affect on them**. The last verb in the chain is that the people went and **obeyed**. This is the last link in the verbal chain, obedience. 'The time had not come' changed to 'they went'. This is true change and

repentance, one that results in **action**. True hearing results in change of heart that produces a change of life. Hearing -> fearing -> obeying. God is the one who empowers and transforms!

14. What does God now tell the people in 2:3? Why does God tell them this? What is He getting at? (2-3 sentences)

A: The temple was destroyed 66 (586-520) years ago. For someone to have been 14 when it was destroyed, they would have to be 80 years old now. God says to compare how you saw the temple in the past to how you are presently seeing it now. Do the comparison. If you compare, the work you are doing now seems **insignificant** (the older people that could remember the former temple were **weeping** about how small the new one was). But...

15. But even in light of what He tells them in 2:3, what does He tell them to do in 2:4-5 and why? (2-3 sentences)

A: He tells them: **Be strong, be strong, be strong, and do! Take courage.** There is no need to fear. **Do** with boldness and confidence. Serve God without wavering. Why serve God like this? **Because** He is with you. His presence enables and empowers you (cf. Exo 8:22). This is technical language for a covenant, an oath. God has promised/covenanted to be with His people. God's presence is what enables and empowers His people.

16. What then does He tell them in 2:6-9? How does this fit in with 2:3? What is the overall message of this prophecy (Think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

A: God tells them that once again in a little time, in a trifle, He is going to **glorify** Himself. So they need to wait expectantly, hope, long for and anticipate. Earthly timing is not important, it is not long. This will be global, the worldwide kingdom of God. This very house you are working on will be the one that God fills with the glory of all the earth. God will make their work worthwhile. He will bless it. We can't always see the results of what God asks us to do, but from **God's perspective** it is **worth it**. Everything is God's. He owns it all. He will bring what is His to His house. God is global. This new temple will be greater and better, even greater than Solomon's temple. Though it looked insignificant, one day God would make it great. This is about **courage to serve** God despite appearances. What we are doing for God might not look like much. But He promises to be with us. We need to be strong in faith, realizing that if God calls us to do something, He will enable us and He will bless, and bless our work. True service takes **faith**. In **God's time** the true merits of one's work will be shown.

17. Explain what question is being asked and what are the answers in 2:11-13? Why are the priests asked for a ruling? What are the **principles** that come directly from these verses? (1 paragraph)

A: The priests were to be the keepers of the law. Holiness and uncleanness was a huge portion of the law. Leviticus teaches us about the **holiness** of God. Animals and food are clean or unclean by nature. People and objects can **become** ritually unclean. God cannot dwell with uncleanness (it must go outside the camp). These are all object lessons of God's holiness (Exo 19:23). The cultic depicts the moral. So the overarching principles that these verses are highlighting are that **holiness by association** (in the fold) is not transferable (cf. Lev 6:27, If God would touch it though, it would be holy). On the other hand, **uncleanness is directly transferable** (cf. Lev 22:4).

18. How do the principles of 2:11-13 apply to the people in 2:14? (1 paragraph)

A: This applies to the people in that the works that one offers **do not become holy** just because they involve the temple. However, the works that one offers **do become unclean** because the one offering them is unclean. This keeps consistent the passage as a whole: this passage is about the **peoples' hearts**. This interpretation fits with the conclusion, "so is this people and so is all their works." Verses 14 and 17 emphasize the works of their hands which God struck. This is specifically about their offerings. They were still giving offerings to God (on the altar, cf. Ezr 3:3, 6), even though the temple wasn't built. They thought their offerings were holy to God, but in reality they weren't **because they were unclean** (because of their misplaced priorities, cf. ch 1) and therefore so were their offerings.

19. What was God asking them to consider in 2:15-17? What should they have realized? (1 paragraph)

A: Once again, the consistent usage of the phrase ('place it upon your heart') is for all of them to think about how God has intervened in their circumstances to cause them to evaluate their actions. Think about 'natural' causes and who is the **real cause**. 'Onward': This is very parallel to verse 18, and probably has the same point. Usually this phrase means 'and upward', speaking of age ie. 30 years of age and upward (= and older). The idea 'consider' lends support to the idea that this is past time (you can't really consider the future!). In other words, think about the last 16 years! Has God blessed? God was the one who struck. He caused. He was behind their losses. God struck all the works of their hands, because all the works of their hands were unclean. Why did God do this? To cause them to turn to Him. "And yet, you had nothing to do with Me." The heart of the matter was their **hearts**. Their hearts weren't right so the work of their hands was cursed. It was their uncleanness that led to their work and offerings being unacceptable to God.

20. So what does God ask them to consider again in 2:18? But even in light of what God asks them to consider in 2:18, what does God say in 2:19? (1+ paragraph)

A: They should again **consider** the last 16 years. Has there been any blessing? No! Yet even though there has been NO blessing for 16 years, God will bless them. **Everything has changed**. They have repented and so God's blessing is upon them, even though they can't see it yet. This book is about work, serving God. Since the temple was started (16 years previous) till the present, God had been cursing their work. But now, He will bless, because their hearts changed. Just because they gave sacrifices didn't make them holy. But when they returned to God with their hearts, then they were accepted. Even though they couldn't see the results of God's blessing yet, **it was sure**. When God is for someone, they will be blessed (cf. Mal 3:7). God is always faithful, and ready for us to return. **As soon as we turn to Him, the blessings follow, it's sure**. There is absolutely no indication that this year will be any different than the last 16 years. There is no visible blessing yet. It was mid-winter. The crops were planted, but there is no sign of them yet. Yet they should know that there is covenant blessing for covenant keepers. God calls for faith and trust. Because they heard and feared, God had changed their hearts and they obeyed. Now their offerings are acceptable, and He will bless. They can't see the results yet, but everything had changed, even though they couldn't see it yet. **So He calls them to depend upon Him**.

21. How does the book end in 2:20-23? What was the message to the original recipients (Think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

A: God is conquering the world. God will establish **His kingdom**. Remember the context, they are not even a nation! It will be glorious: worldwide and universal, no one will be able to resist. There will be no other kingdom or power on the whole of the earth that rivals God's kingdom because He will overthrow those kingdoms and establish His own. What a blessing for being an obedient servant of Yahweh. Not necessarily in the here and now, but in the future God will make it worth it. God is great and glorious, and we look

forward to His global kingdom in which **righteousness reigns**. Zerubbabel, is the governor of this small province. Yet Judah would become the center of God's world kingdom. He is important as the Davidic heir to the throne. God will keep His promise to David, that one of His descendants would rule over His kingdom (cf. 2Sa 7).

22. What is a signet ring? What does it mean here? What about 'my servant'? (2-3 sentences)

A: A seal is a precious, personal possession, like an identity tag (cf. Jer 22:24). It is an extension of the individual's own authority (cf. Joseph in Gen 41:41-42). The one who has the signet ring has the complete and total authority of the one whose ring it is, and in this case the owner of the ring is God. So this signifies that the Davidic representative will rule with the totality of God's power as His mediator in the worldwide kingdom. The phrase 'My Servant' is very Messianic as well (cf. Isaiah, David, etc.).

23. Comment on the significance of God's election of Zerubbabel here. (2-3 sentences)

A: God's election and free **choice** is His **prerogative**. For His own purposes which we don't understand He has done this. Not because of the individual, but because of **God's grace**. Just as He elected Abraham to be the one through whom the nation of Israel would come to be His chosen people, so He elected David to be His king. The right response to God's election is awe and thanksgiving.

24. Summarize the message of each of the different prophecies of Haggai. What is the overall message of the book in light of the message of each of the individual prophecies? (1 paragraph)

A: This book is about serving God. Each prophecy adds a distinct aspect and lesson to what serving God should be like. 1) Our service should be wholehearted. God should be our number one priority. 2) We should be strong and courageous in it, no matter what the circumstances. If we are doing what God asks us to, there will be a result in eternity, even if we can't see one! 3) Our service does no good if we aren't holy. But if we are in right relationship with God, then blessing will come! Every changes when we change! 4) God will glorify Himself in the end. We need to serve in light of eternity, there will be great blessings for those who trust in Him!

25. Application: What do we learn about serving God from Haggai?

## 9. Messiah Sent to Cleanse & Empower: Zechariah 1-6

**Scripture:** Zechariah 1:1-6:8

**Theme:** God will Send Messiah who brings the Kingdom by Forgiveness and the Power of the Spirit

**Objectives:**

- To give us hope in the certainty of God's plan
- To strengthen us to work for the furtherance of God's plan
- To impress on us the need for holiness and repentance to participate in God's plan

**Reading:**

- Read all of Zechariah once
- Read Zechariah 1:1-6:8 *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Zechariah 1:1-6:8

**Questions:**

1. When was Zechariah written? Compare when he lived/wrote to Haggai. What was going on during this time? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Zechariah picks up where Haggai left off, there is about one month of overlap. Zechariah seems to be Haggai's younger contemporary. He is probably the young man in 2:4.*

2. What are major themes that run through the book of Zechariah? If you could summarize the major themes of this book under two main headings, what would they be and why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Much about holiness: cleansing, purity, temple, priests, etc. (14:20-21; 13:1). Much about hope for the kingdom: very Messianic.*

3. How is Yahweh usually referred to in Zechariah? What is the significance of this (Note especially 1:3)? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh is **Yahweh of Hosts**, the commander of the armies of heaven, the sovereign Lord.*

4. Noting that chapters 1-6 are eight night visions, and 9-14 are two oracles (9-11 and 12-14), comment on the symmetry and structure of the book. What receives the emphasis in the book based upon this structure? What sections break out of this structure? Which sections receive the emphasis? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The book forms a large chiasm. The 8 night visions and 2 oracles are nicely balanced (6 chapters each), with the narrative of 7-8 in the middle. Moreover, 7-8 as well as 1:1-6 focus on a call to repentance, and thus form the heart of the message to **repent and be holy in light of the coming kingdom**. We also see that 6:9-14 falls outside of the scope of this structure, and thus receives emphasis.*

**Zechariah**

I. Introduction: Call to Repent (1:1-6)

## II. 8 Night Visions (1:7-6:7)

A. The 4 Horsemen (1:7-17)

B. The 4 Horns (1:18-21)

C. The Surveyor (2:1-13)

D. The Priest (3:1-10)

E. The Menorah (4:1-14)

F. The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)

G. The Ephah (5:5-11)

H. The 4 Chariots (6:1-8)

Interlude: The Branch King-Priest Warning (6:9-14)

## III. Fasting and Feasting (7:1-8:23)

A. Fasting: Call to Heartfelt Listening (7:1-14)

B. Feasting: Promise of Abundant Restoration (8:1-23)

## IV. 2 Oracles (9:1-14:21)

A. 1<sup>st</sup> Oracle (9:1-11:17)

i. The Humble King Comes in Power (9:1-17)

ii. Yahweh Strengthens His People (10:1-12)

iii. The Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:1-17)

B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Oracle (12:1-14:21)

i. God Saves Israel from the Brink of Destruction (12:1-9)

ii. God Cleanses and Purifies Israel (12:10-13:9)

iii. The Return of the King and His Kingdom (14:1-19)

Conclusion: Holy to Yahweh (14:20-21)

5. How does 1:1-6 set the frame for the rest of the book of Zechariah? What does it clue us in on as a major purpose of the book? How does Zechariah theologically reinforce the message he is calling the people to in this section? (1 paragraph)

A: 'Return to me that I may return to you.' This is a call to **repentance**. This is about restoring the **relationship**. This is a call to **covenant faithfulness**. Repentance must come before blessing. God will certainly keep His word, but those who will be blessed must be holy to participate in that blessing. Zechariah reinforces his message but a strong emphasis on God's faithfulness to keep His Word. God's Word **always** comes to pass. You cannot treat it lightly. They were forced to admit the reality that what the prophets said was true. So we need to **listen up** and **give heed** to what God says!

6. Comment on the content of each of the night visions. Are there any similarities between them? What does this suggest about the structure and focus of the night visions? (2-3 paragraphs)

A: The eight night visions have an abbcbbba form, centering on chapters 3-4. There is also a progression to the end. This is about the **coming of the King**, emphasized in 6:10-15, the postlude to the visions, distinct but not separated from them (and in 14:9, 16). The scope of all these visions extend to the **future** establishment of the **kingdom**. Notice how 1 and 8 are similar.

1 1:7-17 Yahweh's Sovereignty in Israel's Restoration The 4 Horsemen

2 1:18-21 Persecution & Dispersion of God's People The 4 Horns

3 2:1-13 Preparation for Restoration The Surveyor

4 3:1-10 Renewal of Israel's Priestly Ministry The Priest

5 4:1-14 Messiah as Priest & King The Menorah

6 5:1-4 Judgment for Covenant Disobedience The Flying Scroll

7 5:5-11 Removal of Evil from the Land to Babylon The Ephah

8 6:1-8 Yahweh's Final & Universal Dominion The 4 Chariots

7. Note carefully the various people who are speaking in the first vision. Comment on the identity of each one. Who receives central focus in the first vision? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The **man on the red horse** is central and receives the focus. We see He is then called the **angel of Yahweh**, but we've already seen Him described as a man. We also see the interpreting angel, who appears throughout the visions.*

8. What is the significance of the myrtle trees in a ravine? Why does the author include this detail (Think about the setting of the book and the point of this vision for additional clues)? What are these various horses? (1 paragraph)

*A: Myrtle trees are identified with Israel. They are known for being evergreen and fragrant (cf. Isa 55:13 which is a well known passage). They are in a valley/ravine, speaking of their low condition. Israel is in the pits. This is the point of the vision and also the book, as Israel as a nation is very low. The question raised here is "**How long** will they be lowly?" The angel of Yahweh is standing next to them, speaking of His **presence** with His people. The various horses (minus the red one), are angelic messengers who Yahweh has sent to patrol the earth. Patrol here has military connotations.*

9. What do the horsemen report to the angel of Yahweh and what is His response? How does this clue us in to the point of this vision? What does the angel of Yahweh ask? (1 paragraph)

*A: The horsemen report that the earth is at peace. This is the Pax Persiana. So the angel of Yahweh cries out that this is not how the earth is supposed to be at peace! How could the earth be at peace while God's people are lowly!?!? They aren't exalted at the center of God's worldwide kingdom! This is not the time for peace! Where is the shakedown (Hag 2:21-22)!?! His fundamental question is 'How long?' When will you act and accomplish Your plan to exalt Your name through working through Your people?*

10. What is Yahweh's response? What receive the focus in Yahweh's answer? What is Yahweh going to do? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh answers with **comforting** words. In context, these are words of Israel's **restoration** and **exaltation**. Notice the focus on Jerusalem. God is **jealous** for His people! God has not forgotten His people. It may appear that He has forsaken them because of the exile, but that is not the case. The **worldwide peace** was not good from God's perspective! God is angry with the nations who trust in themselves but is jealous for His people. God will return to His people. He will bless them. He will pour out His abundance on them. He will be compassionate to them. He will be **compassionate** to His people once again!*

11. What does it mean that Yahweh will again 'chose Jerusalem'? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh will once again show the benefits of His eternal election of His people! They are His chosen people and it will be clear once again that He is for them. Yahweh's choice again does not imply that God must choose Israel afresh, but that now, at long last, He will be able to manifest to the world the immutable character of His original choice and its practical outworking in renewed, restored, and resettled Israel.*



12. Who are the four horns and the four craftsmen? What is the point of the second vision? What is emphasized as the reason for what the craftsmen are coming to do? (1 paragraph)

*A: These go back to the four kingdoms of Daniel. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. And the four craftsmen are the four kingdoms that destroy those kingdoms. Thus they are Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Messiah's kingdom. The point is that God will judge the nations who oppressed and attacked His people. He is in **sovereign** control. Notice the emphasis on the reason being that they scattered and oppressed God's people. And so God will act in **justice** to **save** and **vindicate** His people.*

13. What is the point of the man measuring Jerusalem (2:1-5)? What is the reason that this will happen? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The man measures Jerusalem to point out that God is going to bless Jerusalem so abundantly that they cannot even fit within the walls! This will happen because Yahweh will **dwelt** in the midst of His people and He will be the fire surrounding them.*

14. What does Yahweh tell His people to do and why in 2:6-8? Who is the 'He' and who is the 'me' and who is the 'you' in 2:8? What does this whole verse mean (Think about this!!)? What do we learn about the angel of Yahweh from this section? What does 'apple of His eye' mean? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh tells His people to flee from Babylon because He is going to judge them. Yahweh is speaking in verse 8, so the 'me' must be Yahweh! But who could send Yahweh?! So, the 'He' must be Yahweh and the 'me' the **angel of Yahweh, the Sent One**. The 'you' is Israel. Thus the message of this verse is that **Messiah vindicates and demonstrates the glory of Yahweh in keeping/fulfilling God's word and His promises to His people Israel**. The angel of Yahweh is the 'sent One' (cf. 1:10, messengers/angels sent). Angels are messengers to do God's bidding. This is a Messianic reference as Yahweh is speaking. Note the following references to the angel of Yahweh: **Exo 23:21**; 1Ch 21:16; Isa 37:36; 63:9. There is a close relationship between angel of Yahweh and Yahweh Himself (cf. 12:8 and also the pronoun switching in 12:10). See also Mal 3:1; **Isa 48:16; 61:1**, and also 'My servant' in Zec 3:8. (General Messianic Jer 23:5; 33:15; Isa 11:1; 19:20; 42:19) and the Father sent the Son in John. The apple of God's eye, is His pupil. The most vulnerable and sensitive part of the body, and thus the **most guarded and valued**.*

15. Who is speaking in 2:9? What does this verse mean? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh is still speaking in 2:9. When God judges Babylon and shows His glory, then it will be evident and all will know that the angel of Yahweh is sent by Yahweh!*

16. What is so exciting in 2:10? What is going to happen in 2:11? What is this a fulfillment of? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh will dwell with His people is so exciting! Then **many nations** will join themselves with Yahweh and be His people. They will be **united as one**. This will be **global salvation**. This is **Gentile inclusion** in the kingdom. And this global salvation will once again prove that Messiah has been sent by Yahweh.*

17. How does this vision end? How does it tie back to the message of this vision? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This vision ends with a universal call to fear Yahweh. God has been silent, **but** He is going to act once again. His jealousy has aroused Him to action. He will **vindicate His glory!** Hush! Fear the Holy God!*

18. What is the scene we find at the beginning of 3:1? What role do we find the angel of Yahweh playing here? What was the role of the High Priest in the nation of Israel? What does 'Satan' mean? What do we find him doing here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We find ourselves in a courtroom setting. The Angel of Yahweh is in the place of the judge. The High Priest was to represent the people to God. Satan means the Accuser and here we find him accusing. He is the prosecuting attorney.*

19. How does Yahweh respond to Satan for accusing His people in 3:2? On what basis does He do so? Why does Yahweh refer to Joshua as a brand plucked from the fire? What is the implication of this? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Angel of Yahweh rebukes Satan! [Note that the speaker in verse 2 says, 'may Yahweh rebuke you,' implying that the speaker is distinct from Yahweh, while at the same time the verse says that it is Yahweh who is speaking. Continue to note the interplay of pronouns and close relationship between the Angel of Yahweh and Yahweh Himself!] The basis for His rebuke is His **election** of His people (Note Jerusalem which shows this is really about the nation and not just Joshua. Joshua represents the people to God). God has chosen them and so He won't let them go so easily! The implication that they are a brand plucked from the fire is that **Yahweh saved them when they were burning and reached down and plucked them from that fire!** So He's not going to so easily give them up!*

20. Now what do we see in 3:3? What is so shocking about this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We find out that Joshua was wearing crap covered garments! Satan actually had a **valid basis** for accusation! The High Priest was standing in the presence of Yahweh as **guilty**. Yahweh is holy and sin can't be in His presence! How could a nation so guilty and covered in sin and shame continue on as a kingdom of priests???*

21. What then does Yahweh do in 3:4-5? What is the order in which He does these things? What is this turban? (2-3 sentences)

*A: So the first thing is that the sin must be dealt with. **God** is the one who takes away iniquity. **He** deals with the sin. Moreover, He clothes him with festal robes, speaking of white, festive garments. Where there is cleansing there is joy! Next he puts a clean turban on His head, speaking of the fact that he is Holy to Yahweh (this was the priestly turban). The nation is set apart to be the Holy Kingdom of Priests to the world. All the while the angel of Yahweh stands by, approving and sanctioning the transaction.*

22. Notice the official, solemn nature of what Yahweh says in 3:6-7 (admonished = testified, govern = legal ruling). What is God promising Joshua here? What were the conditions? (2-3 sentences)

*A: If Joshua walked in right covenant relationship with Yahweh, then he would be officially **commissioned** to perform his priestly duty ('My service'), with access to God's presence in God's house. Since Joshua is here representing the nation, the point is that the nation will serve Yahweh's purpose!*

23. What was Joshua a symbol of (3:8)? Where else in Scripture is the phraseology of 'My servant' and 'branch' used? (1 paragraph)

*A: Joshua was a symbol of the nation of Israel. They were guilty. They were the ones called to be kingdom of priests. They were the brand plucked from the fire. The **Messiah** will come in and cleanse His people, just as Joshua was cleansed. This is very clearly Messianic. Cf. 6:12-13. Servant: Isa 53; etc. Branch: Jer 23:5; 33:15; Isa 4:2; 11:1-2; Psa 132:17.*

24. What is the one stone mentioned in 3:9? Where else in this book do we see 'seven eyes' and how does that help? What is the point of this verse? (1 paragraph)

*A: This stone is the **cornerstone of the temple**. 1) Whole book (and section) about the temple, and building it. The temple is central to God's purpose. It is the place of His presence and the locale where sin is dealt with. 2) Cf. 4:7-10 (7 eyes and cornerstone). 3) **The Branch will build temple (cf. 6:12)**. 4) 'Placed' is in past tense, it has already happened, while the Messiah (another view) is future. 5) The temple is the place of expiation of sin (cf. verse 4.) 6) Ultimately, the Messiah is the temple, in application, but not in meaning. The seven eyes are the watchfulness of Yahweh to ensure the temple is built. Yahweh will be the One who removes the sin. This is about the nation, not just Joshua. **God will take away the sin of the land, the nation, His nation.***

25. How does this chapter end? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is about the nation once again. There will be great abundance in the reign of the Messiah. First will come cleansing and forgiveness, then blessing! There will be peace and prosperity in His rule!*

26. Notice how chapter 4 begins. Is this a distinct vision or not? How does this effect the structure and emphasis of the night visions? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is a distinct vision, but the way it is introduced shows its close connection with the previous vision. Thus these two visions receive the focus at the heart of the visions. The heart of the message is cleansing and empowering.*

27. Draw a simple picture of what is described in this chapter. What do the various aspects of the vision represent (especially the lampstand, the olive trees, and the oil). What does the text say to interpret this picture? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The lampstand is a common picture for the nation of Israel that was to be a light to the nations. The olive trees we see at the end are the two sons of fresh oil. Presumably a reference to the offices of priest and king. Thus the two olive trees together are representative of the Messiah, the Priest-King! We also see a clear emphasis on the Holy Spirit, which is commonly pictured by oil. This is because of the fact that oil was used in anointing, as the Holy Spirit came upon and empowered people.*

28. Note that the Hebrew grammar makes clear that there are 49 pipes, seven to each lamp. Why so many pipes? (1 sentence)

*A: To emphasize the complete abundance of oil!*

29. What is the great mountain? What is the top stone? Why do they shout 'Grace, grace' to it? What are the seven eyes and what are they doing? (1 paragraph)

*A: The great mountain is some great difficulty, possibly the opposition to the building of the temple, but probably more general. The top stone is the stone of the temple. They shout grace, grace, to it because it was*

*all accomplished by God's grace. It was His Spirit that empowered the work. It was all divine enablement, so God gets all the credit! The seven eyes are God's omniscient watchfulness that ensures that His plan, centered around His temple is accomplished. Even though they were small in the past, God's omniscient care would ensure His plan would continue, and His Spirit would empower the work!*

30. What is the point of this vision as a whole? (1 paragraph)

*A: Israel will be the light to the nations that God intended them to be when they are empowered by God's Spirit, with His Messiah reigning at their head. What Israel was to be, the Messiah will be, and the nation itself will be with Messiah at her head! There is a very close relationship between the Messiah and the nation, see the Servant passages in Isaiah. The Holy Spirit is also integral in empowering God's work. When He does the work, He gets the credit, and we cry out grace, grace. The temple was at the center of God's plan as the place of His presence and the place of expiation of sin.*

31. What is on the flying scroll? Why do you think these two specifics were chosen? What do you think it represents? Does its measurement have any significance? What verb is used to speak of the scrolls effect? What does this vision mean? (1 paragraph)

*A: One law was chosen from the center of each half of the ten commandments (3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) and thus is representative of the covenant word of God. The measurement is that of the Holy of Holies. Thus God's judgment will be meted out by the standard of God's perfect holiness. God dealt with the sin of the righteous in the nation in chapter 3, now He deals with the sin of the wicked in judgment. He will **purge** sinners from His people.*

32. What in the world is going in the next vision? Where is Shinar? What is the point of wickedness being taken there? (1 paragraph)

*A: This vision emphasizes God's sovereignty in Babylon's restoration and opposition to God's people. Shinar is the original name for Babylon. This goes back to Babel. All through Scripture Babel is wicked. It is the city that stands in antithesis to Jerusalem. This city has been opposed to God's plan and purpose and people from its beginning. Cf. Revelation and Babylons centrality to God's plan in the end. Babylon will be a world power and raise once again before He conquers once again. It is not an accident that the world powers are arrayed against God's people. An **ancient evil** will arise once again...*

33. What do the four horses do in the next vision (6:1-8)? What do the horses represent according to the angel? Where is the land of the North (6:8)? What is the point? (1 paragraph)

*A: These chariots are God's angelic forces who go and conquer and triumph over the world powers opposed to God. The land of the north is especially mentioned, as they were the center for wickedness in the previous vision. God is going to triumph and His wrath will be poured out on those who opposed Him. He is going to act to exalt His kingdom and show forth His power.*

34. Note the sequence of the eight night visions and comment on the message of them together. (2-3 sentences)

*A: The night visions begin with Israel lowly, speak of God's restoration and acting on their behalf once again.*

35. Application: What do the central visions (chapter 3-4) teach us about God's role in using us for His glory?
36. Application: What do we learn about the Messiah from this section, and how He fits into God's plan for the world?

## 10. You Can't Coast into the Kingdom: Zechariah 6-11

**Scripture:** Zechariah 6-11

**Theme:** God will bring His King, but Humble, Heartfelt Relationship is how you enter His Kingdom

**Objectives:**

- To call God's people to humble repentance and courageous work
- To warn against the danger of religious duty without heartfelt listening to God
- To encourage that God's plan overrules even His peoples' rejection of Him

**Reading:**

- Read Zechariah 6-11 *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Zechariah 6-11

**Questions:**

1. What is so significant about putting a crown on the head of the High Priest? What did this act represent? Who is the branch? What is significant about him building the temple? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The offices of **king** and **priest** were **sharply separated** in Israel (Note Uzziah (2Ch 26:18)!). This represented the coming of the Messiah, who would be a **king-priest**! He would reign in holiness and righteousness. He would rule in perfect obedience to God's will and plan. The temple in the future will be central to God's plan for the world.*

2. Why is the temple so significant in this book? Why put the crown in the temple? (1 paragraph)

*A: The temple is at the center of God's plan. Once again it is the place of expiation and God's presence. That's why it was important for them to build it, and why it is important that the Messiah will one day build it. Here we also see that others from far off will be included in the building of the temple, probably speaking of God's power in gathering His people back to the land and making them into a nation once again, but possibly having connotations with Gentile inclusion in the kingdom. The crown would be a constant reminder in the temple of what God is going to do in bringing in His righteous King who would deal with the sin of the people as the perfect High Priest. He would rule and represent the people to God.*

3. What is so significant about how this whole section ends? Who is talking by saying "then you will know..."? What is the point of this? What is the point of the 'if'? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again we see the Angel of Yahweh, the Sent One, speaking. **When the temple is built, God will be vindicated.** Then all will know and no one will doubt any more who He is or the One He has sent. The book ends with an **'if because this whole book is a call to repentance.** They need to wholeheartedly obey if they were to be used by God in His plan. This is almost an exact quote of Deu 28:1, and thus a reminder of the blessings and curses. God will certainly bring about this plan, but if they wanted to be included in it, they needed to obey. There is a great, certain, hope, **but for them to be included they need to be holy!***

4. What were the fasts of the 10<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> months? Noting that the events of chapter seven are two years after the construction of the temple is underway, why do the men go to the priests

and prophets and how does this fit in with the purpose of the fasts? What is the explicit purpose for their going given in 7:2? (1 paragraph)

*A: 10th - siege began (Jer 39). 4th - breach in wall. 5th - city burned. 7th - Gedaliah murdered. The temple is now well underway. They were wondering if they should still fast for the destruction of Jerusalem as they have been doing for 70 years because the temple is being rebuilt. So they sent men to stroke the face of God, to appease Him, and seek His favor. They were seeking to gain a favorable response, seek blessing. This is their **purpose**. **Yet, weren't in right covenant relationship!** Bethel used to be the center of idolatrous worship, now seeking Jerusalem. The exile wiped out idolatry, but Pharisaism replaced it... They thought they could appease God with externals, like the pagan gods who need food. It is good to seek to appease God (cf Zec 8:21-22), but don't wait 70 years and be in right relationship!*

5. What attitude do they portray in 7:3? (1 sentence)

*A: They've really been sacrificing for God; For oh, so many years they've been abstaining.*

6. How does God respond in 7:5? What were they really mourning for and what should they have been mourning for? Where did these fasts come from? What were they doing for 70 years and what should they have been doing? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They were mourning for themselves in self pity! **They weren't mourning for the glory of God!** Stop feeling sorry for yourself and start feeling sorry for your sin! Have I ever wept for the glory of God? They mourned for 70 years before seeking God. God didn't appoint these fasts, they made them up. They should have simply obeyed His word!*

7. What shows they weren't fasting for God according to 7:6? What is the implied warning given in 7:7? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They were **living for themselves**. You can't relegate God to religion! If God overthrew His people when they were prosperous, how much more could He do so for this struggling community! God keeps His Word, we better be careful to **listen!***

8. What should they have been doing instead of the fasts according to 7:9-10? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They should have been obedient to Yahweh and keeping His word! This full of covenant language. They should have been in a relationship with Yahweh, seeking Him, not just going through the externals. If they were in a right relationship with Yahweh, it would have evidenced itself in right relationship with others. **Forget your made up fasts and go back to my Word!***

9. What is the fundamental issue according to 7:11-12? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The fundamental issue is they didn't **listen!** They weren't **sensitive** to the Word of God! They had **dull ears**, **stubborn shoulders**, and **diamond hearts**. Are we quick to respond to God's Word!?!*

10. And so what did God do in response? Did God answer the question from the beginning of the chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He sent them into the exile. God never answers the question because this isn't about fasting, it's about relationship with Him. This is about sensitivity to God's Word.*

11. What do we learn that God wants from His people from chapter 7? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God wants His people to **listen** to Him, to obey Him, and to walk in **relationship** with Him, not to go through externals! He wants us to **weep over sin** and **not** its **consequences**. He wants us to seek Him quickly when things aren't going right. He wants us to respond quickly to His Word with sensitivity to it. He wants us to **live for His glory and not live for ourselves!***

12. What connects chapter 8 with chapter 7? What is the flow of thought from chapter 7 into chapter 8? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Notice how chapter 8 talks about the fasts as well at the end. Chapter 8 is a reversal of what we see in chapter 7. Chapter 8 begins with the assumption that His people now are in right relationship with Him. And so the chapter is full of reversals. We also see chapter 8 begin with, "The Word of Yahweh came to me..." which sets the chapter apart and shows chapter 8 is a response to chapter 7.*

13. What is the basis for what happens in chapter 8 (see especially 8:2, but also elsewhere)? Count how many times 'Yahweh of Hosts' occurs in chapter 8. Why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The basis is Yahweh's **jealousy** for His people. He will be faithful to them. He will work out His plan. He has a **zeal for His own glory!** 15 times in this chapter an emphasis that God is Yahweh of Hosts, the sovereign Lord. The events in this chapter are almost unbelievable, but Yahweh of Hosts **can and will** bring them about.*

14. What does Yahweh say He's going to do in 8:3-5? How is this reinforced in 8:6? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to return and dwell with His people. Jerusalem will be exalted and known as the city of **Truth** and the **Holy** Mountain. God will bring about great prosperity and peace as He reverses the fortune of His people. Even if this is incredible and unbelievable to us, it's not to God. He will certainly do this!*

15. What else is God going to do in 8:7-8? What is the basis for this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to **save** and **gather** His people. He will be their God. And He will do so in truth and in righteousness, ie. in trustworthiness and honesty! The basis for the restoration is that God will keep His Word!*

16. What is a major purpose of this chapter according to 8:9-17? What themes are repeated? What does God exhort them to (there are many exhortations here!) and what does He use to motivate them? (1 paragraph)

*A: This is **encouragement** for God's people to finish the work and to put God first. God tells them to be strong and not to fear. He encourages them by letting them know that everything has changed, now that their relationship with Him is right. He is going to bless them so that they will be a blessing! This ties in to their purpose in Gen 12:3. God is not finished with His people and His plan for them, and so He calls them to be strong in the accomplishment of His plan. He also calls them to covenant faithfulness as they live out His Word (8:16-17). As we saw in chapter 7, obedience to God's Word is central to God's plan!*



17. How does 8:18-23 tie chapter 8 to chapter 7? Why does the promise of 8:19 end with a command? What theme do we see this chapter ending on? (1 paragraph)

*A: We see the fasts continued from chapter 7 here and thus tying these two chapters together. There is a complete **reversal** of what we saw in chapter 7. The point is that there will be blessing, once right relationship has been established. As we see in 8:19 and all throughout this book though, there is a human element to fulfilling God's plan. That's why right alongside so many of the promises of this book are commands to covenant faithfulness. Once again, the chapter ends with God's global plan being fulfilled through His obedient people. All the earth will learn who Yahweh is through His exalted people. God will certainly bring it about, but through them!*

18. What does it mean in 9:1 that the eyes of all men are to Yahweh (NASB has best translation here)? Why are all men's eyes on Him (see the chapter for details)? What then do we see in 9:1-7? What theme do we see again in 9:7? (1 paragraph)

*A: All men's eyes are on Yahweh because of what He is doing globally. They are watching to see what He will do. This oracles specifically concerns Yahweh's sovereignty over the nations. This is Yahweh's triumphant procession that has the eyes of the whole earth. He is marching south. Likely this was fulfilled in Alexander the Great in his march south. See especially Tyre... We see once again the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's kingdom.*

19. Note that this procession of Yahweh is likely referring to the march of Alexander the Great when he marched south and conquered the Levant. As the procession of Yahweh marches south in 9:1-7, what happens when He gets to Israel in 9:8? What is the significance of describing Alexander's march as Yahweh's procession? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Though the army gets to Israel, Yahweh will guard them. By describing Alexander's march as Yahweh's procession, it is a reminder that Yahweh was sovereignly behind this great king. God is watching over His people (9:8).*

20. In contrast to Alexander, who is described in 9:9-10? How is He described? What will He do? (1 paragraph)

*A: God will bring His king, the Messiah! He will be just and righteous. He will be humble. This is amazing in context here. The fact that God's king is humble is a big surprise. The word here could be translated poor or needy, hence humble. Furthermore, He rides on a donkey, not a horse. A donkey is a beast of burden. He will cut off dependence on anything except Yahweh. As He Himself is humble and dependent on God, so He will do to the nation. He will rule over all the world.*

21. What will God then do for His people in 9:11-17? Why is He going to do so according to 9:11? What does 9:15 mean? Comment on the meaning of 9:16 and how it fits with Israel's purpose. (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to save them! It is because of His covenant with them. When God saves His people, they will be displayed as jewels in His crown. This will be Israel as God intended them to be.*

22. What does the topic change to in 10:1-2? Why does it seem out of place and why do you think this is included here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The topic changes here to idolatry. This seems out of place after the exile, where idolatry was more or less wiped out, but the **message of trusting in Yahweh** is very applicable, and thus its inclusion here...*

23. What is Yahweh going to do in 10:3-12? What is interesting/amazing about what we see in 10:9 given that they have already returned from the exile? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Once again we have another description of Yahweh's **salvation** of His people. He will empower them and use them to win the victory. What is amazing about **10:9** is that even though they were returned, this wasn't the full fulfillment yet. **God would yet scatter them and gather them again in the full fulfillment! The end is greater still!***

24. What do we see in 11:1-3? How does it tie into the rest of chapter 11? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There is a lament for the trees. Most likely, the three trees represent the three leaders of the nation (prophet, priest, and king), and thus a lament for them.*

25. In light of the rest of this oracle (chapters 9-10) what is shocking/different about chapter 11? How does it fit in with the first two chapters? (2-3 sentences)

*A: In the first two chapters we saw much about Yahweh's salvation of His nation. Here we see a lament for them and their destruction!*

26. It appears that much of chapter 11 is based upon ideas/concepts found in Jeremiah. Read Jeremiah 7:32, 12:3, 18:1-4, and 19:1-6 for this background and we'll talk about it in class. Describe in your own words what happens in 11:4-14 (think through this). Does this appear to be future or past? Why do you think so? (1+ paragraph)

*A: Zechariah here is told to **symbolically** act out the part of a shepherd in communicating a message to the people. The fact that this is symbolic is made clear by 11:15 where he is told to take the equipment of a shepherd. Here Zechariah is act out shepherding the people who are doomed to slaughter. [This also helps to explain why the fulfillment doesn't follow exactly what Zechariah did. Zechariah threw 30 shekels to the trash heap by the temple, whereas Judas threw the money into the temple. Zechariah wasn't prophesying exactly how it would be played out, but was prophesying that the Messiah would be rejected by His people for a slave's price.] They are being sold by their own leaders who have no compassion on them. This is because Yahweh will have no pity on them **and thus allows/ordains this**. This statement that Yahweh will not have pity on them seems to place this as yet future, judgment yet to come (the judgement being that God allows them to have bad rulers). But then Yahweh will shepherd His flock in verse 7. So Zechariah acts out shepherding God's people with his two staffs, Favor and Union. Favor speaks of God's protection of the nation from foreign powers, and Union speaks of the unity of the nation. By shepherding the flock, He really shepherded the afflicted of the flock, those who needed and wanted shepherding. Then God got rid of the three shepherds in one month, likely speaking of the prophet, priest, and king, the three offices in the nation of Israel. But then, He rejects shepherding His people. He breaks His two staffs and leaves them to themselves. Those who were humble among the nation realized that it was Yahweh's doing, but the others by implication apparently did not. Then we see why He rejected shepherding them, because they did not value Him, the true shepherd! So He asks for His wages, and they give Him a ridiculously low wage, which*

*He throws to the potter in disgust. In short, this section speaks of a time when **God's people are doomed to slaughter** because they had been given up by Yahweh. But then He will send His good shepherd to care for His flock. But they will reject Him and so He will quit shepherding them!*

27. What then happens in 11:15-17? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to raise up a worthless shepherd because His people rejected the good shepherd! He will not care for God's people. This is the anti-Christ who is to come. But ultimately, God will judge this worthless shepherd as well!*

28. What is the point of chapter 11? Why is it included within the book? What is the right response to knowing this is going to happen? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 11 is here to show us that it's not all downhill from here on for God's people. God still is going to bring them through a lot of **pain before the kingdom comes**. They still need to be **purified**. God is going to **bring them low once again so that He can save them once again! God loves to save!** They must go low again so that He can save with His mighty power! God had to humble them over and over again. We will see this from another perspective in 12-14. But then **He will ultimately save!** When times are good we forget about God and stop depending on Him. He brings His people low so they will look up, depend on Him, and call out to Him to save, and then He will save in power.*

29. Application: What are ways that we, like them, have redefined what relationship with Yahweh looks like (chapter 7)?

30. Application: How does a clear understanding of our hope, motivate us to work for the kingdom in the here and now?

## 11. Yahweh Loves to Save: Zechariah 12-14

**Scripture:** Zechariah 12-14

**Theme:** Yahweh Loves to Humble His People and Bring them to the Lowest Point so He can Show Off His Amazing Power to Save

**Objectives:**

- To demonstrate God's love to save, and how He humbles His people to show His power
- To cause us to worship at the majesty of God's plan
- To grant us thankfulness at the graciousness of God's plan

**Reading:**

- Read Zechariah 12-14 *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Zechariah 12-14

**Questions:**

1. How is the second oracle introduced (12:1)? What does this introduction emphasize and how does that fit into the rest of the chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The oracle is introduced with a statement about **Yahweh's creative power**. Emphasized within this is a statement that not only did He create the universe, but also mankind, and is therefore sovereign not only over the universe, but also mankind. Mankind is the crowning act of God's creation and is at the center of the drama of redemption. The climactic conclusion to that drama is what is going to be at the focus in this chapter!*

2. What is God going to do with Jerusalem in 12:2-3? What does this mean? Who is involved in this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is going to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling and a heavy stone. Both of these metaphors imply both the fact that the nations are going to come against Jerusalem to attack it, but that **they** will be the ones hurt in the process! We see that both verses mention that **all** the surrounding nations, indeed **all the nations of the earth** will be gathered against Jerusalem to siege it.*

3. What will then happen in 12:4-9? How is this emphasized in this section? (1 paragraph)

*A: **God will go forth and fight for His people!** He will **save them in power!** God is going to powerfully enable His nation to destroy the nations surrounding them. This has **never** happened! The nations' strength are their armies, but Israel's strength will be Yahweh. And finally in that day they will know and **acknowledge** it! Not only will God save them, but He will save them **totally** and **emphatically**. He will save the outlying villages with the least defenses first, to show the greatness of His power! He will make the weakest among them like David, the mighty warrior! And Yahweh will destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

4. Then what happens in 12:10? Who is speaking in 12:10? Comment on the use of pronouns in this verse. In light of what we have seen already in Zechariah, comment on the identity of the antecedents (the noun the pronoun is referring to) of the pronouns. What is the theological significance of the fact that Yahweh initiates this verse? Where else have we seen the Spirit

emphasized in Zechariah? What is being said about Him and His involvement here? Why is He described as a Spirit of grace and supplication? What is significant about the timing of this verse in light of verses 1-9? (1+ paragraph)

*A: Then God **spiritually saves** His people! Notice how **Yahweh is speaking** and Yahweh is the One who is pierced! And yet, there is a shift of pronouns to Him, such that the person who is pierced is also distinct from Yahweh. As we've already seen emphasized so thoroughly in the book, this is the Messiah, the angel of Yahweh, the King-Priest to come! His suffering has already been mentioned in this book (chapter 11). Here the word for pierced is also used of a mortal wound (cf. Isa 53:5 and Zec 13:3). And so now, after they realize that they have rejected the good shepherd, **God will grant to them repentance and genuine sorrow for this heinous rejection of Him as their king!** It is very significant that Yahweh is the One here who grants repentance, and also significant that He does so through His Spirit. He pours this out abundantly on His people. Here the two words are (morphologically) related, **grace** and **supplication**. They are the two sides of the same coin, God grants not only grace but also the desire for grace! This can only happen when God pours out **His Spirit** in His grace. God's Spirit produces an understanding of God's grace and they respond with pleas for grace (which are also from Him). Note also the Spirit elsewhere in Zechariah- 4:6; 6:8; 7:12. It is also significant that Yahweh will not save them until they are being sieged! When they are at their **lowest** point, then they will call out to Yahweh, motivated by His grace, and then He will save! We will see this more explicitly in chapter 14.*

5. What happened at Hadad-Rimmon? Why are David and Nathan, Levi and Shimei mentioned? Why is there such an emphasis on each family mourning by itself? What is the point of 12:11-14? (1 paragraph)

*A: Josiah died in the plain of Megiddo. He was the last good king of Israel and there was **great, national sorrow** over his death. Two heads of families and two subordinates branches are chosen to **representatively** show that all the families of Israel are involved. The kingly and priestly lines are specifically chosen because the leaders were often so corrupt. This will be national repentance. And although it will be **national repentance**, there will be **individual** sorrow and repentance. People will not be mourning just because everyone else is doing it. Each will be sorrowing over their own sin...*

6. Note the use of "in that day" throughout this section. What day is being talked about? (1 sentence)

*A: Throughout this section it is Yahweh's day that is being talked about. We'll see more of this later.*

7. Then what happens in that day in 13:1? What is the significance of a fountain "standing open"? What will this fountain be for? (1 sentence)

*A: It will be a free flowing stream to provide abundant cleansing.*

8. What will then happen in 13:2-6? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God will cut off the wickedness and idolatry from the nation. The false prophets which had been so widely popular throughout Israel's history will no longer be popular. They will be put to death, even by their own parents! Even the closest familial tie will not be stronger than the tie to Yahweh! They will have to hide the fact that they are involved in idolatrous worship (cf. 1Ki 18:28; 2Ki 9:24).*

9. What then happens in 13:7? Does this appear to be in chronological sequence? What is being emphasized that we keep seeing Israel "go through the wringer"? How does 13:7-9 help answer this question? (1 paragraph)

*A: Reminiscent of chapter 11, and now also 12:10, we see Israel's shepherd being struck. This doesn't appear to be in chronological sequence, but a flashback of sorts. We keep seeing the end from different perspectives in Zechariah. We continually see Israel 'going through the wringer' as God brings them low. Here we see that part of the reason for that is to purify them! They need to be refined. They need their dependence upon anything except Yahweh to be taken from them. And so Yahweh will do it. Then, as He has brought them low, He will act and He will save. Then they will call upon Him and He will answer! His purifying of His nation will even include killing two-thirds of them. But the remnant that makes it through will be purified and saved! There will be holiness before the hope. The cleansing must come before the kingdom!*

10. How does chapter 14 begin? What is emphasized in the initial few words? What is emphasized by the fact that the spoil will be divided among them? What else will then happen according to 14:2? (1 paragraph)

*A: Chapter 14 begins emphatically with, 'Behold!' Yahweh's day is coming, it's on its way. And it will be a day for Him. It's His day! It is distinctively and specially His day. Yahweh's day is going to begin in a very interesting way, with His people being decimated. The spoil being divided among them is because their enemies fear no retribution. Israel has no allies and no strength left. All the nations will gather together to attack His people, and they will be almost completely destroyed. But there will be a remnant left ('the rest').*

11. But what will happen just at that time according to verse 3? (1 paragraph)

*A: Then Yahweh will save. Then He will fight! God loves to save. That's why He starts His day with great trouble, so He can go forth gloriously to triumph. He gathers nations against His people so He can save. Cause His people to depend only on Him. This has been God's purpose since the Fall, triumph through tribulation. God will come most gloriously in fulfillment of His purpose for electing Israel as His covenant people to mediate salvation to the world. This is the great fulfillment of that plan.*

12. What will happen when Yahweh comes according to 14:4-5? What about according to 14:6-8? What do these verses emphasize? (1 paragraph)

*A: His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, and there will be cataclysmic changes to the land! They will flee through the valley, and just then, Yahweh will come, and all His Holy Ones with Him! It will be a unique day! It will be unprecedented in human history. It's the day that Yahweh acts. There will be cosmic, universal changes when God powerfully acts in history. And water will flow from Jerusalem, a city known for its lack of water supply in the desert. The waters picture the renewal and cleansing that will come.*

13. And what will be the end result of all this according to 14:9? What is emphasized by this verse? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh will be the only, worldwide King! He alone will be recognized as God. This harks back to the Shema. But this will be global. This is the uniqueness and exclusivity of Yahweh as the only God. He alone deserves worldwide worship!*

14. What do we then continue to see in 14:10-11? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There will be more transformation of the land. Jerusalem will be exalted, not only figuratively, but literally! There will be safety and security, peace and prosperity. There will never again come the destruction of the curse/ban.*

15. What do we see happened to the nations that came to attack Jerusalem according to 14:12-15? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God struck them with a terrible plague. There will be extreme blessing for God's people, but extreme cursing for those who oppose. Their flesh, eyes, and tongue will rot while they are standing! There will be panic and they will rise against one another. Reminiscent of Haggai, the wealth of the nations will be brought to Jerusalem, as God destroys the nations that attacked His people.*

16. What do we see will happen in the kingdom from verses 14:16-19? How does this fit in with what we've seen as God's purpose all throughout the Old Testament? Read Leviticus 23:40-43 for background on the Feast of Booths. What do you think its significance is? (2-3 sentences)

*A: All the nations will go to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh! This will be the global worship which is at the heart of God's plan for His world. They will celebrate the Feast of Booths, celebrating the rest and permanence of the kingdom. Note also Exo 23:16 which refers to the Feast of Booths as the Ingathering.*

17. How does the book end in 14:20-21? Does this seem out of place? How are these verses are at the heart of Zechariah's message of hope? (1 paragraph)

*A: Hope will not come without holiness! This book is about hope, but also about the prerequisite holiness as well. Not just holy, which they will be, but holy to Yahweh. Holiness has a purpose. Priestly function, like earlier in book (cf. Zec 3; 6:10-15; Exo 28:36). Every distinction between holy and profane will be abolished for everything will be holy in that day. All will be holy, and all equally so. Every single household pot will be holy. No exceptions to this holiness, it will be pervasive. Global worship will not happen apart from God's design and plan with Israel/Jerusalem at the center of that plan as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. God will not fail to bring this about through His (often rebellious) people. Canaanite = impurity, wicked, not to mix with, etc. Proverbial for profane and morally degenerate (cf. Lev 18:24ff; Deu 7:2; 9:4; Ezr 9:1-2).*

18. Application: What do we learn about God's plan from Zechariah? What was at the heart of God's message for His people in this book?
19. Application: How does an understanding that Yahweh repeatedly brought His people low so that they would look to Him and He would save them impact us in our daily lives? How does it impact how we go through trials?

## 12. Living in the Awesome Majesty of God: Malachi

**Scripture:** Malachi

**Theme:** Yahweh's Fearsome Majesty and Demands our Zeal for His Glory

**Objectives:**

- To grow in our fear of Yahweh
- To grow in our zeal and jealousy for the glory of Yahweh
- To grow in our understanding of how living in the fear of Yahweh affects daily life

**Reading:**

- Read Malachi *four times*
- Read Chisholm's section on Malachi

**Questions:**

1. When was Malachi written? What has transpired since the days of Haggai and Zechariah? What were the people now like? What verses in Malachi clearly show the **attitude** of the people? (1 paragraph)

*A: Malachi was written **decades** after Haggai and Zechariah. Not much had transpired. There were no miracles, no Messianic age, no global shakedown. So **cynicism** and **skepticism** set in. Where's God and what is He doing??? They **gave up hope** and acted like there wasn't any God at all. They didn't obey the covenant. See Mal 1:2; 1:7; 1:13; 2:17; 3:14-15 for this attitude.*

2. What is the structure of the book of Malachi? Noting the pattern for the first section within the book (1:2-5), come up with an outline for the book (try to do this without reading the commentary or other questions first!). What is the basic pattern and how many sections are there? What is the topic of each section and how do they tie together? How would you describe genre of this book? Think about the format of the book, who is talking in the book, etc. (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: This book is a series of 6 disputations. The format of each roughly follows the first disputation: 1:2a Assertion, 1:2b Question, 1:2c-4 Response, 1:5 Implication. This book is a **first person** encounter with Yahweh. **Yahweh** is talking in **47** out of the 55 verses. The basic outline of the book is as follows:*

*Heading (1:1)*

*1) Chosen People (1:2-5)*

*2) Holy Priesthood (1:6-2:9)*

*3) Sanctity of Marriage (2:10-16)*

*4) Lord is Coming with Justice (2:17-3:5)*

*5) Tithes & Contributions (3:6-12)*

*6) Distinction in Final Judgment (3:13-4:3)*

*Covenant Exhortations (4:4-6)*

*Although all six disputations have different themes, they all have the same basic message: Yahweh is an awesome and great God even if it doesn't appear so! We need to live in light of His greatness. We need to live by faith in who He is!*



3. What are some of the major themes that run throughout the book of Malachi? Look for repeated words and themes throughout the book. (1 paragraph)

*A: Key words include: **fear** 9x, **name** 10x, **glory** 3x, **great** 5x, **esteem** 1x. This book is about glorifying, magnifying, and exalting the great name, fame, honor, and reputation of Yahweh! He is an awesome God and deserves to be worshiped as such. We also see much about **fear** and **faith**. God doesn't appear to be working, but we need fear/faith to see how great the invisible God is and to live in light of that (tithe, give best of flocks, stay married, etc.).*

4. What nuance is there to 'love' and 'hate' in 1:2-5? How does 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 5:1 (note that the end of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 5:1 should be translated, "for Hiram was a lover of David all his life") help us detect this? (1 sentence)

*A: This is covenant language for chosen and rejected.*

5. What are the people asking in verse 2? What is significant about this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: They asked how God has loved them! This is a virtual denial of His covenant love! They don't think His love is apparent.*

6. What is God's response in 1:2-5 and how does this fit in with their question? (1 paragraph)

*A: God draws a comparison between Jacob & Esau, not only brothers, but twins, and Jacob younger. But God chose Jacob. Esau/Edom **opposed God's people all throughout their history**. In the Babylonian invasion the Edomites captured Israelites and handed them over to Babylonians. But God judged Edom (cursed those who curse Abraham). And in the Nabatean invasion (former Idumea), Edom was judged. Thus the judgment of Edom was a **present example** of God's choosing Israel, and Edom would never recover. Evidence was clear from history. Edom thought they would rebuild, but God says, never. This is the last of Edom. **Never again do they exist as a nation**. You will see Yahweh do this, finally finish off Edom. It is **only because God chose Jacob** that Israel survives. Yahweh is great in the whole world, not just Israel. God's goal - to exalt Himself.*

7. Application: When it seems like we're not loved by God, what is the proof of God's love to us? (1 paragraph)

*A: This goes back to the covenant. Love vs hate. **God's election is the basis of His love**. The proof of Yahweh's choosing of them is at the Red Sea, not in present experience. Yahweh is great. He does act, even when we don't see it. We think God isn't blessing. We complain, forgetting that God's choosing as His people is THE blessing. We don't see God's love. But this is covenantal, rooted in the past (to be seen in the future), and seen in God's Word by faith. Think of all that God has done for you! He has been faithful! He has saved you!*

8. What is the next section all about according to 1:6? How had they despised God's name according to 1:7-14? Do you think they actually said what is quoted in 1:7? Explain. (2-3 sentences)

*A: This section is about God's **glory** and His **fear**! They were offering lame sacrifices. They probably weren't actually saying that Yahweh's table was despised, but that is what their actions were saying. That was their attitude!*

9. What is God's argument in 1:8 and what is its implication? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God asks them to give the lame sacrifices they are giving to Him to one of their governors and see if he is pleased with it! Of course he will be insulted and not happy with them! How much more should they give great sacrifices to God who is infinitely more important than their governor!*

10. What does God long for according to 1:10? What does this teach us about how **we** should interact in similar situations? (1 paragraph)

*A: God longs for someone who has the **hutzpah (guts, bravado)** to stand up and shut the whole operation down! This is **zeal** for the glory of God. God longs for someone to have enough **zeal for His name and glory** to close the gates and **stop** the profaning of His name. This is not just "don't offer worthless sacrifices." This is zeal for God's name like in **Exo 32:26-29** (cf. 2:5-7 below). See also **Phiny: Num 25:11-13**, Num 31:6; Josh 22:13-34; Ps 106:30-31 (peace links to Num 25). These offerings are in **vain**; they don't accomplish their purpose to please and glorify God.*

11. How is the main point reinforced in 1:11? Note that the tense of the verbs in this verse can be either present or future, ie. "Great is my name," or "Great will be my name." It seems better to take them as present tense verbs. (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is all glorious, despite appearances at times, and we need to think of Him and treat Him as such! This is **reality**, we need to believe it!*

12. What attitude do they show in 1:13? What were they doing according to 1:14? Why shouldn't this ever be according to 1:14? What is God's reasoning? (1 paragraph)

*A: They talk about what a '**bother**' it is to give sacrifices to Yahweh. They act **as if** He's not real. They would make a vow that they would give a sacrifice to Yahweh if He blessed them, but then He would bless them and they would give Him a lame sacrifice instead! You wouldn't even do this to someone you were a little afraid of, much less the King of the universe!*

13. What does God promise to do to the priests if they don't change in 2:1-4? Why is this particularly fitting? (1 paragraph)

*A: God promises to turn their curses into blessings and to spread **refuse** on their faces. The priests were to be known for cleanliness and holiness, but because they were dishonoring God, He would turn everything on them. Their blessings were at the heart of their function in mediating God's blessing to others. But God would turn that on them too, indeed, He already had, because of their hearts.*

14. What is the covenant with Levi mentioned in 2:4? Read the following passages and note connections with this section in Malachi: Exodus 32:26-28; Lev 10:3,11; Numbers 25:11-13; Deuteronomy 21:5; 31:9-13; 33:8-11. (2-3 sentences)

*A: If we look at these passages we see the Levites, and then later Phinehas, were faithful to Yahweh in zealously guarding His holiness, and thus God ordained them to be closest to Him. The key words of 'covenant' and 'peace' are a link to **Phinehas** in Numbers 25:12. Most likely that is the covenant with Levi, or more probably a merging of this promise with the one based on Exodus 32:26-28.*

15. What was a true priest supposed to be like according to 2:4-9 and the previous passages? Comment on how better understanding the purpose of the priests helps us to understand the purpose of the nation of Israel, and even our purpose today? Where do we go in Scripture to make these connections? (1 paragraph)

*A: Priests were to be the people who were closest to Yahweh, and thus they should be the ones who had the greatest **fear** of Yahweh, **zeal** for His name, and **holiness**. Then Yahweh will give them life and peace. There is blessing for being in relationship with God. Priests were to be the **teachers** of the people, those who mediated God's Word to the people. They were also to live it out so that Yahweh would be **honored** among the people. So we see that they were to live **holy lives** in **jealous zeal** for **Yahweh's glory**. They were to mediate God's blessing on the nation. We see in Exodus 19:6 and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9 that Israel was supposed to be a **kindom of priests** to the nations of the world, and moreover, that we as Christians should be as well!*

16. What else do we find these priests were doing according to 2:9? How does this fit in with the rest of the message to them? (1 sentence)

*A: They were showing **partiality** (cf. Hophi and Phineas). Once again they weren't living in light of the awesome majesty of Yahweh.*

17. If you could pick one topic that all of 2:10-16 is about what would it be (Note that in 2:11 where NASB and ESV translate 'sanctuary' it is probably best to take it as 'holy people')? How then does God begin in 2:10? What is He trying to emphasize about the nation in 2:10 (think about this)? What key word occurs five times in this section that helps us understand it's purpose? How does all this fit together? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 2:10-16 is all about the **unity** of the nation being **corrupted** because Israelites were marrying foreign women. God is trying to emphasize the **solidarity** of the nation. They all have one father, they are all brothers. So they should not be treacherous to one another by profaning the covenant! When one Israelite marries a pagan, the whole nation is effected and polluted! This is **treachery**. They **deceitfully broke** the covenant with their wives and also with Yahweh.*

18. How was Judah profaning Yahweh's Holy People whom He loved (2:11)? How then does 2:11 and 2:14 fit together? Read Ezra 10 for background, even though it's not the exact same time frame. (1 paragraph)

*A: Apparently the Judeans were divorcing their Israelite wives and marrying foreigners. Thus they were profaning God's people by polluting the nation. The foreign women also had foreign gods that came along with them, hence the 'daughter of a foreign god'. They broke the covenant with their wives and also broke the covenant with Yahweh. This is **treacherous**, which is the main theme of this section. Covenant faithfulness in the nation is a **corporate responsibility**, and to **break faith** in this way **pollutes all of God's people**.*

19. What does it mean that they 'weary Yahweh with their words' in 2:17? What were the people basically saying according to 2:17? How does God respond? What will He specifically do according to 3:1-5 and how is this in answer to 2:17? How is the covenant emphasized in this passage and why? (1 paragraph)

A: Yahweh is **sick and tired** of hearing their faithless words! They were basically saying that Yahweh doesn't do anything. He doesn't judge the wicked, He doesn't bless the righteous. He doesn't come in justice. He's completely absent. Therefore they are basically saying He blesses wickedness and it's good to Him since He isn't doing anything about it. But God responds by saying that there will come a day in which He acts! God's answer is the day of Yahweh. He will judge. He will **show Himself** as powerful. He will **refine** His people. He will **judge** those who don't keep His covenant. They desired Him to come thinking He would judge their enemies, not realizing that since they broke covenant, they would be judged. He will sit, in the position of Judge, and will judge and purify His people. You want justice, you'll be judged (3:5)!

20. What does 3:6 mean and how is it connected with 3:7 and following? (1 paragraph)

A: God's **constancy** is the **basis** for their survival. It is because He is **faithful** to the covenant that they have not been completely destroyed. Because of His continual faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant, there is always a basis for the people of Israel to return to Him. He is always a **merciful and compassionate** God who is faithful to His Word.

21. How had they not kept God's statutes and in what way did they need to return to God according to 3:7-8? How was what they did 'robbing God'? (1 paragraph)

A: They were not keeping the law by tithing. This obedience was an important part of their covenant obedience. They were robbing God because **everything is His!** When He asks for something that's His and we don't give it to Him, that's robbing Him! Even if they just hold back **part** of the tithe (cf. 'the whole tithe' in 3:10) they are still robbing God. Partial obedience is disobedience!

22. What was the result of their robbing God? What does God mean when He asks them to 'test Him in this' in 3:10? How is this testing different than the testing that happens in 3:15 (which is the same word)? (2-3 sentences)

A: They were cursed with a curse! Because of their covenant disobedience, they were under covenant curse. But God tells them to test His covenant promises. The testing in 3:15 by contrast is testing His curses. We should test all of His promises, but none of His threats. To do one is because of faith, while the other is out of unbelief. **See if you can outgive God!** [While we are not under OT tithing law, the principles of giving apply. Take an aside on giving.]

23. What will be the end result if they obey? (1 sentence)

A: They will be blessed and **all the nations will see it!** This was the plan from the beginning!

24. What were the people saying that was strongly against God in 3:13-15? What attitude do we see once again? (1 paragraph)

A: They thought serving God was vain! They saw no profit in keeping His Word! They had no faith whatsoever! They couldn't see eternal benefit and thought there was no profit or reason to serve God! They also thought the arrogant were 'blessed' of God since He wasn't judging them. They were getting away with their wickedness. They **test God's threats** and escape. They steal and keep the profit. But they didn't realize that God is indeed great, awesome, and real, and there will be judgment in the end.

25. What is the point of 3:16-18? Why is it significant that a book will be written with peoples' names who fear Yahweh? What is God going to do in the future? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God will once again show a **distinction** between the righteous and the wicked! There will be a book written with the names of the righteous in it, and they will be spared in the judgment. God will treat His people special and then everyone will see that it is **very** worth it to serve God!*

26. What is coming in 4:1? What is the contrast between 4:1 and 4:2 between? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The day of Yahweh is coming and there will be judgment. There will be nothing left for those who oppose God in that day. But in that very same day, the sun of righteousness will not burn, but heal. There will be a clear distinction in that day. The righteous will tread down the wicked! There will be **vindication** for those who trust Yahweh!*

27. How does the book end in 4:4-6? What is the emphasis in this section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The book ends on a very covenantal focus, on the law of Moses. Elijah the prophet is going to come before the **great and terrible day of Yahweh** comes and turn the hearts of the people back to Yahweh. Elijah in the past was a moral catalyst to the nation and will be so again in the future. Get ready, He is coming! Notice the intertextuality in the fulfillment of this prophecy. It will literally happen in the future (Elijah indeed will come and restore all things Matthew 17:11, Mark 9:12), but has come as John the Baptist in the Spirit and Power of Elijah (Matthew 17:13; Luke 1:17; John 1:21).*

28. Thought question: How do the messages of all the various sections of Malachi fit together? What is the message of the book as a whole? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is an awesome and great God, and we need to live like it! God will act once again in the future, and so we need to live by faith in light of His awesome majesty now.*

29. Application: How does Malachi impact the way you go about your daily life in the small details of life? What does it mean to live by fearing Yahweh according to Malachi? How are you challenged to live by faith in everything that you do?

## V. Writings

Writings is the class that contains the majority of the third portion of the Hebrew Canon called 'The Writings' (Psalms is included in the BTOT class). This class consists of Lamentations, Daniel, Ruth, Song of Songs, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, and the wisdom books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. The Writings focus much more on individuals than on the corporate nation as in the Torah and the Prophets. Some of the major themes include God's sovereignty over nations and history, personal responsibility, prayer, the future of God's plan, the fear of God, and wisdom. This is a 4 unit class and consists of 23 lessons.

## 1. Mourning Our Brokenness: Lamentations

**Scripture:** Lamentations 1-5

**Theme:** Mourning over the Brokenness of the World with Proper Perspective

**Objectives:**

- To understand the function of the acrostic form of Lamentations
- To study the theological purpose and themes of Lamentations
- To examine the different facets of biblical Lament
- To write a personal lament over some personal or historic tragedy, in order gain a better sense of the personal impact of Lamentations

**Reading:**

- Read Lamentations *three times*
- Barry Webb, "Lamentations: Garment of Suffering," in Five Festal Garments, pp. 59-81
- Memorize Lam 3:19-27 in one of following translations: NASB, ESV, NKJV, NLT, or NIV.

**Questions:**

1. What is the distinction in emphasis between the Writings and the Prophets? (1-2 sentences)

*A: While the Prophets were written to the nation of Israel as a whole calling them corporately back to the Torah, the Writings are much more focused on the individual. Thus while the Torah is still the foundation for life, there are a variety of purposes in the books for how righteous individuals should live within their contexts.*

2. What is the background of Lamentations? When was it written? What was the backdrop that provided the occasion for its composition? What was going on? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The book of Lamentations is written in **response** to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It appears that most of the book was written shortly thereafter; certainly the tone of the book seems very **vivid** in its depictions. Most likely Jeremiah is the author of the book, although no author is given. Most of the people of Israel have been exiled to Babylon. Most if not all of the survivors have witnessed **horrific atrocities** and have been greatly and **personally affected** by the calamity.*

3. What is an acrostic? What are the reasons for having acrostics? Comment on the acrostic structure of the book of Lamentations, specifically how each chapter uses or doesn't use an acrostic. How does this use of acrostic help us understand the structure of the book, and the message/purpose of the book? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: An acrostic is a type of poem where every line begins with a different letter of the alphabet, from A-Z (in Hebrew, there are 22 letters in the alphabet...) Their purpose was to: 1) Aid memory, 2) Emphasize the completeness of the subject (it's "a to z"), and 3) Emphasize order. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 all fit the same pattern of acrostic, each verse in the chapter begins with the next letter of the alphabet. But chapter 3 devotes 3 lines to every letter, hence 66 verses. And chapter 5 doesn't fit the pattern at all: it's not an acrostic. So, chapter 3 clearly occupies a central place in the Lament. It is central because of its position (two chapters before and two after), its length (three times the number of verses), and its theme of faithfulness (central to the book). Chapter 5 stands out from the rest as being **disoriented**, less organized. It is important*

to note that chapter 5 still has 22 verses, which seems to make its lack of acrostic pattern stand out even more as intentional. Thus chapter 5 seems to emphasize the theology and emotion of the book as a whole. There isn't complete order! It represents an **unraveling**... "to the issue with which the preceding poems have been struggling" (Webb, 61). In any case, the book doesn't end on a very confident note. The tragedy so gripped the author that his assurance in God's promises has been fractured. The best case scenario has the author ending the book with a plea that remains open ended.

4. Describe Lamentations' view of the sovereignty of God and God's involvement with the events recorded in the book. Comment on what this teaches us about how to deal with tragedy from a Biblical standpoint. Please include scriptural references from Lamentations and personal reflection and application. (1-2 paragraphs)

A: God's sovereignty is never questioned in the book of Lamentations. In fact, it is strongly affirmed all throughout the book (chapter 2 especially!!) Yahweh is clearly the one who brought this disaster on them. The destruction of Jerusalem makes His sovereignty clear because it is a covenant curse for their unfaithfulness and disobedience. In light of the horrific nature of the judgment and the fact that the instrument that God used to enact His justice was completely wicked more strongly underscores the point that **even the worst situations are under the sovereign control of Almighty Yahweh!**

There is an important lesson for us to learn as we meditate on these truths, especially in light of the fact that Lamentations is in Scripture and thus is intended to **teach** us something about how to respond to trials. The point should be clear that the answer to the problem of sin, death, pain, and the curse in the world is not to question Yahweh's control over such situations. It may seem appealing to under-emphasize His direction over such events. There are many ways people do this: God just left people to their own consequences; He wasn't involved in the situation; maybe He didn't even have control over it, or couldn't do anything about it. But ultimately, these solutions offer no lasting hope. Yes, the world is horribly broken, but let us learn from Lamentations that the proper way to respond to such tragedies is to affirm God's complete sovereignty over the situations and remember that **this is part of His plan!** We may not understand what He is doing and may not have His perspective to see how this is good, but we can rest in the fact that He has everything under control. It is our part to recognize that He is God and we are not, and to acknowledge that His ways are not our ways. Ultimately, everything He is doing is part of a glorious plan to magnify Himself and even sin and death are part of that plan. This is a much better solution than to say that God is not in control of the chaos of this world!

5. Webb says that there is an underlying theme of "protest" running through the book. "At one level," he says, "the divine anger is acknowledged to be right. But at another it remains simply unendurable" (Webb, 78). List and reflect on those passages in Lamentations where justice of God's activity is either questioned, or the extent of his wrath is protested. (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Some passages affirm God's justice in bringing out the events (1:18; 2:17; 5:19). Some other passages affirm that the suffering is caused by people's own sin (1:8; 3:39; 5:16). Yet there are some passages that seem to reflect the author **wrestling** over the extent of God's justice: Yes, we are guilty and deserve punishment, but did the punishment have to be so brutal (cf. Lam 2:20-21; Lam 3:10-16)? The author believes that it is their sin that has elicited God's wrath, and thus they are justly punished. "At one level the divine anger is acknowledge to be right. But at another it remains simply **unendurable**..." The book... "more than any other Old Testament book, shows us God's wrath as a directly experienced reality" (Webb, 78-79). See also Psalm 88! where there is all grief and no hope.



6. What does chapter 1 emphasize and what are its main themes? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The whole book begins with the line, "How lonely sits the city..." Jerusalem (who is personified, "she" vv. 1, 2, 4, 5, etc.) then takes center stage in this opening chapter. In 1:1-11 the anguish of Zion is felt from others (3rd person). In 1:12-22 the anguish of Zion is felt by herself (1st person). The destruction of the city is a result of her sin (1:5, 8, 9, 18), and yet the **pain** and **hopelessness** is overwhelming. Often it is said that there is "none to comfort her" (1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21). The emotional intensity increases throughout the chapter: The covenant name of God, Yahweh, is mentioned 10x, usually as an agent of the disaster (e.g. 1:5, 12).*

7. What does chapter 2 emphasize and what are its main themes and how is it different than chapter 1? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: As we move to the next chapter, **God's anger** is a major theme. We see "anger" (2:1, 6, 21, 22; cf. v. 3), "wrath" (2:2), "without pity" (2:2, 21), and God as "an enemy" (2:5; cf. v. 4). God is shown as the main agent in the events: "He" is the subject of every sentence in vv. 1-8, climaxing in **2:17**. God is certainly the one who brought this destruction because of His anger.*

8. What is different about chapter 3 as it begins? What is emphasized in these first 18 verses? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: This is the central poem in the book. "Here it is as though the observer of the previous two poems, without ever disclosing his identity, steps forward and gives full vent to his own, **personal** grief. So intensely **personal** does the language become that for more than half the poem the national dimension of the crisis is lost to view entirely, and all we are aware of is this man's pain and his struggle to come to terms with it" (Webb, 66-67). It begins with "**I am the man** who has seen affliction," and the rest of the chapter continues on this personal note. Of note is this use of 'man' (Heb: geber) throughout the chapter (4x) and finally in 3:39. This helps show that verse 39 is a transition within the chapter.*

*The first section of chapter 3 is verses 1-18. They are focused, like chap. 2, on God's direct and violent involvement in the events, though the name Yahweh doesn't appear until verse 18. This highlights the impersonal, seemingly distant, nature of God's involvement. My hope from Yahweh is gone (3:18)! "The language is violent and the emotion intense" (Webb, 67).*

9. What then happens as we come to 3:19-24? What do you think shifts the focus of the author? In the midst of such intense personal lament, what does the author call to mind? Comment on how the theme of waiting/hoping runs through this section and beyond. How is this section significant in light of the structure of the book? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: But as we move on to the next section (3:19-24), something seems to have changed since Yahweh has been introduced (3:18). This introduction of Yahweh to the chapter forms a turning point. It seems that the author's statement that His hope from Yahweh is gone is what him to call out to Yahweh to remember his situation (3:19) because he himself remembers it well (3:20). But this then moves him to **recall to mind and to force himself to remember a truth that ultimately then gives him hope**. This truth is the **faithfulness of Yahweh**! This section is dominated by the words "wait" and "hope" (3:18, 21, 24, 25, 29). In the midst of the calamity and seeming despair, there is hope! The transition from 3:18 to 3:19ff. is striking (Webb, 68-69). "But here we are on the threshold of a paradox which lies at the very heart of this central poem. For it is precisely at this point, where hope is extinguished, that, phoenix-like, it begins to rise again" (Webb, 68). The words of vv. 3:22-23 reflect Exodus 34:6, the great confession of the OT born out of the golden calf incident: "Yahweh,*

Yahweh, the **compassionate** and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **covenant love** and **faithfulness**" (Lam 3:22-23), "Because of Yahweh's great **covenant love** we are not consumed, for his **compassions** never fail. They are new every morning; great is your **faithfulness**." This is not just wishful thinking, or the power of positive thinking. It is a intentional reflection on God's mercy that has been demonstrated in history. "Yahweh's anger was real, but not hasty or irrational, and it did not nullify the essential truth about him which had been revealed in the exodus" (Webb, 69).

In the midst of the tragedy, Jeremiah focuses on the **faithfulness** of Yahweh! When he causes himself to focus on this great and amazing truth, then he has great hope. Every day Yahweh is faithful. He never stops keeping His promises. He is unswervingly loyal to His covenant which is a means of being in relationship with Him! So Yahweh's faithfulness is what gives hope. It is His loyal love! In light of the structure of the entire poem, this is obviously central and receives the utmost emphasis. What an amazing truth in the midst of such a tragic book! No matter how dark the trial, when we force ourselves to focus on how amazingly and constantly faithful Yahweh is, we will always have hope!!!

10. What then is the point the author makes in 3:25-36? What is good in 3:25-27 and how then are those truths developed in verses 3:28-36? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: In 3:25-36 the writer now reflects on his situation, admitting his guilt and also his pain. Jeremiah (as part of a sinful nation) suffered justly. And yet we see that as painful as the calamity is, after remembering the hope that Yahweh's faithfulness brings, he can see the **good** in the situation. God has a **purpose** in it!

The author states first of all that Yahweh is good to those who wait on Him, but then also moves on to state that waiting for Yahweh's salvation itself is good. It is **good for men to bear the yoke** and to be silent and to be **laid in the dust**. Why is waiting and being laid low good? **Precisely because Yahweh is faithful!** Yahweh will not reject forever (3:31) and if He causes grief, there will be compassion in the end. He is not capricious or unjust! God is merciful and compassionate. And so it is good for men to wait upon His salvation and to experience His mercy in this way!!! What a perspective for us to have in the midst of trials. If we never went through a trial we would never see God's faithfulness in showing up in compassionate salvation!

11. What then does the author conclude in 3:37-39? How do 37 and 38 relate to 39? What do these verses teach us about God's sovereignty as related to God's judgment and the human condition? (1 paragraph)

A: God is completely sovereign, and both good and bad come from Him. But no one can complain about any injustice because we are all corrupted by sin. So the connection is: God is completely sovereign, so any tragedy that comes has certainly come from Him. Yet He is completely justified to bring calamity in light of the heinousness of sin! God is sovereign, we deserve punishment, we shouldn't be surprised when we get it! We tend to be so man centered in our thinking. We need to remember that any ungratefulness, and lack of obedience, any pride, is an assault against the greatness of God who deserves all praise and worship. If we truly saw sin and God did, our perspective would change! We would marvel so much more at God's mercy! Note that verse 39 is the last use of 'geber' in this chapter and signals the close of this section.

12. So what then does the author call out for in 3:40-66 (there are at least two clearly distinct things that he calls out for)? How does this fit into the rest of the chapter? (1 paragraph)

A: 3:40-66 then goes into more of a communal lament and **plea for repentance** and plea for God to act justly in paying back their enemies. The rest of the chapter is more hopeful, though **pain** still saturates this hope (vv. 48-54).

First, the author calls for the people to examine themselves and to return to Yahweh. They are sinful and deserve judgment, but as we saw earlier, in light of Yahweh's faithfulness there is hope of forgiveness. **Self examination** is key to repentance, and repentance is key to salvation! So next, after once again lamenting their state, the author calls out for Yahweh to save! He calls out that Yahweh will act justly in judging their wicked enemies who have oppressed them. Certainly, although Judah was wicked and in light of their sin deserved to be judged, Babylon was not much better! And so he pleads with God to judge his case (59) and to pay them back (64) for their wickedness.

13. What does chapter 4 emphasize and what are its main themes and how is it different than the preceding? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: This chapter is similar to chapter 2. It reflects on the tragedies of Jerusalem's destruction: infants (4:4), upper class (4:5), nobility (4:7-8), nursing mothers (4:10), prophets and priests (4:13-15), king (4:20). It is much less personal. The chapter is just as horrific as the previous ones, "but the tone is more detached and impersonal" (Webb, 72). Only in 4:17-20 does the author use the first person, but even here it is plural. There seems to be almost a **shock of disbelief** and what happened and the greatness of the atrocities (cf. 4:12). This chapter reminds us that **even though** the poet has been reminded of the faithfulness of God in chapter 3, there he is still **overwhelmed** and in the midst of the **ongoing effects** of the situation.

14. Comment on the structure and progression of chapter 5. How does verse 1 begin? What then do we see in 2-18? But then how does the chapter conclude in 19, 20, 21, and 22? How do each of the last four verses progress from the previous? How does this fit into the fact that chapter 5 isn't an acrostic? Especially think about why the book ends as it does in verse 22, and what this teaches us? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: This chapter has many differences from the others. There is no acrostic form, although it still has 22 verses. It is shorter than the rest (each verse has only 1 line in the Hebrew). The author seems to be more distant from the destruction of Jerusalem. The focus is on the aftermath of destruction, rather than the immediate event (cf. 5:2-3, 4, 9, 13, 18). The **first person plural** is frequent, typical in **communal lament**. Three main features stand out: 1) There is a strong note of **repentance** (see 5:7, 16). Webb says that 5:21 is an "appeal for forgiveness and restored relationship rather than simply for a change of circumstances. This poem is more than a lament; it is a prayer of **penitence**" (Webb, 74), 2) There is the confession of faith in 5:19, and, 3) There is the questioning at the end. The last attribute mentioned is **anger**. "This is a prayer of desperate people who have been convinced of their sinfulness and know they have nowhere else to go but to Yahweh, but remain uncertain about how he will receive them" (Webb, 75).

Chapter 5 begins with a call to Yahweh to remember and to act. They had been severely judged by Yahweh, yet the author calls out for Yahweh to remember: ultimately to remember that they are His people. Then we see the context for this call in 2-18, it is because they are greatly afflicted. But when we come to verse 19 we see a strong contrast between the chaotic and fallen world where sin and death reign, and the sovereign rule of Yahweh who is completely in control of it all. And so in light of Yahweh's complete sovereignty the author once again calls out for God to remember and not forget them, but to act. He continues in verse 21 building upon this plea to include restoration and renewal. So really what we see is that this entire chapter is framed from beginning to end with a call to Yahweh to remember His people and act in restoration and renewal in

*light of their affliction because He is the sovereign Lord who can do it! What an act of faith to call out to Yahweh in the midst of such circumstances!*

*Yet the book ends with a difficult question. Is it possible that Yahweh has utterly rejected His people and angry with them beyond repair?!? The depth of the tragedy was so severe that it caused **serious questioning** in the mind of Jeremiah. This is real. There is no empty triumphalism here. The book ends with questioning and not hope. The book ends in a way with the poet **undone**, with an **unraveling** of his world. This highlights that even true believers often **wrestle** with hard realities. It is the nature of life in this broken world that faith is a battle, and this ending emphasizes this fact. **It's a fight to remember!** Even the lack of acrostic in this chapter shows the disorder and chaos of this sin filled broken world. In the midst of it we call out to the Sovereign Lord who alone can bring restoration and renewal. But this chapter reminds us that we should never minimize the massive effects of sin on the world and how a dark cloud of God's providence can cause a deep wrestling match over our faith. May we learn to be understanding of those who are going through these dark times with a true sympathy over the brokenness of this world and not a smug presumption that everything is always happy for believers.*

15. Application: How does (or should) the book of Lamentations put things in perspective for us? How should it affect the way we go through trials?
16. Application: What do we learn about the brokenness of the world from Lamentations? How does this affect how we minister to both believers and unbelievers?
17. Application: What do we learn about the world and history being God centered and not man centered from Lamentations? How does this affect our questioning of difficult events in our lives and in the world?
18. Write your own Lament (1/3 to 1 page) reflecting on one of the following tragedies:
  - a. Rwanda genocide (1994)
  - b. Haiti earthquake (2010)
  - c. Another catastrophic event
  - d. Personal event

In preparation, I encourage you to study the details of the event to which you are responding (internet, books, news clips, etc.). Your lament may be poetic but it doesn't have to be. The main point is that the event should elicit feelings of extreme grief; questioning, yet affirming, God's goodness; confirming God's justice, yet expressing intense pain over the execution of it. The point of this project is to train ourselves to "grieve with those who grieve," and to be saddened by and lament for the pain and suffering that life in this world brings, and yet to be confident that God is sovereign and is working in and through the tragic events. The themes in your lament should broadly correlate with the themes in Lamentations. You can even use the language of Lamentations and apply it to your lament.

## 2. Living in God's Sovereignty: Daniel 1-3

**Scripture:** Daniel 1-3

**Theme:** Living with Wisdom and Trust in Light of God's Sovereignty

**Objectives:**

- To grow in our fear of Yahweh and therefore complete trust in Him
- To understand how God's sovereignty should impact our daily lives
- To learn what wisdom is and where true wisdom comes from
- To understand what the fear of man is, and how knowing Yahweh produces a fear of Him
- To learn to rest of God's sovereignty, whether it results in what we desire or not

**Reading:**

- Read Daniel 1-3 *five times*.

**Questions:**

**Chapter 1**

12. Why is the book of Daniel in the Writings and not the Prophets? Who was it written to and what was its purpose? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel is in the Writings and not the Prophets because its purpose was to **individuals** and not the nation as a whole. The Prophets wrote to the nation as a whole to call them to corporate repentance, to follow the Law, and so be used by Yahweh to accomplish His plan for the world. The Writings have much more of an individual focus, teaching individual Israelites how a righteous Israelite was to live. This latter purpose fits clearly into the purpose of the book of Daniel. It was written to Israelites during and after the exile to teach them how to live in light of Yahweh's sovereignty. There is a huge focus on personal **prayer, trust, wisdom, integrity** in Yahweh's sovereignty, and how to live **under pagan Gentile dominion**...*

13. Note: Daniel is one of only two books of the Bible written largely in two languages (Ezra also has a few chapters in Aramaic). Daniel was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. How does knowing that chapter 1, and chapters 8-12 were written in Hebrew, while chapters 2-7 were written in Aramaic help to give an understanding of the structure and purpose of the book? Which people groups used Hebrew? Aramaic? Which was more common? What was the lingua franca in Daniel's day? What point do you think Daniel was trying to get across by using these two languages (think about this!)? Contrast the scheme used for dating in 1:1 and in 2:1 and think how this fits into the preceding discussion. (1 paragraph)

*A: The **structure** of the book is created by the change of languages. Chapter 1 is the introduction, and sets the stage that Israel's God is sovereign over history. Chapters 2-7 focus on the '**times of the Gentiles**' and Gentile dominion over the world. Chapters 8-12 focus once again on Yahweh's sovereignty over history and creation. Only Israel used Hebrew, while Aramaic was the lingua franca of that day. By using the two languages the point is reinforced that Yahweh, Israel's God, is sovereign over history, even though the Gentiles are ruling the world for a time. By dating 1:1 according to an Israelite king, and 2:1 by a Babylonian one, this same point (as the changing of languages) is reinforced.*

14. Who are the main characters in the book of Daniel that chapter 1 introduces us to? What do we learn about these main characters? (1 paragraph)

*A: The main characters are God, Daniel, his friends, and Nebuchadnezzar. We learn that God is **sovereign** and in control of history. He is truly the Lord and is the only one that should be **feared**. Daniel is a young Judean man who is exiled to Babylon. He is from the upper echelon of Judean society and exhibits amazing **trust** in God. Daniel's three friends come from similar situations as himself and likewise exhibit a great trust in God at such an early age. Nebuchadnezzar is the greatest king in the world at that time. He is proud and powerful. He is under no one, except God. He is a statesman and a militarist.*

15. What would people have thought about what happened in 1:1-2? What would Israelites have thought about this? What about people from other nationalities? What would they have thought about Israel's God? About Babylon's god? What does 1:2 tell us that lets us (the readers of the book) know something that the event itself wouldn't have told them? (2-3 sentences)

*A: People, both Israelites and otherwise would have thought that Yahweh was not very great since His temple was robbed and plundered by the Babylonians. They would have thought that Babylon's gods were greater. But 1:2 tells us that the Lord gave His country over to the Babylonians and thus that He is still in control!*

16. What is God doing in this chapter? Where and what does He do? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see God actively doing things in 1:2, 9, 17. God gave Jehoiakim into Neb's hand. **God gave** Daniel favor in the sight of the chiefeunuch. **God gave** them wisdom, skill and understanding. The point is that God is behind everything that goes on!*

17. Who did Nebuchadnezzar (Neb henceforth) exile according to 1:4-5? Why did he exile them according to the text of Daniel? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Neb exiled the cream of the crop, youths who excelled in every way. He exiled them so that they would participate in the government of his empire. So he wanted to **naturalize** them and **indoctrinate** these young people with Babylonian ideals and identity.*

18. Thought question: Why did Neb change their names in 1:7? Did they resist this? Why or why not? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Neb's changing of their names was part of the naturalization process. He wanted to eradicate their past so that they would be loyal to Babylon. They didn't resist the changing their names, presumably because it wasn't a sin issue to go along with it.*

19. What pressures and influences would there have been on Daniel and his friends to conform and eat the king's food (there are many!)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Think about how much pressure there would have been on these young men. There was: 1) The physical desire for the food itself. 2) The desire to advance in the kingdom. 3) Peer pressure. 4) Fear of punishment by the king. 5) This is compounded by the fact that they are so far from home and no one is watching them.*

20. What issue was at stake in 1:8? What key word shows us this issue in 1:8? How is this different than the issue of changing their names? (1 paragraph)

*A: The issues at stake was whether or not Daniel and his friends would **defile** themselves. This was a sin issue. It seems that this was a sin issue because the food was sacrificed to idols (otherwise what reason could there be for him not to partake of wine, there is certainly no law against that in the OT!). Both meat and wine were frequently used as sacrifices (even in the OT). God's word commanded them not to defile themselves in this way, so they **took a stand**. This is opposed to the changing of their names where they didn't take a stand because it wasn't a sin issue.*

21. What is the first thing Daniel did in 1:8? What did he do about that? How was his decision put into action? What would you have done? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel **set his heart**, or **resolved** not to sin by eating the food. He made up his mind beforehand and committed to live in that way. He lived a life of **no compromise**. After he had resolved not to sin in this way, he put his decision into action by going to the chief and asking for permission to not defile himself. His conviction demanded that he not eat this food, so he stood firm in his faith in God and acted upon that conviction. So often we don't take action and put our convictions into practice. But Daniel did!*

22. Who did the commander fear in 1:10? Where is the word 'lord' used in this chapter? What does this imply in connection with who the commander feared? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The commander feared lord Neb. But 'Lord' is also used in 1:2 of Yahweh. The connection implies that there are two lords. Which lord are you going to fear?*

23. What does Daniel's plan rest upon in 1:12? What could he do to ensure the results he wanted? What does this teach us about Daniel? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel's plan completely depends upon and rests upon a miracle from God! He could do absolutely nothing to ensure the results he wanted. He simply **believed** in God and **entrusted** his life to Him. There was not really any other option. He believed in God and was in an impossible situation (where the king wanted him to eat food that God didn't want him to eat). So he simply devised a plan that met both parties desires! The desire from God, which trumps all other desires, that he not defile himself meant that the plan had to include a way for him not to eat the meat and the wine. The king's desire that they be healthy was met by appeal to God for a miracle. What other way out was there? The solution is simple, although based upon a firm belief that God is the God of the impossible!*

24. Is what happened in 1:15 what we would naturally expect to happen? (1 sentence)

*A: No! Football players and Navy Seals don't just eat vegetables! Meat makes people strong!*

25. Where does wisdom come from according to chapter 1? How old were Daniel and his friends? Do we need wisdom? Where should we seek it? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Wisdom only comes from God. Daniel and his friends were likely around 15 years old. We need wisdom and the only place we can find it is from God alone!*

26. Application: What can we learn about how to respond in wisdom according to chapter 1?

A: **Wisdom** comes from a **humility** that understands that we don't have wisdom, and only God does, and so we must seek it from Him. Wisdom is the fear of Yahweh, an **uncompromising** stance that is committed to obeying and following Him no matter what. From a human stand point how stupid Daniel appears! Eating only vegetables is ridiculous! You must be kidding. But his solution is based on an unwavering trust in the omnipotent God. That is where his wisdom lies. There is never an impossible situation where we cannot obey God. He always provides a way out. He is omnipotent and omniscient!

## Chapter 2

27. Thought question: What is the job of the magicians, sorcerers, and enchanters (2:2)? What would their relationship/interaction be with the king? (2-3 sentences)

A: They were supposed to be in contact with the gods and have 'supernatural' abilities and discernment. They were to give counsel to the king from the gods.

28. How does Neb respond to the magicians in 2:5-6? Would this have been normal? How do the magicians respond in 2:7 (compare with 2:4)? What are they claiming with their response? (1 paragraph)

A: Neb responds by demanding them to tell him his dream. This would not have been normal, as usually the king would have looked up to the magicians, etc., and have gone to them for counsel. But Neb was different. He was one of the greatest and most **egoistic** leaders of all time. So they say the same thing a second time. They are completely unable to tell the king his dream and so they keep asking the same question. They are claiming that they can divinely interpret the dream, if he just tells it to them.

29. What is Neb's conclusion from the fact that they can't tell him his dream (2:8-9)? How does he come to this conclusion? Why would not being able to tell him his dream be important to Neb? (1 paragraph)

A: Neb's conclusion is that they were just trying to **buy time** and **wiggle out** of the situation somehow. He even concludes that they are lying. They have claimed that if he gives them the dream they can give him a divine interpretation to it. But Neb rightly concludes that if they can't discern the dream itself from the gods, how can the gods give them its interpretation?! They and their **whole profession** is simply a **sham!** They are simply trying to wait out the situation by manipulating the king. Neb is not the kind of king that likes to be **manipulated**. He was one of the greatest and most prideful kings that ever lived. So he concludes that if they can tell him the dream, then he will know that they can also give him a divine interpretation to the dream. He will not be tricked.

30. How do the magicians respond to Neb's final demand (2:10-11)? What does their response show? How does it set up for what follows? (1 paragraph)

A: They claim that what the king asks is impossible. They make excuses. Thus they have indicted themselves because their whole occupation is based upon claiming they can communicate with and do the 'supernatural'. They claim that only the gods can do this, and their whole job was to communicate with the gods! **Thus their whole reply serves to introduce Daniel who indeed can communicate with the true God and shows that Daniel's God can indeed do the impossible!**



31. How does the king respond in 2:12? Does this fit with what we know about Neb's character/personality? What were the reasons for him doing this? (1 paragraph)

*A: He responds by demanding all the wise men be killed. This is very fitting with Neb's character of being an absolute monarch with complete control with extreme pride and power. Neb had many qualities, but self-control was not one of them. The reasons being that a) apparently the wise men couldn't actually do what they claimed to and their whole occupation was a sham, b) the audacity of them to actually accuse him (no king has ever asked this...), c) they were manipulating and lying to him, and d) this dream was important to Neb.*

32. When Arioch shows up at Daniel's door in 2:13-14, what is the situation? Would Daniel likely have known anything of what had already happened? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The captain of the king's bodyguard came with armed guards to take and kill him. This probably would have been the first he would have heard about the situation.*

33. Try to put yourself in Daniel's shoes. How would you respond? How does Daniel respond? What words does the text use in describing his response? What adjectives would you use to describe his response given the situation he was in (think about the situation!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel responded with **wisdom** and **discretion**. He responds **calm** and **cool**. He just finds out he is about to be killed for no fault of his own, and his complete trust in God is immediately evident. He doesn't **panic** or **despair**. He simply assesses the situation. He can think quickly and on his feet because he is not worried or panicking about the situation. When a trial comes it shows our true character. Life is a school, and a test is coming. How will we respond? Talk about an impossible situation, there was no court of appeals in Neb's kingdom! How do we respond in impossible situations? That is when we typically panic or despair because we see no way out. **But with God there is always a way out!** We simply need to trust in Him. That is wisdom. We will respond calm and cool with complete reliance upon God when we understand that He is in complete control. This test says much about Daniel's character, temperament and ability.*

34. What does Daniel ask for in 2:16? How would you describe this request? What key word is used that has already been used in this chapter? Contrast how this key word was used earlier with how it is used here. (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel asks to be able to go before the greatest man on earth in that day. This is bold. But Daniel fears no king. He asks for time. Notice the contrast between the magicians. They were deceptively trying to 'buy time' **but Daniel asks for it straightforwardly!** By asking for time he is admitting that he doesn't have the answer, but is also stating that he knows where to get it! An impossible situation demands an impossible solution! But with God all things are possible!*

35. What does Daniel do next? What does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is always the answer, and so we should seek Him for it! He goes to his three friends so the three of them could pray and petition together. They pray earnestly, likely throughout the night. They **seek mercy** from the **God of mercy**...*

36. After God answers Daniel's prayer, what does he do next? What does this teach us? (1 paragraph)

A: Daniel **praises** and **blesses** God for the answer to prayer. **God gets all the glory!** This is why He answers prayer! Wisdom and power come from God, so if we want wisdom and power we should go to Him! He is completely sovereign and powerful. He has all the answers. Even the things that are too hard for us to do or understand are possible for Him. According to Daniel (and Proverbs), the moment you think you are wise (cf. 2:30), you cease to be wise because you no longer seek wisdom from God!

37. What does Daniel first say to Neb? What do we learn from this? (2-3 sentences)

A: He first shows that wisdom does not come from any man but comes from God. He gives all the credit to God so that God will receive all the glory. He doesn't take credit for himself (contrast Arioch in 2:25 with Daniel in 2:30). But he is **bold** before the king in **declaring the greatness of God**.

38. Summarize the dream and its interpretation. What is the scope of this dream? Contrast how the head of gold and the other parts of the statue. What does the stone represent and what can we learn about this from the dream and its interpretation? What does the dream emphasize? (1+ paragraph)

A: There will be four major world kingdoms in the future. The scope of the vision is in the **Gentile dominion** of the world. The head of gold is king Neb, while the other parts of the statue were the kingdoms, not the king. This is because in Babylon, Neb was the kingdom. The four kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This vision matches chapter 7 closely. After these kingdoms, a stone would come and crush all the kingdoms of this world, leaving not even a trace of them. That stone is God's kingdom which will fill the whole earth and last forever as an eternal kingdom. It is a kingdom not made with hands, speaking of its divine origin and not through human agency. The stone = a kingdom. Christ's Millennial kingdom. 1) Established by God. 2) Parallel to previous kingdoms (and thus on earth). 3) Must be when 10 kings ruling. 4) Sudden and decisive blow. 4th kingdom obliterated (Rome came to greatest strength after Christ). 5) The kingdom will grow and take over the whole earth (Cf. Psa 2:6-9; Isa 11:2-5, 6-9; Rev 13:1-10; 17:8-14). If the statue represents the political power of the Gentiles, it is very much still standing! The emphasis is on God's complete sovereignty over history and kings and kingdoms. Neb was great, but he was only so because God made him so (2:37).

39. How does Neb respond? What do we learn from this? (2-3 sentences)

A: Neb bows to a captive! Amazing! He acknowledges the greatness of God. Because of Daniel's bold and faithful testimony, even a great pagan king acknowledges who God is. **He acknowledges that God is even Lord over himself!**

40. Application: What do we learn about how to respond in wisdom from this chapter?

41. Application: What do we learn about God and His plan from this chapter?

### Chapter 3

42. Thought questions: What was the purpose of creating this image? What was the purpose in dedicating it (3:1-2)? Who were invited to this dedication and why (3:3-4)? Why all the instruments (3:5)? (1 paragraph)

A: Neb made a massive image (90 ft!) to proclaim **his** greatness. This shows his pride and the pride of his kingdom. In dedicating it, he wanted all the nations he had conquered to acknowledge his greatness and to be subdued under his kingdom. Once again this was to **frighten** and **awe** them into submission. This is reminiscent of Fascist Germany and its pomp and circumstance. All the important people in the kingdom were invited (from all over the kingdom). Notice that they were from various nations and languages. Thus once again the purpose is to assimilate them into Babylon's greatness and rule. There was to be unity and conformity. They were to be **indoctrinated** and **naturalized**. The instruments show that this was a big deal.

43. Thought question: Why is the fiery furnace announced as part of the command to bow down (3:6)? (2-3 sentences)

A: The furnace is announced along with the command because it would have been natural for the nationals to want to keep their own identity and culture. But Neb had **orchestrated** (literally!) this massive event such that no one would not conform. There would have been enormous pressure to conform. Neb wanted full allegiance from all people under his rule.

44. What does verse 7 state that happens when the command was given (only look at this verse for the answer!)? What is then stated in verses 8-12? Why do you think the story unfolds this way with what verse 7 states, and then what we learn in 8-12? How are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego referred to in these verses? Why do you think the Chaldeans referred to them this way? (1 paragraph)

A: Verse 7 states that **everybody** bowed down and worshipped. Verse 7 states that there was complete obedience to the command. Neb's ceremony went exactly as he planned. The nations and languages all bowed to his greatness. But then we learn in verses 8-12 that there were three men who didn't bow down. This emphasizes how much they would have stood out! They are referred to as Jews. It's likely that this is racism. The Jews would likely have stood out as **different** anyway. This is possibly referenced in 3:12 when it states that they do not serve your gods, possibly referring to something wider than just this event. Certainly we have already seen how the Jews responded in chapter 1 to **distinguish themselves**. There is probably also **jealousy** in that Neb had appointed them over Babylon in chapter 1 (ie. you appointed). This would have been a position of high honor. This was not a place that separatist Jews should be! But ultimately their offense is that they openly refused to bow down to Neb's image.

45. Why is Neb so furious in 3:13? (2-3 sentences)

A: He has gone to great effort to make this that this would **not** happen! His pride is assaulted. His plan of seeing all the nations assimilated under the greatness of his kingdom has been attacked. This was his special dedication that will not be ruined.

46. Why do you think Neb gives them a second chance in 3:14-15? How does what Neb says set up for what follows? (1 paragraph)

A: He gives them a second chance to **save face** for himself. His greatness is on the line. Who would dare to defy him. He wanted everyone to acknowledge his greatness and to bow in submission to him. He wanted to break the spirit of defiance within people. If they were to die rebels, in some sense they would win. This is **not** because of his **grace** and **patience**... Of course Neb sets up for God's response in claiming that **no god is able** to deliver out of his hand. In his pride he sets himself up as greater than any god. He exalted himself, but God is greater!

47. Why do Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego say that they don't need to answer the king in 3:16 (think about this!)? How do we do this or not do this? (1 paragraph)

A: They were guilty as charged. They had no need to defend themselves. God is in control and they didn't need to **manipulate** the situation or **fenagle** their way out. If they had tried to get out of the situation it could only have served to minimize the statement of their fear and trust in God and complete unwillingness to bow to the king. Just like Christ, they didn't defend themselves as there was nothing to defend. They simply took the opportunity to proclaim the greatness of God. Application: When someone asks us why we didn't sin in some way (ie. going to a movie against conscience), do we simply stand for the truth or explain our way out (ie. I was busy).

48. What is the primary statement they make in 3:17? What do they say that relates back to verse 15? What would they have been saying if they bowed down? (2-3 sentences)

A: The primary statement is that "**God is able**." God is completely powerful and able to do anything. This is a **direct denial** of Neb's claim. They claim that God can deliver from His hand. This is bold and courageous. You are wrong, king! They **risked all** to defend God's reputation. To bow down would be to throw God's reputation in the dirt.

49. Why does 3:18 begin with an 'if'? What does this teach us? (1 paragraph)

A: This is one of the greatest statements in Scripture! They recognized that God's will might be different than what is pleasant to them! The previous verse was about faith, this one is about **submission**. "If there is anything more rare than faith, it is submission" (Wood). They didn't make their obedience **dependant** on what God would do for them. They were most concerned about God and His reputation, not themselves. They were satisfied in God alone and would trust and obey Him **no matter if** they were blessed for it in this life or not. They were ready to be thrown into the fiery furnace.

50. How does Neb respond? Why? (2-3 sentences)

A: Their **clear-headed trust** just infuriated him all the more! They **defied** him **publicly!** Now he was **really** mad. He lost his cool to say the least. And so he envisions the most terrifying punishment for such rebellion.

51. What does verse 3:21-23 tell us? In literary terms, what would we call this section? (1 paragraph)

A: They were thrown into the furnace. God **could** have delivered them **before** they were thrown in, but God waited to show an **even greater deliverance**. The fact that the furnace even killed Neb's men showed how great His deliverance was. This is the climax of the story. What would happen? At the height of tension, still bound and helpless these men were thrown into the furnace...

52. What does 3:24-26 tell us happened? What is said about this fourth person? What does this mean? (1 paragraph)

A: Neb was astonished and rose in haste. He was shocked! There were four people in the furnace, and they were not harmed by the flames. Truly this is an **amazing miracle**. The fourth person appeared as a son of the gods (possibly implying that He shone? or was outstanding in some way). God sent His angel (ie. His representative/ambassador) to personally care for the three.

53. Who was around to witness this miracle? Why were they there? What did they plan to witness and what did they witness instead? (1 paragraph)

*A: The list of people are the **first three groups** from the previous list, and also the counsellors. Thus these are probably the **highest** ruling officials in Babylon who were expecting to witness Neb's greatness over those who rebel against him. **Instead** they witnessed the triumph of God over Neb. These men weren't even touched by the fire and they didn't even smell like smoke! Only the rope burned. This was an amazing miracle!*

54. What does Neb do in response? What does he say about God? What does he stop short of saying about God? What does he say about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (1 paragraph)

*A: Neb responds by **blessing** God. He sees the connection that God sent His angel to deliver His servants. Yet he **doesn't** worship God and command others to do the same. His command merely prohibits saying anything negative about God. He recognizes that no other god has this kind of power and ability, yet he doesn't bow the knee to Him. He saw the trust of the three in God and recognizes that they yielded their very bodies to be burned. They gave everything in service to God, in complete trust of Him for the results. Neb saw this. This is a reminder that **we never know** who will see and be effected by our faith and trust in God. People are watching us.*

55. Application: What does this chapter teach us about trusting God? What does it teach us about the effects and results of trusting Him (for ourselves and for others)?

### 3. Fearing Yahweh and Humbling Yourself: Daniel 4-6

**Scripture:** Daniel 4-6

**Theme:** Understanding Yahweh's Sovereignty Produces Humility, Fear, and Confidence

**Objectives:**

- To see how pride is opposed to God and His glory and so learn humility
- To see the utter foolishness of self-trust and the wisdom of trusting in God
- To understand our need to depend upon Yahweh every day
- To see the confidence of those whose trust is Yahweh
- To be encouraged to see the faithfulness of God for His children

**Reading:**

- Read Daniel 4-6 *five times*

**Questions:**

**Chapter 4**

1. How does this chapter begin in 4:1-3? How does this set the stage for the rest of the chapter? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 4:1-3 begins as a **letter** describing what the Most High God had done for Neb. He wrote it to all peoples and nations. Obviously in light of the content of chapter 4 (which is probably included in the letter), this would have been a **humbling** thing to do!*

2. Notice which person the account in chapter 4 is described in (1<sup>st</sup> person = I/we, 2<sup>nd</sup> person = you, 3<sup>rd</sup> person = he/she/they). What is the implication of this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Much of chapter 4 is in **first person**! This implies that this account was written by Neb, and is probably included in the letter he sent to all peoples! This reinforces the point of his **humility**, and possibly also emphasizes the point of his **salvation** which we'll see at the end of the chapter!*

3. How does 4:4 begin? What does this tell us about Neb? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Neb is at **peace** and at ease. His kingdom is firmly under his rule. He has conquered his enemies and now is enjoying the fruits of 'his' labors. He's fat and happy.*

4. What is the purpose of the dream according to verse 17? What does this teach us about God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The purpose of the dream is that all the living might know who God is, that He is the Most High over all the realm of mankind. He sets **over** mankind the **lowliest** of men. This teaches us that **no man** is great before God. He puts lowly men over kingdoms so that no man can boast in himself. God alone is the one worthy of glory and greatness and He will not share it with anyone.*

5. What is surprising about Daniel's response in verse 19? What does this teach us about how we relate to unbelievers? (2-3 sentences)

*A: What is surprising is Daniel's great **care** for Neb. He wasn't happy that Neb was going to be dealt with in this way. He had **compassion** for him. He 'wished' that this would happen to someone else. This teaches us that we too should **care about unbelievers** (even proud and wicked ones, there are no others!). We should not be so callous to their hurts so as not to care.*

6. Describe the dream and its interpretation? What does it emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Neb was the tree whose greatness was **global**. Neb truly was a great king. All the earth benefited from the greatness of his rule. But God was the One who had made him great!*

7. What will be the condition upon which Neb's sanity returns to him (verses 25 and 26)? What does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The condition will be when Neb **recognizes** that God is the One ruling over all the events of mankind, and He is the One who bestows rulership on those whom He desires. He is completely sovereign. No one can rob Him of this sovereignty. And He wants people to recognize and **know** it. He deserves the praise and He will get it!*

8. What did Daniel advise Neb to do? What do we learn about Daniel from this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel advised Neb to live righteously, caring for justice, caring for the lowly. This is about **humility**. **Pride always exalts itself over others** while **true humility always results in care for the lowly**. This advice shows Daniel's care for Neb and also his boldness to tell the king what God wanted him to do.*

9. What is at the heart of Neb's statement in verse 30? What does the immediacy of God's response show? (1 paragraph)

*A: Neb's statement is all about **pride**. Notice how many times he uses the first person pronoun (I, my, and me). Neb states that it is for **his glory**, and misses that **everything** is about **God's glory**. He attributes his power to himself and his own strength, whereas God wants people to know it's all about His power. The immediacy of the response shows that it is in direct response to Neb's words. There is a causal link between them.*

10. What is the first thing Neb did at the end of his period of insanity? What does this represent? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He lifted up his eyes to heaven. This represents his **recognition** of **needing** God. Often lifting up the eyes goes along with prayer. Prayer is a statement of dependence and humility to God. Fundamentally, it's looking to God and not to oneself for help.*

11. What does Neb say about God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He **acknowledged** His complete sovereignty over all time and all places. No one on earth can even compare to His greatness. He indeed is the King of kings. He does whatever He wants (even more so than Neb!).*

12. What is different about what Neb says in this chapter (especially in 4:37) in response to seeing God's power as opposed to previous chapters (ie. 2 and 3)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Neb **praises, exalts, and honors** God. Notice also he is speaking in the first person. I do this. He also begins with 'Now', communicating a change of stance. The verbs are also present participles showing **continual/characteristic** action. This seems to show a change, a **conversion**.*

13. How would you summarize what this chapter is about in one word? How would you articulate its main point in a sentence? How does this main topic relate to the glory of God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This chapter is about **pride**. God humbles the proud because He alone is worthy. God will not share His glory with anyone, but deserves all the praise and worship. He alone is glorious, and wants the world to know this.*

14. Thought question: What do we learn about how to be about God's glory in this world from this chapter? How does God want us to live? What does this teach us about our purpose in the world? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God wants us to **give Him all the credit** and to take none for ourselves. We need to humble ourselves so that God is seen as great. God's whole purpose in creation was to glorify Himself. Therefore our purpose in the world should be the same.*

15. Application: What are specific ways that we rob God of His glory in our own lives?

### Chapter 5

16. Describe the opening of this chapter in the first 4 verses. How would you describe the scene? What did Belshazzar do? What is significant about the description of Belshazzar's gods according to verse 4? What is the author getting at with this description of them? (1 paragraph)

*A: Belshazzar is throwing a party. There would have been **drunkenness** and **frivolity**. Belshazzar in his **audacity**, called for the cups from Yahweh's temple so he could drink out of them. This shows complete **irreverence** for God. Belshazzar's gods are called the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. It emphasizes what the idols were **made** out of. They were created and not the Creator. They are just empty idols.*

17. What happens immediately after he does this? What does the immediacy of the response signal? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There was writing on a wall. The immediacy of the response shows the **causality** of what happened. What was written on the wall was in direct response to what Belshazzar did.*

18. Describe carefully how the king responds to the writing on the wall in verse 6? How does the king respond when none of his magicians can read the writing in verse 9? How would you characterize the description of the king so far? Compare and contrast Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar. (2-3 sentences)



A: He is **completely terrified** and **paralyzed** in fear. Not kind of response we would expect from a king. Belshazzar isn't depicted as a great king. He doesn't have the composure of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar.

19. Why was the queen (verse 10) not among the wives who were drinking in verse 2? Why is this woman singled out? How does she know Daniel? What does she know of him? Who does it seem likely she is? (1 paragraph)

A: It appears that this is really the queen-mother (grandmother?), not one of the wives of the king. Thus she is older and remembers Daniel from the reign of her husband (father-in-law?). [Aside: We know from history that Nebuchadnezzar's son was named Nabonidus, and that he left (fled?) Babylon to an oasis in Arabia early in his reign and stayed for roughly 10 years, while Belshazzar reigned in Babylon in his place. Thus we see why Belshazzar only offers Daniel to be third in the kingdom, and not second.]

20. Contrast the queen's response to that of the king. Why the difference? (2-3 sentences)

A: She is **calm** and **collected**, while he is a bumbling idiot. She knows (of?) the true God while he knows nothing of Him.

21. Why does Daniel refuse the gifts from the king in verse 17? Why does he give him the interpretation none-the-less? (2-3 sentences)

A: He couldn't be bought. He was under **no obligation** to speak, he could speak freely. He's showing that he isn't blessed by the king, but by God. He declares to the king the greatness of God.

22. What is the first thing Daniel says in verse 18? (1 sentence)

A: God is the one who made Neb great. Neb was indeed great, but only because of God.

23. What does Daniel say in verse 19 about Nebuchadnezzar? What is the reason for what Daniel says about Neb given in the verse? (2-3 sentences)

A: Daniel talks about how great Neb was, and yet this great was all due to God. Neb had absolute control, almost... God is always greater, no matter how great Neb was.

24. What key words are used in verse 20? What does this teach us about why God does what He does? (2-3 sentences)

A: **Pride, glory, exalt**. Neb exalted himself and took pride in himself and gloried in himself. But God wanted to show how great He is and so he brought Neb down. God alone wants the glory. He will not share His glory.

25. What does verse 22 teach us about Belshazzar's responsibility for his actions? What does it teach us about what he should have done? (2-3 sentences)

A: He knew all this about his grandfather. He should have humbled his heart. He wasn't even as great as his grandfather. Daniel draws this comparison to make an argument from greater to lesser. How much more should have Belshazzar have humbled himself.

26. What is at stake according to verse 23? What does God want according to this verse? Why does He deserve this according to this verse? (1 paragraph)

*A: God's glory is at stake. He deserves and wants praise and worship. He deserves to be honored. He is the only one that deserves worship because He is the only, true and living God. He holds the universe in His hands, and the life of every living being. We only live and exist because of Him and for Him, and yet we so often live for other things.*

27. How does the chapter end and what does this teach us? Contrast how Belshazzar responded to God's miraculous intervention to how Neb did. (2-3 sentences)

*A: God kills Belshazzar. God won't share His glory. God is sovereign. Our lives are indeed in His hand. We better live for Him! Belshazzar gives zero recognition to God. This is likely why God kills him that very night.*

28. Application: What do we learn about our purpose for living from this chapter?

29. Excursion: Talk about how pride, salvation, and faith are related throughout Scripture.

*A: Note the following passages: Luk 18:14; Phi 3; 1Ti 3:6; also Jam 4:6; 1Pe 5:5; and Mat 18:4; 23:12 and finally Pro 16:5; 3:34; 4:7.*

## **Chapter 6**

30. How does this chapter begin and where do we find Daniel? How old is Daniel at this point? What does this teach us about Daniel and about God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We find Daniel about to be put in charge of the entire kingdom. This was because of Daniel's **faithfulness which came from his faith and fear of God**. We see once again that Daniel didn't rebel against his government and was in submission (ala Rom 13), and yet he **never compromised**. At this point Daniel is an old man and has seen God's faithfulness so frequently throughout his life and has such a cool confidence in God. We also see God sovereignly at work to display His glory to the nations.*

31. What do we learn about Daniel in 6:4? Why is this remarkable for a person of such high position? What does 6:5 teach us about Daniel's faith? (1 paragraph)

*A: They could find no cause for blame against Daniel. This is remarkable for a person in such a high position because with so many responsibilities and decisions being made there are so many opportunities for greed/corruption/failure in some way. We also see that Daniel's faith was well known. They knew he was faithful to God. He was reliable in all he said and did.*

32. Note the use of the word 'law' throughout this chapter. What do you think the author is trying to emphasize by the use of this term? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There is a contrast between **God's law** and **man's law**. The law of the Medes and the Persians is 'irrevocable', but in reality, only God's law is irrevocable! He is the One who never changes and who has supreme authority.*

33. What is at the heart of their request to the king? What do they appeal to? What do they say to try to get him to sign it? (1 sentence)

*A: They are playing to his **pride** and so they butter him up and also **deceive** him (all the presidents, etc.).*

34. How does verse 10 begin? Why does the author begin this verse with this phrase and what does it teach us? How does Daniel respond when he hears about the decree? What do we learn about Daniel's life from this verse? Where did Daniel pray? Why is this significant? Why didn't he pray at a more hidden place? (1 paragraph)

*A: Verse 10 begins by telling us how Daniel responded to the decree. In other words, he **knew** about the decree and acted this way **in light of it**. He was not tricked into this. He was **purposeful**. Daniel responded by praying just as he always had. He was a man of prayer. He prayed three times a day. He prayed openly, at the window, with the window open. It is significant because everyone could see him praying. He did not hide his relationship to God. Everyone knew of his faithfulness to God. To change his habit would have been to bow in some small way to the decree. He took the opportunity to display the greatness of God. He had developed a life of faith and trust, and now at 80+ he wasn't going to change that.*

35. What does Darius try to do when he finds out that Daniel prayed and what does this tell us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Darius tried to rescue Daniel, but was unable to because he was bound by his own law! It also shows us how close he was to Daniel. Daniel had quite an effect on this king! It shows us once again his submission and **care** for rulers **without compromising** his faith.*

36. What is different about Darius and Neb? Why all this emphasis on law? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Darius was bound by his own law! This is a difference between the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. Medo-Persia had a huge emphasis on law and tried to be much more 'kind' to the people they took over. They did not try to assimilate them into their culture as much, but allowed them to keep their local religion. They viewed themselves as **benevolent dictators**.*

37. What does Darius say to Daniel in verse 16? What does this reinforce again? What does Darius do that night and what does that emphasize? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Darius offers a prayer for Daniel. His care for Daniel and Daniel's reputation are both well known. Darius' care is seen in him worrying all night about Daniel. Amazing that Daniel would have such good relationship with these major world powers! What a testimony of his faithfulness!*

38. What is the reason given for Daniel's deliverance in verse 22? What is the reason given for Daniel's deliverance in verse 23? What means did God use to deliver Daniel? Where have we seen this theme elsewhere in Daniel and what do we learn from seeing this theme run throughout the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel was saved because he was **blameless** before God. He was innocent. He was faithful to God and didn't compromise. Furthermore, according to verse 23, Daniel trusted in God. His faith was honored. And really, it was his faith that resulted in his blamelessness. **God blesses faith that acts!** That is what pleases Him because then He receives the glory. God used an angel to shut the lions' mouths. We see angels acting as*

*God's messengers throughout the book of Daniel. We will continue to see them emphasized even greater as the book continues. We learn that God works through means, and uses angels to carry out His will.*

39. How does Darius respond to the whole incident? What is the outcome once again? What does this teach us? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Darius makes a proclamation throughout his whole kingdom about the greatness of God. We see once again how God is working to proclaim His own glory!*

40. Application: What do we learn about prayer from this chapter?

41. Application: What do we learn about our witness from this chapter?

#### 4. God's Sovereignty over the Nations: Daniel 7-9

**Scripture:** Daniel 7-9

**Theme:** God is in Complete Control of History for His Glory, but still Wants us to Plead for His Glory

**Objectives:**

- To be overwhelmed by God's complete sovereignty so that our trust in Him will grow
- To see how God's plan for the world centers around Israel and how that plan is worked out
- To see how the trials God brings the world through are to demonstrate His victory
- To learn humility in our prayer that is concerned with God's glory and not our own
- To learn holy boldness in prayer that reasons with God for His glory
- To see how God loves to answer prayers for His glory

**Reading:**

- Read Daniel 7-9 *five times*

**Questions:**

**Chapter 7**

1. What is the subject matter of chapter 7? What do the four beasts represent? What happens to them? What are key words used in this chapter? (Hint: how does the angel summarize the vision in verses 17 and 18?). (2-3 sentences)

*A: This chapter is about rule and the four beasts represent four kingdoms. Each of these kingdoms is conquered, and ultimately **God's kingdom** is established. Key words include king, kingdom, dominion, judgment, court, and sovereignty.*

2. How are the four animals described in chapter 7? What are unique descriptions given to each? (1 paragraph)

*A: The lion was given a mind of a man, representing Neb who was humbled and then exalted. The bear had two sides, one greater than the other, representing the Medo-Persian empire, of which the Persians were greater. The third beast was the leopard, known for its great speed (and having 4 wings). Alexander the Great was known for his speed in conquest (Blitzkrieg). It had four heads representing the four generals that took over after Alexander died. The fourth beast was different and represented Rome. Rome was known for its great strength. Ultimately, the Roman kingdom will be destroyed by Christ's kingdom.*

3. What is said about the 'Ancient of Days?' How is He described? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He is pictured as white and surrounded by fire, picturing His **purity** and **justice**. The court sat around Him as He is the **judge of the earth**, and the books were opened showing that He is going to judge.*

4. What is said about the 'Son of Man?' (1 sentence)

*A: He came before the Ancient of Days and **the kingdom was presented to Him as He who will rule over the earth!***

5. What is said about the 'Little Horn?' (2-3 sentences)

*A: He is boasting great things with his mouth. His **arrogant pride** is emphasized. He will be judged for this. He attacked and prevailed over the saints. He will even have the audacity to change the times and the law, speaking of his great authority and power.*

6. What is said about the saints in the passage? (1 sentence)

*A: They will be overpowered by the little horn for 3 1/2 years, but then they will be given the kingdom.*

### Chapter 8

7. Contrast the scope of chapter 8 with chapter 7? Is there any significance to the fact that chapter 7 is written in Aramaic and chapter 8 in Hebrew? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 8 narrows in and talks about how these world events effect **Israel**, whereas the previous chapter didn't talk about the nation of Israel, but was more **global** in scope. This narrowing of focus fits with the change back to Hebrew.*

8. Compare the goat and ram from chapter 8 with the animals from chapter 7. Are there any similarities? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yes, both the ram and the bear had a side/horn that was bigger than the other representing Medo-Persia. Both the goat and the leopard have their speed emphasized representing Greece's great speed. Both the goat and leopard also have four parts that come from them.*

9. Compare and contrast the little horn of chapter 8 with that of chapter 7. (1 paragraph)

*A: Both are proud. Both have to do with a 3 1/2 year period (7:25; 8:14, spoken of frequently in Revelation). Yet one is in Greece and one in Rome. The abomination of desolation is clearly shown to be future by Jesus in Matthew 24:15. Revelation also shows that this Anti-Christ is future. Yet history would show that much of this was played out in Antiochus Epiphanes. So, both point to the Anti-Christ, in chapter 7 directly, while in chapter 8 through him being **prefigured** in Antiochus Epiphanes. In 7:24, the 10 kings are destroyed by Christ's kingdom (cf. 2:42) and also correlates to Revelation (17:12). Chapter 8 adds the description of his wisdom and cunning to his great pride. He will be full of deceit.*

10. What did the little horn do in 8:11-14? (1 sentence)

*A: He stops the sacrifice and desolates the temple. He is opposed to God and His people.*

11. What was Daniel's response to both this vision and the previous one? Why? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He was overwhelmed and sick. Because the vision was overwhelming of course! He didn't understand it. It involved so great a span of time, it foretold thousands of years of world history in an enigmatic vision!*

12. Thought question: What do we learn from all the events of these two chapters? How do both chapters end? What does all the trouble before the end remind us of? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is in complete control and is completely sovereign over all the events of history. Even the "bad" things that happen He has foretold because He laid them all out! They are all working out for His purpose. Both chapters end with **God's Kingdom coming**. It will be given to the Son of Man, and the saints will rule with Him. This gives us great hope. God's kingdom is not yet here, but it is coming!*

13. Application: How should we respond to these chapters? What is our hope in? Can we trust God even if things get worse? What are we longing and hoping for? How should knowing the end change our life today?

### **Chapter 9**

14. What caused Daniel to begin praying according to 9:2? Read Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10ff. to see what Daniel was referring to. Why would this cause Daniel to pray (think about this!)? What does this teach us about the purpose of prayer (think about this!)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel **realized** that God's promise that the exile would last 70 years was about to be over! **So** he prayed. Even though God's Word was sure, Daniel prayed that God would do what He said. In prayer we plead God's revealed will. We pray for what we know He wants. We pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

15. What does 9:3 teach us about how Daniel approached God in prayer? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel prayed **earnestly** and **humbly**. He came with a recognition of who he was in light of who God is. But he also came with earnestness and boldness before God **because** he was seeking God's will.*

16. How does Daniel begin his prayer in 9:4? What specifically does He say about God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel begins by extolling the greatness of God. This is a very God centered prayer. God is faithful. God is righteous. In everything God does, God deserves to be praised!*

17. What is interesting about what Daniel says in 9:5? How does Daniel himself relate to what he says? What does this imply about Daniel's relationship to the rest of the nation? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel includes himself, even though he was righteous. He was very **humble**. This also shows the corporate solidarity of the nation. Daniel **identified** himself with the nation. We are all part of the problem and not the solution!*

18. How does Daniel continue to speak of himself and his people, verses how he speaks of God (in 9:4-14)? What does this teach us about the differences between God and His people? What does this teach us about our attitude toward God? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is completely **righteous** and **faithful**. His faithfulness is shown in that even in His judgment He is doing exactly what He said He would do. Moreover, His judgment manifests His perfect **righteousness** in justly punishing sin and in upholding His word. The people are sinful and rebellious. We do not obey God as we should. So God is righteous and we are not. This should teach us to be extremely **humble** before Him. Yet even in His punishment, we see that Yahweh is **compassionate** and **forgiving** (9:9). There is always hope for God's people and He has not completely wiped them out. If we humble ourselves God will hear! This is because of His **nature** as a compassionate and forgiving God!*

19. What changes in the prayer starting in 9:15 (and marked by the 'now')? Why does Daniel mention the Exodus, and how does this relate to the rest of the prayer? (1 paragraph)

*A: Finally, Daniel makes **petition** for what he is praying about. But even so, he has to get in two more admissions of their sin and wickedness! Daniel mentions the Exodus because all of history is about God showing His reputation. Currently, it appears as though God's reputation is in the dirt. But Daniel is going to pray that once again God's **reputation** be **exalted** like it was in the Exodus!*

20. What does Daniel specifically pray for in verses 9:15-19 (there are three specific things)? (1 sentence)

*A: Daniel prays for God's **city**, God's **people**, and God's **sanctuary**.*

21. What is the basis upon which Daniel asks requests of God in 9:15-19? What are Yahweh's righteous acts (9:16) and how do these relate to Daniel's basis for prayer? (1 paragraph)

*A: The basis of Daniel's prayer is God's own **name** and **reputation** and **glory**, for God's own sake! Once again, this is a very God centered prayer. Daniel also prays based on God's **attributes**. God is **merciful**, so Daniel prays that God show **mercy**. God is **faithful**, so Daniel prays that God **keeps His promises**. He prays based on who God is and what God has revealed, His character and will. This is the basis for everything that Daniel prays. This is why it is so important to know God and His will in order for us to pray for what God wants us to pray for! Notice as well that Daniel asks the Lord to act in accordance with His righteous acts. The concept of righteous acts are the deeds that Yahweh has done in righteousness. This terminology is used in Scripture of acts of God's powerful salvation, like at the Exodus. In the Exodus, Yahweh **vindicated His righteousness** by His powerful judgement of His wicked enemies, and His powerful salvation of His children. As wicked Pharaoh had enslaved God's people, it was as if evil was triumphing. Justice was not being upheld. But by Yahweh's powerful act of **salvation** He judged wickedness and saved the humble, and not only that but He also vindicates His promises in faithfulness. Thus in God's powerful salvation of the humble from the wicked God demonstrates His righteousness. Thus Daniel is asking Yahweh to display His righteousness as He has in the past!*

22. How would you characterize or describe Daniel's petitions in 9:15-19? Why do you think he prays like this? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Daniel is **bold**. He can pray with this kind of boldness because He is praying for what he knows God wants, His own glory. He is praying based **solidly** on what God has **revealed**.*

23. What do verses 9:20-23 teach us about the relationship between the vision given in 9:24-27, with the prayer? What does the timing of the response (see verse 23) teach us about how God answers prayer? What else do we learn about the reason why God answered this prayer? (1 paragraph)

*A: The fact that the answer came while he was still praying shows that the vision is in direct response to the prayer. The timing also shows that God hears prayers immediately, and often even acts **immediately**, but that we don't often see the results until later! There are **spiritual** factors at work which we cannot see. Notice as well that Daniel was highly esteemed. Probably this was because of his humility and passion for God's glory and not his own!*



24. What is the vision in verses 9:24-27 about? Why are these things important to Daniel? to God? How are these things related to the prayer? (1 paragraph)

*A: This vision is about exactly what Daniel prayed for: God's **people**, God's **city**, and God's **sanctuary**. God's whole plan for the world is wrapped up in these three things. These are the very things that Daniel prayed about. God's glory is wrapped up in His plan to use His people to bless the world, that's why Daniel prayed as he did. God's people, sanctuary, and city are called by His name. For them to be desolated is for God's name to be in the dirt! Daniel prayed for God's own glory to be exalted. And so God answered!*

25. How does the vision in 9:24-27 relate to the previous two chapters (7-8)? How would you summarize what is going to happen in this vision? Who are the two main characters? (1 paragraph)

*A: Just as before, we see the Anti-Christ and the Messiah. The Messiah is going to come in and institute God's kingdom, one of everlasting righteousness and the end of sin. But the Anti-Christ is going to come in and oppose God and His plan before the end comes. But in the end God will destroy the Anti-Christ and be the victor in the final battle over evil.*

26. Application: What does this chapter teach us about how to pray? What should be the basis for our prayers? What should be the purpose for which we are praying? What are attitudes we should have in prayer? What do we learn about how God responds to prayer and how should that effect our prayers?

### 5. A Message of Great Conflict: Daniel 10-12

**Scripture:** Daniel 10-12

**Theme:** There is a Spiritual Battle going on for the Glory of God that centers on Humanity

**Objectives:**

- To understand how prayer impacts the spiritual world in a way that encourages us to pray
- To understand the purpose of fasting and its relationship to prayer
- To once again see Yahweh's sovereignty so that we will trust and depend on Him
- To better grasp how to live in the middle of circumstances we don't understand

**Reading:**

- Read Daniel 10-12 *five times*

**Questions:**

**Chapter 10**

1. Where is the actual vision/message mentioned in 10:1 given? What is the nature of the vision according to 10:1? Who is involved in the vision? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Chapter 11 is the vision mentioned in 10:1. It is a vision of great **battles** ("great conflict") concerning various kings, beginning with Alexander and telescoping until the Anti-Christ. Both good and bad angels, good and bad kings are involved. It is an epic battle, with Israel at the center.*

2. What is the context in which this vision was given to Daniel? What was Daniel doing? What was the timing of these events? What is the relationship between this vision given to Daniel and what he was doing? Who gives this message and how does it get revealed to Daniel? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel was mourning and fasting for three weeks. The vision came at the **end of these three weeks**. God answers prayer! As in chapter 9, the vision comes in response to Daniel's petitions, yet it took three weeks for him to get the answer! At the end of the three weeks, Daniel sees a vision of a man dressed in linen, glowing like fire and awestruck and overwhelmed, Daniel falls asleep with his face to the ground. Then the angel who had been sent to Daniel arrives and strengthens him to receive the message.*

3. Think about why Daniel was fasting and mourning. How does chapter 9 fit into this? What kind of a fast did he do according to 10:3? Why these things? What does this teach us about fasting? What was he doing while he was fasting according to 10:12? Think about what we can learn about the purpose of fasting from these connections. (1 paragraph)

*A: He was **humbling** himself and giving himself to **understand** (10:12). He was aligning himself with God's will, seeking to understand it. It is also clear that he was **praying**, in that God heard his words (10:12). He fasted from delicacies, wine, and meat. Here we learn that there is a purpose for fasting from things other than simply a complete and total fast of all food. By fasting from delicacies, wine, and meat, he was fasting from the finer enjoyments of life. It is important to remind ourselves what is truly important in this life, and that is the spiritual aspects of life. He was weaning himself from the world to be able to humble himself before God. By implication, fasting from anything that distracts us from God can be good. But as is often the case, fasting is closely linked with prayer.*

4. Why was this vision given to Daniel? What does 10:12 add to your understanding? (1 paragraph)

*A: Twice it states in chapter 10 that Daniel was a 'treasured' man (note that the word 'treasured' is the same word as 'tasty food' in this chapter! This is probably an intentional wordplay, showing that God delights in us like we delight in delicious food!). As with Abraham (Gen 18:17), God revealed His plan to Daniel as one who was trusted and valued as part of that plan. As with the rest of the book of Daniel, the vision of the future shows God's complete sovereignty over the events of history. He is in complete control. And even though the Gentile nations are ruling over the world for the time being, God will ultimately bring in His kingdom and exalt His people. The answer is said explicitly to be given in **response to Daniel's prayers**. God heard his **humble** petitions and sent an answer. Daniel was praying that God would fulfill His purpose for His people, would glorify Himself and fulfill His good promises (cf. ch 9 for more explicit mention of this), and so God revealed how His plan was going to work out.*

5. Think about the timing given in 10:12-13. Put the following events in chronological order and think about what this teaches us: Daniel begins praying, Daniel receives the vision, the angel is sent to Daniel with the answer. What does this teach us about the relationship between prayer and spiritual events? What do we learn about spiritual warfare? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As soon as Daniel begins to pray the angel is sent with an answer. However, the angel is **opposed for three weeks** by the prince of Persia. Finally, Michael came to help this angel overcome the prince of Persia. Here we see such a clear connection between prayer and **spiritual battles** going on!*

6. Was Daniel aware of the specific spiritual battle going on? What was his 'part' in it? What does the angel continually do to/for Daniel in this chapter? Read Ephesians 6:10-20 about spiritual warfare and look for similar connections. (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel was not aware of the specifics of what was going on in the spiritual battle. He did not know about angels battling to bring an answer to his prayer. However, as part of his praying, there were spiritual realities going on while he was unaware. And his prayer influenced the spiritual realm. But his part was to pray! And throughout the vision, the angel comes to Daniel to strengthen him, and to encourage him to be courageous and not be afraid! We need spiritual empowerment to be courageous and strong to fight the battle. Similarly in Ephesians, in one of the clearest sections on 'spiritual warfare' in Scripture, we focus on spiritual truths and character (truth, righteousness, readiness of the gospel, faith, salvation, and God's Word), and our primary response is to pray.*

7. Who are the various characters in these chapters, "The prince of Persia," "The prince of Greece," "Michael?" What do their titles/names imply about what they do? Who was talking to Daniel? What does he do in 11:1? What does all of this teach us about spiritual warfare? What should our response to all of this be? (1 paragraph)

*A: These appear to be various 'angels' and spirits for and against God and His plan. There seems to be some connection between the **angels** and **various countries**. Michael is called 'your prince' seeming to imply he was closely associated with Israel. The angel speaking with Daniel was involved in coming alongside Darius in some way as well. All of this teaches us not to look at the world from a naturalistic standpoint. There are spiritual forces at play and battles going on which we cannot see. These Gentile world kingdoms appear to be spiritually driven! This should cause us to be extremely prayerful as we think about the implications of all this on our lives! We need to pray!*

8. Application: How does a greater understanding of the spiritual battles going on impact your personal prayer life? How does better understanding the purpose of fasting impact your prayer life?

### Chapter 11

9. According to 10:1 and 10:14 what is the vision about? Who are the two primary characters in chapter 11 according to the text? Why is all this history given and how does it fit into the purpose of the vision? How does this relate to Daniel's prayer? (2-3 sentences)

*A: As we saw in chapter 10, the vision of chapter 11 is a vision about great conflict (war), that pertains to Israel. Thus the vision is all about the king of the North and the king of the South. These are two dynasties that came out of Alexander's kingdom (the Seleucids in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt). Thus, the focus on the king of the North and the king of the South is because they keep attacking each other and passing through Israel in the process.*

10. Briefly summarize what happens in chapter 11:1-35. Identify as many people in the vision as you can. For this question, feel free to reference commentaries and historical resources (even Wikipedia has a lot of info on the history involved)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The Persian kings are Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, and Xerxes. Xerxes is the 4<sup>th</sup> king of 11:2. He amassed a huge army and attacked Greece in 480 B.C. He lost badly and never recovered. The mighty king in 11:3 is of course Alexander the Great. [As an aside, Alexander's conquest is why Greek became the lingua franca of the world from his day through the Roman Empire...] Verse 4 is about Alexander's death and division of his kingdom into four dynasties. The two that are pertinent to chapter 11 are the Seleucids in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt. 11:5 starts with Ptolemy I and Seleucus I. Berenice is the daughter of the King of the South (Ptolemy II) in 11:6 given in marriage to Antiochus II Theos. It was a rough marriage and so after Ptolemy II dies, Antiochus divorces her, marries his old wife Laodice, who poisons him and kills Berenice and her son. 11:7 is about Ptolemy III, who attacks Syria to avenge his sister's death. 11:10-16 is about Antiochus III (the Great), and his conquest of the Holy Land (from Egypt's control). Even Hannibal (the great military strategist from Carthage that conquered most of Italy with a brigade of Elephants) came to be Antiochus III's advisor in his fight against Rome.*

11. Who is being talked about in 11:21-35? Why is this so significant? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 11:21 starts talking about Antiochus IV, Epiphanes. The ships of Kittim in 11:30 is talking about the Romans who came to the aid of the Ptolemies, and who thwarted Antiochus' plans who was then enraged on his way back home and desecrated the temple (11:30-31). The Roman consul, Gaius Popillius Laenas, reportedly drew a circle around Antiochus and demanded that he decide whether to retreat, or face the wrath of Rome. Humiliated, Antiochus decided to retreat. The history of Antiochus' attack of God's people is given in 1 and 2 Maccabees.*

12. Why do you think the descriptions of 'the king' are just given in 11:36-39? Who is this king? What hints are there in the text? How does verse 35 end? Note the use of 'time of the end' in this chapter and how does this effect/help interpretation? Also, read 12:10 and 11:35 together. What similarities do you see and how do these effect our interpretation or help us understand? (1 paragraph)

*A: There seems to be a break/shift at verse 36, which I believe now moves from Antiochus Epiphanes to the Anti-Christ. Verse 35 seems to end a section with a conclusion, speaking of the end for the appointed time. Then 36 introduces a king, and tells us about him and gives background, which would be strange if we are still talking about Antiochus. Also, the descriptions of the king of 36ff. does not match what we know about Antiochus. The references to the time of the end in verse 35 and 40 seem to support this interpretation. Verse 35 concludes the portion dealing with past history and looks forward to the time of the end, and verse 40 in the middle of this section takes place at the time of the end, a phrase usually reserved for 'end times'. The fact that 12:10 has the same verbs as 11:35 would also seem to suggest that 11:35 is a verse that transitions to 'end times', as 12:10 is clearly at the end.*

### **Chapter 12**

13. What time frame is 12:1-3 in? How does 12:1 connect temporally to what precedes it? (1 paragraph)

*A: Clearly, this is at the end as the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked is described. 12:1 happens 'at that time' clearly implying that the time frame is the same as 11:45 and prior. Thus somewhere in chapter 11 there must be a time break between Alexander the Great and following (clearly described in the beginning of chapter 11) and the 'end times'. Thus, all of this suggests a break at verse 36 to the 'end times' and that really, chapter 12 should start in 11:36...*

14. What is the big picture of what will happen to God's people in chapter 11 and early in 12? What is God's purpose in doing this? Where do you see this in the text? (1 sentence)

*A: They will be persecuted to refine them (see 11:35; 12:10).*

15. What was Daniel's response to be to all this? What about other saints? Where do we see this in the text? How does this portion of Daniel encourage believers to respond to events surrounding them? (1 paragraph)

*A: Daniel was to 'Go his way' (12:9). He wasn't to be overly concerned about the details. But the purpose was to encourage and strengthen him, to wait and persevere (12:12). To show him that God is still in control. Even though Gentile world powers are ruling over the world, and were to continue to do so for some time!, God has laid out history and He is the one planning it out. We need to persevere in the midst of persecution, God is using it to refine His people and ultimately He will judge the wicked and bless the righteous. There will be a judgment, God is the judge! We need an unflinching trust in God's sovereignty if we are to persevere through the midst of great persecution, when it appears that God is not in control. But this is all part of His plan.*

16. Application: What does this section teach us about how we should live?

## 6. Yahweh's Sovereign and Tender Care: Ruth

**Scripture:** Ruth 1-4

**Theme:** Yahweh is Sovereign over and Caring for those who Seek Refuge in Him and oversees even the smallest events for His wonderful plan

**Objectives:**

- To understand how the author skilfully tells his narrative to make his point
- To be challenged by Boaz and Ruth's faithfulness to Yahweh and their strength of character
- To see God's Sovereign attendance of every aspect of life
- To understand the difference between our responsibility and God's
- To worship God as we see how He works in history

**Reading:**

- Read Ruth *four times*

**Questions:**

**Chapter 1**

1. What is the time frame of the book given at the beginning of the book? Why is this significant from the standpoint of the end of the book and how it is resolved? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It is the time when the judges judged. There was **no king**. At the end of the book we find the descendant is king David, God's righteous King!*

2. Was it significant that Elimelech and his family left Israel? What is the significance? Why or why not? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It seems to be somewhat significant that Elimelech left the land. It seems likely that they shouldn't have left the promised land. They should have **entrusted** themselves to Yahweh, and taken "refuge under His wings."*

3. What is significant about them being in Moab for 10 years? What is conspicuously absent after 10 years? What would Naomi be expecting after her two sons got married? (1 sentence)

*A: After 10 years they don't have an **heir**! This whole story centers around this plot line.*

4. What was the situation Naomi found herself in at the end of 1:5? Name all her circumstances and think about what that would have meant for her in that day and time. How does the author place the focus on Naomi in the text? (2-3 sentences)

*A: She was a husbandless, childless, penniless, older, foreigner. Notice how the text singles her out by saying that 'she was left' in 1:3 and 1:5, by calling Elimelech Naomi's husband, and calling Mahlon and Chilion, her two sons.*

5. What does Yahweh do and how does Naomi respond in 1:6-7 that is the key verb in this chapter? What does this signify? (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh **visits** His people. And Naomi responds by returning. The key Hebrew word *Shüv* (= turn/repent) is repeated 12 times in chapter 1. She was **returning** to Israel, and things were going to **turn** around for her. Due to *shüv* being the Hebrew word used for repent, the implication may be that Naomi is repenting...*

6. Why does Naomi tell her daughter-in-laws to return? What are her reason(s)? And what key word does Naomi use in 1:8 in her argument and why is it significant here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Naomi tells them to return because it will be **best** for them. They have the best chance of having a decent life in Moab. They have the best chance of finding a husband there (from a human standpoint). We need to remember how difficult it was to be a widow in those days... The key word *hesed* is used in 1:8. Ruth had shown **loyal love** to Naomi, even though Ruth was a **foreigner**.*

7. How do Orpah and Ruth respond? How would you characterize Ruth's speech? What does she claim in it? What does she say that is significant given that she is a Moabitess? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This is clutch. This is amazing **faithfulness**. Ruth is trusting in Yahweh. She claims that Yahweh is her God, which is significant given that she is a Moabitess. She even states that she will stay in Israel after Naomi dies!*

8. What is Naomi's view of Yahweh? How/why is this significant for the rest of the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh's hand is against Naomi and He had dealt bitterly with her, had afflicted her, and brought her back empty (1:13; 1:20-21). Naomi views Yahweh as completely sovereign, which is dark at the beginning but is also the **basis for hope**. Everything changes for Naomi as she returns to Israel and places herself under the care of a sovereign God.*

9. How does the chapter end (1:22)? What is said in the chapter that may be foreshadowing the future? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The chapter ends with the two of them returning to Israel. It is a sad and bleak situation. However, there is a **glimpse of hope** hinted at in that it is the beginning of harvest.*

## Chapter 2

10. How does chapter 2 begin? What is the first word of the chapter and what does this signify? How is this information significant for the rest of the chapter/story? What key word is used to describe Boaz that is used throughout the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It begins with a 'now' (waw disjunctive). This shows that this is background information that is going to be significant for the development of the story that the narrator wanted to give the reader up front. It is very significant that Boaz was a **relative** as he will turn out to be a '**kinsman redeemer**'. The key word used to describe Boaz is *hayil* = strong. It can be used to describe physical strength, but also ability or capability. It can often be used to describe someone with money, a person of means. But in Ruth it is largely used to describe **strength of character**.*

11. What does Ruth do as the chapter begins? What does this show about her? (2-3 sentences)

*A: She plans to go work in the fields, gathering sheaves. She takes **initiative!** This was hard work and would be mere subsistence living. This shows her **faithfulness** to Naomi and also **her** strength (physically and of character). We also see her **dependence** on God, she needed grace/favor!*

12. What does 2:3 state that is a "striking understatement"? How is this significant for the development and main point of the story? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Ruth '**chanced a chance.**' But the striking understatement really emphasized **God's complete sovereign control**. She happened to end up in the very field of the strong, rich relative mentioned in the first verse!*

13. How is Boaz introduced (the beginning of verse 4)? What does this smack of as well? What do we immediately learn about Boaz? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Behold! What do you know, chance upon chance, Boaz shows up! Once again the **irony is thick**. Notice how **Yahweh** is immediately on his lips. Notice how even **his workers** are in good relationship with him! Clearly he is not oppressing them, but is generous and caring, living out OT law and caring about justice!*

14. What do we see about Ruth in 2:7? (1 sentence)

*A: Ruth is clearly seen to be a **hard worker** in 2:7!*

15. When the moment of truth comes, and Boaz and Ruth talk for the first time, what does Boaz say and how does he treat her? (1 sentence)

*A: He treats her as a **daughter**: notice the tenderness and graciousness that Boaz shows this lowly foreigner!*

16. What does Boaz say that Ruth did in 2:11 that reminds of us of 1:16? What does Boaz finally say in 2:12? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Ruth **abandoned** her homeland, but she wouldn't **abandon** Naomi! This points to the cost of her faithfulness and thus highlights how significant it is. He prays that Yahweh would protect and care for this widow, since she has taken refuge under His wings!*

17. Then what does Boaz do in 2:14? What about in 15-16? (2-3 sentences)

*A: He **serves** her as he gives her food to eat. Then he shows even surpassing kindness and graciousness in **generosity** in having his harvesters pull out extra sheaves for her and not rebuking her for even taking what she was not supposed to.*

18. How does Naomi respond when she sees Ruth? What key word does she use and what does it signify? How much barley was she able to glean (in modern weights)? (2 sentences)

*A: Naomi is completely **shocked** at how much she was able to glean (this was about 30 pounds worth). Clearly, this was from God, and thus was a **blessing**. There is blessing for being in trusting relationship to Yahweh!*



19. What do neither of these two women up until the very end of verse 19 know that the reader has known all along? (1 sentence)

*A: Finally, the suspense builds until the last word of verse 19 reveals that it was Boaz who has shown this great kindness, and he is a relative.*

20. What words occur in verse 2:20 that we have seen before and what do they signify? What are their significance? (1 paragraph)

*A: Notice the use of the word 'abandon' again? Note also that in Hebrew, this word has the same three letters as Boaz, "azb" vs. "baz", and so is probably a word play. Note also the use of **hesed** and **blessed**. Yahweh is **faithful**, He does not **abandon** His people but shows **loyal love** to them. Yahweh deserves blessing for the blessing He bestows! Furthermore, the key concept of a (kinsman redeemer) is brought in here which is one of the main ideas in the book. A kinsman redeemer is someone who is near of kin, a near relative, who is able to **ransom** a family member according to OT law.*

21. Where does the story leave off after chapter 2? What are we anticipating/hoping for? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The problem of the food has been avoided, but we have not reached full resolution yet. God has been faithful, but there is still something lacking, an **heir**!*

22. Application: What do we learn about Yahweh from these two chapters? What do we learn about how we should live in light of who Yahweh is?

### Chapter 3

23. What was Naomi going to seek for Ruth according to 3:1? What does this mean? (2-3 sentences)

*A: She was going to seek **rest**, that it would go well for her. She clearly has in mind here seeking for a husband for Ruth and the security and rest that comes with that.*

24. What was the threshing floor known for in Scripture (cf. Hosea 9:1 and also Ruth 3:14)? What time was Ruth going to go? How was she to go? What kind of nuances does the word 'uncover' (cf. Gen 9:21; Exo 20:26; Lev 18 many times, etc.) have? What about the word 'feet' (which is used in various idoms, including 'covering the feet' referring to going to the bathroom, cf. Jdg 3:24; 1Sa 24:4)? What about 'lying with a man' (cf. Deu 22:22)? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Threshing floors were known for **licentiousness**. **Night** is also not a time known for doing good. She was to get all dressed up and go to him after he was done eating and drinking. 'Uncover', 'feet', and 'lying with a man' are all sexual innuendos common throughout Scripture.*

25. Describe how Boaz would have felt in verse 3:8? (1 sentence)

*A: He would be shocked! Here is this upright Israelite who wakes up in the middle of the night to find a woman lying at his feet!*

26. What does Ruth ask Boaz to do in 3:9? Notice the word that she uses here and the wordplay with a word in 2:12 (the word for *wing* and *covering* are the same). See Eze 16:8 for this phrase. What is the basis for her request? Think about the significance of this in their culture. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Ruth asks Boaz to marry her! The basis of her asking this is that he is a redeemer. Thus it was within their law and culture that she would ask this. Somewhat different from a woman asking a man to marry her today!*

27. Why does Boaz praise Ruth and what key words does he use of her in 3:10-11? Where have we see the key word in verse 11 before in Ruth and elsewhere in Scripture (hint: end of Proverbs) (1 paragraph)

*A: Here we see **hesed**, **blessed**, and **hayil** again. Boaz praised Ruth for not going after the younger men. Apparently Boaz is older. She didn't chase after young men, whether they be rich or not. She was not selfish in pursuing Boaz. Plus, Ruth was a woman of **hayil**. This is the key word in Proverbs 31. Her strength lay in her character: trustworthy (Pro 31:11), industrious (Pro 31:13-15, 27), shrewd (Pro 31:16, 18), generous (Pro 31:20), and efficient (Pro 31:29). She enhanced rather than detracted from her husband's reputation (Pro 31:23; 12:4). The people of Bethlehem saw the same traits in Ruth, sacrifice (Rut 1:16-17; 2:11), loyalty (Rut 3:10), industry (Rut 2). Ruth would make a good match for Boaz, who himself was **hayil** (Rut 2:1).*

28. Just when it looks like there is going to be resolution to the story, what happens? (2-3 sentences)

*A: A plot twist! There is a nearer redeemer! Will he redeem? What will happen to Ruth and Boaz?*

29. As we come to 3:14, what has happened at this shady place? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Despite the innuendos the author used earlier, absolutely nothing sexual happened! We see that both Boaz and Ruth are people of high moral **integrity**. Boaz is even concerned for her **reputation**. The author setup the situation to show what a **temptation** it would have been and yet how the couple came out unscathed. Note also that the word used in 3:13 for 'stay the night' is different than the word used earlier (in 3:7, 8 for 'lie down') and free from possible innuendos, possibly a way that the author is trying to make clear that nothing happened sexually.*

30. Where have we seen the word 'empty' before in the story (as here in 3:17)? What is the author emphasizing by reusing it here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This word 'empty' is the word from 1:21. Resolution to the story is being brought about by Yahweh. She who came back to Israel empty, is now full!*

31. How does the chapter end? What does Ruth need to do now? How is this (3:18) contrasted with the beginning of the chapter (3:1)? Comment on how the concept of 'rest' is being contrasted in these verses. Why? What is the author trying to communicate? (1 paragraph)

*A: Now all she needs to do is **wait**. Earlier she needed to act, now she needs to trust God. She needs to see how the matter will fall out, and there is nothing she can do about it. There may be an intentional lesson here that there are times we need to act and do our part and take initiative, and times when we simply need to trust our loving heavenly Father.*

32. Thought question: At the start of chapter 3, does Naomi and Ruth simply wait for God to act or do they take action? Was this taking things into their own hands? Was it right? Why or why not? How does the author frame it?

#### Chapter 4

33. How does chapter 4 begin? Comment on the timing of the events in this verse? What is the effect of Boaz calling the other redeemer 'so and so'? (1 paragraph)

*A: What do you know, just as Boaz goes to the gate, the other redeemer shows up! What a coincidence! By calling the other redeemer 'so and so', his place in the story is minimized. He doesn't even **deserve mention** in the story. As we'll see later, **name and posterity** is very significant in this story. He who refused to raise up a line for a widow is refused a place in the story.*

34. How does Boaz lay out the offer to the other redeemer in verses 3-5? What are the two primary aspects to this redemption? Does Boaz seem to have any method to what he is saying? Why or why not? (1 paragraph)

*A: He first lays out only the land aspect of the redemption. With only this in view it seems like a pretty good deal, simply care for a widow until she dies and you get a bunch more land. Boaz seems to be keeping out the key aspect of the redemption, ie. Ruth, until a key moment. He is wise in his dealings as he wants to redeem the land and take Ruth as his wife. Although a greater risk, his generosity and concern for the ladies is of greater concern for him than other matters. As earlier in the story, the important factor of an heir is very important.*

35. Why does so-and-so change his mind? What aspect of the redemption was undesirable to him? Why was this undesirable to him? What is his reasoning (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

*A: He changes his mind once he finds out that he will need to take Ruth as his wife. In that day and time, raising up a line was very important. Also very important is the idea of inheritance. The idea here is that if he takes another wife, his inheritance will need to be further divided amongst her and her children. Thus the inheritance for his existing children would be endangered, and they might not be able to prosper. It's not so much that old so-and-so was doing anything wrong here, he merely takes the normal path. By contrast, Boaz shows great *hesed* and care for Naomi and Ruth.*

36. What is the main point of verses 4:7-11 (especially the part about witnesses and the sandal)? What do we learn about the practice of redemption and the fact that Boaz bought from Naomi? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We see here clearly that everything was done fairly, justly, and legally. We also see that Naomi was the one who instigated chapter 3. It was her land to sell, and in that culture she was the one whose family line was in danger, and so helps us to understand the culture better as well as the message of the book.*

37. What do the people say for Boaz in verses 11-12? What key word do they use again in verse 11? (1 paragraph)

*A: They offer a **blessing** upon him that his line would be great. Notice the importance of having a name once again (4:11). Rachel and Leah were the two founding mothers of the nation of Israel. Tamar was the*

*founding mother of Judah, who herself was a foreigner. The foreigner has been accepted into the nation. The Moabitess has indeed become the wife of an Israelite. This may be a major point of the story, that foreigners who are faithful can join the nation. Once again hayil comes out as a major key word in this section.*

38. What all happens in verse 13? Why does the author moves so quickly over such a long period of time? Who is significantly mentioned again in this verse? What is said about them? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The author is moving the story to the important point, the birth of a son! Yahweh acts once again! He has been sovereignly working out all the coincidences all along. Now, once again at the end of the book (forming a bracket with the beginning), He is explicitly stated as acting.*

39. What do the women say in verses 14-15? What is significant here? What is said about Ruth in 4:15? (1 paragraph)

*A: Yahweh is the one who deserves all the praise. He gets the credit! For Yahweh to ensure that she was not left without a redeemer, He had to be behind everything that happened in the book! Each step was necessary! Yahweh truly is sovereign even over the smallest events of our lives. He cares for poor widows. He cares for foreigners. **This is a major point of this book!** Note once again note the significance of a name/reputation. As we'll see at the end of the story, Boaz gets quite the name as being the ancestor of David, and even of the Messiah! Ruth is better than seven sons! What an amazing testimony of the faithfulness of this foreigner!*

40. What final surprise do we find out at the end of the story? What significance does this add to the whole book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Not only do we see God's faithfulness in caring for a widow and a foreigner, and that He is sovereign in doing so. But we see that these small, everyday occurrences were used by God in a major way to bring about His king, David. Ultimately God used these events to bring about His Messiah who will rule over all the earth. "Suddenly, the simple, clever human story of two struggling widows takes on a startling new dimension. It becomes a bright, radiant thread woven into the fabric of Israel's larger national history" All of the seemingly hyperbolic statements were not exaggerations at all. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz turned out to found a ruling dynasty. From a Moabite immigrant no less! How generously Yahweh rewards those who seek refuge under His wings! Yahweh's guidance takes on even more meaning. By His divine providence He used two lowly widows to change the nation, and indeed the world. The bitter question of whether God was still king (Elimelech) is answered. He is the king. And a main point of the author, that Yahweh had ordained David's dynasty/rule is answered (Hubbard, Ruth).*

41. Thought question: What reversals have occurred in this story? (1 paragraph)

*A: All is resolved, first in the court and then in the home. Bitterness to joy. Doubt to certainty. Uneasiness to security. Women who welcome Naomi's sad return (Rut 1:19) greet the son's happy birth (Rut 4:14-15). The one named Mara had a son named Obed. The empty (Rut 1:21) one was made full (Rut 2:18; 3:17). Two dead children (Rut 1:5) was replaced by a new child (Rut 4:17). The near extinction of the family line averted. A foreigner becomes an Israelite. She has rest (Rut 1:9). Her rest answered prayer (Rut 3:9; 1:8-9; 2:12). Her wages were paid (Rut 2:12 cf. Rut 3:10). And ultimately God brings about the dynasty through whom His King will come (Hubbard)!*

42. Application: What do we learn in this story about Yahweh? How should we respond to Him?
43. Application: In what ways were Boaz and Ruth exemplary (think about and list several ways with personal applications)?

## 7. God's Good Gift: Song of Songs

**Scripture:** Song of Songs

**Theme:** Love is Good because Love is from God

**Objectives:**

- To think through what love is and what love looks like
- To understand that sex and sexuality are good gifts from God
- To grow in wisdom understanding our sexuality

**Reading:**

- Read Song of Songs *three times*

**Questions:**

1. What is the setting and background of the book? Who is the author? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It was most likely written by Solomon since the title of the book is "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's". [Background Solomon] It definitely has an air of **wisdom literature** to it, much like Proverbs. It is not written to call out the nation to repentance, but simply shows us the **beauty of love** in song form. [Shulem/Shunem Sol 6:13, 1Ki 1:3]*

2. How do you think Song of Songs should be interpreted? Why is this book in the Bible? Is it an allegory about God's relationship with His people? Is it about human love? What is the purpose of the book? Why do you think so? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: It seems best to simply take the book as a series of songs about **human love**. Good interpretation would lead us from over-allegorizing what at face value can be taken at face value with no indications in the text itself that it should be taken otherwise. People over the centuries have struggled with the fact that there doesn't seem to be anything 'spiritual' about it whatsoever. There is no real mention of God, our relationship with Him, the Covenant, Law, or anything of the sort. However, since the whole song is about love, there is certainly much to learn about love from the book. And these truths about love do teach us more about all our relationships, relationship with others and relationships with God. So while it is probably not best to interpret the song as being intended to be read as an allegory, the principles of love we learn can certainly be applied to the way we think about relationship with God and with others.*

3. Regardless of how you answer the previous question, do you think there is a progression and a overarching story within the book, or is it a series of more or less separate poems/songs? Why? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: This is very difficult to tell without thorough literary analysis of the Hebrew, which is difficult to do. One key factor in the decision is that the introduction itself calls it the "Song of Songs" (with the repetition being a Hebrew way of communicating the superlative, "The best song." The fact that the title presents the book at a single song lends much to the theory that it is meant to be read as a whole. Obviously, there are many themes that run throughout (even the stanza about not awakening love...). So it seems best to take the book as a literary whole, while looking for a unifying storyline is difficult. The book is so full of imagery, poetic language, etc., it's not always easy to tell what the author is talking about! So practically speaking, that means we can begin by taking it as a series of poems on love, even though there may be more unity to the*

book than is easily discernable. One reconstruction of the story of Song of Songs was done by David Malick, and it can at least give you an idea of a possible framework for the progression of the song.

*I. Introduction: In the book's superscription Solomon is identified as the author of the book and its content is identified as a superlative book of wisdom (1:1).*

*II. Meeting and Courtship: The relationship between the Shulamite woman and Solomon developed from her own personal desire through their meeting, personal attraction to one another, expressions of love, the need for patience and a dream of loss and marriage by the Shulamite (1:2-3:5).*

*III. Marriage and Consummation: Through the beautiful, polar descriptions of Solomon's wedding procession and the physical consummation of the relationship the glorious marriage of Solomon and the Shulamite woman is affirmed (3:6-5:1).*

*IV. Rise of Difficulties and Their Resolution: When the bride refuses her husband's approach for intimacy, a rift arises between them and finds its resolution as she begins to pursue him, is reminded of her love for him, realizes his love for her, and then is received by him in the garden where he waits for her (5:2-6:13).*

*V. Deepening and Maturity of Marriage over Time: Although the love of Solomon and his bride deepens with new expressions that reflect personal growth, and although there is much to remember in the preparation of the Shulamite for this time, there is still room for patience and growth in their relationship (7:1-8:14).*

4. What does Song of Songs teach about what true love is like? Contrast the following two definitions of love and then comment: 1) Love is a duty to selflessly sacrifice for the sake of another; 2) Love is an emotion of strong affection towards another. How would you define biblical love? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Love causes delight in the object of one's love (Song 7:10). When we look at what love looks like from this book, we can't escape the fact that the lovers **delight** in one another. There is **no cold duty** in this book! Certainly elsewhere in Scripture we see the sacrificial nature of love brought out, but here we see this other aspect of enjoying relationship. This is how relationship was designed to be! It is only sin and the Fall which came in and made relationships hard work! And this is something we should all strive for! No, because of our selfishness and pride, relationships won't always be so effortless like this, but we should be striving to enjoy relationship as God intended, both with others and with Himself! Here two aspects of love have been obviously pitted against each other. One of these aspects (selfless sacrifice) is completely missing from Solomon's song of love, while the song wholly focuses on the other. Taking the whole of Scripture into account, both of these aspects are present in love. In some senses the full meaning of the self-sacrificial nature of love never became fully clear until Jesus (John 13, cf. 1st John 2:4-8). But this self-sacrificial aspect of love is then elaborated on and expounded at great length by the New Testament authors. So while we don't have time to expand upon this here, we will take it for granted that the New Testament teaches the self-sacrificial aspect of love. From this song on the other hand we see so clearly the aspect of **emotion** and **affection** that sometimes can be lost in our focus on selflessness. Too often Christians define love in terms of duty. We lose much when we excise the heart and emotions from our definition of love. We see so clearly in Scripture how **God delights in people** and the emotion and heart involved in this. Note Hosea 11:8, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled." He is jealous for people! Thus I would define love as, "**A committed delight in another person that is happy to selflessly sacrifices for their good.**" May our love not only be selfless and sacrificial, as exemplified by Christ going to*

*the cross for us, but passionate and emotional, zealous and jealous as we see in this song! Life should always be head, heart, hands. What we think effects how we feel, which drives what we do.*

5. What do we learn from Song 8:6-7 about love? Where else do we see this theme in the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Love is as strong as death and twice as good (Song 8:6-7)! Love is a **strong bond** between two people! If we are loving the right people for the right reasons, then this is very positive. Circumstances will not sever relationships with this kind of love as its basis. Of course we cannot help but think of Romans 8, "What can separate us from the love of God!" Love causes longing and pursuit. True love always **pursues** (Song 3:1-3; 5:8). Absence makes the heart grow fonder!*

6. What do we learn about how one thinks about another person with whom they are 'in love'? What does this teach us about the lenses through which we view other people? (1 paragraph)

*A: When someone is in love, they see no faults in the other person! **They are perfect** (Song 6:9)! How easy it is to always have a critical spirit and to not see people through the eyes of love. Obviously this applies directly to marriage relationships, but love will cause all people to think and look at each other from a different perspective. 1st Corinthians 13 verifies this perspective of love, love hopes and believes all things!*

7. What does the book of Song of Songs teach about human sexuality? What perspective or viewpoint does the book have about sex? (1 paragraph)

*A: Human sexuality is a good gift from God (Gen 2:25). There are obviously a lot of sexual images and language in the book, and all of them are **positive**! One can only walk away from reading the book with a positive view of sex. It is good and to be delighted in. In light of so much that is negative in Scripture about sex, commands against using it except in the way that God designed, bad examples, fornication, adultery, etc., this combats what could be interpreted that the Bible has a negative view of sex. But having a whole book full of sexual themes makes clear that this is not how God designed the world. We should be reminded of Adam in the garden, that it was not good for him to be alone, and that God made Eve for him as a good gift. This also reminds us that as humans, **all of us are sexual beings**, and this by **God's design**. This is good. That doesn't mean that everyone *\*should\** get married, the New Testament makes clear that there are good reasons for staying single. Yet we still see that in one sense people were created for this type of marriage relationship where God designed sex to be enjoyed.*

8. Note that some see 4:16-5:1 as the consummation of Solomon and the Shulamite's marriage. What does 4:16-5:6 teach about intimacy, confidence, trust, and rejection in marriage? (1 paragraph)

*A: Although as through much of the book of Song of Songs, the language is poetic and almost cryptic, it appears that we see a rejection of the Shulamite by Solomon in this section. In 5:3 it appears that Solomon was approaching his wife, and yet she possibly wasn't ready for him and so he left. So she goes out in search of him in Song 5:8. The reality is that as we see in this section, it takes work for both people to have their hearts in the right place at the right time to pursue intimacy and express it in sex. Although sex is a beautiful expression of intimacy and love, the Fall and sin has made it difficult! Every married couple knows the feelings of **rejection**, and **trust broken** at times from trying to learn this dance of how to **pursue intimacy** in relationship. Both husband and wife have to be so careful to guard each others' hearts to help build that*



confidence and mutual trust in relationship. And so this kind of selfless love and pursuit of intimacy helps to build a **confidence** that the relationship is secure (Song 2:16).

9. What do we learn about the purpose and design of sex from the Song of Solomon? (1 paragraph)

*A: Sex is the ultimate expression of selfless delight and intimacy (Song 1:13; 7:8). It is amazing how God designed sex to be so emotional and so selfless at the same time. Sex doesn't 'work' the way God designed unless the emotions of both people are rightly engaged emotionally. God designed sex to be selfless and for each person to find **delight** and **enjoyment** in the good of the other person. Making the other person happy and fulfilled is how we find joy and delight in sex. God made sex to be a physical expression of the intimacy that exists in marriage. All throughout the book, we see the physical and the emotional connection as this couple experiences physical attraction and delight in one another. Solomon's heart races as he pursues his wife (Song 4:9)!*

10. What principle is emphasized by the repetition of the refrain in Song 2:7, 3:5, and 8:4? What do we learn from this and how do we apply it? (1 paragraph)

*A: Human sexuality is a strong desire, and wisdom calls for caution in arousing it (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). Here we could cross reference many of the Proverbs. For both men and women to understand how strong sexual desire is will help all of us to be more wise! The implications for modesty, guys and girls being alone together, and all kinds of other wisdom issues are far reaching. **Men and women need to be very careful to guard their hearts towards one another!!!** I can say personally as a pastor that this can be so subtle as I've seen it so many times. Be careful! Often one party (or both!) won't even realize how hearts are being attracted and attached until very far along in the process! And we should learn from Song of Solomon that this is true of all humanity, as we mentioned earlier we are all made as sexual beings! This has application in so many settings! We need to be aware of this and **guard each others' hearts**.*

11. Please note other questions and observations about the book that you gain from reading and studying it for discussion (You should have at least half a page or so). What else does the book teach about love, romance, relationship, and sexuality, where do you find those principles, and how do they apply?

*A: Emotion is important to God. God designed us to be creatures of feeling!*

12. Application: How should Song of Songs affect the way that we understand love and sex?

## 8. The Hidden God: Esther

**Scripture:** Esther

**Theme:** From Fasting to Feasting, a Coincidental Tale of Irony and Reversal

**Objectives:**

- To be amazed at the hidden providence of God
- To be encouraged at God's unswerving faithfulness to His promise, despite people
- To wrestle through issues of syncretism and living out one's faith in a pagan society
- To understand the purpose and benefit of a good story

**Reading:**

- Read Esther *three times*
- [Optional] Watch the movie, "One Night with the King"
- Read Esther in "Five Festal Garments"

**Questions:**

1. Discuss each of the main characters: Ahasuerus, Esther, Mordecai, Haman. How are each of them described and developed? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: **Ahasuerus** is shown to be the absolute monarch of the Persian empire. Although as was Persian custom, he followed the law, he himself had authority to make laws, and in effect had absolute power and authority. He is portrayed in the book as a strong leader, with none of the plot twists in the book effecting him as much as all his subjects. Definitely a pagan, he doesn't seem to hesitate at ordering the destruction of the entire Jewish people. **Esther** is a young, beautiful Jewish girl who becomes queen. She listens to her 'uncle' Mordecai's request that she hide her Jewishness. Her morality in doing so and also in going in to the queen and winning the competition without apparent hesitation, brings her actions into question. Yet at the same time her faith is seen in standing up for her people at personal risk to herself, in her wisdom and discretion in several matters, and in asking Mordecai to fast (and pray) for her as she went before the king. **Mordecai** likewise is a Jew who apparently has strong confidence that God would deliver His people, and yet we wonder why he has Esther hide her Jewishness, why he won't bow to Haman, and whether he has in fact given up too many Jewish distinctives. But his confidence in God's salvation, and standing with his people show aspects of his faith. **Haman** is depicted as a hateful enemy of the Jews. From the beginning he is plotting their downfall. His pride is clearly evident throughout the book, and his ancestry from Agag shows his wicked origins.*

2. Outline the overall plot of the story. (2+ paragraphs)

*A: King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I?) is the king of Persia at the time, the greatest nation on earth which ruled over a massive portion of the Middle East and beyond. When he summoned his wife Vashti to parade before him at a party and she refused, he ordered a search be found for a new queen. A Jewish girl named Hadassah (Esther) was taken to the palace and eventually chosen to be queen. After that, her 'uncle' Mordecai, who had raised her discovered a plot to kill the king and alerted Esther and the queen told the king in Mordecai's name and it was recorded in the annals. Soon after that Haman was promoted above all the princes, but Mordecai who was Jewish wouldn't bow to Haman who descended from Agag. So Haman schemed to kill not only Mordecai, but also all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom. Haman brought his plan to the king and*

it was signed into law. If indeed the king is Xerxes I, the events of the book take place around 480-450 B.C. The first return from exile happened around 538 B.C. Why are the Jews still there?

When Esther saw that Mordecai was mourning and inquired of him the reason, he implored her to go before the king to seek his favor. Although this was a risk to her, Esther went before the king and the king granted her favor. He granted her request that he and Haman come to a banquet the following day. In the meantime, Haman continued to be infuriated at Mordecai, and so had a gallows 50 cubits high made for him. **That very night**, the king couldn't sleep, and when he had the chronicles read to him, he was reminded how Mordecai saved his life. When the king then asked Haman, who happened to be in the court what should be done to honor the man whom **the king desires to honor**, Haman, thinking the king wanted to honor him, said that he should be paraded around on the king's horse giving him honor throughout the city. So the king had Haman honor Mordecai in this way, while Haman was horrified at his enemy being honored. Just as he returned home and Haman's wife gives him a **foreboding word** about Haman being unable to overcome Mordecai and he was whisked away to the banquet.

At the banquet, Esther finally revealed her request that her life be spared from Haman, and when Haman saw the harm that the king determined to bring to him, he pled for his life from Esther on her couch. When the king saw this, he was infuriated and immediately ordered Haman to be hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai. At that point Ahasuerus appointed Mordecai ruler in Haman's place and gave him Haman's house. The king ordered a new law in place to in effect overturn the first, and the Jews overtook their adversaries and triumphed over them. A second letter was written to establish that Purim was to be celebrated as a memorial every year by the Jews.

3. Comment on how the following key points in the story function in terms of the storyline: 1) Esther being made queen (2:17), 2) The King's decree (3:11-15), 3) Esther and the Jews fast, 4) The king accepts Esther (5:2), 5) The king cannot sleep (6:1), 6) Zeresh's speech (6:13), 7) Haman hanged (7:10), 8) Mordecai exalted (8:1), 9) Jews destroyed their enemies (9:1-16), 10) Esther establishes Purim (9:31). [Note that these aren't necessarily all the key movements in the story, but some of the more significant ones pulled out for analysis] (1-2 sentences each)

A: 1) Esther being made queen is obviously the key amazing event that prepares for the whole rest of the story (it had already been foreshadowed by the fact that it was mentioned how beautiful Esther was in 2:7) and in one sense we can say this '**coincidental victory**' is the high point of the introduction. 2) The king's decree sets up the key **conflict** of the whole story: will the entire Jewish race be destroyed? It is noteworthy that the law of the Persians plays such a key aspect in this as the law cannot be overturned, so the question remains, how will the story be resolved? 3) Obviously we are working towards the **climax** when Esther calls for the Jews to fast and commits to go before the king. 4) So at the **climax** of the story, Esther brings her petition before the king and he accepts her! Although everything isn't resolved at this point, this is a key turning point in the story as we have much greater confidence after this great victory that somehow it will all work out. 5) At the point of the king not being able to sleep, we see another of several key '**coincidences**' that take place in the book that cause the story to work out as it does. It of course results in Mordecai being honored which is the beginning of one of the key **reversals** taking place. 6) We see a clear example of **foreshadowing** in Zeresh's words to her husband, that hints to us that it is all going to be downhill from here on for Haman. 7) Obviously with the arch-enemy of the Jews being hung, we have partial resolution at this point, yet we still have **the law** in effect which needs resolution. 8) With Mordecai being **exalted** we see further resolution in this reversal being completed. 9) Finally, when the Jews triumph over their enemies we have the full resolution to the conflict and now everything is merely epilogue. 10) With the establishment of **Purim**, we have what in many senses is the reason for the book, the inauguration of a holiday to

*commemorate and celebrate the salvation of the Jews! This gives **purpose** to the story as a whole and ties together some remaining themes.*

4. How does the author use feasts to structure the plotline? How are fasts included in the story and how do the two interplay? How do all of the reversals in the story relate to the main plotline? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The plot is structured around three rounds of feasting, "at the beginning (1:1-9; 2:18; 3:15), in the middle (5:1-8; 7:1-9; 8:17) and at the end (9:17-19). Each round of feasting connected with a significant **reversal**: Vashti and Esther, Haman and Mordecai, the Jews and their enemies. The contrasting motif of fasting appears near the middle of the book in chapter 4, and the two are brought together in chapter 9 in connection with Purim. The feasting of Purim is to be observed as the positive counterpart to the fasting and lamentation prescribed for other times of the year (9:20-22, 31). Purim is a celebration of **sorrow turned to joy**, and **mourning into celebration** (9:22)" (Webb). The whole story itself seems to center around this idea of **reversal**, and certainly the fasts being turned into feasts fits into this theme perfectly. "Much of the tension of the main action will revolve around the question of **how the irreversible can be reversed**" (Webb, 114). Esther is not simply a story of deliverance, but of reversal.*

*The **specificity** with which the reversals are carried out shows the purposefulness of the author in showing these correspondences. For example, Haman is hanged on the very same gallows he made for Mordecai! Mordecai gets Haman's own house! The Jews conquered their enemies on the very same day their enemies hoped to gain mastery over them (cf. the specific wording in 9:1). Their fasting was turned to feasting (cf. the specific wording in 9:22). All of these things show that **reversal** is the main idea of the story.*

5. How does 4:12-14 function in the narrative and how is it key in understanding the main point of the story? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Mordecai was convinced that God would save the Jews somehow, **regardless** of how Esther responded. Here we see that indeed He did end up saving them through her, but his absolute statement that God would save the Jews seems to reflect the major point of the book, the Jews are God's people and He is not done with them and will sovereignly work to accomplish His plan for them, whether through spectacular miracles or through His hidden sovereignty.*

6. What does the fast for Esther in 4:16 imply and how does this fit into the main point? (1-2 sentences)

*A: It seems clear that Esther is asking the people to **pray** for her, even though the word prayer itself is absent. This seems clear because the fast is **'for'** Esther, which seems to have a goal in mind that only makes sense in light of the Jews' view that God looks to those who are lowly and answers their prayers.*

7. What makes Esther such a good story? Think through the book from a literary standpoint and discuss the use of the following in the story: plot twists, conflict, climax, foreshadowing, irony, resolution, suspense, tragedy, etc. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: One of the reasons that Esther is such a good story is because it engages the reader in what is happening. We are drawn in to find out what will happen next. The conflict is introduced near the beginning of the story (3:11-15), but things don't all resolve at once. We see a movement towards resolution while at the same time new questions are being raised as we move along. There is **foreshadowing** in Zeresh's speech, which*

already reflects the foreshadowing of the events that the very one Haman is trying to destroy has by chance been remembered on the very eve of the queen's feast. There is **irony** in many ways, most clearly in Haman being hung on the gallows made for Mordecai! All the reversals in the story create many **tensions** at the beginning, but then make for a **clear resolution** at the end. As the story progresses and **plot twists** are introduced, **suspense** is created as we know that God isn't going to let His people be destroyed, yet we don't know how! See how everything is resolved at the end leaves us with a sense of relief and settledness that everything has been completely taken care of!

8. How does the theme of 'luck' flow throughout the book? What are the major coincidences that take place? Think as well about the use of the phrase 'found favor' throughout the book. How does the concept of Pur/Purim (lots) fit into this discuss as well? What do you think these ideas communicate in terms of the larger message of the book? Think about this! (1-2 paragraphs)

A: There are certainly a lot of **coincidences** in this book, a vast number of them! Some of the more significant ones include: Vashti being removed at just the right time for Esther. Esther being chosen queen (cf. favor below)! Mordecai's overhearing of the plot. The king's insomnia right before the execution of Mordecai. The entry of Haman at just the time when the king wanted to honor Mordecai. The king's reentry just when Haman fell on Esther's couch. In fact, the casting of the Pur (lot) itself focuses the theme of luck! What an odd celebration in the Bible, the celebration of lots! The concept of favor runs through the book as well, '**found favor**' occurs in (2:9, 15, 17; 5:2; 10:3). These strong emphases on luck/coincidence in the book serve more of a function than to increase the **irony** of the story to make it a fun/interesting/compelling story. They tie in to the subtle message of the book: God is completely sovereign over all the events of history, seemingly large or small, and is working through them all. Certainly we see throughout the rest of Scripture that the Abrahamic covenant is part of the key storyline of the Bible and ensures that God will certainly (the promise is eternal and unconditional!) use the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, to bless the world. Mordecai seems to have clearly understood this.

9. Why do you think that there is no mention of God, prayer, or anything explicitly religious in the book? How does this relate to the point of the book? Think about this! (1 paragraph)

A: The fact that there is nothing overtly religious or focused on God in Esther highlights the fact that God is often working **behind the scenes**. He is present even when most absent, when there are no miracles, visions, or prophets. By not mentioning God at all in the book, it highlights God's hidden providence. Of course we know that God does miracles. But what about when there are no miracles happening? Where is God? The book of Esther would respond with a resounding '**behind the scenes**'. He is still working. He is still in control. You may not see Him, but you can see the effects of His working if you simply look at history. His hand is on it all!

10. How does the theme of reversal so emphasized in the last lesson fit into the theme of God's hidden sovereignty? (1 paragraph)

A: Because God keeps His promises, the conflict which began the book with the destruction of the Jews was **guaranteed to be reversed** by God! And so from the outset, the problem of the book is known by those who know Yahweh and His plan not to be a problem. Yet the details still needed to be worked out. It is very fitting in this book and in this story how **every last detail** is worked out and God produces a complete reversal! In so many ways this salvation is as great as some of the greatest miraculous works of God in the OT due to the great number of details that God sovereignly worked out behind the scenes! It should almost be more

*astonishing to us that God was able to coordinate all of these coincidences than that He could send His angel to wipe out 185,000 Assyrians in a single blow!*

11. How does the fact that Esther is a good story relate to the fact that it is historically accurate? How does the use of plot twists, irony, climaxes, etc., affect our understanding of it as history? And how does this fit into the theme of God's hidden sovereignty? (1 paragraph)

*A: Normally, when we read a good story, we disassociate it from history, as history is told in a form that communicates to us that we are looking at unbiased and boring facts. Stories on the other hand we can tell from the genre have been made up for a purpose (ie. to communicate a point or a moral, for entertainment, to think about something, etc.). The reality of course is that the evening news or history books are far from unbiased, and indeed tell a story based on which facts are included and how events are described! And on the other hand we often can find true histories that have all the elements of a good story! What is amazing about biblical stories is that as God is the author of history, these two facets of a good story and also a true story, always come together in Scripture! Since we are not God, if we want to tell a good story with a good introduction, foreshadowing, plot twists, climax, and conclusion, we **usually** (sometimes we can find historical events that have many of these aspects) need to make it up so that it will have all these elements of a good story and at the same time get across the point we are trying to make. God on the other hand, is doing so with history itself, since He is the author of history!!! He directs the course of history so that He can get across the points He wants to make and in the dynamic way He wants to convey these truths! Thus we often find stories in the Bible that are amazingly well told stories with all the best literary devices and elements of our best made up stories, and the point behind them is clear and to the point. But God doesn't need to make up these stories, He is making history itself to be His story!*

12. How is Mordecai portrayed? Why do you think Mordecai didn't bow to Haman? What is significant about the fact that Mordecai was a descendant of Kish (2:5), the father of King Saul and that Haman was an Agagite? Note that bowing to superiors was a normal Persian custom, and a regular way of acknowledging rank, even when they met in the street (Webb, 119). (1 paragraph)

*A: It is interesting how Mordecai is portrayed. There are definite questions regarding his actions. Was it wise for him to encourage Esther to **hide her Jewishness**, or compromise? Certainly comparing the book to Daniel we might be challenged to think of this as compromise. Likewise in this section, on first glance it might be easy to think that Mordecai didn't bow down because he only worshiped the true God and would not worship anyone else much like Daniel's three friends. But it is much less clear that worship is indeed what was going on, but very likely a simple sign of respect to one's superior. That combined with the fact that Haman was an Agagite and Mordecai a descendant of Kish (Saul's father) raises the question whether or not he was simply acting out of **spite**. Or possibly he was simply operating under the correct theology that Haman as a descendant of Agag was an enemy of God and should not be honored in this way (Exo 17:14). Also, there is the question as to **why these Jews were in Susa** in the first place, after Cyrus had decreed the return and rebuilding of the temple. These questions aren't really answered by the text, but seem to be purposefully raised by the author.*

13. What should we think of Esther's apparent lack of protest of being taken into the king's bed and her apparent participation by which she succeeded in winning the queenship? (1 paragraph)

*A: Likewise with Esther, her apparent participation with the king and apparent going into his bed for the selection process raises serious questions of morality. Vashti herself refused to come to the king and now it*

*appears that Esther is all but running into his bed! Or maybe not? It's once again impossible to be sure, but it seems as though the author is aware and is purposefully raising these questions.*

14. What are positive examples (if there are any) of what Esther and Mordecai did in the book? How should we view these characters theologically? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Yet at the same time we do see positive examples from both Mordecai and Esther. We see Mordecai's strong **conviction** that the Jews will be saved. We see Esther **asking** for her people to **fast** for her as she risks her life on their behalf. We see actions that may be taken as great wisdom in the midst of a pagan nation. However, the questions raised about their morality and the differences between Mordecai and Esther and the way Daniel and his friends lived so **clearly Jewish** in the midst of a pagan nation probably serves to highlight the truth that God works through imperfect people and despite the sins of His people. Yes, it appears that Mordecai and Esther were people of **faith**, as imperfect as it was. Yet their questionable activities doesn't bring into question whether or not God is at work and whether or not He will work through such people, He will! He will even work through completely pagan kings! How much more will He work through His **confused and weak-faithed people**! This of course doesn't **condone** any of their actions in any way, but serves to reinforce the main point of the book: God is at work!*

15. Thought question: Comment on the reoccurring word "Jew/Jewish" in Esther. Think about what we learn from the constant use of the term 'Jew/Jewish', what it was like to be a Jew in a pagan society? Think about the theme of syncretism. Comment on what 3:8 adds to this discussion. What do you think about how Mordecai and Esther lived in society and what can we learn from the book on this theme? Put yourself in their shoes and think about what it would be like. (1 paragraph)

*A: Esther is a very "**Jewish**" book. In light of the Persian setting how Jews live in it is a significant theme. Interestingly, the Jews did seem to stand out in the empire according to 3:8. They apparently kept the law over and above the Persian law and thus were a peculiar people. The fact that Esther was able to hide this? seems to suggest that at some level she was compromising?! Yet possibly there was wisdom? in her hiding this and maybe there are factors we don't understand. Maybe she was able to keep the law in secret, and possibly she was more forced? into the harem and into the king's bedroom than we know. In the end we are reminded that God works despite the failings of His people, Esther (much more so than even Daniel in that sense) is a story of God's triumph alone. Although He used people, in some senses it was **despite** them! We must not be quick to cast judgment on Mordecai and Esther, but think what it would be like in their shoes. In some ways they showed remarkable **faith**. And even if they did fail, we see that God did not. We're reminded from the book that we need to walk by faith because God is able to do remarkable things, and not trust in our own actions since we don't always know what is right!*

16. [Optional] What things do you notice from the reading the text after watching the movie that you didn't notice when reading it before? What do you learn from this about observation of the text, assumptions, and asking good questions of the text? (1 paragraph)

*A: There are so many assumptions that we make when we read the text! Seeing someone else's interpretation of the story shows just how many those are. Even though some of their interpretations were off and our assumptions shown to be right, probably for most of us we found that there were a lot of assumptions we made just because that was always how we thought about it and there isn't any good reason for it. Thus we need to go back to the text and ask good questions of it and then seek the answers to*

*those questions from the text itself. This shows that there are a lot more questions that we should be asking and how good questions are key to good interpretation!*

17. [Optional] What did you enjoy about watching the movie? (2-3+ sentences)

*A: Personally, seeing the movie reminded me of how truly amazing this story is! It's easy to forget about the grandeur of the Persian empire and how truly amazing it was that a Jewish girl really became the queen of that empire to a pagan king! It also helped me think about the historical context. I loved thinking about the politics involved and remembering how God is behind it all! Hopefully we all came away being simply amazed that this story really took place!*

18. [Optional] What aspects of the movie did you think they did well in accurately representing the story? Where did they miss the mark and misconstrue the story? Critique the movie. What would you keep and what would you change if you were making the movie? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Although possibly overdone, beginning the movie with the scene from King Saul and Agag definitely is an aspect of the biblical story and seems to be part of the author's point that I liked that they brought out. I also appreciated seeing the grandeur of the empire in the movie. Seeing the pomp and riches of the kingdom reminds us how great this kingdom was. They also emphasized a lot the importance of 'law' to the Persians, an important aspect in the plot of the story and historically accurate. They brought out well the hatefulness of Haman and reminded us that the Jews were indeed hated in the kingdom for being different. Overall, they stuck to the plot. I really enjoyed being reminded of the intrigue, cunning, deceit, and politics that would likely have been going on in the kingdom (there was a plot to kill the king in the story!), as well as the interplay with Greece (which was a \*major\* rivalry over many, many years).*

*Things that were definitely inaccurate include the end of the story where Haman 'falls on Esther's couch': in the biblical story, he is definitely pleading for his life because he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king. In the movie of course they made Haman mocking and threatening her. There is also the mystic element added to the movie that is completely absent from the biblical account (her necklace with the stars). This of course fits well with Modern Judaism's strong embrace of Eastern Mysticism but is wholly absent from the Bible itself. In the Biblical account it seems clear that the king sided with Esther because he cared for her not because he saw stars! He even offered her up to half of his kingdom before she even asked for anything! This goes along with the fact that it also appears that the relationship between Ahasuerus and Esther is possibly portrayed more negatively than the biblical account. In the movie they have the king mistrusting and questioning Esther quite a bit which doesn't seem to reconcile with the text. Finally, the way that Esther treats the king is very loose and cavalier compared to how the text portrays it. In the text, notice that every time Esther talks to him she speaks with an incredible amount of deference to him as the king! Almost every sentence begins with 'If it pleases the king' or 'If I have found favor with the king' or something to that effect. Even her statement, "If we had only been sold as slaves it wouldn't be worth bothering the king" shows the extreme honor, respect, and reverence that were shown to the kings in those days that the movie didn't seem to bring out at all! These are just a few things that I noticed, I'm sure you have much more!*

19. Application: What does this understanding of story teach us in terms of how we tell, and listen to stories (both secular and sacred)? (1 paragraph)

*A: This should encourage us about the benefit of telling stories to others (both believers and non-believers). Especially in contexts where the truth we are sharing might not be well received. Conversely, it helps us to*



*be aware that we need to be critical thinkers in our listening to stories, and not just find ourselves being persuaded of a secular worldview if we are constantly listening to 'pagan' stories. There is no such thing as a completely unbiased story, every story flows from the worldview in which it was born. Being aware of this helps us to be both better listeners of stories as well as better tellers of stories as we seek to engage those around us in the great story of God!*

20. Application: What do we learn about good stories from studying Esther? Why do you think the Bible is so full of so many stories? How do stories affect us differently than reasoning from propositional truth, laws, poems, and other genres found in Scripture? Think about this! (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Good stories draw in the readers into the story. We are excited and afraid for the characters. We can put ourselves in their shoes. We are caused to think about what we would do in their situations. In a word, we **relate** to what they are going through. This is one of the reasons why there are so many stories in Scripture. They are powerful in their ability to teach and challenge us in ways that we would not otherwise be open to. By being drawn into the story, we often find ourselves making value judgments or learning other lessons in subtle ways indirectly. In a story we might find ourselves saying, "How how coincidental is that, I can't believe that all worked out like that," and moving toward the position, "God works out every detail in life" without even knowing it. By the end of the story we might find ourselves in a different position than when we started. In a story, our defenses are down. If someone stated the fact that "God is sovereign over every detail of life." We might automatically be defensive if we don't already believe that truth and be thinking of reasons why that isn't true in our minds. With a story, we might not even realize that we are coming to a new viewpoint until after the fact! Think for example of the story of Nathan and David, how Nathan told David an apparently detached story about a man who stole another's sheep, and David became convinced by the story before he realized that the story was even about him!*

21. Application: How are you encouraged and amazed by the book of Esther? What does it remind you of that will help you as you seek to live out your faith?

## 9. Our Part in God's Plan: Ezra

**Scripture:** Ezra 1-10

**Theme:** God Sovereignly Works out His plan, but our Part to Play involves Purity and Prayer

**Objectives:**

- To see the importance in purity of worship in worshiping as God designed
- To be reminded of the faithfulness of God because He always keeps His promises
- To see our need to pray and be encouraged by God's sovereign answers to prayer

**Reading:**

- Read Ezra-Nehemiah *once* and Ezra *twice*

**Questions:**

1. What is the timeframe that the book of Ezra-Nehemiah was written in? Who was it written to? What were they like at the time? Lookup the dates of the Persian kings from Cyrus to Artaxerxes II. Then date the following verses: Ezra 1:1; 5:1; 6:15; 7:7; Nehemiah 1:2; 2:1; 13:6 (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Note that Ezra-Nehemiah is most likely a **single book**, written for a particular purpose. Ezra-Nehemiah was written after the return of the exiles to Israel/Jerusalem to the returnees. We can see from Ezra-Nehemiah as well as the post-exilic prophets, that while there seems to have been reform in many ways, the people **still didn't have completely purified hearts** to follow Yahweh and quickly fell into various sins (intermarriage with pagans, not keeping the law in various ways, a general lack of fear of Yahweh, complacency, syncretism, etc.). Ezra doesn't show up in the narrative until 7:1, which happens considerably later than the events of the first 6 chapters and near contemporaneously to Nehemiah.*

*Persian Kings:*

Cyrus	559-529 BC
Cambyses	529-521 BC
Darius I	521-485 BC
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	485-464 BC
Artaxerxes I	464-424 BC
Xerxes II	423 BC
Darius II	423-404 BC
Artaxerxes II	404-358 BC

*Dates in Ezra-Nehemiah:*

Ezra 1:1	538 (Cyrus)
Ezra 5:1	520 (Darius I)
Ezra 6:15	515 (Darius I)
Ezra 7:7	458 (Artaxerxes I)
Nehemiah 1:2; 2:1	445 (Artaxerxes I)
Nehemiah 13:6	433 (Artaxerxes I)

*[Note the Darius from Daniel is not one of these listed, but a governor over Babylon appointed by Cyrus who also had a father named Ahasuerus also not in the list. The Ahasuerus of Esther is Xerxes I. Cf. Leon Wood in his Daniel Commentary, p. 153.]*

2. Think about and meditate on the following major themes throughout Ezra-Nehemiah: the sovereignty of God (over Gentile kings, His people, circumstances, etc.), prayer, continuity of the peoples' present with the past, the dangers of syncretism, keeping the Law, and purity of worship. How do they relate to one another? Why were these themes important for the people at that time? What is the overarching purpose of the book? How does the fact that Ezra-Nehemiah is in the Writings and not the Prophets affect our understanding of the purpose of the book? Think carefully about these themes, they are key to understanding the books! Also, keep these themes in mind as you answer the other questions. It may be best to answer the other questions and then to come back for this question. (2+ paragraphs)

*A: These books have a strong emphasis on God's **sovereignty**! He is indeed King over even the pagan kings! God is the one who sovereignly appointed Cyrus to bring His people back. This shows one of the main emphases of these books, that God is not done with His people or His plan. He is still active and alive and going to bring about His purposes. Even though it is the times of the Gentiles and His King is not leading Israel to rule over all the earth, He is not done with His people and will bring them to that intended goal! Thus we see a large emphasis on continuity with the peoples' past. They are rebuilding the Solomonic temple. They are descendants of Abraham (genealogies...): **they** are the people of the promises! Celebration!*

*Even though God would surely bring about His plan, they needed to trust and depend upon Him to bring about His plan. This meant a life of **prayer** that God would act according to His sovereign power. But we also see a large focus in the books on peoples' **personal responsibility** and effort as well. To trust in Yahweh does not mean to sit back and do nothing! We see the two aspects of God's sovereignty and our responsibility coming together in various ways in the book to accomplish His plans.*

*Therefore it was very important for them to keep **faithfulness** to Yahweh, so that they could be part of His plan. Due to the fact that Israel wasn't at the time of fulfillment, but were living in the midst of a pagan society and under pagan kings, they had to be so careful to not to pollute what true relationship with Yahweh looked like. Since they weren't an autonomous nation, there were so many **influences** that could so easily come in and **mix** with the true religion of Yahweh. So they needed to guard carefully against **syncretism** that would pollute God's people and proclude them from participating in His plan. Thus they had to guard the **purity** of the people, and that is why foreign marriages were dealt with severely, and outsiders were excluded from building with them. In order to make sure they were keeping relationship with Yahweh pure, and not mixing in foreign elements, they had to go back to the **Law** and make sure they were keeping it. Thus the **reading, studying, and keeping** of the Law are so important.*

*To summarize the message of the book: Since Yahweh is always faithful to His promises, He is not done with His people and was **sovereignly working** (through pagan kings, their hearts, circumstances, etc.) to restore the nation and to accomplish His plan for them. He did this of His own initiative, yet not apart from their dependance upon Him in prayer and personal responsibility. For them to participate they needed to be **faithful to covenant relationship** with Yahweh, which meant carefully **studying and obeying the Law**, and **keeping the worship of Yahweh pure from corrupting influences**.*

*The fact that these books are in the writings and not the prophets emphasizes the individual focus of the books. In the prophetic books the focus is on the prophets calling the nation as a whole to covenant faithfulness. In the writings the questions are more framed toward the individual: How should I as a righteous Israelite live out **faithfulness** to Yahweh. Thus from the message of the book we see the purpose of the book: Righteous Israelites should trust in God's sovereignty, that He is still accomplishing His plan.*

depend upon Him in prayer while at the same time working to fulfill His purpose, study and keep the Law and guard relationship with Yahweh from outside and polluting influences.

3. Summarize the storyline in Ezra 1-6. It will help you get your mind around the flow and theme of the book. As you are reading through Ezra 1-6, identify the following characters: Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Sheshbazzar, Jeshua, Darius, Ahaseurus, Artaxerxes, Tattenai, Shethar-bozenai, Haggai, Zechariah. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The book begins with the proclamation of Cyrus that the people return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple! He even gave them resources to do so and the articles from the temple! So a large number of the people returned to Israel celebrated the Feast of Booths, setup the altar, and began the work. When they finished laying the foundation, they had a huge celebration. But when the enemies of Israel heard that they were rebuilding the temple, they sought to foil their efforts, first by **joining** with them, then by **discouraging** the work, and **frightening** the people. They wrote two letters, one to Ahaseurus (4:6) and one to Artaxerxes (4:7) to get the work to stop. Artaxerxes ordered the work to stop, and so the Jews stopped until Haggai and Zechariah convicted them to begin again. It is unclear which kings Ahaseurus and Artaxerxes refer to since the chronology doesn't fit with the kings after Darius I. This was in the second year of Darius I. Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai wrote a letter to Darius I, who ordered that the work on the temple be left alone and moreover, ordered it to be paid for by the royal treasury! And so the temple was completed and they ate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread!*

***Sheshbazzar** was “prince of Judah” (1:8) and “governor” (5:14). He was simply the first governor appointed during the initial decree of Cyrus in 536, but he disappears from the scene and by 520, **Zerubbabel** is now governor. **Tattenai**, who is also called “governor” (pechah) (5:3, 6), was probably the authoritative figure over the larger province, of which Judah was a part. The term “governor” is flexible and can refer to various degrees of authority. So Tattenai was the big boss, while Sheshbazzar and later Zerubbabel were little bosses. Jeshua/Joshua was the high-priest. Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes were the Persian kings (see their reigns from question above). Shethar-bozenai was possibly the secretary to Tattenai, but was clearly an official with him in some capacity. Haggai and Zechariah were prophets of Yahweh who prophesied to the people during those times and encouraged them to restart work on the temple.*

4. Ezra 1:1 says that “Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia...” This is one of many statements that refer to God's sovereign intervention in the minds and hearts of individuals in Ezra-Nehemiah, some of whom fear Yahweh, and others, like Cyrus, who do not. As you read these books, list below all those statements that are similar to this one in 1:1 (statements referring to God moving in the mind and hearts of individuals, or statements that the hand of God was upon someone). What do we learn from this? (1 paragraph)

*A: God is explicitly **moving** in the **hearts** of people: righteous Israelites, nominal Israelites, and pagans who don't know him personally. Examples: “stirring the heart/spirit” (Ezra 1:1, 5); “Yahweh caused them to rejoice and ... turned the heart of the king of Assyria” (Ezra 6:22); “put into the king's heart” (Ezra 7:27); “hand of Yahweh upon” (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Neh 2:8, 18); “God was putting into my mind” (Neh 2:12); “God put it into my heart” (Neh 7:5). It is very clear that Yahweh is at work! He is sovereign over the hearts of all men, indeed He must be if He is to accomplish His purposes and plan! His hand was on His people to bless them and to use them to accomplish His work! Also we see in Ezra 5:5 that “the eye of their God was on [them].” God was sovereignly watching to ensure His plan. But all the statements about God working in hearts shows that God worked through people and not apart from them!*

5. Both Ezra and Nehemiah are saturated with prayer. Read the prayers in the books, and then summarize and describe what we can learn about prayer from Ezra-Nehemiah (see Ezra 8:21-23; 9:6-15; 10:1; Neh 1:5-11; 9:6-37; there are also many short prayers throughout Nehemiah: 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31). What key words or concepts run through their prayers? Spend a lot of time on this, this is really important! (2-3 paragraphs)

A:

**Prayer is life:** Nehemiah has many brief prayers calling on God to remember his deeds. Prayer can be short, spontaneous. Prayer, for Nehemiah, was like breathing. It wasn't something he just did in his quiet times; it was a way of life and saturated his daily routine.

**Remembering:** The key theme of 'remembrance' runs through His prayers. Calling on God to 'remember' is in essence calling God to **act** in accord with the situation. Of course God never forgets in the literal sense of the word, but sometimes He doesn't seem to act in seeming accordance with what He has said or who He is. Thus remembering is the act of taking a given situation to account and acting appropriately and not 'forgetting' and doing nothing. Many of Nehemiah's prayers are that God will remember in the sense of do what is right in the end, either by paying him back for his sacrifices of faith, or by paying back the wicked for their wickedness.

Notice the good example in Neh 1:8 where He asks God to remember the word He spoke to Moses. He is **pleading with God to act in accordance with what He has said**. We find this pattern of prayer often in Scripture! In essence it is to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Let your hidden will be your revealed will!

Neh 5:19 "Remember me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."

Neh 6:9 "But now, O God, strengthen my hands"

Neh 6:14 "Remember, O my god, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were trying to frighten me."

Neh 13:14 "Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services."

Neh 13:22 "For this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Their lovingkindness."

Neh 13:29 "Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and Levites."

Neh 13:31 "Remember me, O my God, for good."

**Corporate solidarity:** Ezra and Nehemiah identify themselves with the sin and guilt of the people, even though they were, as individuals, innocent (cf. Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 1:5-11). This is because as a family there is a solidarity such that when one members sins, the family sins. We can learn a lot from men like Ezra and Nehemiah who recognized this reality and humbled themselves by including themselves in it. How important it is for leaders today, especially in the church, to take responsibility for and identify with the sins of the people, even those for which we are not directly responsible!

**Divine and human action:** Prayer didn't always replace action, but called on God to help them. Prayer and action often go together in Scripture, and very much so in Ezra-Nehemiah. Cf. Neh 4:9 "We prayed to our God...we set up a guard..." Neh 4:20-21 "...our God will fight for us. So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears..." Note as well the opposite principle at work also in Ezra-Nehemiah. In Ezra 8:21-23, Ezra was ashamed to ask for help, since he had told the king that God's hand was favorable toward them.

Here since God's reputation was on the line, **he didn't make use of human means** that would have been available to him. Notice that the driving factor here is faith. He believed it would be best for the sake of God's glory to not use a particular human means here, and so in faith He trusted that God would protect them without human means. In other situations where there is no reason not to use means, by faith they worked and used the means while at the same time trusting in God and not the means! What is important in either case is to be fully trusting in God and to act from faith. If there is a reason to use human means/action, work hard. If there is a reason **not** to use them, trust in God because He is able!

**Humility in prayer:** Notice also the connection between prayer and fasting (Ezr 8:21-23). Fasting was one way to humble oneself and to show one's complete dependance on God which is at the heart of prayer. Notice also Ezra's humility in Ezra 9:3-5 where he tears his hair, his clothes and fell on his knees as a sign of that same humility. See also how Nehemiah fasted, wept and mourned before his prayer (Neh 1:4). We need to ever keep before us the great awesomeness and holiness of God and our sinfulness that separates us from Him. We need to recognize how humble we are and need to be before Him. We are completely dependant upon Him for everything! Thankfully we know that God has provided a means of atonement and entrance into His presence, we can't wait to get to the NT to see how that is possible!

6. Why do you think the author points out that the articles from Solomon's temple were given to Sheshbazzar to go into the new temple (1:7-11)? (1 paragraph)

A: The author is establishing **continuity with the past**: the **same** articles in the previous temple will fill this new temple. Continuity with the past is a major theme in Ezra-Nehemiah because it not only links the present post-exilic generation with the pre-exilic nation, but it also demonstrates the ongoing validity of God's promises to Israel. In fact, in the corollary book of Haggai which speaks of these same events, we see that this very same temple that they were building would in fact be the temple that God fills His glory with! **There is a great continuity in God's plan!**

7. What is the significance of the list of returnees in Ezra 2? (This is the first of many such lists in these books. See also: Ezra's traveling companions in Ezra 8:1-14; men who divorced their foreign wives in 10:18-44; workers on the wall in Neh 3:1-32; returning exiles in 7:6-72; ones who signed the covenant in Neh 10:1-27; many others in Neh 11-12). (1 paragraph)

A: Once again we see continuity with past. There is an emphasis on the **continuity** with past generations and with their **ethnic identity**. The struggle for some to identify their ancestry (2:59-63) highlights the importance of ancestry. Ancestry connotes continuity and identity with Abrahamic promise. It shows that they "are the raw material of Abraham's posterity from which God will continue salvation history" (Waltke, 777). This makes clear that the "migrations of Jews to Jerusalem in the period after 538 are a continuation, not a new beginning." (Exploring, 254). There is also a focus on land which reminds us that indeed this is the '**promised land**' and continues to establish continuity with the promises of God: "each to his own city" (2:1, 70); men of Bethlehem, et al. 2:21-34. Likewise, the focus on the **temple** and all its trappings reminds us of the former temple, of God's purpose to be worshiped as designed in the Law, and that God will keep His promise to dwell among His people: Priests (2:36-38); Levites (2:40-42); Temple servants (2:43-54); sons of Solomon's servants (2:55-58) reminiscent of the former temple; heads of household (2:68-69).

8. What is Ezra 3:10-13 reminiscent of in Israel's past (think of specific Scriptures)? Why do you think the author of Ezra-Nehemiah is trying to make such a strong connection with the past? (1 paragraph)

A: The language in Ezra 3:10-13 reflects **1 Chron 16:4-7** (David brought ark to Jerusalem) and **2 Chron 5:11-13** (Solomon brings the ark into the temple) and **2 Chron 7:6** (the dedication of the temple). We see all throughout Ezra-Nehemiah a deliberate emphasis on continuity with the past. This shows that the nation that returned to the land is indeed the heirs of the Abrahamic covenant, that they are God's people, and that God is not done with them yet! They have rebuilt Yahweh's temple and are continuing on with the true worship of Yahweh according to the Torah.

9. Who are the “enemies of Judah” (4:1; cf. people of the land 4:4) and why doesn’t Zerubbabel let them build with the Judeans? Think about this! (1 paragraph)

A: Most likely the ‘enemies of Judah’ here are the **Samaritans**. The people of the Northern Kingdom were not exiled but remained in the land of Israel and mixed with others the Assyrians deported to the land of Israel in an attempt to destroy national identity. There were also those left in the land after the Babylonian invasion. They were probably not fully Gentile, but a mix between Jews and Gentiles. Zerub says they have “nothing in common with us...” (Ezra 4:3). They were probably syncretists. This hits on a major theme in Ezra-Nehemiah, the need for **purity of worship**. As the people came back to the land, there were many **dangers of mixing** the worship of Yahweh with many other forms of religion around them. This is especially so when they are a small band of survivors that don't have an autonomous nation. The boundary lines were not clear and people all around them were semi-Jewish and mixed aspects of the worship of Yahweh and the Torah with other aspects of pagan worship. But Yahweh demands absolute allegiance and complete purity. Thus the importance of the theme of purity of worship and religion finds its place in Ezra-Nehemiah.

10. Why do you think the author devoted so much time and attention to the Persian “stamp of approval” on the building of the temple in Ezra 5:6-6:15 (see too 6:22). (2-3 sentences)

A: The books (Ezra-Neh) as a whole highlight the fact that God is working not against but through Gentile political opposition (cf. Cyrus’s decree (Ezr 1:1-3)). Even though they are back home, as it were, they are still subservient to foreign rulership (see Neh 9:36-37). From the standpoint of the book of Daniel, these are the times of the Gentiles (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27; Luk 21:24), and so **faithful Israelites need to understand how to worship Yahweh** in covenant relationship with Him when the nation of Israel isn't all that it should be and eventually will be when the kingdom of Messiah comes... They weren't supposed to revolt, but to live faithfully in the times of the Gentiles. You can't usher in the kingdom, God will bring it!

11. How is Ezra characterized in Ezra 7:1-10? What in particular stands out about him? Why is this significant in light of the purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: Ezra was a man of the **Torah**! This is continually repeated about him. This is what he was known for. **He studied it, practiced it, and taught it.** This is especially important in light of the fact that the people have just come back to the land from Babylon, and most of the people weren't even aware of what the Law said or what covenant relationship with Yahweh was supposed to look like! **How were they to faithfully worship Yahweh when they didn't even know what He said?!** Furthermore, as was already said, there were so many temptations to syncretism, people surrounding them who probably followed aspects of the Torah or claimed to be following Yahweh in some way, and yet had corrupted the true worship of Him with pagan elements. Thus it was vital to go back to the Torah to understand how to worship Yahweh in truth!

12. [Optional] Notice the shift from the third person (“he”) to the first person (“I/we/our”) in Ezra 7:27-28. This begins the so-called “memoirs of Ezra.” Where does this memoir end, where we see

a shift back to the third person? What does this suggest about the composition of the book? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 9:15/10:1 ends the memoirs. Included within Ezra-Nehemiah are these 1st person memoirs, which \*possibly\* suggests that the book was composed from various sources (it of course is also possible that Ezra simply changed his writing style here for some reason). This certainly doesn't mean that Ezra didn't or couldn't have written the book himself, but could be an example where we have books in the Old Testament that were not written start to finish as a single 'original' composition.*

13. Application: What do we learn about prayer from Ezra-Nehemiah that should change the way we pray?
14. Application: How are we encouraged by the sovereignty of God in Ezra-Nehemiah? How does this relate to His faithfulness? What truths should we be reminded of from these books that will affect us on a daily basis?



## 10. Watching and Working on the Walls: Nehemiah

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 1-13

**Theme:** As we Work for God we Need to Watch out for Compromises because we Fear God

**Objectives:**

- To see the dangers of syncretism and to better understand how to combat it
- To better understand our human responsibility in light of Divine sovereignty
- To be challenged to fear God and not man in doing God's work

**Reading:**

- Read Ezra-Nehemiah *once* and Nehemiah *twice*

**Questions:**

1. What is the significance of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem? What key word is repeated twice in chapters 1-2 of Nehemiah that gives an important purpose of rebuilding the wall? What is emphasized in Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1? (1 paragraph)

*A: 1) Neh 1:3 and Neh 2:17 "so that we may no longer be a **reproach**." God's name was being disgraced because His captial city was lying in ruins. God cares about His **reputation**. 2) The wall offers physical protection from enemies, 3) The wall separates the Jews from foreigners, 4) It symbolizes **covenant restoration**, God's presence and His blessing. "As Kidner points out, his perspective on their situation is significant: "it is the disgrace, not the insecurity of their position, which strikes him." The word "**reproach**" (Heb: *herpah*), in particular, is heavy with overtones of the punishment of the exile, behind which lies the disrepute brought upon God's name among the nations by those who should have been his servants." **The nakedness of the city without the wall**. Nehemiah is concerned in his prayer in chapter 1, just as we have seen repeatedly throughout the OT, for **God's reputation**. He wants God to keep His promises! Note that Nehemiah's prayer is full of Scriptural allusions...*

2. Why do you think chapter 3 details all the people who worked on the wall? (2-3 sentences)

*A: By listing all the people who worked together on the wall, it emphasizes that this was a **community** project. They all had to **work together** and each had to do his part for the wall to be completed. If the entire wall was built except for one section, the wall would be totally useless! But by working together they all benefited from what was accomplished.*

3. Comment on what happens in Nehemiah 4. What do we learn about fearing man from this chapter and how to respond to it (see also chapter 6)? What do we learn about planning and personal responsibility from Nehemiah? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The enemies of the Jews sought to **mock** them and cause them to be **afraid** so that they would stop the work. Instead, they trusted in Yahweh, prayed to Him, prepared for battle and went to work! They need to remember how great Yahweh is (4:14) and press on trusting Him. Yet they also came up with a solid **plan** and **worked** hard! What a great lesson for us as well! Notice how Nehemiah is as wise as a serpent in his planning! In chapter 2 he even stealthily scouts out the land. He plans that the people defend themselves and work hard. Planning is not necessarily anti-spiritual!*

4. Summarize the conflict going on in Jerusalem in Nehemiah 5. What is the crisis? How did the people respond to the crisis? What sins are involved? What was Nehemiah's response? Especially think about the corporate aspect of these sins and why this was significant. Note what key word is used in 5:1, 5, 7, 8 to describe the key issue at stake. Notice also what Nehemiah says in 5:9. (1+ paragraph)

*A: The people were suffering from some **economic** trial. There was a shortage of food due in part to a famine that had struck the land (Neh 5:3). But the reference to wives in 5:1 probably indicates that they were struggling to provide for their household, since the men were busy working on the walls. The people respond in three ways to this economic crisis:*

- a.) Some with large families were demanding a large distribution of food (perhaps there was some welfare type system in place, yet those who had more needs were not given sufficient food)*
- b.) Others mortgaged their houses, vineyards, and fields.*
- c.) Others borrowed money to pay the royal tax that was due every citizen.*

*The grammar (lack of introductory formula) suggests that vs. 5 describes the state of all three previous groups: they were all selling their sons and daughters into slavery; the daughters, in particular, probably were "forced into bondage," a word with sexual overtones (cf. Esther 7:8). The sin was that some fellow Israelite's were **taking advantage** of this opportunity to make money off other peoples' poverty, by loaning money at excessive interest and taking their property as a pledge. Nehemiah was also involved in "lending them money and grain (Neh 5:10)" but it is less clear whether or not he himself exacted interest. Later (Neh 5:14) we see that he didn't take the governors food allowance, even though he had legal rights to do so. This allowance would have come from the heavy taxes laid on the people. Neh 5:14-18 is a separate account than 5:1-13 and represents Nehemiah's general practice concerning his allowance. In Neh 5:15 we see that other governors took their luxurious food allowance and dominated the people, but Nehemiah didn't do so "because he feared God."*

*This is all especially important because of the **corporate aspect of faithfulness to Yahweh**. Community is important! They should have been working together to keep covenant faithfulness to Yahweh. Just as we saw in Ezra and Nehemiah's prayers, there is an aspect of corporate solidarity where they are responsible for one another. They are **brothers** (Neh 5:1, 5, 7, 8) after all! If they were going to accomplish God's purpose for His people, they would have to work together! Note also that Nehemiah is concerned in 5:9 with their **lack of fear of God** in their sin and how that **reflects badly on Him!** We need to obey God because we fear Him, and doing so we will care about His reputation! Not only was all of this wrong, but it is explicitly against the Law (interest, owning Jewish slaves).*

5. What kind of tactics did the Samaritans try to use to stop the work on the temple in 6:1-14? What then was the result of the work being done according to 6:15-19? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Notice all the deceit, trickery and manipulation that the Samaritans were trying to do in chapter 6!*

6. What do you think the point of chapter 7 is? (1 sentence)

*A: By showing the people **who returned** to Jerusalem, we see God's faithfulness in preserving a remnant to keep His promises! We also continue to see continuity with the past in that the Jews who returned descended from those who worked on Solomon's temple. Thus there is a special focus on the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants.*

7. Nehemiah 8 is a very important chapter, documenting the role of Scripture in this post-exilic spiritual revival. As you read it, write down which verses emphasize the high place the word has in this community. Also, how many times does the phrase “all the people” or similar statements occur? What is the author emphasizing here? (1 paragraph)

A: All the people gathered and **asked** Ezra to bring the Word (8:1). The people **listened** to the Word of God (8:3). They **honored** it by standing (8:5). They **agreed** verbally with what they were hearing and humbled themselves by bowing (8:6). Ezra **interpreted** for them so that they could understand (8:8). We see that once they understood what the Law required of them, they **put it into action** (8:12). They then went to listen to the Law again (8:13) and heard a new command (8:14) so they immediately obeyed that (8:15). Notice how the author is clearly showing the process here: They sought what relationship with Yahweh looks like in the Word, they listened to and sought to understand what God said, and they acted on it! This is a good model to follow indeed! It is interesting that although they were repenting, it wasn't to be a sad day, it was to be a holy day, a day of rejoicing.

8. Nehemiah 9 is a prayer rich with scriptural allusions, which reflect on Israel's history. Write down the name of the event or events that correspond to the verses in each section of the prayer: 9:7-8; 9:9-11; 9:12-21; 9:22-25; 9:26-31; 9:32-37. What is the point of this prayer? How does the last section of the prayer help us see the point? (1 paragraph)

A: 9:7-8: Calling of Abraham; 9:9-11: The Exodus; 9:12-21: God leading in the wilderness; 9:22-25: The Conquest and Possession of the Land; 9:26-31: Israel's Rebellion and God sending Prophets until the Exile; 9:32-37: Israel's history of rebellion leading to Israel being under Gentile rule. The prayer is working to the **climax** in the final section. In light of all of Israel's history, a history of rebellion against Yahweh, He has **still not abandoned His people or forgotten His promises**. He is the awesome God who keeps covenant and loyal love. So the prayer is really a petition to plead with God to continue working out His plan to restore the nation of Israel to their place in His plan! Yahweh made promises to Abraham which have still not been fulfilled. In fact, they are **slaves in their own land!** The nation of Israel isn't even an autonomous nation! So this prayer is in essence a pleading that God will keep the Abrahamic covenant (and Davidic)! May Yahweh who has never forgotten His people finish the work and plan He has for them!

9. What do the people do in Nehemiah 10 (cf. 10:29ff.)? What is the benefit of this? Should we do this also (cf. also Ezra 10:3)? (1 paragraph)

A: The people **made a covenant with each other to keep the covenant** (Law). Notice again the **communal** aspect of faithfulness to Yahweh. They also **summarize** certain aspects of the Law that they **commit to keeping together**. As with us, often it's easy to look at Scripture as a whole with all of its commandments and principles, and to say that we're committed to keeping and obeying all of it, yet while there are specifics lacking, it's easy to neglect carefully keeping all of God's commandments! So there is value in thinking through what God has said, summarizing important aspects of it and committing to obeying what we have learned together! There is **accountability** in this.

10. What is the problem in 13:4-9? Note the genealogical connection to Sanballat in 13:28. How does this section fit in with major themes in Ezra-Nehemiah? (1 paragraph)

A: Tobiah (an Ammonite!) is given chambers in the temple of Yahweh! This was obviously prohibited by the **Law**. We see once again the importance of purity in worshiping Yahweh. God cares about **separation** and

**holiness.** There was a huge emphasis on this in Leviticus, the book most specifically about the temple and what worship of Yahweh should look like. Because of the continual danger for Israel to become **profane**, there was a constant need to be **vigilant** about separation, purity, and holiness!

11. Thought question: There is a large emphasis in Ezra-Nehemiah on purity of worship: The temple is a huge emphasis, faithfulness to the law is emphasized, purity from the influence of foreigners runs throughout. Comment on the danger of syncretism and what we learn about it from Ezra-Nehemiah. Think about this! (1 paragraph)

A: We have seen over and over again in these books the emphasis on the need for separation, holiness, and purity of worship. This was so often a danger to Israel. The problem goes all the way back to the Torah. Even in Genesis there was a strong emphasis of the danger of the Canaanites wanting to **intermarry** with the Israelites (Gen 34:9, 16, 21, etc.)! It was God's **grace and plan** to take them to Egypt where they were loathsome to the Egyptians so that they wouldn't intermarry (Gen 43:32; 46:34)! We constantly see an intermixing of true Yahweh worship with elements from other religions.

12. Both Ezra and Nehemiah address the issues of intermarriage at the end of their books (see Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh 13:1-3; 23-30). Describe the similarities and differences in their approach to confronting this issue. What is at stake again? (1+ paragraph)

A: Both are appalled and see the issue as a gross violation of the Law and an abomination to Yahweh ("unfaithfulness" - Ezra; cf. 1 Chron 10:13 = deep rooted rebellion against Yahweh). "Ezra's handling of the problem of mixed marriages is noteworthy in that, quite unlike Nehemiah (cf. Neh 13:23-27), he used no direct coercion, but rather he encouraged the people to see the problem for themselves and so formulate their own response (cf. v. 1 above and 10:1-4, 7, 14 below)" (WBC). Ezra even "pulled out his [own] hair," while Nehemiah pulled out their hair. However, Ezra actually takes a more rigorous approach to the issue, by ordering a guilt offering (10:19) and mandating divorce (10:11), and even making a list of those who did so (10:18-44). The fact that the last verse in Ezra summarizes this issue highlights its importance. Nehemiah just used the culprits, after he beat them up, as an object lesson to prevent future such behavior.

Once again we see the importance of keeping God's people and relationship with Him free from outside (pagan) influences. Just as with Solomon (and the Israelites before him), marrying foreign wives so often involved compromising with their foreign gods. This was a constant problem for Israel. They needed to worship Yahweh and Yahweh alone, in His way alone!

13. Respond to the following statement, "All of the Old Testament promises toward Israel were fulfilled in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah: Israel was back in the land, the temple and Jerusalem was restored, and the covenant had been renewed (Neh 8-10)." This is not true, but how would you respond to this? What proof from the text of Ezra-Nehemiah itself do you have that the promises were not fulfilled and that we are awaiting something more? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: While there is a sense of restoration being accomplished, the final part of the prayer (Neh 9:32-37) shows clearly that even though they are in the land, they are still slaves! The produce of the land is feeding pagan kings (9:37)! This cannot be the fullness of restoration. Even though Neh 8-10 is **climactic** and portrays a repentant community, the sins of Neh 13 show that they still were not morally pure. Neh 13 suggests "the possibility that, in spite of the pledges of Nehemiah 10, there will be further violations in the future. There is, it emerges, a negative side to continuity with the past: the post-exilic community **repeats the sins** of pre-exilic Israel (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:26-27)" (Exploring, 255). There is still **no Davidic King** (Ezek 37:24; Jer 23:5-6);

*in fact, surprisingly, there is no attention drawn to the Davidic covenant when Zerubbabel, a Davidic descendant, comes on the scene. He's even associated with re-building the temple! (Exploring, 255). There are no other nations coming to Zion (Isa 60:12) to worship Yahweh and learn the Torah (Isa 2:2-4). In fact, there is no language reflecting the New Covenant at all, no Spirit, no new hearts, no Law placed within them. They don't even have an independent nation, much less are they the greatest kingdom on the face of the earth! They are even **slaves in their own land!** In short, they are **very far from being the fulfillment of all that God promised for His nation...***

14. Application: Think carefully what we learn about the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility in Ezra-Nehemiah. When is it right to simply wait on God and not take action? When is it right to take action without waiting?
15. Application: What are idolatrous forms of worship that surround us that we need to be very careful to guard against being mixed with our relationship with God? How/where is syncretism common today? What is the function of God's Word in this?

## 11. God Keeps His Promises: I Chronicles 1-9

**Scripture:** 1 Chronicles 1-9

**Theme:** God will be Faithful to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants Despite the Exile

**Objectives:**

- To understand the purpose of genealogical lists
- To study and recall the historical and theological background of the writing of Chronicles
- To observe and analyze the particular manner in which the Chronicler gives his genealogy in 1 Chron 1-9
- To suggest a few theological themes that are apparent in the genealogy, in order to establish certain themes that may be developed throughout the ensuing narrative

**Reading:**

- Skim 1-2 Chronicles *quickly* to get a feel for its general structure and contents
- Read 1 Chronicles 1-9 *once*

**Questions:**

1. What is the background to the books of Chronicles? Assuming that these books were written together for a single purpose, when were they written (the genealogy of Jehoiakim 3:16ff. helps date the book)? Who were they written to? What were the people like at that time? Why were these books written to them? (1 paragraph)

*A: 1st Chronicles 3 lists 5-8 generations after Jehoiakim, and so was probably written between 500-400 B.C. The book ends with the decree of Cyrus to return, and so clearly was written after that point (538 B.C.). There are also similarities with Haggai/Zechariah that seem to fit well with Chronicles being written during a similar timeframe, ie. in the earlier portion of that time period (closer to 500 B.C.). Assuming then a similar background to Haggai/Zechariah, the Jews have recently returned from exile and are rebuilding the temple/wall. These books are written to these Jews in the land. Unlike Samuel-Kings, which was written to prove to the Israelites that they were suffering justly God's wrath for their covenant disobedience and to call them back to covenant faithfulness, Chronicles seeks to instill hope in the returnees in the promises of God. God had not forsaken them or His unconditional promises to Abraham and David! God is working and will still bring the perfectly righteous King!*

2. Briefly compare and contrast the books of Chronicles with those of Samuel-Kings. Why do you think another 'history' of Israel is needed? Is Chronicles a history book? Why or why not? When were the two books (Chronicles and Samuel-Kings) written? How do they inter-relate with one another? How do their respective authors intend for them to be read in relation to one another? (Think carefully about this question! 2-3 paragraphs)

*A: As was said above, the times when the two books were written and the purposes for which they were written are vastly different. We can see from even a cursory comparison of Samuel-Kings with Chronicles, that Chronicles focuses much more on the Southern Kingdom, and also much more on the good of the Davidic kings. This of course ties in with the purpose of the book being to give the people hope in God's promises. Some of the important 'additions' from Samuel-Kings include: 1) Genealogies of 1 Chron 1-9, 2) **David's** preparations to build the temple (1 Chron 22-29), 3) **David's** celebration in response to bringing the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron 15-16). Some 'changes' include: a) David and Solomon are squeaky clean! b) Some*

“good kings” are viewed much worse in Chronicles (Johash/Joash), c) Some bad kings are viewed much better (Jeroboam; Manasseh’s repentance), d) Some kings receive much more attention (Asa: 1 Kings = few verses; 2 Chron = 3 chapters)

It is important for us to recognize that Chronicles is not a 'history' book, although it is definitely historical. So while we have two different 'histories' of the nation of Israel, both were written for a different **theological** reason. There is no such thing as raw facts, or raw history! Whoever is telling the history includes certain events and reports about those events from a certain standpoint. The **purpose** for writing a book will **always** influence the content of the book! Especially if the author of Chronicles knew of Samuel-Kings or used it as a source, it is clear he used selectivity in weaving his narrative.

The book of Chronicles contributes much to the OT canon and to OT theology, despite the fact that this book seems on the surface to simply reiterate what was previously stated in Samuel-Kings (it does much more than this, as we will see!). Indeed, much of what is in Chronicles was already recorded in these previous books, but there is also a lot of material that is unique to Chronicles, accounts not in Samuel/Kings. Many accounts in Chronicles are added, modified, or simply taken out of the narrative in Samuel/Kings. So in a sense, the message and content of Chronicles may seem familiar, but it certainly does tell a story of its own!

But since Chronicles interacts so extensively with Samuel-Kings, and even assumes that its readers have done the same, it will be imperative to read this book in light of Samuel-Kings. That is, much of our study of Chronicles will consist of comparing the stories in Chronicles with the same stories in Samuel-Kings in order to discern the Chronicler’s theological message. Through viewing the Chronicler’s deliberate choices to include different materials and wording than Samuel-Kings (additions, subtractions, modifications, etc.), we will be able to draw out his own theological contribution to the Hebrew canon. Since Chronicles was written quite a bit later than Samuel-Kings, we are suggesting here that the author **intends** us to read his book this way! He is not whitewashing history, he is assuming that you already know about Samuel-Kings.

3. Does the Chronicler focus on God's conditional or unconditional promises/covenants and how does this relate to the purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: Both! **Unconditional:** In one sense, the emphasis on **David** throughout reminds the audience of God’s unconditional commitment to raise up a seed of David who will lead Israel (1 Chron 5:2) and bring about **God’s everlasting righteous kingdom**. God is always faithful! He will keep His promises! It is no accident that the book ends with the decree of Cyrus to return and that the Davidic line has not been cut off! **Conditional:** In other sense, the Chronicler still operates within an “Old Covenant” (= Mosaic Covenant) framework, where future blessing is conditioned upon repentance and obedience. In fact, there is a strong theme of retribution theology (2 Chron 7:13-15). But even here, **the conditional theology is meant to instill hope** (not, as Kings, to justify God’s wrath). There is hope that it is not too late to turn to God and if you turn He is ready to forgive, ready to forget, and ready to receive you once again with open arms (cf. Manasseh, 1 Chron 33). **God will keep His promises, but do you want to participate in them?!?**

4. Give a brief outline of the books of 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

A:

- I. Genealogies, Chapters 1-9
- II. Saul’s reign, Chapter 10
- III. David’s reign, Chapters 11-29
  - A. David’s mighty men, Chapters 11-12

- B. David and the ark, Chapters 13-16
- C. David and the temple, Chapter 17
- D. David's wars, Chapters 18-20
- E. David's sin in numbering the people, Chapter 21
- F. David's preparation and organization for building the temple, Chapters 22-29
- IV. Solomon's reign, Chapters 1-9 (Building the temple is key)
- V. Division of the kingdom and the history of Judah, Chapters 10-36
  - Reformations given prominence:
    - A. Asa's, Chapters 14-16
    - B. Jehoshaphat's, Chapters 17-20
    - C. Joash's, Chapters 23-24
    - D. Hezekiah's, Chapters 29-32
    - E. Josiah's, Chapters 34-35

5. Trace the following themes/phrases throughout Chronicles: David, all Israel, the temple (including God's presence, worship, etc.), retribution theology (including how pride, humility, and repentance fit into this), and God's sovereignty. Why are these themes important for the Chronicler and how do they fit into the purpose of the book? (This is a big question, work hard on it and think carefully about it, at least 1 short paragraph for each theme)

*A: David occurs 253 times in Chronicles, all over the books! Obviously, most of 1st Chronicles is about his reign: We see him made king (11:1-3), we see his supporters (12:23), we see him moving the ark (13:1-14), defeating the Philistines (14:8-17), his fame (14:17), the celebration of the ark (ch 15 & 16). The Davidic Covenant is of special significance (ch 17). Also of note is David's preparation to build the temple (chs 22-29). But probably even more surprising is how often he is mentioned in 2nd Chronicles which is not about him! He is mentioned 'incidentally' many times throughout the book. A few of these mentions include: 1:8-9; 6:4-17, 42; 7:18; 10:19; 13:5, 8; 21:7; 23:3, 18; 28:1; 29:27, 30; 33:7; 34:2. Thus we are reminded of God's promise to David will still continue!*

*The phrase "**All Israel**" is used in the books 46 times! Most of these are in 1st Chronicles and the first half of 2nd Chronicles. This reminds us of the unity of Israel under the reigns of David and Solomon. Especially after the Exile when it looked as though the nation was scattered and separated, this topic of the unity of the nation was very important. Thus even the importance of the genealogies, establishing that the people who came back were indeed the same nation that God had formed and brought under the rule of David. God will still fulfill His promises to **this nation as a whole!***

*The **temple** plays a major part in the books of Chronicles. As we've already seen, the genealogies themselves emphasize those who worked in the temple. David's preparations to build the temple cover a major portion of 1st Chronicles, and does Solomon's building of the temple in 2nd Chronicles. As we already noted, the dedication of the temple and Solomon's prayer concerning the temple forms a high point of the theology of these books. Of course the books end with the declaration of Cyrus to **rebuild the temple**, and the setting of the books probably involves motivating the people to rebuild the temple. In short, God wasn't done with His people. He would still dwell among them. His plan wasn't ruined by the Exile, and there was still a need for the temple and a means to right relationship with Yahweh!*

*Another major theme in Chronicles is that of **retribution theology**. Over and over again we see God blessing those who humbly walk with Him in faith, and God cursing those who rebel against Him in pride. We see that God answers the prayers of those who repent. In effect what we are seeing is that the blessings and the*



cursings from the Mosaic Covenant are in effect. Notice the very Mosaic covenantal language in Solomon's prayer in 7:13. This is even stated explicitly in Solomon's prayer in 2nd Chronicles 7. We see several examples of this language coming out explicitly where a king repents or turns to Him, and God hears and answers! Some examples (or examples of judgment for pride/rebellion) include: 2Ch 12:2; 13:14-15; 14:11-12; 16:9, 12; 20:4-22; 28:19; 32:7-8; 33:12-13; 34:27.

Along with this theme of retribution is the theme of **God's sovereignty**. God must be in control if He is going to bless those who trust Him and curse those who rebel! He must be sovereign if He is going to keep His promises! God is the One in control and His plan is being worked out. He will keep His promises because He is in control and He is faithful! Thus we see that history is the outworking of Yahweh's plan. Thus we see the Chronicler adding parenthetical statements often throughout the book showing God's sovereignty. Besides ones we've already mentioned, some examples include: 1Ch 9:1; 10:13; 2Ch 10:15; 11:4; 13:20; 14:6; 21:7, 16, 18; 34:25. History is indeed His story!

Thus all of these themes come together to form the Chronicler's **message**. God is in complete control and is working out His plan for the world through His people. He made promises to Abraham and David and will certainly keep them. His plan involves His temple by which He is able to dwell with and have relationship with His people. If His people will simply humble themselves and turn to Him, He will bless them. They must be in relationship with Him through the Law and sacrifices (Mosaic Covenant) if they are to be blessed. And if they rebel against Him they will be cursed. But ultimately all Israel will be united under the Davidic King as God sovereignly brings about His plan for His nation!

6. Jump ahead and read 2 Chron 7:12-15 very carefully. Note the language, the theology and the point of this passage. This verse captures in summary form some key theological concerns of the book. List below some key terms that are in this passage, and then summarize briefly what the author is saying in this passage. (1 paragraph)

A: This passage is about **prayer** and **humility**, **sacrifice** and **forgiveness**, **healing** and **hearing**. Of course it is all about the temple. The temple is a house of sacrifice, the place of atonement. Through this sacrifice, Yahweh's people can be in a relationship with Him. Thus **God will hear His people when they humbly come to Him by His appointed means (the temple!)**. There is a need for forgiveness! God is always faithful, He has promised to hear and answers prayers when He is approached by the right means!

7. Drawing from your previous study of the Toledot ("generations") of Genesis and other genealogies, give some potential reasons why the Chronicler would begin his work with 9 chapters of genealogies? What is his purpose in doing so? (1 paragraph)

A: Genealogies show **origin**, they show connection. There is a huge focus on **identity**. In this case we will see that the emphasis lies on particular tribes within the nation of Israel that relate to the kingly and priestly lines. These lines of course have a lot to do with God's plan in the world. He will bring the Messiah, the **King-Priest** into the world to fulfill His plan and design for His creation. Because in the OT God's promises were so tied to family lines (from the seed of the woman, from the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, ...), it shows the connection to God's original promises. God's plan for creation from the beginning (Adam) was to bring a righteous King to rule over His creation and a sacrifice and priest to forgive His sinful people. God's plan has not failed but is continuing on!

Also note that these genealogies had a purpose to the post-exilic community. The genealogies would have **unified** the community. Their forefathers served Yahweh and Yahweh blessed them! The hearers would have

*had specific ancestors in the list! Think how encouraged they would be to see God working in the lives of their ancestors and to have that connection to the past!*

8. What stands out with the genealogical list in 1:1-4 (ie. the way it is told) compared with the other lists in chapter 1? (1-2 sentences)

*A: 1:1-4 is simply a list of names. God's plan goes back to the beginning. It **begins with Adam** and ends with Noah's sons. This is stark and reminds us of God's original design for His creation. He moves straight from Adam to Noah to highlight the line that would lead to Israel and Judah.*

9. What stands out about the order of tribes in 2:1-2 with the list beginning in 2:3? (1 sentence)

*A: **Judah** isn't the firstborn as shown in 2:1-2, yet his genealogy is given first. This obviously gives him emphasis.*

10. What is special about Judah according to 5:1-2? (1 sentence)

*A: Judah is special because **the 'leader'** came from him. This of course refers to King David who is significant throughout the book.*

11. Which sections in the genealogies of chapters 2-8 are devoted to the following people/tribes: a) Judah b) David c) Benjamin d) Levi. Give a suggestion why these four people/tribes get the attention they do? What sort of theological themes should we anticipate? (1 paragraph)

*A: Judah- 2:3-55; David- 3:1-24; Judah- 4:1-23; Benjamin- 7:6-12; 8:1-40; Levites- 6:1-81. These people and tribes were emphasized because of their importance to the author. Judah and David's lines were clearly emphasized because of the importance of the **Davidic line**, the line of the Kings, and the Davidic Covenant that God made with David. One day a king would come from his line who would rule in **perfect justice** over Israel forever! The Levites were important because of their role in the spiritual life of Israel, and particularly for their role in the **temple**. The book of Chronicles ends with a command to rebuild the temple, and as we see in Haggai/Zechariah, rebuilding the temple is of central importance for the nation in God's plan. There must be atonement for there to be relationship with Yahweh, and this hasn't changed through the Exile! Finally, Benjamin is also of great importance in the nation of Israel for several reasons. Probably most important for the author is that Benjamin sided with Judah in supporting the Davidic king when the northern tribes formed their own kingdom. Thus Benjamin and Judah formed the Southern Kingdom where the Davidic kings reigned. Also of note with respect to Benjamin is the strategic importance of their land (Jerusalem was in their allotment) and the Central Benjamin Plateau was often key in important battles in Israel. Saul was a Benjamite as well.*

12. Why was Judah carried away into exile according to 9:1 (this is a key word)? (1 word)

*A: They were carried into exile because of their **unfaithfulness**.*

13. 9:2 assumes a return from exile and gives a genealogy of the post-exilic inhabitants of Jerusalem. List the 7 different types of people listed in 9:2-3. (1 sentence)

*A: Priests, Levites, temple servants, sons of Judah, sons of Benjamin, sons of Ephraim and Manasseh.*

14. 9:10-13 is a genealogy of what type of people? Who is 9:14-16 is a genealogy of? Who is 9:17-27 is a genealogy of? Who is 9:33-34 is a genealogy of? (1 sentence)

*A: The priests. The Levites. The gatekeepers. The singers.*

15. What would you say is the main focus of the genealogies of 9:10-34? What do they all have in common? What *greater* theme might this section point to? (1-2 sentences)

*A: These were all people who had responsibilities in the temple. We see once again the importance of the temple for the Chronicler.*

16. Given your reading of 1 Chron 1-9, what are the main emphases that show what the author was trying to highlight. (1-2 sentences)

*A: The two twin emphases of **David and the temple** run throughout these genealogies. Thus he may be trying to emphasize the importance of the Davidic Covenant and the importance of atonement/sacrifice/relationship with Yahweh!*

17. Application: What do we learn about God's faithfulness from Chronicles? How can we be encouraged that God will keep His promises from these books?

## 12. The Davidic Reign: I Chronicles 10-29

**Scripture:** 1 Chronicles 10-29

**Theme:** God is Ruling through His Chosen King

**Objectives:**

- To begin to understand the Davidic covenant and its significance on all of Scripture
- To see the significance of the temple and God's presence with His people

**Reading:**

- Read 1 Chronicles 10-29 twice

**Questions:**

1. Why do you think the author begins his narrative with this brief account of Saul in 1 Chron 10? Verses 13-14 are a theological summary added by the narrator (it's not in Samuel-Kings). What theological points is the author drawing out of Saul's life? What key word is used of Saul's sin? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Saul's reign ended in defeat and death. Yahweh was obviously not fighting for him. By introducing the section on David's reign with Saul's defeat and death, the author establishes the need for a king after God's own heart. The point is made explicit in the last two verses in this section (10:13-14). Saul died for his sin and the kingdom was given to David. The word for sin here is "ma'al"? This is **covenant treachery**. Note its use in 1 Chron 9:1 and 2 Chron 36:14.*

2. 1 Chron 11-12 is about David's rise to king and the establishment of his kingdom. As you seek to understand the author's main point of this section, pay special attention to the theological summary statements made by the narrator in 11:3, 9, 10, 14; 12:23, 38. Summarize the author's main point(s) made in these sections. (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh was behind David's success. Once again we see that history is God's doing. He is in control! Notice as well that 'all Israel' made David king (11:1, 3). David's support was **universal**. David's victory came from God. God was behind him! Notice as well how David is portrayed as a man who **fears** and **honors** Yahweh (11:18-19). This is why Yahweh blesses him, because he is **humble** and not proud although he is the king.*

3. What section in 2 Samuel does 1 Chron 11:11-47 correspond to? Why might the Chronicler include the list here? (2-3 sentences)

*A: This list corresponds to 2nd Samuel 23. The Chronicler possibly puts the list **up front** to show how great David was and how God was powerfully behind him. This was true from the beginning of his reign! The list is longer in 1 Chronicles 11:26-47 than the parallel account and includes more names. This **huge list** of military leaders shows that the breadth of David's support is astonishing. David's army is even compared with the **army of God** (12:22)!!!*

4. Articulate the main point the author is making in 1 Chron 11-12. (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh was the one who made David exceedingly great and strong because ultimately, **God was reigning through him**.*

5. After reading 1 Chron 13-16, what's the main focus of this section? (1 sentence)

*A: The theme here is the temple as David brings the ark to Jerusalem.*

6. Compare 1 Chron 13:1-8 with 2 Sam 6:1-5. What is different about the Chronicles account? (2-3 sentences)

*A: David's decision is made in consultation and agreement with **all Israel's leaders**; (2) these leaders also agree to invite "all their brethren who remain in all the land of Israel," with particular mention of priests and Levites, to join them in securing the ark; (3) it is this enlarged assembly which is then seen to be the "all Israel" of v 5, in contrast to "all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand" of 2 Sam 6:1" (WBC).*

7. 1 Chron 13-16 draws on 2 Sam 6. Note the main difference between these accounts. What is unique to Chronicles and what might be the point he's trying to make through these "additions?" (1 paragraph)

*A: 1) 1 Chron 13:3 admits guilt for neglecting the ark in the previous days. 2) 1 Chron 13 emphasizes "all Israel" far and wide, joining in bringing the ark and in the celebration (1 Chron 13:8). 3) David is somewhat exonerated from the mishap with Uzzah (David originally sought the "priests and Levites" in 13:2, but apparently, his command wasn't followed through, because the ark was not carried by the priests. Instead, Uzzah and Ahio drove a cart pulled by oxen. In 1 Chron 15:2 David acknowledges again that priests are to carry the ark (not in Samuel). 1 Chron 15:3-15 is a lengthy explanation this point. 1 Chron 15:13 even explains what went wrong: the ark wasn't carried by priests. 4) 1 Chron 15-16 greatly elaborates (71 verses vs 12 in Samuel) on the event, emphasizing David's good treatment of ark. The bringing of the ark to Jerusalem is surrounded by **constant exuberant worship**, accompanied by **David's ANE praise band**, marked in particular with "loud-sounding cymbals" (15:16, 28; 16:5). 1 Chron 16:8-36 concludes the event by **quoting Psalm 105, 96, and 106** = "The choice of these psalms is hardly accidental. They are united by a theme of Yahweh's salvation of Israel, **even though Israel is weak and small**, an important message for the post-exilic community" (EOT, 272).*

8. What key words or themes are introduced by the inclusion of Psalms 105, 96, and 106 in 1 Chron 16? (1-2 sentences)

*A: The Abrahamic **covenant** is brought to the forefront of the emphasis. Also notice Yahweh's **hesed**. Also God's sovereignty is highlighted in these royal Psalms. Yahweh is to be **praised** for His faithfulness!*

9. Carefully compare 1 Chronicles 17:14 with 2 Samuel 7:16 and note any differences in the account of Chronicles. (1 paragraph)

*A: In 2 Sam 7:16, '**Your** house and **your** kingdom will endure forever before me; **your** throne will be established forever.' In 1 Chron 17:14, 'I will set him over **my** house and **my** kingdom forever; **his** throne will be established forever.' In Chronicles, Son of David is set over **God's** kingdom! This is the idea of the **mediatorial kingdom**, the nation of Israel is God's kingdom and God's rule is mediated through this nation! The emphasis from 'your kingdom will last forever' to 'his kingdom will last forever', also focuses more attention on **David's descendant** who would reign forever!*

10. Note that 1 Chron 18-19 follows closely 2 Sam 8-10, except that it passes over 2 Sam 9 (so 1 Chron 18 = 2 Sam 8; and 1 Chron 19 = 2 Sam 10). Now read 1 Chron 20:1-8 and identify the text(s) in 2 Samuel to which this passage corresponds. What significant difference do you see? Why? How is David portrayed in this section (chs 18-19) and how does this prepare for what follows? (1 paragraph)

*A: 2 Sam 11 corresponds to 1 Chron 20:1-8 with the episode of David and Bathsheba conspicuously absent. Obviously it is not the point of the Chronicler to show the sin of David and so since this story doesn't add to his argument he doesn't include it. This is not to say that there is anything inaccurate in the Chronicles account, but that it is telling a particular story with a particular point. David is portrayed in this section as a man a war, and thus he is not able to build the temple. However, this sets up for his **wisdom** and **foresight** in preparing for the temple to be built, something completely absent from Samuel-Kings.*

11. Compare 1 Chron 21:1-22:1 with 2 Sam 24. What differences do you see in these passages? Why does the author bring these out? (cf. 2 Chron 3:1-2) Why is numbering the people such a big sin? (1+ paragraph)

*A: One obvious difference is that in Chronicles, it is **Satan** who incites David to number the people. In 2 Samuel it is **Yahweh** who incited David so that Israel would be judged. There seems to be a more developed understanding of causes and the problem of evil in Chronicles. So while **ultimately God is responsible** we also see intermediate forces at play. Here we also see in the sin of David numbering the people that the site of the temple is chosen (1 Chron 22:1). This is consistent with Chronicles larger emphasis on the temple.*

*Numbering the people was such a big deal because it showed David's **trust** was in his army and not in Yahweh. It shouldn't have mattered how large the army was, if Yahweh was fighting for Israel it didn't matter! The question we must ask ourselves is what do we turn to when a tough situation comes up? Do we immediately look to see how much money is in our bank account??*

12. Note that 1 Chron 22-29 has no parallel in Samuel-Kings. What is the main point that the Chronicler is trying to make in this passage? Why does he add all this stuff? Note that 1 Chron 22 and 28-29 creates an envelope around this section and captures the main point. (2-3 sentences)

*A: David is closely tied to the building of the temple, something foreign to Samuel-Kings. Chs 22 and 28 frame this section, which both focus on the organization of **temple worship**. This would further stand out since it's unique to Chronicles. The transition from David to Solomon overlooks many of the things contained in 1 Kings 1-2 and is focused on one main issue: the temple. **David was more concerned with building God's kingdom than his own.***

13. What do we see emphasized in 1 Chron 28-29 in the transition to Solomon? Compare how the transition goes in Samuel-Kings. What is significant in the wording of 28:7-9? (1 paragraph)

*A: 1 Chron 28-29 is significant because: 1) Solomon is the heir of God's kingdom promised to David (1 Chron 28:5-6), 2) **Conditionality** is emphasized (28:7-10), 3) Solomon's charge to build the temple echoes Joshua's **conquest** (28:10, 20), 4) Solomon's selection as king after David is instantaneous and unanimous (29:22-25) unlike the presentation in Kings.*

*We see that Solomon has a **choice** whether to participate in God's plan. God has made clear, unconditional promises. Solomon has received an amazing inheritance. David has made all the preparations. God has*

clearly appointed Him as successor. It is as if he is standing on the border of the promised land, will he go in and take it? God **will certainly** work out His plan, but a generation may die in the wilderness! This of course combines the twin emphases of God's unconditional promise with His conditional promise of inclusion. Will you be a part of the plan?! There is a strong emphasis on the Davidic line and God's blessing upon them, but the hearers would have known that Solomon blew it! But that doesn't negate God's promise to David and that God is faithful to keep His word! Solomon didn't participate in God's plan, but just like the wilderness generation who missed out, others came after them to whom the promise was still open...

14. What themes do we see mentioned in David's prayer in 1 Chron 29:10-20 that tie in with the message of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: We see David's **acknowledgment** that everything comes from God. He is the one who strengthens and makes people great. People are nothing apart from Him and everything we bring is ultimately from Him! We are merely sojourners on His earth! We also see a strong emphasis on people's **hearts**. God cares about the heart! David's heart was fixed on Yahweh and he prays that the people's hearts and intentions would be preserved and directed to Him as well. He also prays that Solomon might have a perfect heart. Thus we see themes subtly related to the retribution theology of the book coming into David's prayer. The implication is that **God blesses the humble!** He does so for **His own glory!**

15. Application: How does seeing David's rise to power, victories, reign and prosperity and then plan to build the temple encourage us to be faithful in putting God first?
16. Application: How does understanding both God's conditional and unconditional promises help and challenge us in our relationship with Yahweh?

### 13. A Glimpse of the Kingdom: II Chronicles 1-9

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 1-9

**Theme:** Israel in Solomon's Reign Foreshadows the Kingdom when the True Son of David Comes

**Objectives:**

- To see the importance of the Abrahamic covenant in understanding God's plan for the world
- To see a glimpse of how the kingdom should have been and get a taste for how it will be
- To be encouraged to humbly seek Yahweh because of His unfailing faithfulness
- To be challenged by the need for faithfulness to be used by Him

**Reading:**

- Read 2 Chronicles 1-9 *three times*

**Questions:**

1. 2 Chron 1-9 (the account of Solomon) follows fairly close the account in Kings. However, there are a few differences. What are they? (Try to list 3-5) How do these differences color the account different than in Samuel-Kings? (1 paragraph)

*A: 1) Chronicles is missing the account from 1 Kings 3 and exercise of wisdom with the two women, 2) Chronicles has 2 Chr 1 shortened from 1 Kings 1-3 (Adonijah trying to take the throne, killing Solomon's enemies, foreign wives), 3) Chronicles has no mention of Solomon's suppression/killing of his enemies (1 Kings 2), 4) Chronicles has no mention of foreign marriages, turning to false gods, which led to the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11), 5) Chronicles has only a brief mention of his building of his own palace (2 Chron 2:1; 7:11; 8:1), while Kings goes into great detail and contrasts this with the temple (1 Kings 5:1ff), 6) His worship at the "high place" in Gibeon adds: "for God's tent of meeting was there..." which isn't in 1 Kings 3:4. Of course these changes make the transition from David to Solomon look much more smooth, and paint Solomon in a much better light. See next question...*

2. Comment on how Solomon is portrayed in Chronicles as compared to Samuel-Kings. Note verses like 1 Chron 22:9-10; 2 Chron 7:10; 11:17. How does this fit into the purpose of the Chronicler? (1 paragraph)

*A: In Samuel-Kings Solomon is never given as a positive example. In Chronicles however, he is frequently paralleled with David, and also given as a positive example. We don't see his downward spiral with wives in Chronicles. Note also verses like 2 Chronicles 7:10 and 11:17; By paralleling David and Solomon, the Chronicler may be emphasizing the parallel between promise and fulfillment and reminding the readers that God always keeps His promises! We also see that Solomon is characterized as a man of peace, further strengthening the idea of promise and fulfillment. But as we'll see, later there will be **conditionality** to the promise. The readers of course **know** that Solomon wasn't the final fulfillment of the promise, they know he blew it. But that doesn't negate the unconditionality of the promise, and seeing how he was on the brink of fulfillment gives us a taste for the fact that fulfillment is yet coming!*

3. Read 2 Chron 6 very carefully. Analyze important topics and themes in the chapter. Note especially 6:40-42, and 7:1-3 which are new/different from the Kings account. (1-2+ paragraphs)



A: The primary topic of this chapter is the **temple** as the occasion of the chapter is Solomon's dedication. From the outset we see that the temple is God's eternal dwelling place (6:2). This emphasizes that God will not forsake His temple. It is God's dwelling place because of His **choice** of David and Jerusalem (6:6). As history has unfolded, we continue to see the narrowing of God's original promise. God continues to **choose** how His plan will unfold. At first, we started with the simple promise that God would crush the Serpent through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). As we continued in the Biblical account we saw that God would bless the whole world through the seed of Abraham whom He had **chosen** (Gen 12). As time went on we saw God **choose** the line of Judah (Gen 49:10), and ultimately David (2 Sam 7) to be His chosen king. We see that God has **chosen** Jerusalem to be His capital city, the place where He dwells! So now in this text we see clearly the connection between the Davidic Covenant and the temple. God has chosen Israel to be His nation, David's line to be His dynasty, Jerusalem (where David reigned) to be His capital and the place where He dwelt (6:2, 6). God's **choice** is irrevocable, and so what becomes key in this chapter is that God is **faithful** to keep His promises (6:14)!!! So Solomon pleads with God to keep His word (6:16)!

So now the temple becomes the meeting place between God's unconditional and conditional promises. God has **promised** to bless the world through the nation of Israel. He has **promised** to bring a perfectly righteous King in the line of David. He has **promised** to dwell in Jerusalem forever. These are God's unconditional promises rooted in His eternal election. But these promises can only happen when His people are walking with Him! So the temple is the place where repentant people who are seeking Yahweh's favor can go and plead His unconditional promises (6:20-21)! Since God will never forsake His people, when His people repent and turn back to Him, to the place where He has caused His name to dwell, He will hear and answer (6:25, 27, 30, 33, 35, 39, **40-42**)! God will be faithful to keep His promises! They are unconditional! Yes, individuals and even whole generations may stray, but **since God is always faithful to His promises, the opportunity to return always stands open!**

Notice another key theme is that of blessing (6:3, 4). This brings us back to the original design and intent of the Abrahamic Covenant. God intends for His people **to be blessed** by Him when they are in relationship with Him, and so **to be a blessing** to the world. We see a glimpse of this happening in 2 Chron 1-9, only a taste of what is to come in the kingdom... See especially the **foreigner** in 2 Chron 6:32-33 and God's purpose of them coming, knowing, and fearing Yahweh as a result of God dwelling among His people!

4. Compare 2 Chron 7:11-22 with 1 Kings 9:1-9. Which section is unique to the Chronicles account? There are a few verses not in 1 Kings at all, what are they?

A:

1 Kings 9:1-9	2 Chron 7:11-22
<u><sup>1</sup> As soon as Solomon had finished building the house of Yahweh and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, <sup>2</sup> Yahweh appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. <sup>3</sup> And Yahweh said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me.</u>	<u><sup>11</sup> Thus Solomon finished the house of Yahweh and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of Yahweh and in his own house he successfully accomplished. <sup>12</sup> Then Yahweh appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have <b>chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.</b> <sup>13</sup> When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people who are called by my name humble</u>

I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. <sup>4</sup>And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, <sup>5</sup> then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' <sup>6</sup> But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, <sup>7</sup> then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. <sup>8</sup>And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land and to this house?' <sup>9</sup>Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned Yahweh their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.'"

*themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* <sup>15</sup> Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

<sup>16</sup> For now I have **chosen** and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

<sup>17</sup>And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, <sup>18</sup>then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.' <sup>19</sup> "But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, <sup>20</sup> then I will pluck you up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. <sup>21</sup>And at this house, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land and to this house?' <sup>22</sup>Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned Yahweh, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'"

5. Re-read 2 Chron 7:12-16, once again noting the key words of this passage. How do these verses become key for the whole rest of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: **Humility** and **prayer** are key words and concepts for Chronicles. So is God's response of hearing and forgiving. As we saw in chapter 6, we see so clearly again in Chronicles the interplay between God's conditional and unconditional promises. He will certainly hear the prayer of those who **humbly repent** and **seek Him**. That's because He will always keep His promises! Notice that the judgment that God will bring on His people (shutting up the heavens, locusts, pestilence) are covenant curses. There is definitely cursing for disobedience. While after there is humility and repentance, there will be blessing and God will heal His land. He hears prayers offered at the temple because the temple is the place that stands for and reminds the people of God's unconditional promise to dwell forever with His people... Those who rebel will not partake in that promise, but those who turn to Him He will not forsake!

6. Comment on how 2 Chronicles 1-9 fits in with the Abrahamic Covenant. Make sure to include key words (like covenant, *hesed* = loyal love), and concepts (like foreigners, blessing, etc.). Think about this!!! (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Notice the repetition of the key word *hesed* in this section. God will be faithful to His covenant! He is to be praised for His **loyal love**. He is like a husband who is never faithless. The Abrahamic Covenant is the primary focus for the unconditional covenant that God will be faithful to. God **will** certainly bless the world through the nation of Israel! Notice how the key word/concept of **blessing** from the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3) comes into this section. The word bless occurs in 2:11; 6:3-4; 9:7-8. Notice as well how this blessing interplays with foreigners. The Abrahamic covenant is that the world would be blessed through Abraham's seed. So see how that is happening in this section! Even Hiram, a pagan king is **blessing Yahweh** because of what Yahweh is doing through Solomon! Solomon himself is then blessing the people (6:3) and also blessing Yahweh for keeping His promise (6:4). Then we also see the Queen of Sheba **blessing Yahweh** and acknowledging how **blessed** the people are because Yahweh had set His love on Israel (9:7-8)!!!

This is precisely what the Abrahamic covenant was supposed to look like! As God's people lived in right relationship with Him, Yahweh would bless them! Then as Yahweh continued to bless His people, all the nations of the earth would see this blessing and would come to Israel to know Yahweh! Notice this spelled out explicitly in 6:33: As God **answers** the prayers of His people and acts on their behalf, all the earth will see that God has **chosen** Israel, that Jerusalem is His capital city, and that the temple of Yahweh there is the place of the dwelling of the Creator of the universe among men. Thus **all the earth will know** the greatness of Yahweh and fear Him. We see of glimpse of this happening in this section. But we know that this isn't the end, the rest of the book shows us that this wasn't it! See the next question...

7. Comment on how 2 Chron 1-9 fits into the Mosaic Covenant. Make sure to include words/concepts such as blessing, cursing, and conditionality. (1 paragraph)

A: We see so clearly in this section the conditional aspects of the Mosaic Covenant coming into play. The Mosaic covenant teaches us that **if** you obey you will be blessed, **if** you rebel you will be cursed! The only way to be used by God as part of His plan is to be in relationship with Him! Notice the language of conditionality ('if', 'then', 'when') especially in 6:22-39 and 7:12-22. The Mosaic Covenant is the only way for people to be in relationship with Yahweh (at least until the New Covenant was to come...)!

8. Comment on promise/fulfillment in 2 Chronicles 1-9. How are the words promise and fulfillment used in this section? Does that create any tension? What? How is it resolved? Why do you think the author emphasizes these themes here? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Notice the language of **fulfillment** in this section. In 1:9 Solomon says that God's promises to David are fulfilled. We see this language again in 6:15. God promised that David would have a son who would sit on his throne forever. Was Solomon that son? The **tension** is whether or not Solomon is the final Davidic king who will reign forever in perfect righteousness and institute the New Covenant where God's people are forever in right relationship with Him. For a brief moment in history, it almost looks as if Solomon could be that king. There is great blessing, first on the nation of Israel, and through them the nations of the earth are learning about Yahweh. But the reader already knows and we will soon see, that this is not the end... Solomon wasn't the answer. There is a need for an even greater king!

By giving a brief picture of what the kingdom looked like in the days of Solomon, the author gives us a **taste** for what is to come. We are setup for a great sense of **anticipation** because in one sense we saw how close the

kingdom was and saw a dim picture of what it will look like. God can certainly do it again, but this time to its fullest! If the kingdom in Solomon's day was great, how much greater when God brings the final Son of David! God will certainly keep His promise, that is what is emphasized in this section, and we are reminded of His faithfulness to bring it to completion!

9. Comment on how chapters 1-9 of 2nd Chronicles function to introduce and prepare us for the rest of the book? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: At the dedication of the temple, Solomon has setup an expectation of God's unswerving loyalty to His promise to bless the world, but also the reminder from the Mosaic Covenant of the need for faithfulness and relationship to Yahweh to be used by Him. Thus the unconditional and conditional promises are both emphasized. Solomon setup the expectation that when people repent and turn back to Yahweh, He will hear and listen. This is because He will never forsake His people.

So as we move on from this section to the rest of the book of Chronicles, we are watching to see if the kings after Solomon will humbly turn to Yahweh or not. We are waiting to see if God will listen to their cries for help. Will God hear their prayers? And conversely, when they rebel, will they come under covenant curse? Will God fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant? Will the blessing and cursings of the Mosaic Covenant still be in effect? We will see in the following section that indeed, those kings that humbly sought Yahweh in His ordained way, He heard and saved, but those who rebelled came under His curse. God continued to preserve the Davidic line and the remnant of the nation of Israel, so that one day He will finally fulfill His plan for them!

10. Application: How does seeing a glimpse of how great Yahweh's kingdom was encourage us as to the greatness of His future coming kingdom with the Messiah as the perfectly righteous King?

## **14. Divine Alignment: II Chronicles 10-36**

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 10-36

**Theme:** God Blesses those who Humbly Seek Him and Fights against those who don't

**Objectives:**

- To understand the theological features of the Chronicler's retelling of the divided kingdom
- To compare the presentation of kings in Chronicles with the narratives of the book of Kings
- To understand the exhortation that the Chronicler is drawing from Israel's history and proclaiming to his post-exilic audience

**Reading:**

- Read 2 Chronicles 10-36 *twice*

**Questions:**

1. Once again, re-read 2 Chronicles 7:13-16 and summarize the main theological point of this passage and note the key words. The Chronicler's retelling of the divided kingdom (10-36) will in effect be an exposition of this passage in 2 Chron 7. (2-3 sentences)

*A: When God's people rebel and so find themselves under covenant curse (no rain, locusts, pestilence), if they humbly turn to Yahweh in prayer, seek Him, and turn from their wicked ways, God will hear and answer and forgive! God's temple will **always** be the place of His dwelling because He has chosen Israel/David/Jerusalem and will forever keep His promises (Abrahamic and Davidic covenants), and so there is **always opportunity for God's people to repent!***

2. Where do we see key words from 7:13-16 elsewhere in Chronicles? (1 paragraph)

*A:*

- a. **seeking God** (Heb: *dārash*, *bāqash*) or the failure to do so becomes the benchmark for blessing or woe (1 Chr 10:13-14; 22:19; 28:9; 2 Chr 11:16; 12:14; 14:4, 7; 15:2, 4, 12, 13, 15; 16:12; 17:4; 18:4; 19:3; 20:4; 22:9; 25:20; 26:5; 30:19; 31:21; 33:12; 34:3).
- b. **humbling oneself** (Heb: *kāna`*) or the failure to do so determines the divine response (2 Chr 12:6, 7, 12; 28:19; 30:11; 33:12, 19, 23; 34:27; 36:12).
- c. **turning** (Heb: *shūv*) by both God and people (2 Chr 11:4; 12:12; 15:4; 19:1, 4; 24:19; 29:10; 30:6, 8, 9; 33:13; 36:13)
- d. **prayer** (Heb: *pālal*, and others) is key throughout Chronicles (1 Chr 4:10; 5:20; 21:26; 2 Chr 13:12-15; 14:11; 18:31; 20:9; 30:18, 27; 32:20, 24; 33:13, 18-19)
- e. **healing** (Heb: *rāphā'*) either happens or not based on how people respond to God (2 Chr 16:12; 30:20; 36:16)

*These antonyms are also frequent:*

- a. **abandon, forsake** (Heb: *āzab* in 1 Chr 28:9, 20; 2 Chr 7:19, 22; 12:1, 5; 13:10-11; 15:2; 21:10; 24:18, 20, 24; 28:6; 29:6; 34:25)
- b. **be unfaithful, rebellious** (Heb: *ma`al* in 1 Chr 2:7; 5:25; 10:13; 2 Chr 12:2; 26:16, 18; 28:19, 22; 29:6; 30:7; 36:14)

3. What are some clear examples of retribution theology in chapters 10-36? (1 paragraph)

*A:*

- 1 Chron 28:9 "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for Yahweh searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.
- 2 Chron 12:5 "Thus says Yahweh, 'You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.'"
- 2 Chron 15:2 "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Yahweh is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.
- 2 Chron 24:20 "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of Yahweh, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken Yahweh, he has forsaken you.'"

4. What do we see as the result of obedience and disobedience in this section (1 paragraph)

A: Obedience from the kings is rewarded with:

**success and prosperity** (1 Chr 22:11, 13; 29:23; 2 Chr 14:7; 26:5; 31:21; 32:27-30 - contrast 13:12)

**building programs** (2 Chr 11:5; 14:6-7; 16:6; 17:12; 24:13; 26:2, 6, 9-10; 27:3-4; 32:29-30; 33:14; 34:10-13 - contrast 16:5)

**victory in warfare** (2Chr 13:13-18; 14:8-15; 20:2-30; 25:14; 26:11-15; 27:5-7; 32:20-22)

**descendants** (1 Chr 3:1-9; 14:2-7; 25:5; 26:4-5; 2 Chr 11:18-22; 13:21; 21:1-3)

**popular support** (2 Chr 11:13-17; 15:10-15; 17:5; 19:4-11; 20:27-30; 23:1-17; 30:1-26; 34:29-32; 35:24-25)

**large armies** (2 Chr 11:1; 14:8; 17:12-19; 25:5; 26:10).

Conversely disobedience and infidelity bring:

**military defeat** (2 Chr 12:1-9; 16:1-9; 21:8-11, 16-17; 24:23-24; 25:15-24; 28:4-8, 16-25; 33:10; 35:20-24; 36:15-20)

**the disaffection of the population** (2 Chr 16:10; 21:19; 24:25-26; 25:27-28; 28:27; 33:24-25)

**illness** (2Chr 16:12; 21:16-20; 26:16-23 - contrast 32:24).

5. Note that the section in 2 Chronicles 11:5-23 is added from the Kings account (in both Kings and Chronicles we see Rehoboam's response to Shemaiah, but only in Chronicles do we see what follows). What is included in this section? What effect does showing this after Rehoboam's obedience to the word of Yahweh from Shemaiah have? (1 paragraph)

A: Seeing Rehoboam's strength (11:5-12), support (11:13-17), and progeny (11:18-23) **right after** Rehoboam's **obedience** (11:4, cf. 11:16-17) present these as the results of listening to Yahweh. There is blessing for obedience! We also see more about Jeroboam than in Kings. In Kings, Jeroboam's reign is merely wicked. In Chronicles, we see that at times he listened to Yahweh and was blessed for it, even humbling himself when faced with judgment. In the end though he didn't seek Yahweh, but we see more of a textured account of him.

6. Compare the account of Rehoboam in 2 Chron 12 with the parallel account in 1 Kings 14:21-31. Note the modifications that the Chronicler makes to the account in Kings and explain a possible rationale why he does so. Don't forget to note the key word 'humbled' in this section. (1 paragraph)

A: Notice especially 12:1-2, 5, 6, 12, and 14. These verses mention the divine reasons for what was going on and are absent from the Kings account. Shishak came against them because they were unfaithful and forsook Yahweh (12:1-2). Shemaiah says to Rehoboam that Yahweh will forsake him because he had forsaken Yahweh (12:5). But then they **humbled** (key word!) themselves (12:6) and so God responds and His anger is turned away from them (12:7, 12). But overall, he didn't seek Yahweh (12:14) and he dies...

7. Abijah's speech in 2 Chron 13:4-12 has no parallel in Kings. Write down 3 things that Abijah emphasizes in his speech. Note especially what he says about David, and how this fits into the theology of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Abijah's speech strongly emphasizes **retribution theology** (13:10-12), the **temple duties** (13:10-11), and the **Davidic kingdom** (13:5, 6, 8). See how the emphasis in this speech is on the fact that the Davidic kingdom is God's kingdom! God forever gave the rule to David and his sons with a covenant (13:5). He goes on to say that resisting the Davidic kingdom is resisting Yahweh's kingdom (13:8)! Fighting against Judah was to fight against Yahweh (13:12)! So we see in this speech (included only in Chronicles) the emphases of retribution, the temple, and David's throne, characteristic of these books.*

8. Compare the account of Asa's reign in 2 Chron 14-16 with the account in 1 Kings 15:8-24. List the main differences that stand out in the Chronicles account. There is a lot going on here! (2-3 paragraphs)

*A: The Chronicles account is much longer than the Kings account (15 vs 48 verses)! It seems the Chronicler wanted to resolve and explain the reasons for some of the tensions in the Kings account. In Kings, Asa was good, reigned for 41 years, did reforms, had war with Baasha of Israel, allied with Ben-Hadad, got a foot sickness and died. In Chronicles there is much more explanation. **If Asa was good, why was there war all his life and why did he die from an illness?***

*The Chronicler shows that **first** there was peace in the land (14:6-7) as a result of seeking Yahweh (14:5, 7), rather than portraying Asa as warring with Baasha all his life (1 Kings 15:16). Then we also see in Chronicles his victory over Ethiopia because Asa prayed to Yahweh (14:11) and so Yahweh answered (14:14)! Notice also the inclusion of the interlude highly emphasizing retribution theology in 15:1-7. This was from God's Spirit (15:1) and explains why Yahweh was with them, because they **sought** Him (15:2), but in the past there was no peace because they weren't in right relationship with Yahweh (15:3-6). Next we see in Chronicles that Asa leads Israel to **seek Yahweh**, and to reconfirm covenant with Him (15:12-15) and also removed paganism (15:16-18) and the result was peace (15:19)!*

*Then we see the wars with Baasha in chapter 16, and 16:7-10 explicitly shows that the wars with Baasha were a divine retribution for relying on Ben-Hadad instead of relying on Yahweh! Wars are explicitly said to be a judgment for not trusting in Yahweh! Asa didn't like hearing this, and so put the seer in prison who gave this word of Yahweh. Finally, we see that Asa gets his foot disease, but here once again the Chronicler gives us a divine and theological interpretation of the event, Asa sought the doctors and not Yahweh (16:12), and so he died.*

9. In theological terms, how would you explain the reason for the Chronicler's modifications to the account of Asa in Kings? (1 paragraph)

*A: In the Chronicles account, especially in contrast to the Kings account, we have a strong focus on the fact that **God blesses those who humbly seek Him**, and judges those who are unfaithful to Him (retribution theology). He was careful to not just give events, but to show the events of history from a theological standpoint. Everything happens for a **reason** for the Chronicler! Yahweh is behind every event. It is best to humbly seek Him and have Him on your side!*

10. Compare the account of Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings (15:23-24; 22:1-50) with 2 Chronicles 17-20. List the main differences that stand out in the Chronicles account. (1-2 paragraphs)

A:

- a. 17:3-6: "He **sought** Yahweh. . . **so** Yahweh established the kingdom. . . and he had great riches and honor."
- b. 17:9: They taught the law in every city.
- c. 17:10-19: The "dread of Yahweh was on all the kingdoms of the lands." This is classic Chronicles (cf. 14:14; 17:10; 20:29).
- d. 18:1-34: Much like 1 Kings 22, except for 18:31- Jehoshaphat cried out, Yahweh helped!
- e. 19:1-4: Chapter 19 is unique to Chronicles and emphasizes retribution. The prophet Jehu warns Jeoshaphat of the results of entangling himself with Ahab, a wicked king: "should you help the wicked and love those who hate Yahweh and so **bring wrath on yourself** from Yahweh" (19:2; cf 19:3).
- f. 19:5-11: Jehoshaphat says "ya, you're right" and institutes judges and Levites to ensure obedience from the people.
- g. 20:3-4: Demonstrates what happens when one "**seeks Yahweh.**"
- h. In chapter 20, again, the author wants to fill in some gaps. Chapter 20 is mostly unique from Kings. In Kings, Jehoshaphat is "good" yet teamed up with Ahab.
- i. The prayer in 20:6-9 echoes 2 Chron 7:13-15: the land is ours, sanctuary is here, curses are breaking in, we cry to you to deliver us.
- j. War in 20:20-30 (cf. **20:28-29**): God fights for Israel because Israel worships! The enemies kill themselves!
- k. 20:35-37: Theological explanation of the ships of Tarshish (compare with 1 Kings 22:45-50)

11. In theological terms, how would you explain the reason for the Chronicler's modifications to the account of Jehoshaphat in Kings? (2-3 sentences)

A: Once again we see clearly the theological emphases the author is making. Yahweh is sovereignly working out His plan. He will bless those who seek Him. He answers prayers! He acts! We should trust and obey Him!

12. Comment on the significance of 2 Chronicles 21:7. (1 sentence)

A: Yahweh did not destroy the southern kingdom because He will always be faithful to the Davidic Covenant!

13. What was at stake when Athalia was reigning according to 2 Chronicles 23:3 (**note** that this verse is not in Kings)? Why is this so significant for interpreting the whole chapter (2 Chron 23)? (2-3 sentences)

A: The **Davidic line** was at stake! Athalia was a granddaughter of Omri (22:2)! So the Davidic line was barely hanging on by a thread, yet Yahweh ensured that the line continued and was not wiped out. He will certainly keep His promises to David!!! So we see that the Chronicler specifically added this verse (23:3) to emphasize the Davidic covenant once again!

14. Compare the reign of Joash in 2 Kings 12 with 2 Chronicles 24 and list the main differences. Why are they significant? (1 paragraph)

A: 2 Chronicles 24:18-19 shows the wickedness of Joash, after Jehoiada died. Thus we see Zechariah (Jehoiada's son) prophesied that if they **forsake** Yahweh, He would **forsake** them (**24:20**, key retribution theology!). But they conspired against him and killed him! As Zechariah died, he cried out that for Yahweh to see and avenge, and indeed the following story immediately is of the invasion of the Arameans (24:22)!



*This point is made explicit in **24:24**. Thus we see that all the wickedness that happened after Jehoiada died, and the punishment that came from Yahweh because they forsook Him!*

15. Compare the reign of Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:1-18 with 2 Chronicles 33:1-20 and list the main differences. There is one major thing that stands out in the Chronicles account. What is it and how does it emphasize the theology of Chronicles? (1 paragraph)

*A: In the Chronicles account, we hear of **Manasseh's repentance (33:12-13)**! He was taken to Babylon, but in Babylonian in his distress he **humbled** himself and turned to Yahweh. And Yahweh heard his prayer and brought him back to Jerusalem, so that Manasseh knew that Yahweh is God! We even then see blessing upon him (33:14-17). Once again, what is brought into Chronicles is an account of how he humbled himself and Yahweh heard him and blessed him. God is always faithful! He will never completely forsake His people! What is interesting is that the author doesn't whitewash Manasseh (33:9). He fully knows and understands how evil he was. But we see the **faithfulness of Yahweh** that even Manasseh can humble himself repent!*

16. Comment on the significance of 2 Chronicles 34:27 (1 sentence)

*A: Yahweh heard Josiah because of he **humbled himself** and **sought Yahweh**. God cares about our hearts!*

17. Note how the book of Chronicles ends in 36:22-23 (obviously this is not in Kings). Why is this such a fitting end to the book and how does it fit into the theology of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: The book ends with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. This is obviously very significant on many levels. First, it continues to show Yahweh's **absolute sovereignty**. His **Spirit** can even stir up the heart of pagan kings! Secondly it shows Yahweh's unswerving commitment to keep His promises. He never forgets and will certainly bring about His plan! Thirdly, it causes the book to end on a note of **hope**. Even though this book is written to a small band of exiles and it may seem like Yahweh has forgotten them, that's not the case! He will remember the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants! If they will simply humble themselves and seek Him, He will bless them and use them to accomplish His purposes!*

18. Summarize the main theological point(s) being made by the Chronicler in comparison to what we see in Kings. (2-3 sentences)

*A: God blesses those who humble themselves and seek Him. He is in control. He is **sovereign**. He will certainly work out His plan! He has not forgotten the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. His irrevocable choice will be upheld! But we have a responsibility and the privilege of humbling ourselves so that we can be a part of God's plan.*

19. Given this theological point, or points, what is the *exhortational point* that the Chronicler is making to his audience by retelling history in this way? (2-3 sentences)

*A: **Seek Yahweh! Humble yourself!** God will always bless those who seek Him and are in a relationship with Him. God is powerful and able to save. He alone is trustworthy, so trust in Him! **Hope in Him**, His plan is not finished, He will certainly bring it to conclusion by His almighty sovereignty!*

20. Application: How should we respond to Yahweh in light of what we learn about Him in this section?

21. Application: What sense of expectation and anticipation does Chronicles leave us with?

## 15. What is Wisdom?: Overview of Wisdom Literature

**Scripture:** Selected Passages in Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes

**Theme:** Wisdom only Comes from Yahweh; We must Humble ourselves and Seek His Revelation

**Objectives:**

- To familiarize ourselves with the purpose and methods of wisdom literature
- To compare & contrast Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes and to see their distinctive emphases
- To understand the genre of Proverbs and to develop a grid for understand how to interpret and apply proverbs
- To understand how wisdom fits into a biblical grid for decision making

**Reading:**

- Skim Proverbs looking for *key terms* for wisdom and folly, section breaks and noting structure
- Skim Job and Ecclesiastes *quickly*, looking for section breaks & structure, genre, and purpose
- Begin thinking about a topic for your Proverbs Project

**Questions:**

1. What portion of the OT Hebrew canon are we in for these books of Wisdom Literature? What is distinct about this section and how should that affect our interpretation of these books? (2-3 sentences)

*A: These books are in the Writings. Thus they are more focused on the individual, and how an individual should live righteously, rather than being written to and focused on the nation as a whole. The Prophets were focused on calling the nation to corporate repentance and faithfulness to Yahweh. Thus, in many ways the Writings are easier to see how they directly apply to us!*

2. Did you notice any similarities between the three wisdom books in skimming through them? How would you summarize the purpose of each based on your initial interaction? How does each book interact with the concept of 'wisdom'? (1 paragraph)

*A: All three books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job are ultimately about wisdom. In all three at the key points of their respective messages, wisdom is defined as the **fear of Yahweh**. They each approach the topic from a different standpoint, but all bring different truths to bear on wisdom. Proverbs for example begins up front with defining the fear of Yahweh as the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs focuses on understanding our **need for wisdom**, that wisdom comes from God and our **need for divine revelation**. Thus the book of Proverbs seeks to instil within its readers principles of wisdom from God. For Ecclesiastes, the topic of the fear of God comes in at the end. The book as a whole shows the **futility/vanity** of life apart from God and concludes with a reminder that we only find **meaning in life in submission to God**. Finally, with Job, the concept of wisdom comes in at the middle in chapter 28 with an ode to wisdom which is structurally emphasized as linked to chapter 1 and at the center of the book. In Job we are confronted with **God's absolute sovereignty and wisdom and our finiteness**. The fear of Yahweh is **faith, confidence in the unseen greatness of God**. We don't understand everything. We must **submit** to God's greatness because we can't see the reasons why. So each of these books brings its own lessons on wisdom and fearing God, but each one emphasizes man's finiteness and our need to recognize God's greatness!*

3. Comment on the various genres found in Wisdom Literature. Note the single proverb and comment on what they are like. What is distinct about proverbs and what are the benefits and purposes of this type of communication?

*A: In Proverbs, we see both individual proverbs, longer poems, as well as extended speeches (chs. 1-9). In Ecclesiastes we have various treatises. While in Job we have narrative, debates/dialogs, and speeches. Many of these forms are more poetic than narrative. Some of the key ingredients in Hebrew poetry include:*

**Parallelism** is the most important aspect of Hebrew poetry. The parallelism can be in terms of syntax, meter, and sound, but the primary parallelism is that of thoughts and ideas. There are several different types of parallelism including: Synonymous, Antithetical, Staircase, N+1, Chiasm, Inclusio, and Acrostics.

Synonymous- Two lines are roughly parallel and more or less say the same thing. Since they are nearly synonymous, the two lines can help mutually interpret one another. This is especially helpful since poetry is often terse (short and without much elaboration/explanation). This adds clarity and reinforces what is said. Often the second line may still add something new to the first, so don't write it off as being completely redundant!

Antithetical- In this type of parallelism, the two thoughts are contrasting. But just as with synonymous parallelism, the two lines both work together to convey a single thought, and can be used to mutually interpret one another.

Staircase- With staircase parallelism, the first half of the second line somewhat summarizes or repeats the first line, but the second half of the second line moves beyond and expresses a new thought not present in the first line.

N+1- With this type of parallelism, there is a statement about a number of things (N), but then a similar statement made about the one number larger (N+1). This type of parallelism gives a framework for a list to be given in poetic form. Often, it also emphasizes the last item (N+1) as the climax to the series.

Chiasm- This type of parallelism, named after the Greek letter X which describes the form, has a series of parallel lines in opposite order such as ABCB'A' where B' is parallel and similar to B and A' is similar and parallel to A. The center of the chiasm (C) receives the emphasis. This type of parallelism is quite common in Hebrew and so it is tempting to find large chiasmic structures spanning entire books. While this may at times be appropriate it is here suggested that some examples seem contrived when there isn't clear parallelism of syntax or words but only of vague ideas spread over large sections. Nonetheless, true chiasms do occur and can be small or large.

Inclusio- This type of parallelism can be called 'bookends' and often marks a larger section of Scripture. It takes the form of ABA'. What differentiates inclusio from chiasm is that A and A' are much shorter than B (whereas in chiasm each part is of roughly the same length). The purpose of inclusio is to mark off a section and show that it is a single unit of thought.

Acrostic- This can be considered a type of parallelism where every line of the poetry begins with the next letter of the alphabet, starting with Aleph (the 'A' of Hebrew). Thus a true acrostic will have a multiple of 22 lines (there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet). There are several purposes of acrostics. One is that it makes memorizing the poem easier. Secondly, it emphasizes the totality of the subject matter covered (from A to Z). Thirdly, an acrostic emphasizes order, everything is in place.

**Sound** combinations of various types can be used in Hebrew poetry to aid memory, give emphasis and give an overall poetic feel to a composition. There are various types such as assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), consonance (repetition of consonant sounds), alliteration (repetition of the same initial sounds), and rhyme (repetition of the same end sounds). Obviously, these cannot be detected in English translations and the Hebrew needs to be consulted to appreciate the style of the writing.

**Word Plays** are also common in Hebrew poetry (as well as in narrative). These can often be used to emphasize a specific point that an author is trying to make. They can often be ironic, comical, or otherwise witty. Some examples include turns (where same word from the same root is repeated and used in the same way), root play (where different words from the same root is repeated but used in different ways), polysemantic pun (where a pun is made with the same word being used with its different meanings), and paranomasia (words from different roots but that sound similar are used).

**Poetic Devices** that are also common in English can be found in Hebrew such as: Metaphor, Irony, Idiom, Metonymy, Imagery, Allusion, Simile, Merismus, etc. Since these are more or less the same as their English counterparts, no explanation is needed.

**Structure** is also an important aspect of Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poems can often be broken up into stanzas, and the stanzas be broken up into strophes. Understanding the overall broad structure of a poem is important in analyzing its contents so that we can properly see how the parts fit together. Colons describe the number of lines that make up a strophe: mono-colon, bi-colon, tri-colon, etc. There can be many variations on the structure. Often which type of colon the poem uses can be used to break up the stanzas (for example a tri-colon may mark the end of a stanza where the rest of the poem has been bi-colons).

**Individual proverbs** are short, pithy sayings that intend to communicate wisdom for a particular situation. They are not universally true, but are true in a limited sense. Because they are so short and pithy, they often require and invite extended meditation to discern the point and how to apply them. And that's purposeful! They invite meditation! More on the purpose of these below...

4. What is wisdom? How would you define 'wisdom' off the top of your head? What would be a secular definition of the term and how is that different than a biblical definition? How is wisdom defined by Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job (hint: all three define it exactly the same way!)? Why do you think these books define it that way (think carefully about this!)? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Wisdom is having the wherewithal and know-how to achieve your goals. Even from a secular standpoint, wisdom involves understanding life to be able to make choices that give the desired results. Both biblically, and secularly, wisdom is **navigating life skillfully**. It is not just knowledge, but the character and will to carry it out. Wisdom is a high degree of knowledge and skill in any area. You can memorize the entire book of Proverbs and not have wisdom! This is because wisdom always includes the ability to carry out what you know. Yet wisdom must always include knowledge and understanding. Wisdom teaches that choices have implications. It teaches us to think through how we live. In fact, it teaches us how to think!

But since wisdom is about reaching our intended goal, it raises a fundamental question. What is **success**? What is the **goal**? This is where the secular standpoint and the Biblical one diverge. From a Biblical standpoint, true wisdom defines success from God's standpoint, not ours! That's why Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job all define **wisdom as the fear of Yahweh**. True wisdom must start by understanding that God alone is wise and also defines what is wise and **He alone knows what is best**! Since only God has true wisdom, what

is wise for us is to seek wisdom from Him! That is why revelation is so critical for wisdom (especially in Proverbs). Since God alone can define success, we must seek wisdom from Him! We also see a big emphasis on discipline and correction whose purpose is to teach us about consequences! These of course tie into the major themes of **humility & revelation**. We must see our need for wisdom and be humble enough to seek it outside of ourselves, ultimately from God!

There is a pervasive and subtle danger in allowing what 'works' to define what is right or wise rather than Scripture. This is called **pragmatism** (which is different than being practical). What is success? How do we define it? Is it measurable? How can we know what is good and right? Scripture teaches that wisdom only comes from God. **Experience** is dangerous, subtly seeking to define wisdom for us. Thus we trust in ourselves and become **self-reliant** rather than **continually coming to God in His Word for wisdom**. **We don't have wisdom and the only way to be wise is to acknowledge our lack of wisdom and to seek it from God alone (in His Word).**

5. Comment on any structure you found in Proverbs. Are all the chapters the same types of proverbs? How does this help us in interpreting Proverbs? (1 paragraph)

A: There is a definite structure in Proverbs. First of all we see that chapters 1-9 and 30-31 stand apart as not having the normal catalog of short proverbs. We also see within the catalogs of proverbs that there are some section breaks, where various collections of proverbs have been done: 1-9; 10:1-22:16; 22:17-24:22; 24:23-34; 25-29; 30-31. By recognizing the structure of Proverbs, it help us to read chapters 1-9 as an extended unit and to see the cohesiveness of this section on the topic of the need for wisdom. Likewise, understanding that the other sections are collections of Proverbs, helps us to understand that while there may be some connections between various proverbs, in general each individual proverb is to be read as a unit. We also read the various poems in 30-31 as individual units as well, and see the cohesiveness of all these various topics under the heading of wisdom.

6. Who is the book of Proverbs addressed to? What are the implications of this? How does this shed light on the purpose of the book? Comment on the relationship between wisdom and age in Proverbs. (1 paragraph)

A: Proverbs is addressed to **youth**, to the **naive**, to the **son**. The implication of this is that at some level experience and age are related to wisdom. Young people are generally naive and lacking in wisdom! Thus the purpose of Proverbs is to help them gain experience without experiencing! It is to help teach young people about **consequences** and the importance of thinking ahead. Obviously little children don't do this very well. They will do something without thinking of what the result will be just 5 minutes from now! As we grow older, we learn to **think further ahead**. Yet still most of us who are young tend to be impetuous and not thinking far enough ahead. Thus Proverbs emphasizes the importance of **counsel**. We can learn from those who have gone through and experienced life before us. We can learn from their mistakes rather than our own! But since true wisdom only comes from God, there is not a direct correlation between wisdom and age. While in general those who are older are wiser, it is not an absolute. The one who is truly wise is the one who **knows and applies God's Word**. Thus the truly wise man is the older man who has spent his/her life studying and applying God's Word. If someone claims that their advice is wise simply because they are old or have such-and-such an experience rather than showing from God's Word what principles apply to a situation, they are proving that in reality they are not very wise at all! Ultimately then they are trusting in their own wisdom, and compared to God none of us are wise! A truly wise man when confronted with a difficult situation will have had the opportunities in life to work through and apply God's wisdom, and so will be

directing people back to God and His Word. None of us are wise! The moment we think we are wise we prove that we are not!!!

7. Thought question: How are we supposed to interpret proverbs? Are proverbs always true? Is Proverbs a rule book? Why or why not? If so, how are proverbs the same as rules, if not, how are they different? How and when should we apply the proverbs (think about this!)? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Proverbs are not always true! That is what makes them proverbs! They are not intended to be promises, neither are they rules. They help us to understand the **complexity of life** from the standpoint of wisdom and values. They are **generally true**; they accurately represent life given a specific set of circumstances. They help us to interpret and view life from a worldview of principles and values. There are **pros and cons** to different decisions. Proverbs helps us to understand those **values** and to make decisions based on **God's values.**

Most of life is not black and white. Not everyone should get married. Not everyone shouldn't! There are **reasons** for and against it. We see this clearly in 1st Corinthians 7 where Paul gives reasons for being single and reasons for getting married. We obviously need to obey black and white biblical commands. Furthermore, God cares about our **hearts** and wants us to make decisions based on right **motives** (ie. for His glory and not our own pride and selfishness). But then what? How do we decide whether to get married or stay single? How do we decide if we should buy a house? **Wisdom is the answer!** This is where we need to understand the Biblical principles. The more we grow in understanding **God's worldview**, that worldview will shape our decision making process. The book of proverbs shows us **what God values** on a wide variety of subjects. That's why so many of the proverbs take the form of, A is better than B. That's why the proverbs helps us to understand what is good in different circumstances. If we learn the biblical principles then with wisdom we can apply various principles to a given situation. We want to have a principle driven life!

Some principles are absolute moral ones while others are more practical. Note for example the classical example of **Proverbs 26:4-5.** So what is it, which is better to rebuke a fool according to his folly or not?! One proverb says not to do it and the very next proverb using the exact same words says to do it! Well, we of course need to understand the reasons and circumstances to know which one is best. There is a reason not to correct a fool, because you may be tempted to enter into a debate with him and end up just as foolish as him, but likewise there is a reason to correct him, so that he won't end up being wise in his own eyes. Wisdom teaches us to think through a given situation to discern how each of these reasons/principles applies and act in accordance with those principles. If proverbs were universally true, we sure wouldn't find verses like **Proverbs 26:7-9!** Proverbs are best applied in a given circumstance. It takes a wise person to know when something applies (see also **Proverbs 15:23**). Take for example to English proverb, "Look before you leap!" This is not a good proverb to give someone prone to not taking initiative, who over-thinks everything! Maybe they should be given, "The early bird gets the worm!" Take for example the concept of saving vs. giving money. One the one hand we read **Proverbs 6:6-11** and read of the wisdom of saving, but then on the other we read **Proverbs 11:24** and learn of the wisdom of giving. So what is it, should I give or save?! The answer in Proverbs is always, "it depends..." Ultimately we learn that it is wise to save money, but money is not the final goal (cf. Pro 27:23-24)! Proverbs is all about putting things on **scales.** Each proverb helps us to look at a circumstance and principle when no other factors are considered. So we see in **Proverbs 22:6** that taking nothing else into consideration it is generally true that children who are raised up right will follow that way when grown. But there are a lot of other factors...

8. Is the book of Proverbs purely practical? Can the proverbs it contains be just as easily applied to a believer and a non-believer? If so, what makes it distinctly biblical? Are these proverbs something that non-believers could come up with from normal life experience? (1 paragraphs)

A: As we began to see in the previous question, Proverbs is more than just practical. While Proverbs does address a lot of practical matters, in Proverbs the ethical always overrides the practical. Note for example the following proverbs (Pro. 11:4; 17:23, 10:2; 11:1; 15:16, 27; 16:8, 16; 19:1 vs 21:17). Yes it is true that God doesn't want us to be lazy sluggards, fools who waste our time and our money, but **money is not the final goal!** That is why **true wisdom is always moral**, not merely temporal. This is because it is not wise to plan ahead only until the end of this life, true wisdom plans ahead for this life and ultimately on into eternity!

So while an unbeliever in one sense could learn and apply some of the proverbs about relationships, money, etc., etc., ultimately an unbeliever cannot be wise since they are thinking ahead only for this life. And ultimately, the book of Proverbs upholds the **value of eternity over earthly values** so that an unbeliever couldn't truly live out this book! Likewise, some of the principles in Proverbs could be learned and gleaned by non-believers who have experienced life. That is part of God's common grace that is revealed in creation. However, an unbeliever can never truly be wise since they are not **submitting themselves to God's wisdom** and seeking how to live from Him!

9. Comment on your view of decision making. How do you make decisions? How do you 'find God's will'? How do you think the book of Proverbs addresses this question? Comment on how the Biblical concepts of the hidden and revealed will of God factor into your decisions. How does the 'conscience' fit into this picture? How does the Holy Spirit fit into this? How does the Sufficiency of Scripture? (2-3 paragraphs)

A: If we have understood Proverbs properly, we see that while all of Scripture is not direct commands for us to obey, all of Scripture is full of principles which should factor into every decision we make. All of Scripture is **sufficient** for all of life (2 Tim 3:16)! Wisdom is knowing which principles apply in any given situation. The more we learn God's value system it will shape our **worldview** and **priorities** of what is important so that we will then run any decisions we have through that worldview in seeking to choose what is best! We can also clearly see in Proverbs that we are not wise, and so we need to seek wisdom from God (in His word), and also need to seek out wise counsel from others who are wiser than us (in that they have spent more time studying, meditating, applying and living out God's Word!)

While it is true that God has a **hidden and a revealed will**, we do not need to be overly concerned with discerning His hidden will! Yes, everything that happens is God's will. He has a perfect plan for His universe that He is bringing about. But there is no secret, mystical way of discerning that hidden will! He doesn't have a specific certain person ('the one') He wants you to marry and isn't going to tell you who it is! You're not going to mess up His plan by marrying the wrong person! **When God opens a door it doesn't mean you should walk through it. When He closes one it doesn't mean you shouldn't keep knocking!** Once again, there is not a mystical hidden will that God is trying to get us to find! **First** we seek to obey God's express commands. **Then** we examine our hearts and our motives to make sure we are acting out of a desire for God's glory and not our own. **Then** we study, meditate on, and seek to apply His revealed will, which is revealed in Scripture; We seek to have our worldview shaped by Biblical principles. As we do this we seek **counsel** from those older and wiser than ourselves so that they can help us to think through and apply biblical principles. And the **Holy Spirit** will bring to mind these principles in given situations. The Holy Spirit is also involved in helping us to weigh these biblical priorities and principles. Our **consciences** will



convict us when we are acting contrary to our worldview and we weigh the pros and cons according to the Biblical principles, listen to our consciences, and **act in faith!**

Our **consciences** can be wrong, but Scripture still commands us to follow them so that we don't act against our conscience and so become unable to hear it through searing it. For example, it isn't wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols, but those whose consciences are weak, shouldn't go against their consciences in this way. Yes, we may need to instruct our consciences if they are weak in this area so that our conscience is more aligned to a Biblical worldview (think of our consciences as our moral compass that makes us feel guilty when we go against our worldview). So the more we study Biblical principles and seek to align our values with God's values, our conscience will guide us to live according to what we have learned. See Romans 14 for an extended discussion on this topic (the whole chapter but especially verse 23) and also 1st Corinthians 8 (also note James 4:17 and Acts 24:16).

All of this method serves to reinforce the **sufficiency of Scripture**. Scripture alone is sufficient to make us adequate, equipped for every good work. There is **no trump card**, that takes us away from Scripture and the biblical principles it teaches. We are always to evaluate decisions on the basis of the principles of Scripture. We always can be benefited from the counsel of others. And yes, the Spirit does guide and lead us very directly in this process, but not apart from the **mind of God revealed in Scripture**.

10. Why do you think God would give us biblical principles to live by rather than just giving us rules and telling us what to do? Think about this from the standpoint of a parent. If you are a parent, how do you want your children to live when they are grown? (1 paragraph)

A: By giving us biblical principles to live by rather than just rules, **God wants us to become like Him, not just to do what He says!** He wants us to **study His Word** to develop a biblical worldview and value set that matches His, and then to make decisions based on that worldview. As we are constantly doing this we are growing to become more like Him! This is what we **as parents** so desperately want. As our children grow and grow, we want them to **own the principles** we have taught them, so that as they leave the home they are able to stand on their own two feet and to address any issues that life throws their way from a biblical standpoint.

11. Comment on the different words you found for wisdom and folly, wise people and fools in Proverbs. If you have ability, check and lookup the different terms used from a Biblical dictionary. Note that Kidner's commentary on Proverbs has a very helpful summary of these terms. I'm normally not a crazy fan of word studies, but I must admit this one is fun! Look into it!

A:

Wisdom:

biynah – **Understanding**. Intellectual discernment. Interpretation. Reason.

t'vünah – **Applied thought**. This is more pragmatic than biynah. It involves action, aims at efficacy and accomplishment. biynah is more conceptual. t'vünah competence to deal with life, know-how.

da`at – **Knowledge**. This is the broadest word for 'wisdom'. It can be any kind of cognition, the entire range of knowledge. It is awareness.

hokmah – **Wisdom**. High degree of knowledge and skill in any domain. Both the faculty to think and the knowledge behind it. Both are always included. This is expertise. It implies the ability to carry out what you know.

sekel – **Discretion.** Insight, the ability to grasp the meanings or implications of a situation or message.

Discernment or prudence. Perceptive. The ability to understand practical matters and interpersonal relations and make beneficial decisions. The word can also mean success.

tūshiyyah – **Resourcefulness.** It is clear, efficient thinking. Determining a course of action. This word can also mean success.

`ētsah – **Planning,** design, deliberation, careful thinking.

m<sup>e</sup>zimmah – **Shrewdness.** This is hidden, private thinking. It is planning, plotting and scheming.

`ormah – **Cunning.** Cleverness. Talent to use tactics to accomplish one's goal. It is a good shrewdness in Proverbs.

taḵbulot – **Strategy.** Navigation. Direction. Designs. Deliberation. The art of leadership.

mūsār – **Discipline.** Authoritative correction from greater to lesser is a means to gain knowledge/wisdom.

Folly:

petiy – **Gullible.** The verb which this is formed from means 'to deceive'. This person is not inherently culpable. This is a simpleton. In Proverbs an intellectual flaw is close to a moral one. But someone who is petiy is still open to learning. They are the primary audience (1:4). If he remains in his naivete, he belongs to the class of fools.

k<sup>e</sup>šār lēv – **Mindlessness.** Very similar to petiy.

ba`ar – **Ignoramus.** Animal-like. Not necessarily ethical.

'iwwelet/'<sup>e</sup>wiyl – **Folly/Fool.** One who vacates his mind from choosing good and rejecting evil. This is willful refusal to make moral choices. It is moral corruption from the standpoint of its impact on reason and judgment. Warped values and distorted vision (although could be 'smart').

k<sup>e</sup>šil – **Stupidity.** Dull and obstinate. This is smug mental sloth with respect to its impact on judgment and reason. Stupidity that comes from complacency not inadequate intelligence. He **likes** his folly. The k<sup>e</sup>šil's oafishness effects all that he does. He chooses mindless amusements rather than facing reality. A k<sup>e</sup>šil is not necessarily an '<sup>e</sup>wiyl, but is prone to it. He is ignorant, clumsy, and unhelpful, smug and self-destructive.

lēts – **Scorner.** He is arrogant and scornful. He is wise in his own eyes and so mocks everyone else. The lēts rejects chastisement. He cannot learn because of his ego.

(Kidner, Proverbs, ~33-42).

12. Application: Do you think of yourself as wise? How does your view of yourself affect how you make decisions?

## 16. The Absolute Necessity of Wisdom: Proverbs 1-6

**Scripture:** Proverbs 1-6

**Theme:** Humbly Seeking Wisdom is Absolutely Necessary for us Because it is our Life

**Objectives:**

- To understand the absolute vital importance of seeking wisdom and to want it deeply
- To see the necessity of guarding our hearts to be wise
- To learn to think ahead and see how paths we take bring us to unintended destinations

**Reading:**

- Read Proverbs 1-6 *three times*
- Turn in your Proverbs Project topic

**Questions:**

1. Comment on the first seven verses of Proverbs. What does verse 1 tell us? Does anything strike you about the grammar of verses 2, 3, 4, and 6? How does this whole section help us to understand the purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: Verse 1 begins not only by telling us the author (Solomon), but also that the book is a book of proverbs. While we know that there are sections of the book of Proverbs not written by Solomon, on the whole we should assume it was. We also see sections of Proverbs that don't fit the mold of the 'single proverb', but are more extended **speeches from father to son** which introduce the book as a whole and setup the need for wisdom. We also see that verses 2, 3, 4, and 6 are all purpose statements, teaching us why we need Proverbs, so that we can be wise! We've already seen last week that the main statement of the whole book is in 1:7, so these preceding statements show us that the purpose of the book is to teach us how to be wise!*

2. How does 1:8 begin? Where do we see this elsewhere in the first 9 chapters? (1-2 sentences)

*A: 1:8 begins with a command to 'hear'! The author is trying to get his son's attention. This concept of **listening** weaves its way through the first 9 chapters. It's important!*

3. What does 1:10 begin? Where does it continue on to? Why shouldn't the son participate? (2-3 sentences)

*A: 1:10 begins a hypothetical situation that continues down to 1:19. The son shouldn't participate because he needs to **think ahead!** **Instant** wealth sounds appealing, but in the end he is trading his own **life!** Proverbs is so much about thinking ahead. Think about the long term results! If we think about a hypothetical situation before being thrown into it, we are much more likely to make a wise decision! [My wife is so good about this in teaching my girls. When we are in the car heading somewhere, she is always thinking ahead to the situations my daughters might encounter, and throwing those situations out to the girls. So girls, what are you going to do at the birthday party when so-and-so gets their presents? Are you going to be happy for them or want the toys for yourself? What will be happy for you in the long run? Ultimately, it will be happy to love the other person and to rejoice in celebrating their birthday in love for them...] So ultimately, the son needs to be thinking about eternal consequences... What is going to make me happy **in the long run?** Sin is always a trade of instant gratification over lasting satisfaction!*

4. What is the warning of Proverbs 1:20-33 about? What is the danger of not seeking wisdom? (2-3 sentences)

*A: You need to **seek wisdom before you need it**, because you can't get it when it's **too late** (1:28)! Wisdom takes time and diligence to get so you can't procrastinate getting it till the last minute. You need it **before** the test! Once again we come back to the theme of planning ahead!*

5. According to Proverbs 2:1-5, how can you get wisdom? Why is this according to 2:6? What will be the result of getting wisdom according to the rest of the chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Seek diligently** for it and you will find it! This is because **wisdom comes from God!** If only we simply recognize our need from wisdom, we can go directly to the source! He has revealed Himself, and moreover, has given us **Scripture** so that if we diligently pursue wisdom, we can attain to it! He has stored up wisdom for the upright (2:7), God has no lack of it and no hesitancy in sharing it with His people. The Bible isn't some secret code that only special people can understand. **God meant to communicate with us and to teach us how to think and live!** [This principle is called the perspecuity of Scripture]. Then we see in the rest of the chapter, that if you diligently seek wisdom, wisdom will watch out for you! Wisdom is personified as if it is constantly looking after you and making sure you make good choices. It's like **she is constantly on guard for you**, helping you to make good choices without you even knowing it! How great is that!*

6. How does chapter 3 begin (verse 1)? How is *keeping* commandments related to the concept of not forgetting? Why is the heart important/involved here? After we see the result of listening in verse 2, then why do you think loyalty (Heb: *hesed*) and faithfulness (Heb: *emet*) are brought in verse 3? What does the author tell us to do with them? What then does the rest of the chapter then expand upon? (1 paragraph)

*A: To keep his father's commandments, is to '**guard**' them! This means being **careful** to make sure they are being observed. It is so easy to simply not be careful, just to forget! All you have to do is nothing! Ultimately, this is a **heart issue** because if we don't love wisdom, **we will never do the hard work it takes to be wise!** That is why all the introductory chapters are simply trying to teach us the value of wisdom! So we see that the result of being careful to listen will be life and peace. But then we see the author call for loyalty and faithfulness. It is interesting that these concepts are not what we would normally associate with wisdom! Secular people often correlate these concepts with being weak, not getting the 'results' you might want. But the author states that **the results of seeking loyalty and faithfulness will be favor and discretion before God and men!** If you seek the results God's way, through trusting Him, God will give the results!*

7. Comment on the significance of 3:5-7, noting especially how the concepts of trusting, fearing, and being wise are related. What will be the result in 3:8-10? (1 paragraph)

*A: True wisdom is to **trust Yahweh completely and not to rely on our own understanding**. The moment we are **wise in our own eyes** is the moment we will cease to trust Yahweh and will become fools. To fear Yahweh is nearly synonymous with not being wise in our own eyes in this context. This is true wisdom! And blessing comes from this true wisdom as we see in 3:8-10!*

8. How is wisdom pictured in the rest of chapter 3. Make sure to comment on the significance of 3:19-20 and 3:33. (1 paragraph)

A: In the rest of chapter 3 we see the blessings of wisdom! Wisdom will guard and protect us. We will be blessed if we pursue wisdom. In 3:19-20 we see that wisdom is what God Himself used to create the universe. Thus we not only see the extreme value of wisdom, we also should not be surprised that seeking wisdom from God results in things going well. Even though the Fall broke the world, God's wisdom still runs the world. God founded the world based on cause and effect. The law of gravity is a law. So, generally speaking, if you live according to God's design, things will work out better!

9. After the introduction to the content of chapter 4 in 4:1-4, what does the father exhort the son in 4:5? How is this restated in 4:7? Comment on the parallelism of 4:7 and 1:7. Why do we have two verses that both talk about the 'beginning' of wisdom/knowledge. What does this mean? How do the two definitions complement each other? (1 paragraph)

A: He exhorts his son to **buy wisdom!** He then goes on to say that buying wisdom is the very first thing you need to know about wisdom. You could say that buying wisdom is the fundamental principle of wisdom. In other words, the first thing you need to know about wisdom is that you don't have it and you need to get it! This fits perfectly with his statement from 1:7 that the first thing about knowledge is the fear of Yahweh. The most elemental principle of wisdom is that you don't have it and that only Yahweh does, and so we need to humble ourselves in reverent fear of Him, in submission to His ways and to seek wisdom from Him! **Pay whatever the price and get yourself some wisdom!**

10. Comment on what chapter 4 teaches us about the 'heart' as it relates to wisdom. (1 paragraph)

A: At the beginning of the chapter, the author reminds his son to let his **heart hold fast to his words** (4:4). Wisdom is a heart issue. Our hearts are so quick to fall away! That's why the son needs to love wisdom and to not forsake her but to cling to her (4:6)! Later again he reminds the son to keep the truth in his heart (4:21). But then he builds on this theme reminding the son to watch over his heart (4:23). The springs of life flow from one's very heart. **If we are loving what is good, it will be life to us.** But the opposite is also true. If we love what is bad it will be death! In fact, we need to be careful to keep looking straight ahead so that our hearts aren't enticed to do evil (4:25).

11. What topic is introduced at greater length in chapter 5? Why do you think this topic becomes such a touchstone topic of wisdom for the author? What is the ultimate reason for going down the right path in this according to 5:21? (1 paragraph)

A: We now begin a more extended treatment of the adulterous woman. **This is the ultimate choice between instant gratification over lasting satisfaction.** Notice the contrast in 5:3 and 5:4- Her lips drip honey, but **in the end** she is bitter. She **tastes sweet at first**, but brings **death at last!** Once again we see that following her is the path to death. You start down a road but before you know it you end up at a destination where you never wanted to go! Wisdom thinks ahead so that you don't start down the wrong path in the first place! But as we see, ultimately, God is watching what we do, and it is the fear of Him that should motivate our actions!

12. What do the commands of 5:15-19 teach us about falling in love and attraction (think about this!)? (1 paragraph)

A: The fact that the father **commands** the son this (and moreover that it is in Scripture) shows us that we choose to fall in love! Our society is constantly telling us that we have no choice in the matter, but that we are hapless victims of our desires. The Bible teaches us that it just ain't so! We have influence over our desires, and if we choose to delight ourselves in what is good, we will rejoice in the good that God has given!

13. How does the topic of surety in 6:1-5 fit in with what the author has been saying? (1 sentence)

*A: With the topic of surety, we see once again the danger of short term thinking!*

14. How would you summarize what we learn in 6:6-11? (1 sentence)

*A: **Plan** ahead! Don't think short term!*

15. Which item in the list stands out in 6:16-19? Now go back and read 6:12-15 and comment on what sticks out? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The last one really stands out as the others just **seem** so wrong, but one spreading strife among brothers is **especially detested by God**. Now that we see that emphasis, when we go back and read 6:12-15 we see that same phrase of spreading strife as being the end result of the person who does all the things listed in that section. God really wants **unity among His people**, we see it is super important to Him!*

16. What topic is introduced in 6:24? What does the son need to be careful of in 6:25? How does the truism in 6:27-28 function in that section? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We come back again to the topic of **adultery** in 6:24, which will be a major topic in the next few chapters. The son needs to make sure he doesn't **desire** her beauty in his heart. That's where it all starts! These truisms are universally true, and so emphasizes that **without exception**, the one who commits adultery is playing with fire!*

17. Application: What do we learn about the importance of seeking wisdom from this section? Why wouldn't we seek wisdom? Why should we?

18. Application: What do we learn about our hearts in the section?

## 17. Choose your Woman: Lady Wisdom or Folly: Proverbs 7-9; 30-31

**Scripture:** Proverbs 7-9; 30-31

**Theme:** There are Two Paths Represented by two Woman Vying for our Attention, We Must Choose!

**Objectives:**

- To once again be exhorted for our need for wisdom by its value, worth, and long term results
- To be encouraged that wisdom can be found if it is sought in God
- To see and value one picture of what wisdom looks like in the life of a woman/wife/mother

**Reading:**

- Read Proverbs 7-9 and 30-31 *three times*

**Questions:**

1. How does 7:1-5 introduce the chapter? (1 sentence)

*A: Once again we are reminded of the need to cherish and love wisdom (write it on our heart, 7:3), to call it our sister and intimate friend (7:4). **All you have to do to be a fool is nothing!***

2. How does the rest of the chapter unfold? How is the adulterous woman described in this chapter? How is the young man is described? What are some of the lessons in this chapter for the young man (think about these!)? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: The rest of the chapter is a story of a **young man** who encounters an adulterous woman. She is described as wily, crafty and cunning. She is **experienced** and knows what she is doing. She is brazen, and lures in the young man. She deceives him that there will be no consequences for his actions. The young man on the other hand is portrayed as **naive**. He is lacking sense. He doesn't see the results of his actions and the end of his path. The adulterous woman makes it look like this was all just a coincidence, while all the while she is seeking this young man out and hunting him down! It all seems so harmless... while she seduces him and deceives him (7:21)! She is **offering so much and asking so little**, trying to convince him that there won't be any consequences, only satisfaction (7:18-19). The lesson here is to think ahead! This road leads to death! "Just like stupid animals don't see the connection between the trap and death, so morally stupid people don't see the connection between sin and death" (Waltke, 384)! Notice as well that in the father's final exhortation (the only imperative in his conclusion) to his son in this section he says, "Do not let your **heart** turn aside to her..." (7:25). Living wisely is about **making our hearts love what our minds know to be best**. This is about **convincing** our hearts to **rejoice** in what is good and wise!*

3. What do we then find in chapter 8? How does chapter 8 begin in verse 1? What are the implications of the fact that wisdom is calling out? Comment especially on 8:17 and how it relates to the implications of wisdom calling out. What do we see in 8:22-31? What is ultimately at stake according to the last two verses of the chapter? (1 paragraph)

*A: In chapter 8, **wisdom** calls out to the naive. Wisdom is thus personified, almost as a woman who loves those who love her. The implication of wisdom calling out is that wisdom is not difficult to find, she is calling out and seeking people. This is likewise what we find in 8:17, that those who love wisdom will be loved by wisdom and everyone who diligently seeks for her will find her. So we find that wisdom may be **hard to attain**, but she is **not difficult to find**! If only the naive will recognize their need for her and seek her out,*

they will find her! This relates back to one of the main themes of the book, that we must **recognize** that we don't have wisdom in order to attain wisdom! Once again in 8:22-31 we see wisdom was with God in His creation of the world. This shows the immense value of wisdom and reminds us that wisdom was in a sense worked into the fabric of our world. Ultimately, finding wisdom is finding life itself (8:35)! **This is how God designed and created us to live!** He created us to be made in His own image, made to rule under Him in taking dominion over the earth. He gave us the faculty to think, and designed us to have our emotions rejoice in what we know to be good. So finding wisdom is finding God's grace (8:35). On the other hand, to hate wisdom is to hurt oneself and to love death. So the two choices are clear and the only question is what will you choose! It is important to remember that this is a **choice** after all, not merely a situation you find yourself in!

4. How is this whole section ended in chapter 9? What type of image does this chapter paint? Why do you think this is such an appropriate picture of the situation? (1 paragraph)

A: This section ends with the two women, **lady wisdom** and **lady folly**, calling out for attention. Both are ying for the attention of the naive. Both are calling out to him. Both try to show him and entice him with the **results** of loving them. If you love wisdom you will gain life. If you love folly, it will be sweet at first (9:17), but the result is death! The question boils down to which one he is going to **choose**! The point here is that this is a choice. Are you going to think ahead or not?! **You are going to be enticed by one or the other, so you better think carefully about what you are going to choose**, because if not, you might just end up being seduced by the wrong woman!

5. What is 30:1-4 about and how does it relate to 30:5-6? Think carefully about the interrelation between these two sections! (1 paragraph)

A: As Agur begins this section he is meditating on the **weakness and humanity of man**, and that man is stupid apart from God. Man cannot ascend into heaven. God is different from and separated from man. God Creator and man is created. Man cannot even know God's name apart from Him! On the other hand, God has **revealed** Himself by giving revelation! This is the only way that we can know! **Thus God's word is of utmost importance and need to be carefully guarded from corruption!**

6. What themes do we see in the rest of chapter 30? What potential relationship is there between 30:19 and 30:20? (1 paragraph)

A: **Pride** and **greed** are two themes that run throughout the rest of the chapter. Agur wants to be guarded from both! These are the two most basic sins from the beginning, selfishness and pride. This is at the heart of what it means to be **fallen** and **human**. In 30:19 we see mysterious things that are functioning according to the **way** of God's design! But in 30:20 we see a woman walking against God's **way**! Wisdom is what **walks according to God's design and His way**! We also see throughout this chapter the need to plan ahead, work smarter, not harder! Ultimately, these proverbs invite meditation to think about how God has designed His world... Thus we are reminded that God is Creator and we are created, and it will be best to live according to our **design**, which is wisdom. Thus the application of this is for us to see the need for **revelation**, our **operating manual, God's Word**.

7. What are lessons we can learn from 31:1-9? How can we apply the advice that was given to a king to ourselves? (1 paragraph)



A: In this section to king Lemuel, we see that a king has much power and with that **power** comes much **responsibility**. While he could use his power to have an easy life (women and wine), there are many people who would be adversely affected by his selfishness. Thus the king is to use the power and responsibility that God has given him for the **good of others**. He is to stand for justice and to defend the poor and needy. Although we are not kings, we can also think about the privileges that God has given to us and what they are to be used for. Do we have **compassion** on those who share in our humanity? Alcohol dulls our senses, and we need our senses to stand for what is right! **We need to use our wisdom for the good of others!**

8. Noting that 31:10-31 is an acrostic, what are some of the purposes of an acrostic? (2-3 sentences)

A: Acrostics make poems easier to remember. They also convey order and the idea that the poem covers A-Z. They also make the composition poetic and give an aesthetic value to the poem.

9. Do you think this poem is intended to be read as an ideal to follow, or as a metaphor of lady wisdom? Why or why not? What effect does this decision have on interpreting the poem? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: It seems best to take the poem as a **portrait of a wise woman**. One of the major keys in interpreting the poem this way is the 2nd to last verse of the poem which says that a woman who fears Yahweh is to be praised. If this woman is lady wisdom, this statement doesn't make much sense. But taken as a portrait of a woman who inculcates wisdom, it lifts her up as an example for what wisdom looks like in a woman who fears Yahweh. It also appears to be the more natural reading of the poem which shows a woman who builds up her house. There seem to be too many details that are hard to fit with an allegorical interpretation. Here the picture of the woman is a consistent and straightforward view of a wife-mother who builds up her home, not a prophet-teacher as lady wisdom is elsewhere portrayed in Proverbs. It is very fitting that the book of Proverbs ends with a section to young women when the book as a whole has been more focused on men. Also, canonically, Ruth comes right after Proverbs and depicts Ruth as a woman of *ḥayil*, the key word of this poem!

By noting that this poem is a portrait of a wise woman we see that the purpose of the poem is intended to be an example and model for women to follow, not merely an exhortation for people to seek wisdom because of its blessed results. Thus the details become applicable and not merely repetitious in seeking to encourage us to seek wisdom, but show what wisdom looks like in practice! "The purpose of the poem is to counter culture's preoccupation with the physical and sexual side of women and to extol her involvement in the ordinary facts of life: family, community, and business. It also counters Hellenistic ideals of intellectualism with practical wisdom" (Waltke, Proverbs, 517).

10. Lookup the word 'excellent' in Proverbs 31:10. What does this word mean? How does this word color all the follows? How does this verse intro the poem? (1 paragraph)

A: It means '**strong**' or '**capable**'. We see that the woman in this poem is indeed strong and capable. She puts us all to shame! Look at this woman in Proverbs (and Ruth in Ruth!) and see how capable she is. Ultimately, everything she does as we will see flows out of her fear of Yahweh which causes her to be so extremely selfless! We see in this initial verse, that the worth of this woman is extolled. Thus she is setup as an example of what a woman who fears Yahweh looks like. How helpful it is to put skin on a concept so we can see what this looks like in living color!

11. What do we see about this woman from verses 11-12? What does this teach us about her purpose and role? (2-3 sentences)

*A: The first thing we learn about this capable woman is that she is **trustworthy** to her husband! She is so **faithful** in every area of her life that her husband can entrust anything to her. There is no doubt that she is for her husband and for doing him good and not herself. We will see her selflessness in every area of life. She is a helpmate to her husband and shows this in all that she does!*

12. Comment on some of the virtues we see of her in 31:13-19. (1 paragraph)

*A: It is obvious that this woman is **resourceful**. But as she is working hard, it is not a burden to her, but her joy! She is thoughtful in her work and while working hard also works smart. She understands what is valuable and makes decisions based on what is best for the family! She is working hard for the good of others and not herself. She plans, and then executes her plan. She puts in both mental and physical energy to accomplish her goals. She is obviously working hard, working long, all for the good of the family. Once again we see her selfless toil for others. When her time and energy is focused on others and not herself, look how much she can accomplish!*

13. What is significant about verse 20? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Here we see that she is not only thinking of her household, but also for the needy! Certainly her household is the priority, but she is also doing good to others around her as an overflow of her care!*

14. What is the meaning/point of 21? (1-2 sentences)

*A: She is not **afraid** of snow because she is well prepared and her family is well care for! She has planned and so things don't take her by surprise! Ultimately as we will see, it is her trust in Yahweh that allows her to not be afraid, but it is this trust in Yahweh that granted to her the selfless wisdom to plan ahead for the good of others!*

15. Comment on the significance on verse 23. Why is she credited with her husband being well known at the gates? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Likely the implication here is that since she has done so well taking care of the household, he is free to be concerned with the good of the city, giving counsel and teaching (ie. sitting among the elders). His wife enhances his reputation and enables him to do this!*

16. What does it mean that she smiles at the future in verse 25? (1-2 sentences)

*A: Once again we see that her trust is in Yahweh. She has done what she needs to to prepare for the future through her foresight and wisdom, and so she is not afraid.*

17. What do we learn about her in 26? Note the key words in this verse. (2-3 sentence)

*A: Here we see that she has fully absorbed wisdom, not only does she act wisely but has so inculcated the principles of wisdom that they are always on her lips. Moreover we see that she teaches heresed, loyalty. True wisdom is about being faithful to Yahweh, keeping His commands and living in right relationship with Him. She understands that wisdom can only come from Yahweh and so lives faithfully to Him in all she does!*

18. What do we see once again in 27? (1-2 sentences)

*A: She is not idle because she is always concerned with her household. This is the epitome of selflessness.*

19. How does the poem end in 28-31? What key words and concepts do we see? (1 paragraph)

*A: Ultimately, she is praised by her children and husband because of her selfless faithfulness. We see here that ultimately that faithfulness flows out of a faithfulness to Yahweh. This is central to her life. Ultimately, everything we see here is because she fears Yahweh! But as a result of this faithfulness, she will be blessed on all sides. It is her fear of Yahweh that is of greatest beauty and for which her husband is supremely thankful. Outward beauty is fleeting, never really attainable. But this woman's true strength of character is what is truly beautiful. Her selfless action and wisdom which orders itself rightly in relationship with Yahweh is what exemplifies a true fear of Yahweh. She truly has done strongly, capably, and so deserves the thanks of her family! And so this woman receives the blessings of being selflessly in right relationship with Yahweh. Thus this poem encourages others to follow the picture of this ideal woman.*

20. Application: What have we learned about wisdom as it relates to wisdom being a choice and how does this shape our priorities?

21. Application: What have we learned about what a life looks like that lives in the fear of Yahweh?

## 18. Humility, Counsel, Money, and Words: Proverbs

**Scripture:** Selected Proverbs

**Themes:** We need Humility so we will be Teachable; Money has Value for Doing Good, but is not Ultimate; Words contain Ideas which Profoundly Reveal and Effect what and how we Think and Feel

**Objectives:**

- To help us to better understand how various principles fit together into a value system
- To further recognize our own lack of wisdom and see how Scripture is full of it
- To see our need for humility so we will love correction, counsel, and discipline
- To shape our worldview as it comes to money and possessions
- To open our eyes as to the massive effects of words on all of life and to wise us up in our use of our tongues

**Reading:**

- Read through Proverbs 10-29 looking for Proverbs on Humility, Counsel/Discipline, Money, and Words (see below)

**Questions:**

1. Find 25 verses on humility, counsel, and discipline in Proverbs 10-29. Summarize each one with a one sentence summary.

A:

*Humility:*

*11:2 - Pride brings disgrace; humility, wisdom*

*12:9 - Dishonor and provision is better than honor with none*

*15:25 - God humbles the proud but exalts the lowly*

*15:33 - Fear of Yahweh is instruction, humility comes before honor. Humility connected to fearing Yahweh.*

*16:5 - God hates and punishes the proud*

*16:18 - Pride leads to destruction. Pride comes before the fall!*

*16:19 - Better to be humble and poor than proud and rich*

***18:1 - He who isolates himself fights against wisdom. He just wants his own way. Iron sharpens iron!***

*18:12 - Before destruction man is proud, but before honor is humility. All men are proud until humbled!*

*21:4 - Pride is sin*

*21:24 - Acting with overflowing pride makes you a scoffer*

*22:4 - Humility is rewarded*

*26:12 - There is no hope for someone wise in their own eyes*

*29:23 - Pride brings low, humility brings honor*

2. Now come up with 10 key principles on humility and pride. Try to group them together to show how they relate to one another. (1 sentence each)

*A: God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Pride was the first sin, it is one of the most basic and fundamental sins. Pride causes us to be incapable of learning. Humility is the foundation for wisdom, and indeed for all wisdom because the only way to be wise is to be taught wisdom. All growth happens through the transformation of the mind, so **teachability** is where growth must begin. Isolation is selfish, just*

wanting self to rule, rather than caring for others and wanting to grow from input from others. Humility must come before honor, because everyone else can smell your pride before you do! God Himself wants the glory and will not share it with anyone, so is loathe to exalt the proud.

*Counsel and Discipline:*

10:8 - The wise take input, fools don't and are ruined

10:17 - Hearing instruction is life

11:14 - Many counselors lead to victory

12:1 - To **love** discipline is to love knowledge. If you want knowledge you will be willing to be corrected

12:15 - Fools are right to themselves, the wise take counsel

13:1 - Wise take discipline, scoffers don't

**13:10** - Insolent cause strife, but wise receive counsel. Pride causes you to fight for your own way!

13:18 - Neglecting discipline leads to shame, and the opposite is also true

13:24 - Loving children means regular discipline

15:5 - Fools reject discipline

15:12 - Scoffers don't love those who reprove them

15:22 - Plans fail without counselors

15:31 - Listening to reproof makes wise

15:32 - To neglect discipline is to hate yourself

**16:2** - Everyone thinks they are right, God knows the hearts

16:25 - We often think something seems good that is death

17:10 - A rebuke goes far with the wise, blows don't even affect the fool

19:20 - Counsel and discipline result in wisdom

19:25 - Naive can learn from others' mistakes, wise learn from teaching

19:27 - The moment you stop listening you leave wisdom

20:18 - Plan with counsel

21:11 - See 19:25 in slightly different language

22:15 - Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, the rod will remove it from him

**22:17-21** - Listen to wise words

**23:12-14** - Discipline leads to life

24:6 - Counsel leads to success

25:12 - Wise reproof to one who listens is gold

27:5 - Open rebuke is better than concealed love

**27:6** - Faithful are wounds from friends

27:9 - Counsel is sweet to friends

**27:17** - Iron sharpens iron

**28:23** - Rebuke brings favor, flattery doesn't

**29:1** - Someone who can't be reproved will get hardened beyond repair

**29:15** - Discipline gives wisdom, but giving free reign to children brings shame

**29:17** - Discipline of children brings happiness and rest

29:19 - Words won't teach a servant, he will understand but do nothing

3. Now come up with 10 key principles on counsel and discipline. Try to group them together to show how they relate to one another. (1 sentence each)

**A: Listening** well is very important! We need to really understanding **reasons** from others if we are to be wise! Good communication. Not easily dismissing, they may be looking at an angle that we aren't seeing. **Self deception** is a real danger for all of us! We need one another! So easy to go our own way thinking it is right!

*It's so easy to seek one/few counselors who are like us or who will say what we want to hear. More counsel is always good because there are so many principles to weigh! The more we consider, the better the result (nothing else considered)! We don't want gotchas! Planning is good! Better to learn from teaching than from discipline! **If we value wisdom more than anything else, we will love it however it comes!** Flattery feels good, but doesn't do good.*

4. Find 35 verses on money in Proverbs 10-29. Summarize each one with a one sentence summary.

*A: Money:*

*10:2 - Wicked money doesn't help, but righteousness saves*

*10:4 - Diligence makes rich*

*10:15 - Rich man's wealth is his fortress*

*10:22 - Yahweh makes rich*

*11:1 - Yahweh hates false balances*

*11:4 - Riches don't save, righteousness does*

*11:15 - Putting up security for strangers will harm you*

*11:16 - Grace gets honor, violence, riches*

*11:18 - Wickedness earns deceptive wages, but righteousness gets true reward*

*11:24 - Giving produces increase, stinginess produces want*

*11:26 - Being stingy will make you hated*

*11:28 - He who trusts in riches will fall, the righteous will flourish*

*12:11 - If you work hard you will have food, if you pursue worthless things, you're foolish*

*12:24 - Working hard makes you lead, laziness makes you a slave*

*13:4 - Lazy people are hungry, diligent people are fat*

*13:7 - Looking rich doesn't make you so, neither does looking poor*

*13:8 - One's wealth is how much is needed to pay for his life, but poor people aren't threatened*

*13:11 - Wealth gained fraudulently dwindles, but by labor increases*

*13:22 - Good men leave inheritance for grandchildren, but sinner's wealth is store for righteous*

*13:25 - The righteous is satisfied, the wicked is needy*

*14:4 - The easy way out doesn't produce!*

*14:20 - Everyone hates the poor and loves the rich*

*14:21 - There is blessing in caring for others*

*14:23 - Talk leads to poverty, work to profit*

*14:24 - Result of wisdom is riches, and fools...*

*14:31 - To oppress the poor is to mock his Maker*

*15:6 - With righteousness comes wealth*

*15:16 - Better is little with fearing God than much with turmoil*

*15:17 - Better is little with love than much with hate*

*15:27 - Wicked gain brings trouble, but hating bribes brings life*

*16:8 - Better is little with righteousness than opposite*

*16:11 - God cares about justice*

*16:16 - Wisdom is more precious than gold*

*16:19 - Better to be humble with the poor than rich with the proud*

*16:26 - Hunger is a good motivator to work*

*18:11 - A man's riches makes him think he is safe*

*18:16 - Gifts can open doors*

*19:1 - Better to be poor with integrity than perverse and a fool*

*19:4 - Wealth adds friends*

19:6 - Generous rich people have many friends  
 19:7 - The poor have no friends  
 19:17 - God repays those who are gracious to the poor  
 20:13 - Loving sleep will lead to poverty  
 20:14 - Haggling is deceptive  
 20:17 - Deceptive gain seems sweet but ends in bitterness  
 21:5 - Plans lead to abundance, lack of them to poverty  
 21:14 - Gifts and bribes turn away wrath  
 21:17 - Loving pleasure will make you poor  
 21:25-26 - Lazy people always want, but the righteous give  
 22:2 - God makes both rich and poor  
 22:4 - The payment of humility is riches, honor, and life  
 22:7 - The rich rules the poor  
 22:9 - The generous will be blessed  
 22:16 - Oppressing the poor to get rich and giving to the rich, leads to poverty  
 22:26-27 - Don't make pledges, put up security, or be a guarantor or you will lose your bed  
 23:1-3 - Don't love delicacies or they will deceive you  
 23:4-5 - Don't make riches your goal or you'll never attain it  
 23:6-8 - Don't receive from a selfish man, he may give but will resent you and the gift will rot  
 24:30-34 - Laziness leads to poverty  
 26:13-16 - The sluggard has excuses, is too lazy to move or even eat, and thinks he is wise!  
 27:23-27 - Possessions can never tend to themselves, you need to keep working  
 28:6 - Better to be poor with integrity than crooked and rich  
 28:8 - Gaining wealth by oppressing others gains for the gracious to the poor  
 28:11 - Rich people think they are wise, but a discerning poor man will see the truth  
 28:19 - Those who work hard have food, those who pursue emptiness won't  
 28:20 - Faithful men will be blessed, but those who seek riches will be punished  
 28:22 - Those whose values are wrong seek riches and don't realize lack is coming  
 28:25 - Greed produces strife, trusting in Yahweh will prosper  
 28:27 - He who gives to the poor will never lack, but he who doesn't care will be cursed  
 29:7 - The righteous care for the rights of the poor, the wicked doesn't understand

5. Now come up with 14 key principles on money and possessions. Try to group them together so as to show how they relate to one another. (1 sentence each)

A: Money can't make you happy! Loving money will make you sad! If you can't **control your desires**, you will be poor. Caring about impressing others will also make you poor. So will laziness! Money has value, but not ultimate value. God cares about the poor and wants us to be generous. This is because all people are equally made in the image of God. But **money is a tool** and can be used for good things. Money can be used to provide for our households and others, and can be used to gain entrance with people. God wants us to be diligent and work hard for these good things and not money itself. Work is honorable. But righteousness is always ultimate, only it can save from death! Money is not the ultimate end, so don't seek to be rich! It takes effort to upkeep one's wealth. Ultimately, wealth is a false hope if one trusts in it.

6. Find 35 verses on words and deceit in Proverbs 10-29. Summarize each one with a one sentence summary.

A: Words:

10:11 - Righteous people **give life** with words, wicked conceal violence  
 10:14 - Wise men take in knowledge, the foolish bring ruin with their mouth  
 10:19 - The more you talk, the more you sin, wisdom restrains talking  
 10:20 - The righteous tongue is valuable, the wicked heart is not  
 10:21 - The righteous' words feed many, but fools die for lack of knowledge  
 10:31 - The righteous' mouth flows with wisdom, the perverse tongue will be cut off  
 10:32 - The righteous' lips bring forth favor, the wicked mouth, perverseness  
 11:9 - The profane destroys his neighbor with words, but knowledge saves the righteous  
 11:12 - A fool shows contempt for his neighbor, but men of understanding keep quiet  
 11:13 - A slanderer reveals secrets, but someone trustworthy conceals a matter  
 12:13 - An evil man is trapped by the sin of his lips, but the righteous escape from trouble  
 12:16 - A fool's anger is immediately known, but the sensible conceals insults  
 12:18 - A rash speaker is like sword thrusts, but the words of the wise heal  
 12:23 - A sensible man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaim folly  
 13:3 - He who guards his mouth protects his life, he who opens wide his mouth is ruined  
 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a painful word stirs up anger  
 15:4 - A calm tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it breaks the spirit  
 15:7 - The wise spread knowledge by speaking, but not so the heart of fools  
 15:23 - An apt answer is joyful, and a timely word is delightful  
 15:28 - The righteous' heart meditates how to answer, but the wicked bubble out evil  
 16:13 - Righteous lips are the delight of kings and him speaking uprightly is loved  
 16:23 - The wise man's heart wisens his mouth and **adds reason** to his words  
 16:24 - Pleasant words are honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones  
 16:28 - A perverse man spreads strife, a slanderer separates intimate friends  
 17:9 - He who conceals sin seeks love, he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends  
 17:14 - Like pouring out water is the beginning of strife, so quit before it breaks out  
 17:27 - He who restrains words has knowledge, him with a cool spirit has understanding  
 17:28 - Even a fool when silent is considered wise  
 18:4 - A man's words are deep waters, the fountain of wisdom a bubbling brook  
 18:6 - A fool's words bring strife and call for blows  
 18:7 - A fool's mouth is his ruin and his lips snare his soul  
 18:8 - The words of a whisperer are dainty morsels, they go into the depths of the body  
 18:21 - Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love the tongue eat its fruit  
 21:23 - He who guards his words guards his soul from trouble  
 22:10 - Drive out a scoffer and contention, strife, and abuse stop  
 23:9 - Do not speak in the hearing of a fool or he will despise the insight of your words  
 25:9 - Argue your case with your neighbor himself, don't reveal another's secret  
 25:10 - Or he who hears will reproach you and the rumors about you won't end  
 25:14 - Like clouds and winds without rain are a man who boasts of a gift falsely  
 26:20 - Where there is no whisperer, quarreling dies down  
 26:21 - A contentious man kindles strife  
 26:22 - Same as 18:8  
 26:23 - Like a pot covered with silver are burning lips and an evil heart  
 26:24 - Words disguise he who is hating, and lays up deceit in his heart  
 26:25 - When he speaks graciously, don't believe him, for there are abominations in his heart  
 26:26 - Though hatred is covered by guile, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly  
 26:27 - He who digs a pit will fall into it  
 26:28 - A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering tongue works ruin



29:5 - A man flattering his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet  
 29:8 - Scorners set a city aflame, but wise men turn away anger  
 29:11 - A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back  
 29:20 - There is more hope for a fool than a man hasty with his words

*Deceit:*

12:17 - Whoever witnesses faithfully tells what is correct, but a false witness, deceit  
 12:19 - Truthful lips are established forever, but a lying tongue is for a moment  
 12:20 - Those who plan evil have deceit in their heart, but those who plan peace, joy  
 12:22 - Lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but those who are faithful, His delight  
 13:5 - The righteous hate falsehood, but the wicked cause shame and disgrace  
 14:5 - A trustworthy witness won't lie, but a false witness witnesses lies  
 14:25 - A truthful witness saves lives, but he who testifies lies is treacherous  
 25:18 - Like a club, sword, and arrow is a man who is a false witness against his neighbor

7. Now come up with 12 key principles on words and deceit. Try to group them together so as to show how they relate to one another. (1 sentence each)

*A: Words have a massive effect on people! They can bring **life** or **death**! Therefore we need to be very careful about what we say. We need to consider our words before speaking them. Wise men hold their tongues, while fools blurt out whatever is on their minds. Our hearts are so fickle that if we just say whatever is on our minds, all kinds of junk will come out! Slander and gossip are contagious and spread like fire. Everyone loves to hear gossip, but in the end it just spreads strife. Even close friends can be separated by slander. So it is best to go to the person you have an issue with directly and **deal with it in private**! Cover sin! Otherwise, we will become known as gossips! Therefore it is valuable to seek to conceal sin, not spread it! Not only what we say, but how we say it effect how our words are received. Gentleness and timely words are both more effective and delightful.*

8. Are there any other proverbs that jumped out at you while studying this section? Do you have any questions about any other proverbs?

*A:*

10:5 - Planning/working ahead is wise  
 13:13 - He who despises the word will be in debt to it, but fearing the commandment will be rewarded  
 14:6 - Scoffers can't find wisdom  
 14:15 - Naive believe everything, the sensible considers his steps  
 14:16 - Wise men are cautious, fools are arrogant and careless  
 18:2 - Fools don't love to learn but only to reveal their own mind  
 18:13 - It is folly to give an answer before listening!  
 18:17 - Everyone seems right at first  
 18:19 - An offended brother is like a strong city, and contention like castle bars  
 18:24 - A man of friends may be ruined, but there is one who loves that clings closer than a brother  
 20:5 - A plan in a man's heart is like deep waters, a man of understanding draws it out  
 21:1 - God is sovereign over the king's heart  
 24:27 - Plan ahead!  
 26:4-9 - Answering fools  
 28:1 - The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are as bold as a lion  
 29:25 - The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts Yahweh will be exalted

9. Application: How does studying what Proverbs says about humility, counsel, and discipline change your worldview? What difference should this make in your daily life?
10. Application: How does studying what Proverbs says about money change your worldview? What difference should this make in your daily life?
11. Application: How does studying what Proverbs says about words and deception effect how you communicate with others? What difference should this make in your daily life?

## 19. The Emptiness of Life Under the Sun: Overview of Ecclesiastes

**Scripture:** Overview of Ecclesiastes and Chapters 1-3

**Theme:** Life from a Secular/Human Viewpoint is Completely Empty and Without Purpose

**Objectives:**

- To sober us up by giving us a long, hard look at the reality of the fallen world
- To challenge us to think through the implications of a secular worldview
- To give us compassion for those who through the fear of death are in slavery all their lives

**Reading:**

- Read Ecclesiastes *twice*
- Read Ecclesiastes 1-3 *twice*

**Questions:**

1. Who does the author claim to be? What are the implications of the authorship of this book? What perspective would this author have had? Some people have suggested that Ecclesiastes has multiple authors and that the perspective of the book changes within it. As you have read through the entire book, what do you think about this, do you see any perspective changes? (1 paragraph)

*A: The author claims to be the son of David, king in Jerusalem. He also calls himself 'the preacher'. There are other further suggestions within the book that this is Solomon. For one, Solomon was known for his wisdom and this book is certainly within the wisdom literature genre. Secondly, there are specific details within the book that point to that conclusion as well (such as Solomon's great resources with which to conduct his 'experiment', concubines, etc.). Some have suggested that someone was posing as Solomon to write the book, but there are no grounds for that suggestion within the book. **One of the great ironies of Solomonic authorship is how someone with such great wisdom could end his life in such idolatry.** Yet even there he was possibly in a great position to see the brokenness of the world. Furthermore, he had the resources to seek meaning and enjoyment in everything under the sun. So his evaluations and rejections of secular fulfillment come with much more weight than that of the average person. The more someone reads through the book the more it's internal consistency is seen. While it is true that there are both **negative** and **positive** emphases it would be incorrect to see them as opposed to one another. Rather, they are in tension with one another and fit into the **coherent** message of the book. Furthermore, these positive and negative perspectives are so seamlessly weaved together throughout the entire book that it would be impossible to separate them without completely destroying the book. More on the nature of the positive and negative messages below.*

2. Compare and contrast Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. What similarities and differences are there in their outlook and view of the world? (1 paragraph)

*A: In Proverbs, there is much more of an emphasis on God's good creation. There is blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. Yet even in Proverbs we see that the wicked sometimes prosper and that the righteous are sometimes poor. Ecclesiastes focuses on the **effects the Fall on the world**. Sin and death have trashed God's good creation. Why do the good sometimes suffer and the wicked prosper? Yet at the same time even Ecclesiastes weaves throughout it's message that ultimately what is best is to fear God, and that will ultimately be what is **fulfilling** because of the judgment. Both focus much on **man's finiteness**. Both focus on the need to fear God. Proverbs comes from the standpoint that we should fear God because He is*

Creator and alone knows what is wise and has built wisdom into His creation and thus we should humble ourselves, seek wisdom in Him, and we will be blessed. Ecclesiastes on the other hand focuses on the Fall and how it has caused **futility** in the world and that everything is **meaningless** and **pointless** in creation apart from God's overarching design. If we only were to look at the world as we see it, it is **pointless**. Thus we need to fear God and simply live our lives in contentment with the **part of the puzzle** He has revealed, acknowledging that **meaning in life** can only come in light of Him and eternity. While Proverbs approaches life from the standpoint of God's good creation and His sovereign rulership over all that He has made (this is His good world), Ecclesiastes approaches it from the standpoint of the effect of the Fall on all of God's good creation. It focuses on the **endemic** that is the **human condition**, the disastrous effects of evil, sin, and death on everything.

3. What key phrases or words are repeated in Ecclesiastes? What do you think the author is emphasizing by these words/phrases? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: Everything is **vanity/emptiness/worthlessness/transitiveness!** The whole book then unfolds this point. Even wisdom is said to be empty! Even things we would say are good are empty according to Solomon! This indeed is everything! **"Under the sun/heaven"** - This phrase limits the scope of Solomon's investigation of emptiness. Everything is empty when viewed from a purely human (or secularist) standpoint. It is as if Solomon is purposefully excluding God from His study. This phrase helps show that the author is not a complete skeptic (he is not a nihilist, even though at times it sounds as if he is!). This makes the book extremely practical, as we often live as if we don't believe in God, and all unbelievers live according to this worldview in one way or another. Note all the places where **God** and **Eternity** come into the picture. Solomon makes some very significant observations about the emptiness of the world under the sun, but also at times brings God and eternity into the picture. These times help us to see the meaning of the world is found in God and how we fit into it. **"Striving after wind"** - All the things that we can pursue in this world are empty. This gets to our purpose in life. What are we living for?! We see that everything we could live for in this world is an empty pursuit. Thus we see this book rail against vain ambition. What do secularists live for? What do you get up for every morning? What is driving you? Work as an end goal is empty. So is everything else. **There is nothing better.** - This phrase occurs a few times early in the book and the concept runs to the end of the book. God calls us to be content with where we are at. We have a limited understanding of the world. We don't know everything. So we must be content to live within our limited view of the world and to live out the lot that God has given to us with joy. **Evil** - this word is prevalent in the book as well. Solomon sees many evils in this fallen world. The book in many ways wrestles with the problem of evil, or more pertinently in this book, the problems of evil. **Advantage/profit** - What is beneficial in this world? What is worth pursuing? These are questions the author often comes back to.

4. What is the overall message of Ecclesiastes? Overview how we see Ecclesiastes develop that message. How do the positive and negative messages of the book come together to form that message? Comment on how 'death' fits into the message of the book. (2 paragraphs)

A: Ecclesiastes begins with the theme of the **emptiness** of life under the sun and this theme runs throughout the entire book. Apart from God, life has no meaning or purpose. Thus it can have no lasting joy or fulfillment and is empty/worthless/vain. Ultimately, this is because of the Fall and its effects, sin and death. Although the world was created good with the purpose that men work and do good and find meaning in living and accomplishing **God's design** for them, after the Fall sin and death came in to mar that good design. Now **nothing** can have **meaning without eternity** because sin and death frustrate every good thing we could do. It is **only** in light of the fact that sin and death will be dealt in the judgment with that life can have its intended meaning.

So we see that life is hard and evil and then we die. Ecclesiastes points to the **reality of death** that sobers us up. It causes us to look that **reality square in the face**, wrestling with death and our mortality. It is **morbid** and **morose**, and challenges us to our core! It **challenges** a happy-go-lucky, empty perspective on life. Christianity is **not pie in the sky**, it is down to earth. Only Christians can ask these kind of hard questions without ending in complete depression! This world is broken! There is sin and death in it. And so we see that this book is supremely **real**. As believers we don't have to hide our heads in the sand! We are not vainly optimistic. We see **reality** clearly and live in light of it. **We can deal with reality because there is a God.** As Christians, we can be the most real. We can even thrive once we submit to our place in God's plan. It's like the preacher pushes us into a corner to cause us to face the harsh realities of life and shows us that we can't ignore the truth that the world is death infected. Don't live in a dream world! Wake up! Get out of our stupor! **Reevaluate your priorities in light of eternity since death is the final arbiter, the final equalizer.**

It also challenges a secular worldview. It looks at life under the sun, from a humanistic standpoint and finds life empty vanity. Ultimately the book shows that **entertainment is a crutch** to deal with reality. Unbelievers want a **safe** car, **safe** house, insurance, and retirement, why? **To arrive at death safely?** Thus it is a very apologetic book, showing that without the judgment and eternity, there can be no lasting purpose, meaning, or fulfillment in life. Even good things are shown to be empty in Ecclesiastes because they are not satisfying as an **end goal**. Thus there is a large emphasis on being **content** with our place in God's plan. It is only because God is going to sort it all out in the end that we don't have to be overly concerned about things that are not for us. We are very small and finite. We don't know the future. We need to **submit** to God in contentment. It is way too easy to **replace** the means for the end and have **ambition** for good things **replace God as the end goal.**

5. What are your own personal experiences with death? Comment on how many funerals you have been to and how they have affected you. (1 paragraph)

A: My dad died when he was 45, and raised us with an strong awareness of our mortality. He taught us the importance of enjoying life and having a relationship with God. He often reminded us that we had the same genetic condition that he knew would probably one day take his life. This was reinforced when at age 30 I had open heart surgery for the same condition that killed my dad. There's something about thinking about death that causes us to realize what is truly important in life. It should also give us a greater sense of **compassion** for the world when we see a greater sense of its brokenness. It should also give us a greater sense of **hope** when we think about how Christ is going to fix it all, conquer sin and death, and reign forever in perfect justice! We're **more human** and **real** when we face the reality of death, because it is endemic to the human condition. Non-Christians don't want to talk about death. We put the elderly in resting homes and avoid the thought of death at any cost. Most people now die in hospitals so that most of the college students of our generation I have talked to have rarely even seen people pass away! In past generations that would have been impossible! But as Christians, we can think about and even meditate and ponder these harsh realities without becoming either **jaded** or **despondent**.

6. How does the book of Ecclesiastes begin in 1:1-3? How does this introduce us to the message of the book and set the stage for what follows? (1 paragraph)

A: The first verse introduces us to the author, and then the second verse introduces us to the main theme of the book, the **emptiness** of everything! Five times in the first verse of his message we see the word emptiness. This is then elaborated on in the next verse which poses the question of **what advantage** or **benefit** is

anything that is done on earth. The rest of the book deals with these fundamental questions of the meaning of life and its purpose.

7. What then is 1:4-11 about? What is the point of these verses? How does this fit in with the introduction? (1 paragraph)

A: 1:4-11 is about cycles. Everything repeats itself. There is **nothing new**. Thus life is **pointless**. There is no end, no goal. This is looking at life from a human (or secular) standpoint. Take God out of the picture for a moment. Think about reincarnation or evolution: **there is no point!** If you are honest in your evaluation from a secularist viewpoint, that is where you must end up! An honest look at life suggests there is no real progression. Life is a rat race, there is no destination. This is not an uplifting thought!

8. What then happens in 1:12-18? What is his conclusion and why? (1 paragraph)

A: In 1:12 we see a shift where the preacher introduces himself again, and then decides to **investigate** what will be meaningful in life (1:13). These verses introduce this careful investigation. He begins by commenting that the task of men is evil. Everything has suffered the effects of the Fall. Even seeking wisdom itself for wisdom's sake is empty. Even **wisdom** will only make you sad because you will more fully see and feel the effects of the Fall!

9. What then does the preacher turn to in 2:1-11? What does he find? What are his conclusions? How does he come to these conclusions? (1 paragraph)

A: He turned to **pleasure** and found it **empty**. He tried everything. He didn't hold back from anything. He had the **resources** to pursue all his desires. Solomon had the opportunities to fully pursue every avenue. If we were to try to pursue fulfillment in pleasure, we might be tempted to think that if we just had more resources, then we could find fulfillment in it. We think that it's only because our desires are frustrated by a lack of resources that pleasure isn't fulfilling. But Solomon tried it all and yet found it all empty. It wasn't satisfying.

10. What then does he turn to in 2:12-16 and what conclusions does he draw about this? What is the end result of this in 2:17-23? (1 paragraph)

A: He turned to **wisdom** and also found it empty. Even wisdom itself isn't fulfilling. This is because death is the final arbiter. From a secular standpoint, what is the point of what you are doing if you are going to die? Even if you are **wise** and are **able to achieve your goals**, what's the point of being wise if a wise man is going to die just like the fool? What are you striving for? What are you living for? So he hated life. There is **no point to anything!** When you die, then anything that you could possibly strive for is shown to be empty.

11. Comment on the point the author makes in 2:24-26. How does this fit into what he has been saying? (1 paragraph)

A: So Solomon caused his soul to find good in his labor. Therefore he commends **contentment** to us. He has shown the **emptiness of ambition**. Be content with where God has put you. **Enjoy your lot in life, not striving after things that you may never attain**. The sinner is trying to **pile up**: money, pleasure, and selfishness. Greed is empty. Yet God is the one who gives contentment. As an aside: Beware of this **even in ministry**. Ambition and the means can so easily and subtly be exchanged for the goal. Be content in trusting and knowing God! It's about the journey!

12. What is the point of 3:1-8? What word do we find repeated in this section? Why do you think the author is stressing this point in 3:1-8? How do 3:9-10 help to interpret 3:1-8? How then does 3:11 come in and give the point to 3:1-10 (note the key word from 3:1-8 in 3:11)? Where is the phrase "There is an appointed time for everything" elsewhere in Ecclesiastes? Taking this all together what point is the author making in 3:1-11? Comment as well on how 3:12-13 then reinforces this point (think about this section, it is very important for understanding the book). (2 paragraphs)

A: Because we don't have the total picture and only God does, we need to simply do what is right for the moment in light of God's wisdom. Men are busy about their work and **don't see the big picture**. Yet God has established order and given wisdom to know what is right at the moment. There is a beginning and an end. Yet, **without revelation you can never understand the big picture**. There's a **yearning for purpose and design**, a beginning and an end. But apart from God you can't determine it! Every person knows that there is a design in this world. We long to know it and yet can never figure it out! When we talk with unbelievers we need to keep this in mind. People know that there is a design and a purpose. They have a God given yearning for meaning. The secularist has a cyclical worldview. They don't know what the goal is but they are longing for it. So we don't have to prove to unbelievers that God exists, they have eternity placed in their hearts (3:11). They have an emptiness in their hearts and a sense that there is something more!

13. What word is repeated through 3:10-18? How does this help us to understand this section? (2-3 sentences)

A: 'God' is prevalent in this section. It is He who gives meaning and purpose to life. See how 3:2-8 is all about the fact that there is a **time** for everything, and 3:11 says that God has made everything appropriate in its **time**. It is only in light of God, His purpose and design for His world, and eternity and judgment that life has purpose, meaning and a goal. God is sovereign and has a plan for His world. We cannot figure out that plan, but we know that there must be meaning and purpose. **He has worked so that men understand their humility in His plan and need to submit to Him for wisdom (3:14)**.

14. Comment on what 3:14-15 adds to this discussion. What do you think 3:15 even means (hopefully context will help somewhat)? (1 paragraph)

A: What God does remains forever. His work has purpose. And **ultimately, it is that purpose that gives our lives purpose as we will see**. Ultimately, the fear of God is the beginning to the answer to the question. You can understand your place within God's plan, in submission to God's wisdom. In 3:15 we see that there is nothing new, but God knows the past. It's not a purposeless cycle. God is involved. God is keeping track of the past. There is not no memory of the past. Men will forget the past, but God won't. Thus God gives meaning. **The fact that God keeps track of the past is what gives the past meaning**. If no one kept track of good and evil deeds and thoughts, and an evil deed or thought didn't have a lasting effect on the world, then whether one does good or evil doesn't matter. **There can be no purpose to life if God isn't keeping track of everything...**

15. What then does the author move to in 3:16-22 and how does this connect with what he has just been talking about? What dual themes run through this section? (1 paragraph)

A: Next the author moves to the problem of evil. Something is not right! There is wickedness in the world. If there is a God, why is there injustice in the world? We are effected by the Fall. Inherent in the human condition is death. We are all **selfish**. Animals live for self, and then they die. We just seek our own and then die. The secularist in their hearts want to say that there is a difference between humans and animals. Yet

*their worldview demands that they answer differently. How are you any different than a monkey (apart from eternity!)? Here we have the dual themes of **wickedness and death**. These are the problems of the Fall!*

16. Application: What are the implications and attitudes of a secular worldview? How do understanding these help us in our interactions with non-believers?
17. Application: What effect does meditating on the effects of the Fall on the world have on our own worldview? What attitudes should this produce in us?



## 20. Contentment in God: Ecclesiastes 4-12

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 4-12

**Theme:** Recognizing our Finiteness helps us to find Contentment by Rejoicing in our Lot

**Objectives:**

- To help us to see the emptiness of ambition and the need for contentment and joy
- To be challenged and reminded about what is truly important in life
- To understand how to live wisely in light of our finitude

**Reading:**

- Read Ecclesiastes *once*
- Read Ecclesiastes 4-12 *two times*

**Questions:**

1. As Solomon begins evaluation of life once again in 4:1-3, what does he look at and what does he conclude from it? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Solomon looked at oppression and evil and how evil goes unpunished in this world and concludes that it is better to be dead than alive! He even goes farther and states that it is better to have never been born than to be born into such a broken world of **injustice**! Once again we continue to see the reality of the **fallenness** of the world straight on.*

2. What is empty in 4:4? Yet what do we see in contrast in 4:5? How is this rounded off by 4:6? What is empty according to 4:7-8? What does these verses together teach us? (1 paragraph)

*A: Work that comes from **envy** and **jealousy** is empty. Yet on the flipside, it is **foolish** to rest without working and so consume yourself. Yet it is **better** to rest than to strive with vigor after labor. The one who works endlessly, what will be the end result? Together we see that on the one hand, work that is driven by a desire to be better than someone else will only be found to be empty. A striving after work itself will only be empty, while not working at all is foolish and results in destruction!*

3. We see a shift in 4:9 as Solomon turns to some practical advice, how does this fit into the book as a whole (in other words, why does Solomon give proverbial wisdom at times in Ecclesiastes and how does proverbial wisdom fit into his message)? What are some of the principles he draws out in 4:9-16? (1 paragraph)

*A: The proverbial wisdom in Ecclesiastes is part of the book that helps us to see that Solomon is not merely a **skeptic** or **fatalist**. While he does lament the emptiness of the world from a human standpoint and the utter futility that the world has been subjected to, he does recognize that there is a **greater purpose** to the world from the divine standpoint. At times he brings us back to that perspective and basically tells us that there is meaning and purpose for us in life by living **properly and wisely according to our limited view** of things in God's world. We don't have the complete picture and the world as a whole doesn't make sense to us, yet we do have a small piece of the puzzle, and it is wisdom for us to be content with our piece and live properly within it. So proverbial wisdom finds a place in teaching us how to live within our limited purview of the world. Thus we see that the **meaninglessness of life is due to our limited view**. That is why we also see a large emphasis on **resting** in the fact that you don't have the total picture and the need for **contentment**.*

Wisdom teaches us that there is time for everything and that everything is appropriate in its time (cf. 3:1-8, 11-12; 2:24-26). Since you don't have the total view focus on the here and now, being content with your position and living in daily wisdom with your one piece of the puzzle. We don't have to plan out our lives from beginning to end, but we should **live each day reliant on God's wisdom and finding joy in that.**

Next he draws out some practical wisdom, first that two are better than one because they can work together for a common goal. He also shows the value of wisdom in a parable showing that being a poor youth is better than being a foolish king. This is because even a poor youth may become king because of his wisdom. It's less clear how 4:15 is connected with 4:13-14. But the basic thought seems to be that even though that poor youth became king by his wisdom and multitudes flocked to him, ultimately he too will be forgotten and thus even this is empty.

4. What is the overall point of 5:1-7 and why? (2-3 sentences)

A: Solomon is teaching us in this section to **fear God**. God is so much greater than us and we are so finite. Thus we need to be **reverent** and not hasty in our interactions with Him. We shouldn't come to Him to spout out our empty words and knowledge, but to learn. This is at the heart of what wisdom is, **recognizing our relationship to the Almighty**, and living properly in that sphere. This passage is focusing on our finitude in light of God's infinity.

5. What then are some of the things Solomon emphasizes in 5:8-17? (2-3 sentences)

A: First he comments on injustice, and how it is inevitable because of **authority structures**. This book is real! This world is fallen. Next he points out the foolishness of seeking money and the emptiness in seeking to find fulfillment in it. When good things increase, so do those who consume them, so the end result is still zero. The rich man can't even sleep at night! How empty are riches! One can hoard riches only to his own detriment and can lose it all in a second. In the end everyone will die exactly as they were born, with nothing. So what advantage is there to seeking money!?! Man lives in **vexation, sickness and anger** all his life in such a pursuit. So living for money is completely empty!

6. What then is Solomon's response to this emptiness of seeking money in 5:18-20? (2-3 sentences)

A: Thus the answer is to work, but to have **joy** in your life and to appreciate your place in God's design. It is God's gift that we can work and even enjoy the fruits of our labor. We should be thankful with our place in the plan, living out our station without being overly concerned with our lives because God keeps us occupied with joy of heart. It is so **easy** to become **consumed** and **worried** with planning out our lives from beginning to end when we never can ensure those plans happen! We worry about everything and **strive** after so many goals that we think are important. Yet the **only thing** that is truly important is to live rightly in relationship with God, living in wisdom in the things God has shown to us.

7. What is an 'evil' to Solomon in 6:1-9? How does these 9 verses tie together, what theme are they on? (2-3 sentences)

A: So often people can even have good things and yet are **not able to enjoy them!** Either he has piled them up and a foreigner enjoys them, or he has lots of children and long life but is not satisfied! Even if you live 2000 years, you still die! You labor and labor and labor, and yet even if you are wise enough to make profit, you'll never enjoy it because your **appetite** will never be satisfied. He ends these verses by reminding us that it is futile to keep striving for more, we'll never be satisfied! **Ambition for ambition's sake** is empty!

8. What is the point of 6:10-12? What do these verses teach us about the past and the future and how that relates to how we should live in the present? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Life is short! You don't know the future! You don't even remember the past. You have to recognize your place in God's plan. So often **our life is about our plans**: I want to make a name for myself, make wealth for myself, do this or that, but we don't know the future and the past is forgotten and so our plans are so often futile. So we're stuck with living contentedly and wisely in the present! You can't fight your place in God's plan. You can't argue with God (He is stronger than us!). Be content with your lot and enjoy the good that you have right now!*

9. What is some of the practical wisdom that we learn in 7:1-6, especially as it relates to the topic of death? (2-3 sentences)

*A: It's better to have a clear look at reality than to delude ourselves with amusements. When we think about death, we think about reality. We've all been dealt a deck of cards, and there's a **realism** that is content with our lot and recognizes that the world is fallen, but lives within God's plan rather than seeking out empty happiness to distract us from reality. This is what the world is about, anything to distract from death! That's why it's better to be rebuked by a wise man than to listen to the song of fools, because we care about truth and want to live properly in light of the reality about this world.*

10. What are some of the practical wisdom that we learn in 7:7-12? (2-3 sentences)

*A: We continue to see practical wisdom that teaches us how to **live within our limited view of life**. Here we see how injustice drives wise men mad, the end is better than the beginning, the benefit of patience, and the wisdom in not comparing the past to the present. **Live in the here and now**. We need contentment and wisdom to walk day by day. Wisdom, money, and inheritance are good, but we have already seen that they are not ultimately fulfilling.*

11. What is the point 7:13-15 especially as it relates to God's sovereignty and how we are to relate to it? (2-3 sentences)

*A: God is sovereign. We can't oppose what He is doing in laying out history. We can't predict the future. Accept your place in God's plan. Rejoice in the good and know that **the bad is there to humble us and teach us that we are not God**. Understand and learn to embrace your limitedness. God gives us good and bad to show us that we are not in control. We can't plan out the next 50 years of our life and things go according to our plan. Furthermore, this is a cursed world, the righteous sometimes suffer and the wicked sometimes prosper.*

12. What does Ecclesiastes 7:16 mean? How could someone possibly be too righteous or too wise? Note that the word translated 'ruin/destroy' in NASB/ESV is better translated 'bewildered/overwhelmed/appalled'. How then do 7:17-18 fit in with this principle? How then do 7:19-22 fit into this principle? (1 paragraph)

*A: To not be overly righteous and overly wise is to not be overly **idealistic**. It's not saying don't be righteous and don't be wise. To be overly righteous is to be "so righteous" that you can't deal with the sin of the world, and to be overly wise is to be "so wise" as to not be able to deal with the stupidity of the world. If you are **overly idealistic** in this way you will always be bewildered, overwhelmed and appalled at everything! This*

world is a broken place! You will be **paralyzed by the reality of life**. You will constantly be vexed. On the flipside, verse 17 says to not be wicked and not be a fool. We need to hold those both together in tension. The person who fears God is the person who understands his place in God's plan. The one who fears God will live that fine line of being wise and righteous (one thing that he needs to hold on to), yet not so idealistic about these things that they can't live in a fallen world (the other thing we need to hold on to). If we are too idealistic, it is ultimately just a pride that we have everything figured out rather than a humility that recognizes that this is a broken world, and we are part of that brokenness! As we see in 7:19, wisdom is good. Yet, there is no one who is righteous (7:20). And so we shouldn't be overly hurt when people sin against us because we sin in the same ways (7:21-22)! Wisdom and righteousness are good, but we need to recognize and live in light of the fact that we are foolish sinners too, and that is simply the fallen world that we live in! We should never think, "I can't believe you would do/say/think this!" Why not, we're all foolish sinners!

13. What is the point then of 7:23-29? (2-3 sentences)

A: We can't know everything. We need to live according to the light given us. Ultimately we need to just follow God's wisdom, escaping from the adulterous and fleeing from sin! Everyone are sinners. God made men upright, but mankind fell into sin and now everyone is sinners. This is the world we live in!

14. What is the point of 8:1-8? Noting that the phrase in the first part of 8:6 is nearly identical to the wording in 3:1 and 3:17 (ie. 'time for every delight' or 'time for every matter'), how is the point here the same as there? (2-3 sentences)

A: There is wisdom and it is a benefit to those who have it (8:1). If a king gives a command it is wisdom to obey. Everyone understands that this is the wisdom of living life. Wisdom is to know how to live in different situations and circumstances. There is a **proper response** to every action. Of course we know that it is foolish to reject the command of the king, consequences will come. Thus this section is about knowing our proper place in God's plan and having wisdom to live it out. We are not omniscient, and therefore wisdom dictates doing things in the right time rather than doing our own way. As we see in 8:7, we don't have the complete picture, we can't see the future. So we need God's wisdom to live out each moment in proper relationship to what God has revealed as only He has the complete picture! God alone is sovereign and so we should live wisely and righteously (8:8). **If** we could see the future, we could plan out our lives from beginning to end and wouldn't need to depend on God's wisdom to live day by day in submission to His principles. But we can't, so we do!

15. What do we see in 8:9-11? (1 sentence)

A: There is wickedness in this world, everyone dies and are forgotten, and justice is not upheld and so wickedness just increases.

16. But in light of what we saw in 8:9-11 what do we see in 8:12-13? (1-2 sentences)

A: Even though there is wickedness in the world that often seems to triumph, ultimately it is best to fear God! **Ultimately**, it is not best to be wicked, there is a God who cares about right and wrong!

17. But what does he come back to in 8:14? So in light of that what should be man's response in 8:15-17? (1 paragraph)

A: Sometimes the wicked do prosper though, and sometimes bad things happen to the righteous! This world is often upside down! So therefore Solomon commended **joy**. Therefore we should be **content**. This world is messed up and we can't figure it out. We have a place in it and ultimately God has a grand plan. But we can't see the **totality of His design**. We need to live rightly in our place in that plan, fearing Him and trusting that will be best. We can't figure life out completely. This book emphasizes the **simplicity of a life with God**. Accept your finiteness, your lot, and be content in your fleeting life to trust God and take joy in that. We will always have the 'why' questions which we will never know, and so we embrace our finiteness.

18. What is the point again in 9:1-6? So how should we respond according to 9:7-10? (2-3 sentences)

A: Everyone is in God's hand and no one knows the future (9:1) and everyone is going to die. **Death is the great arbitrator, the great equalizer**. Everyone faces the same fate. Death is a reality in this world. Therefore, live contentedly in your life and enjoy the fleeting life that God has given to you. This is our reward, our gift from God. Enjoy whatever God gives to you and do whatever God has given you to do with all your strength. We are not to strive after work **as if it is the end goal, BUT work hard in it because God has given it to us and it is our place**. Be content and satisfied with what God gives and don't be about the ambition that is never satisfied. **Live life to the fullest. If you have no joy in life you're missing the point, the present! Live life now and enjoy it now in submission to who God is!**

19. What then is the point of 9:11-18? (2-3 sentences)

A: **Time and chance take over everything**, so we can't figure it all out. Yes, we should plan, we have seen that we'll see that again later. **Yet if we are too idealistic we'll be crushed when our plans fail**. Use wisdom, make good decisions, and then realize that this is a broken world. There is futility. One sinner can destroy much good. **Wisdom is good and can produce good results, but the result are not in your hands!**

20. As we come to the practical wisdom of chapter 10, what do we learn? (2-3 sentences)

A: Wisdom is good, but fools can undo so much good. We see the value of wisdom, but it is a relative value. We don't want to be fools. But results are out of our control. Wisdom doesn't always get the results we want. Everything is upside down in this world, things aren't as they should be. Yet there is a right time for everything. We should not just party all the time. There is a time for feasting, but not just all the time as princes are drunk all the time. We want to live based on a clear view of reality. Yet we are to live within our limited scope. This is wisdom, given that you don't have everything figured out.

21. In light of the uncertainty of the future shown thus far in the book (and also in this section), what do we see in 11:1-6? (2-3 sentences)

A: Just because you don't know the future, **doesn't mean that you shouldn't take risks!** Don't bury your talent in the sand. **If you don't invest you'll never get anything back**. We shouldn't do nothing because we are **paralyzed** of fearing the future. This is about how to live given that we're finite. We plan for uncertainties as best we can, but don't worry about the future knowing that we can't figure it out. We can't see what God is doing, so we plan and then live life in the present. We trust God and live according to His wisdom because He is sovereign.

22. So then how should we live according to 11:7-10? (2-3 sentences)

*A: So we rejoice in the life that God has given us. We should be glad every morning that we wake up and open our eyes! Darkness and futility are coming. The world is broken, we don't ignore that. In light of coming judgment we live joyfully and contentedly, within God's plan.*

23. So then how does 12:1 pick up on this? What is 12:2-7 a description of? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Don't miss out on life because you were too **consumed with ambition** that you miss the whole point! Death is coming! All of 12:2-6 is a description of old age, one of the most picturesque sections of Scripture. Here are a section of metaphors for old age: 12:2 is about sight, 12:3 is about feeble legs and loosing teeth and sight, 12:4 is about loosing your hearing and not being able to sleep at night, 12:5 is about being afraid of falling and breaking brittle bones, white hair, and sexual impotency, 12:6 is probably about the mind, spinal cord and heart being broken. And ultimately, we are all dust and will return to dust! This book should seriously sober us all up!*

24. So how then does the Preacher end the book in 12:8-14? How does the judgment give meaning to all of life? (1 paragraph)

*A: The book ends how it began. In light of death, everything in life is empty. There is no meaning to life from a human standpoint. The Preacher researched it all and wrote truth. God has given us this wisdom revealed in His Word. The **truth** spurs us on like goads and those who heed it are like well driven nails. But the conclusion to everything is to **fear God and keep His commandments** because this is all of life. It is only the **judgment** that gives meaning to all of life because there is life after death! This world may be messed up now, but things will all be straightened out in the end. If there was no judgment, this whole world and everything that we could possibly seek in it would ultimately be found as empty because everyone dies. But since there is a judgment after death, **suddenly, everything that we do in this life matters!** Life is then about fearing and living our lives in right relationship with our Creator! Every single deed done in all of life will be judged properly by God. We can look hard at death and reality as believers because we know that **this life isn't ultimate**. We can **face the cold, hard reality of a broken world**. We can deal with the meaninglessness and purposelessness of human life because there is purpose in God's design for His world, even when we can't see the future and how all the details work out towards that plan. Everything will be sorted out in the end, and so we can live our lives contentedly and joyfully submitting ourselves to God's design and wisdom and in the lot that He has given to us!*

25. Application: How does understanding the book of Ecclesiastes gives us contentment?

26. Application: What does it look like for us to live wisely given our finitude?

## 21. From Fear to Faith: Job 1-2

**Scripture:** Overview of Job and Chapters 1-2

**Theme:** Fearing God causes us to Joyfully Submit to His Sovereignty, even without Understanding

**Objectives:**

- To be challenged by God's absolute sovereignty and to see how to respond to it
- To understand the nature of fearing and trusting God and to understand why it honors Him
- To be shown how worthy of worship God is compared to anything in this world

**Reading:**

- Quickly read/skim Job looking for its basic structure, themes and message
- Read Job 1-2 *three times*

**Questions:**

1. What do we know about the background and setting of the book of Job? (2-3 sentences)

*A: There is little background information within the book of Job itself. Given the fact that Job is sacrificing personally and outside of the covenantal framework established by God in the nation of Israel suggests a date before the formation of Israel. Furthermore, the description of the Chaldean raiding parties seems to suggest an early date while the Chaldeans were still nomads. The lifespan of Job (240) also suggests a time shortly around Abraham as lifespans began to decrease rapidly after the flood (Abr. 175, Nahor 148, Serug 230). All of this along with extra-biblical testimony suggests that the events of the book of Job took place around the times of Abraham, although when it was written down could have been much later.*

2. Briefly summarize the story of Job. (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Job was a righteous man who was very rich, the greatest of all the men of the east. He continually sacrificed for his children in case of their sin. One day when Satan came before God, **God bragged on Job** to Satan. Satan then suggested that Job only feared God for what he got out of it. So God allowed Satan to test Job and to take everything from him including all his wealth and his 10 children. Job responded by **worshipping** God. So when Satan came before God again, **God once again bragged on Job** because he continued to fear Him. So Satan suggested this was only because God allowed him good health, so God allowed Satan to take away Job's health. Job continued to fear and worship God, even in the midst of his trial. Then Job's three friends come onto the scene and basically tell Job that he is being punished for his sin. Job argues that this is not the case. This goes back and forth for the majority of the book until another man Elihu steps in and tells Job that he is basically accusing God in defending Himself. Then finally, God speaks and puts Job in his place for his questioning of God. Job humbles himself in response and the book ends with God blessing Job even more than he was at the beginning and vindicates Job.*

3. What are some of the key words and themes in Job? How do they relate to the main message of the book? (1 paragraph)

*A: **Fear** is the most important key word/concept in the book. As we will see, it occurs several times in the first two chapters of the book, then at the key junction and climax of the book in 28:28, and at other key points in the structure of the book including the climax of Elihu's speech in 37:24, and finally at the end of God's speech in 41:25. Since Job is wisdom literature, it seeks to answer the question of how to be wise. Just*

like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Job answers this question with the **fear of God**. In Job, the question, "Is God worthy to be feared without anything else?" is raised. Especially in the first couple chapters we see the key themes of blessing and cursing repeated (which are actually the same word in Hebrew). Finally, at the end of the book Yahweh blessed Job (42:12). One of the key questions is whether or not Job will fear God when the blessing is taken away. Throughout the center section of the book there is a large emphasis on **righteousness and justice**. Who is right? Is God right? Is Job right? The ultimate answer is that God is **supremely right**, but we also see that Job is also not wrong (ie. being punished for his sin). Even though God is **righteous** and completely **sovereign**, He doesn't always bring immediate blessing in this world for the righteous. Thus there is also an emphasis on hope in this middle section. We must ultimately fear and trust God that He does what is right and so hope in the future because we cannot figure out the present which isn't always right! And as we see, God does work it all out in the end! We also see wisdom related themes like counsel and knowledge.

4. What key phrase is repeated three times in the first two chapters of the book? Where else in Job do we see parts of this phrase? What does this suggest about the structure and purpose of the book? Give a careful overview of how the book of Job is structured, including all of its major sections (chs. 1-2, 3-27, 28, 29-31, 32-37, 38-41, 42). What is the point of each section? How do these major sections fit together into the overall purpose of the book? Note that you may need to come back to this question at the end after you've thought through the rest of the questions. (2-3 paragraphs)

A: Three times in the first two chapters of the book (including the very first verse of the book), Job is described as being "blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then at the end of chapter 28, which is an 'ode to wisdom' the poem concludes with "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding." So we see that the author has purposefully tied the **main refrain** from the introduction to chapter 28 which is structurally center to the book (see the outline below). Thus it is shown that chapter 28 is at the center of a book-wide chiasmic structure.

A. Prologue (1-2)

B. 3 Cycles of Disputes with Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (3-27)

C. Ode to Wisdom (28)

D. 3 Long Speeches: Job (29-31), Elihu (32-37), & God (38:1-42:6)

E. Epilogue (42:7ff.)

In the prologue of the book we see the themes of blessing, fearing God, and worship introduced. The key question is whether or not Job will continue to worship God **without** God's blessing. That question is answered with a resounding 'yes'. The reason behind Job's response is implied to be his **fear of the Lord**, (this theme of fearing God is reinforced as the major key to the book as the book progresses). In the lengthy section of debates in 3-27, the question of divine retribution and the problem of evil is discussed. If God is completely sovereign, and He is, and He is completely righteous, and He is, then why do the righteous suffer? Although the question is not answered, we are left with Job holding fast to his righteousness despite his suffering while the friends disagree. One of the key questions raised in this section is, "Who is right?" The way that this fits into the flow of the book is that ultimately, Job's friends end up siding more with Satan than with God. They undermine the fear of Yahweh by suggesting that there will always be earthly blessing for obedience! Thus there is **no need** to actually **fear God**, as people would live instead **for His blessing** instead of for Him! It would be as if a police officer were driving next to you and you were driving the speed limit, are you obeying the law because it is right or because you fear getting caught? As we come to chapter 28, we see a serene ode to wisdom which as we said focuses on fearing Yahweh as the key to the



book. Then Job gives his final speech as a defense of his integrity and righteousness. Elihu then steps in and rebukes Job for undermining God's righteousness by defending his own, while at the same time wanting to uphold Job's righteousness. This prepares the way for God who basically says the same thing. It was wrong for Job to question God's righteousness, but ultimately, Job was in the right in that he was not being punished for his sin as the friends suggested (42:7). Men need to **fear God** in light of His **complete sovereignty** and **righteousness** and man's inability to be either righteous or to figure God out. God doesn't always immediately bless righteousness. God is awesome and does what He pleases. We need to fear Him. The book concludes with God blessing Job more than before as Job is vindicated at the end. The book doesn't end with a capricious God who does what He wants and doesn't give a rip about whether or not you do right. In the end God righteously upholds righteousness.

5. What does Satan question and suggest about Job in chapters 1-2? Why is this question key for understanding the purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: The key question that Satan raises is whether or not Job fears God **for nothing**. Job responds with a complete **triumph of faith** in that he continues to worship God when everything is taken away. This shows that God and God alone is of ultimate value to Job! This question is key to the book since God is not giving physical blessing to Job throughout the book. When everything else is taken away, will **God alone be enough** to worship Him for, or do we need something more? When we can't see God, then what? This gets to the heart of the issue which is to define what a true fear of God is and looks like. Fearing God is to believe and live in light of God's complete awesome nature, whether or not He is doing anything on our behalf. That of course takes tremendous **faith**, but such faith honors God since it shows that He alone is worthy.

6. How does Job respond to the tragedies that came upon him? Why do you think he responds this way? Especially in light of what the book says about Job, what reason(s) does he have to respond this way? What do his responses teach us? Comment specifically on what Job says and how these quotes fit into the larger narrative of the book. What phrase does the narrator include alongside both of Job's responses and how does that affect how we interpret what Job says? Comment on what this teaches us about how to respond to God's sovereignty over tragedies. (1 paragraph)

A: Job responds to these tragedies by worshiping and blessing God! In light of the book he clearly responds this way **because he fears God**. There is absolutely no earthly reason in the book for him to respond in this way! It can only be because of Job's complete faith in the fact that God is the awesome Creator of the universe and He is worthy to be worshiped that would cause this type of response. His responses are clearly an example to us of the need to value God alone and to live for Him for who He is and not for what He does for us in this life. Ultimately, we see Job's faith is that God will do what is best after death (19:25ff. and elsewhere in the debates), but God will not always bless in this life! Job's responses **directly attribute his suffering to God**. More strongly, God brought good and God brought **evil** (2:10). Job knows of no intermediary agent, and ultimately, God is behind it anyway. Nowhere in the book is God's complete sovereignty questioned. And the narrator even reinforces Job's response of attributing the calamity (evil) to God by saying that what Job said was right. Thus we see that the answer to the problem of evil is never to question God's sovereignty! The answer is to humble ourselves and to fear God! God is righteous and does what is right, even though at times that means doing wrong to those who are in the right! Ultimately, what is right will be done and we must believe and hope in that and fear God for who He is!

7. What does Job know about how/why the tragedies came about? How does this fact fit into the main purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: Job doesn't know anything about the heavenly interaction with Satan and the indirect causes of what happened to him! In fact, nothing is said about Satan or any indirect causes all throughout the book, Job and his three friends all attribute Job's trial directly to God himself! Job himself does this when he first hears of the tragedy (1:21) and the narrator is careful to remind us that what Job said here is correct (1:22)! Thus we see that we as readers know something of what is going on in the book that Job and his friends didn't know which helps to reinforce the major point: we don't always know why God does what He does! Thus the only proper response is to humbly **fear Him in reverence and awe!** The fear of God is the major topic of the book and the main point.

8. Thought question: Why do you think God allowed Satan to tempt Job like this? How does this reason tie in to the main purpose of the book? (1 paragraph)

A: We don't have an explicit statement about the reason God allowed Satan to tempt Job, but there does seem to be enough clues to piece together some ideas. First of all, it is noteworthy that God began the discussion by **bragging** on Job to Satan! It seems that Job's fear of God really **honored God by showing God off as worthy.** This of course is only magnified when Job continues to worship God even when everything is taken away. Thus our faith pleases God because it shows that He is of ultimate value! Nothing in this world compares to Him!

9. Thought question: Think about what the book of Job teaches us about fearing God and having faith/believing in God. How are these two concepts related? Why do you think these two concepts are the two most central concepts in all Scripture conveying our part in salvation? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: It is noteworthy that the "fear of God" and "faith in God" are the two primary ways of referring to those who trust God and are 'believers' in the two testaments. As we see clearly in Job, to truly fear God is to remain steadfast in one's relationship to God **even when you can't see God, know why He is doing what He is doing, or even receive any blessing from Him!** Thus both fear and faith have a clearly unseen component. They are both a strong belief in who God is. The difference between them lies in what is being believed about God. The **fear of God** is an unseen confidence in the awesomeness of God, while **faith in God** is an unseen confidence in the goodness of God. Thus they are two sides to the same coin. Notice how in the story of Abraham, the two concepts are interwoven. In Genesis 22:12 God says, "Now I know you fear God." Like Job, this was a test of Abraham's fear of God. Yet Hebrews 11:17 says that "by faith Abraham offered Isaac. Believed that God would raise up Isaac (11:19)." Hebrews of course focuses on the reward... Both faith and fear are functioning here. Abraham feared God and had faith in God. He understood the awesome nature of God and his need of submission to Him as well as that God is a gracious God who would raise His promised son from the dead. Both fear of God and faith in God are therefore a confident assurance of who God is, and what He will do. Fear looks to His awesome character and the fact that He will judge, and faith to His gracious nature, and the fact that He will reward. We must hold on to both. They are 2 sides of the same coin. Notice as well that both concepts convey not what we **do**, but who we **trust** in. Thus they are both very appropriate descriptions of our responsibility in salvation. We need to humble ourselves and trust in God for salvation! He alone can save, we can't save ourselves!

10. What do you think the main purpose and message of the book of Job is? Why? (1 paragraph)

A: In light of everything we have seen in the book, the main purpose of the book is **to teach us to fear God**, even when there is no earthly reason to! God is completely awesome! If we truly understood who He is in His nature, we could do nothing but fear! So even though we can't see Him, we need to believe in who He is and

*live in light of that reality. God is completely righteous, and He always does what is right. Sometimes we can't understand why He does what He does. Sometimes even, wrong things are done to those who are in the right. Yet in the end God's justice will be shown. There is eternity and we need to live in light of and in hope of it. God is awesomely righteous, and so we need to believe in and live in light of that reality!*

11. Application: What do we learn about God's sovereignty from the book of Job? How should this understanding affect how we go through all of life, especially including trials and suffering?
12. Application: Comment on why faith and fearing God honors Him and how this encourages us to live lives of fear/faith.

## 22. Futile Counsel and Debates about Right: Job 3-31

**Scripture:** Job 3-31

**Theme:** God is Completely Sovereign and Just although Everything doesn't always work out Justly

**Objectives:**

- To challenge us in thinking we have God figured out and can know why things happen
- To give us compassion in dealing with those who are wrestling with tragedy and faith
- To show us how absolute retribution theology undermines faith

**Reading:**

- Read Job 3-31 *two times* (I suggest reading two different literal translations like ESV, HCSB, and NASB on this one)

**Questions:**

1. What is your first impression of reading Job 3 right after reading chapters 1-2 of Job? What does this teach us about suffering and faith in light of Job's triumphs of faith in the first two chapters? (1 paragraph)

*A: In a protracted trial, a wrestling match goes on. This is a **dark trial** for Job. Remember that he hears nothing from God in the midst of it, and knows nothing of why this is happening. So while he immediately responded in faith, as time goes on and on and he continues to hear nothing from God, a wrestling match is going on in his soul. His faith doesn't make this trial **trivial** or negate the deep pain to his soul. And at times, that very faith is nothing but a slight glimmer of hope. And yet as we see at the end of the book, Job's faith was indeed real and God commended him. This should instruct us on how we respond to people who are going through a dark trial. Their wrestling match with God doesn't invalidate their faith. In fact, it is the nature of being human to wrestle with our faith. Our emotions don't always just 'fall in line', and unless we isolate ourselves from difficult situations, **our lives will constantly be a battle of refining our emotions and teaching them to trust more fully in God.** Note the next question as well.*

2. How does Eliphaz respond right after Job's lament in chapter 4? Think about the implications about how we should respond in such situations. (1 paragraph)

*A: Eliphaz responds by rebuking Job right in the midst of his trial. It's far too easy in these types of situations to give **quick answers** that ultimately don't satisfy the **depth of the tragedy**. Hopefully, walking through the book of Job will give us all a great sense of **compassion**. Job is definitely portrayed as a hero of sorts. God Himself brags about Job in the beginning of the book and Job responds to a crushing trial with amazing faith. Yet we still see Job wrestling hard as the trial wears on, and this should teach us that those who are in the midst of a dark trial need **encouragement** as they are wrestling for their faith. Trite and surface answers do not help to heal Job's soul, and in the end his **counselors are denounced by God.***

3. Noting the following breakup of chapters 3-27 into speeches, come up with a one sentence summary for each of these speeches: chs. 4-5, 6-7, 8, 9-10, 11, 12-14, 15, 16-17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23-24, 25, 26-27.

*A:*

*4-5 - Eliphaz: Suffering comes from sin and all men are sinful, therefore seek God because He can save.*

- 6-7 - Job: God struck me so that I want to die even though I am innocent and now my friends have failed me in my weakness, as man is weak and yet God punishes him.
- 8 - Bildad: God is just so if you were pure and sought Him, He would restore you as history confirms.
- 9-10 - Job: Surely God does as He pleases so if I were right I couldn't say anything so Job questions God's treatment of him as dust.
- 11 - Zophar: Job's claim of innocence is questioned because God sees sin and so if you put sin away you will prosper.
- 12-14 - Job: God is indeed sovereign, worthless physicians, but I wish to argue my case with Him because though I am sinful and weak, this is not right!
- 15 - Eliphaz: Your guilt makes you speak, how can you say man is right compared to God, the wicked will not escape!
- 16-17 - Job: You are miserable comforters, God has hunted me and handed me over to my enemies though I am innocent and hold fast my hope.
- 18 - Bildad: Are we stupid, the wicked will perish.
- 19 - Job: You have attacked me, but cannot prove my sin, yet God has attacked me and you do not pity me, yet in the end God will vindicate me and my hope is in the end.
- 20 - Zophar: The wicked only triumph briefly, God will reveal his sin.
- 21 - Job: The wicked prosper and die fat, and how is it an answer to say the sons will pay for it?
- 22 - Eliphaz: Why would God punish you for right since it doesn't profit Him, He sees your wickedness, so return to Him.
- 23-24 - Job: If I could argue with God then He would hear, God knows when tested I am gold, yet there is no justice for the wicked.
- 25 - Bildad: How can man be just before God, nothing is great before God.
- 26-27 - Job: My friends don't help since I already know God has omnipotent power, yet I hold fast my righteousness as my hope and affirm that the wicked have no hope.

4. Now summarize Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar's basic arguments in chs. 3-27. Summarize what they were basically arguing. Give specific examples (verses) that illustrate their points. (2-3 sentences with example verses)

A: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar all basically argue that God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked, and so since Job's circumstances was clearly from God, He was being punished by God which must be the result of his sin. Therefore he must be hiding some secret sin that if he would just repent of everything would be ok. This is **retribution theology** at its extreme. On the one hand much of what they say about God is correct. They strongly affirmed God's sovereignty and righteousness. On the other hand, their incorrect theology has caused them to wrongly attribute the tragedy that has come upon Job on his sin, rather than encouraging him as they should. They failed to account for the Fall in their worldview and didn't understand that things don't always work out like they should. They put God in a box. This idealism ultimately stems from **pride** that thinks that we aren't suffering or going through whatever because we are better. But the reality is that all of us need to understand any of us can and will deeply wrestle with our faith when placed in tough enough circumstances. If you really think you're a good person that just **proves** that **you've isolated yourself from the brokenness of the world** to be able to delude yourself in that way.

- 4:7-8 The innocent don't perish, God punishes the wicked (Eliphaz).
- 5:8 Job should seek God. (Eliphaz).
- 8:3-4 God is just, punishes transgression (Bildad).
- 8:5-6 Seek God and you will be restored (Bildad).
- 11:4-6 You deserve worse for your guilt (Zophar).

11:13-15 Put iniquity far away and you will be secure (Zophar).

15:4-6 You don't fear God (Eliphaz).

22:2-11 Your evil is abundant, there is no end to your iniquities (Eliphaz).

22:21-23 Agree with God and be at peace (Eliphaz).

5. Now summarize Job's response to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in chs 3-27 with specific examples of Job's points. What are the main things Job is basically saying? (2-3 sentences with example verses)

A: Job affirms that God is sovereign and alone determines what is right, and yet **vehemently defends his own innocence**. He knows that God has attacked him and so longs for vindication and even brings God's justice into question. Job's fundamental argument is correct as opposed to the friends as we will see later in the book. However, we will also see that **Job goes too far** in calling God into question. While it was true that Job was **righteous** and his friends were wrong for attributing the disaster to his hidden sin, Job was also wrong in defending himself at God's expense.

We see a huge emphasis on Job longing for **vindication**. One of the main questions in this section is "Who is **right**?" Are the friends right? Is Job right? Ultimately, as we will see, only God is right. And yet God will vindicate Job. Job longs for vindication in this life. This book raises questions and even establishes the need for a way to be **justified**. God is perfect, powerful, can do whatever He wants. How could we ever be in the **right**? We need an arbiter, a mediator, a Redeemer. We need someone who "can lay His hand on us both."

9:20 I am right and blameless.

9:32-33 Job wants an arbiter.

10:2-9 I will say to God, "Do not condemn me." I am not guilty.

13:3 I desire to argue my case with God.

13:18 I know I will be vindicated

21:7-26 The wicked live, and what do they care for their houses after them?

23:3-7 I would lay my case before Him.

27:2-6 I hold fast my righteousness.

29:12-17 Job's deeds.

31:1-40 Job's final appeal for his righteousness.

6. Unpack in more detail the flow and argument of chapter 19 and specifically how that culminates in 19:25-27 and what then follows in the chapter. (1 paragraph)

A: This chapter begins with Job responding to their attack that his error is still unseen. God has wronged him and although Job cries out, there is no justice. God has made him an enemy. So they should pity him and not attack him as God does. So Job cries out in 19:23 that his words be inscribed forever because he desires to be vindicated. It is significant that when people go through prolonged trials, there is always a desire to be vindicated. Almost worst than the physical trial is the **self-doubting**. **Am I doing what is right?** **Why** is this happening? There is a sense that what was happening to Job **wasn't right**. However, Job confesses that even if he isn't vindicated, his **confidence** (in 19:25) is that his Redeemer lives and in the end He will stand on the earth. The Redeemer will be triumphant and in the end what matters is the resurrection. Even after Job dies, yet he will bodily see God. He has emphasized that this is his confident hope. In the end there will be judgment and his accusers will have to face God (19:28-29). Thus we see that certainly Job does long for **vindication** now, but he knows that ultimately it is the end that matters. He is

*confident that one day he will be redeemed after death by his triumphant Redeemer, and ultimately that is what his hope is in and he longs for!*

7. Comment on the structure and message of chapter 28 in the midst of these speeches. (1 paragraph)

*A: In the midst of all the debates, chapter 28 stands out starkly as a serene poem. This chapter begins by talking about mining and how men will spend so much effort to find and seek out gold and silver. But verse 12 transitions to asking where wisdom can be found. It is more valuable than anything in this world, and yet it is not easy to find. God knows its way (28:23) and established it in the beginning when He made the world (28:24-27). And the climax of this poem is that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. Thus in the middle of this whole debate is this chapter which is a peaceful poem about wisdom and its value. The change in tone from the previous and following sections is stark. It all culminates in a statement that the fear of the Lord is wisdom and thus establishes the main point of the book, that wisdom comes from understanding our relationship to the awesome God.*

8. How does Job conclude his arguments in chapters 29-31? (1 paragraph)

*A: Job longs for the previous days when he was blessed because of all the good that he did. Job recounts all the various ways in which he lived righteously, and remembers he thought he would die in peace (29). But now everyone mocks him because he is cursed! Because God has struck him, he is surrounded by tragedy. Job calls out for help and doesn't receive any (30). Finally in the climax to Job's argument he strongly affirms his innocence and almost challenges God to strike him if he is deserving of it with rhetorical questions of God. He concludes by loudly calling out to God to hear him. If he had done anything worthy of punishment he would take it, but since he hasn't he calls out to God for what is right (31).*

9. Thought question: In what ways were what Job's friends said right and in what ways were what they said not right? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: They were right in affirming **God's sovereignty, His justice and righteousness and absolute omniscience**. They said many things that were absolutely correct about God. Yet they failed to understand that God doesn't bless and curse in this life according to pure retribution for what we have done. His ways are not that simple and He can't be put in a simple box like that where we have Him completely figured out. While it is true that **in the end** justice will be upheld, God has ordered this life according to a more grand purpose. He desires His children to walk by **faith and trust Him in a fallen world**, and He patiently gives the unrighteous grace and time to repent without pouring out His just wrath upon the world. To **presume** that we know precisely why the hidden things of this world which God hasn't revealed are happening is to proudly presume we understand best what will glorify God, and the reality is that we are not God! Furthermore, to simplistically assign guilt based upon life circumstances is in itself **proud**. It is to assume that if we are better off physically than others, it is because we are better off morally. This world is fallen and we should have **compassion** for others who are crushed under the weight of the Fall. To think that trials are a result of peoples' sin is to fail to see that we are all worthy of much worse punishment and ultimately lead to a lack of compassion due to comparing ourselves to others and thinking that we are better.*

10. Thought question: In what ways was what Job said right and in what ways was what he said wrong? Did Job deserve what came upon him or not? Why or why not? Think about this! (1-2 paragraphs)

A: From the standpoint of the book of Job, it is clear that Job's friends are not right in saying that this tragedy came upon Job because of his sin. At the end of the book, God rebukes Job's friends for not saying what was right as Job did (42:7). Thus Job's **fundamental argument was correct** while that of his friends were wrong. Of course the difficulty that we wrestle with is that as humans, all of us are deserving of hell which is so much worse than even the tragedy that befell Job. So how can Job be undeserving of this trial while at the same time be deserving of something much worse? The answer is not so much that Job didn't deserve this trial, but that God doesn't dole out punishment in a tit for tat way in this life. God will certainly work out the universe justly in the end, but we can't know what that should be! And it is proud for us to presume to know why God does what He does. Furthermore, Job was righteous in that he did trust Yahweh and there wasn't a secret sin that Job was harboring in his heart. So there is a real sense in which Job didn't deserve this tragedy, because by trusting in Yahweh and sacrificing to Him his sin had already been forgiven. Furthermore, it is very important to recognize that this world is broken and fallen. Every person whose child dies is not more wicked than those whose children are healthy! God's ways are beyond our ways and while everything will work out justly in the end, His marvelous plan is being worked out in a way that causes us to stand in awe, to worship, and to trust!

11. Thought question: What do we learn about what justice and righteousness is from this section? Think about the implications of the worldview of Job when dealing with impoverished or broken situations or cultures. (1-2 paragraphs)

A: It may be hard for us to understand how Job can claim to be righteous, since we know that we don't have any of our own righteousness apart from God. While that is certainly true, we need to remember that **righteousness has everything to do being in right relationship. When we are in right relationship with God it necessarily puts us in right relationship with others.** That is why righteousness is often almost synonymous with justice, especially in the OT. Job's righteousness was seen in his humble caring and living for others and not himself. This stemmed out of his fear of God. Job's understanding of God's awesomeness humbled him and put him in a right relationship with his Creator where he understood that life is about God. And this caused Job to always be caring for others, as we see throughout the book. So when the book of Job describes Job as upright or righteous, ultimately what it is saying is that he was a humble man marked by faith and living that out in relationship to God and others. That is what Job defends about himself. Hence we see that God even affirms that Job is righteous, and in the right, in contrast to the friends.

Think as well about what we learn about the friends' worldview as it relates to justice and brokenness in our world. They would inherently come to the conclusion (as many in America have done), that people in poor and/or broken neighborhoods are merely facing the consequences of their own actions. While that is true to some degree, the **fallenness** of the world means that there are also **systematic** injustices that have affected people. This is not a perfect world, and there is **racism** and **social inequality** in it. If we claim that people should just be able to work hard and get out of their problems, we end up with the **same proud perspective as the friends.** In our fallen world, good things do not always happen to good people, and people in bad situations are not necessarily bad. Job was a righteous man who was oppressed by God for reasons people on earth couldn't see. Like Job's friends, it is extremely easy to assume if our life is going well it is because of our righteousness/wisdom. And yet true wisdom is about fearing God, and understanding that we can't box Him in and understand Him, but always seeking to live in right relationship to Him and to others.

12. Application: What can we learn from this passage about how God's justice and sovereignty relate? How should that affect how we counsel people?



13. Application: What can we learn from this section about how to comfort those who are in a tragedy?

## 23. Who are You?: Job 32-42

**Scripture:** Job 32-42

**Theme:** God is Awesome in Majesty and we cannot Understand His Ways

**Objectives:**

- To fear God

**Reading:**

- Read Job 32-42 two times

**Questions:**

1. Discuss the position of Elihu's speeches in light of the structure of the book. Compare and contrast Elihu's speeches with that of Job's three friends. Does he say the same thing as the friends? Why or why not? How are his speeches the same or different? What evidence is there in the book that helps us to understand what viewpoint Elihu's speeches have in the book? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Elihu is a bit of an enigma in the book of Job. Upon quick reading it sounds like he is saying the exact same thing to Job that Job's three friends are. So since Job's friends are clearly shown to be wrong, why isn't Elihu rebuked with them at the end of the book? Why didn't he need sacrifices like them? And then upon further reading we see clues the author drops for us that may even seem to suggest that Elihu may be saying something positive! For one, his speech ends with the fear of God, just like God's speech does (37:24, cf. 41:25-26)! Furthermore, Elihu seems to have a very similar assessment of Job that God did (compare 32:1-3 with 38:2 and 40:8). We also see that Elihu's speech introduces God's speech, introducing the theophany before God appears (37:1-5, cf. 38:1ff.). So then reading his speech again in more detail, there are other clues that seem to suggest that he is not saying the same thing as Job's friends. If we take Elihu at face value, he desired for Job to be vindicated (33:32) and didn't agree with Job's friends (32:14). And then in the end of the story, as we said, Elihu isn't condemned like the friends and didn't need intercession (42:7-10). So it appears that Elihu is really paving the way for God to speak. He rebukes Job for blaming God, and yet doesn't oversimplify the situation to say that Job is more guilty than others because of his tragedy.*

32:2 Elihu's name means "He is my God."

32:1-3, 35:16 Elihu understood Job's problem correctly by having the same assessment as God (**38:2, 40:8**).

32:6, 11 Elihu was humble and waited to speak.

32:14 Elihu didn't use the friends' argumentation.

33:32 Elihu desired Job to be vindicated.

37:1-5 Elihu introduces the theophany before God speaks.

37:24 Elihu also ends his speeches with the main theme of the book, as does God's speech.

42:7-10 Elihu is not condemned and didn't need intercession.

One of the key themes in Elihu's speech is the **mystery of God**. And this is one of the key elements that differentiates what he says from the 3 friends. Elihu argues in chapter 33 that God works through dreams and circumstances that we don't understand (33:13, 18, 29).

Elihu also argues that they shouldn't fear him (33:6-7).

Elihu condemns Job for his self-righteousness, but never condemns Job for some secret sin. He doesn't conclude that Job must be facing judgment for some secret sin. Elihu merely proclaims that God is righteous, and that Job is wrong in condemning God. Elihu proclaims the mystery of God and that we cannot understand Him.

2. How does God answer Job's question/request of chapters 29-31 (what are the last things Job said?)? What is the main point of God's speech? How does God make this point? (1 paragraph)

A: God doesn't answer to Job! God asks Job a lot of questions! **God very simply declares His majesty and greatness and feels no compulsion to answer to Job.** In essence God tells Job that He is God and Job doesn't understand the world or all the complexities of why it functions as it does. God ordains all the details of the universe to work together for His ultimate plan, and we simply cannot understand how all of those work together in a vast array of complexity to work together for the ultimate glory of God. **God's awesomeness** is the point of this section, and God declares this truth by displaying His awesome wisdom and power in creation. It is the height of pride when we **complain** at our situations as if we really knew better than God how the world and everything in it should run! We all need a constant view to the awesome glory of God that will give us the wisdom to live in proper relationship to God, with Him on the throne and us as His unworthy servants seeking to bring glory to Him!

3. Thought question: Meditate on how you would feel if you were Job and you literally heard and experienced God's speech. Think about what tone of voice do you imagine God had in this speech? (1 paragraph)

A: All of us would be completely overwhelmed and humbled to hear such an **awesome depiction** of the greatness of God! We would all have Job's response of putting our hand on our mouths. We far too often value our own wisdom and don't realize how **finite** it is. Although we don't experience the majesty of God as Job did, we need a fresh reminder of how **immanent and real** He is in His awesome majesty so that we too will have a reverent fear of Him in our daily lives! As forgetful humanity, God's glory is something that we often need to be reminded of!

4. Thought question: Meditate on some of the things we learn about God from His speech. What effect do and should these truths have on us? (1 paragraph)

A: To think about all of the amazing ways in which God has setup the universe should humble us and remove any thoughts that we can know what is best! The law of unintended consequences should teach us that we have absolutely no idea what the results would be if we got our way! But each of us in our pride thinks that we know better than God what would be good. When we don't understand why God is doing what He is doing, when things don't seem right or fair, then it is so easy for us to think that we know better than God what would be good. But in light of the overwhelming complexity of the universe, this thought should immediately be put to death. **Do we really have the wisdom to run the world???** It's easy to play armchair quarterback, but it only shows our **pride** when we are talking about running the universe! And yet we all **question what God does** far too quickly!

5. How does Job respond to God? What does this teach us? What are the implications of Job 42:5 in light of the book as a whole? (1 paragraph)

A: Job response with silence. When God speaks it is only appropriate for us to **shut up**. Twice Job speaks in response to God's questioning (40:4-5 and 42:1-6), and both times it is a response of **humility**. When we truly

*understand who God is, we can only see how small and insignificant we are! Job had to retract his words (see 42:6 in NASB) because what he said about God **wasn't right!** In defending himself, Job presumed too much and understood too little (42:3). And so God showed up and put Job in his place.*

*We see an amazing fact in 42:5 that this is the first time Job had an encounter with God. This shows us that his previous response of trusting God in the midst of the trial (ie. chs. 1-2) were based solely on **faith**. Job had never seen God, but had only heard of Him. Yet Job still clung to God and trusted Him in the midst of this terrible tragedy that God brought upon him. Yes, Job did go too far in defending himself, yet he is a man of faith, and while God rebukes Job, He still affirms him ultimately (42:7-8).*

6. How does the book end in Job 42:7ff.? What effect does having the book end in this way have on the overall message of the book? What possible misconceptions of God could we walk away from this book if this ending wasn't here? (1 paragraph)

*A: By having the book end on a positive note, it is a reminder to us that in the end, God will work out all things justly and rightly. Yes, sometimes it won't happen in this life. But it is very fitting that in the book of Job we see how God is able to make it all work out properly. We see that God is not just a capricious God who does whatever He wants no matter if Job deserved it or not. Yes, God is greater than us and ultimately all of this universe is about His glory and not our own. But that does not mean that God simply afflicts men without reason and unjustly afflicts some men more than others. There is a grand **design** behind all that He does which we may never understand in this life, but in the end it will all work out rightly and justly!*

7. Application: How should fearing God properly affect how we go through trials?
8. Application: What affect should a true understanding of the fear of God have upon how we interact with others going through trials?

*A: We can't understand God's ways. We won't try to oversimplify situations and give pat answers to complex problems if we truly understand the fear of God. We simply cannot understand why God is doing what He is doing in the details most of the time. We know He is working out His plan to glorify Himself, but how He is doing that in the details of life are for Him to know and for us to trust.*

## VI. **Biblical Theology of the OT**

Biblical Theology of the Old Testament is the final class in the Old Testament Module. It consists of an overview of Biblical Theology, the Psalms, and tracing key themes through the OT. Some of the major themes include the kingdom of God, God's covenant faithfulness, salvation, worship, righteousness and holiness, the Messiah, and God's judgment. This is a 2 unit class and consists of 10 lessons.

## 1. Intro to Biblical Theology

**Scripture:** The Bible

**Theme:** God's Word tells God's Story which Culminates in Christ

**Objectives:**

- To understand what Theology and Biblical Theology are
- To understand how different ways of doing Theology differ
- To understand how to do Biblical Theology

**Reading:**

- Read Section One of Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church

**Questions:**

What is Biblical Theology?

1. What is theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: Theology is "the study or science of God" (Erickson, 22). It is an extremely **broad** area of study, since theology not only involves studying **God Himself** in His person and attributes, but also **His creation** and how He relates to it. When we are talking about only studying God in Himself, we call this "Theology Proper". Since God and His creation encompasses all that there is, theology **intersects** with **every other field of study** and knowledge. But theology differs from other fields of study in that theology is solely concerned with understanding what **God's Word** says is true, since it is the source and foundation of all other knowledge. So for example, studying **calculus** is not studying theology per se because the Bible doesn't teach calculus, even though the underlying principles and foundation for math and even knowledge is found in the Bible. Likewise, studying **philosophical** questions that the Bible is silent on is not doing theology. Also, **science** is distinct from theology and studying chemistry is not studying theology, even though the Bible does lay the foundation for science and teaches many scientific and verifiable truths.*

*Also, theology doesn't necessarily include correct **practice** since theology is what we learn or know about God. Theology centers around what **God has revealed**. Theology is concerned with **truth**. Theology is about about **facts** and **propositions** about God and His creation. So people can know the truth without believing or practicing it. Christianity is a **propositional religion**. It is founded and based upon certain propositional truths. You cannot be a Christian and deny that God is a real and personal eternal being, that He created the universe, that He exists as one God in three persons, and that God became man in Jesus and died and rose again to pay for our sins and save us. Each one of these propositions forms part of our theology, our understanding of who God is and how He relates to His world. Now just because someone has the right beliefs or theology, doesn't mean that they are a Christian either. Someone can know the right truths without living it. But knowing the core truths of Christianity is foundational to being a Christian.*

2. What are the different types of theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: When we dive deeper into studying theology, we discover that there are three primary types of theology that we are concerned with. There is **Systematic Theology**, **Historical Theology**, and **Biblical Theology**. **Systematic Theology** as the name implies systematizes what the Bible says about a wide ranging set of topics intended to be more or less comprehensive. So in Systematic Theology we take these various topics*

like God, man, sin, the afterlife, angels, and end times and study through the entire Bible to see what the Bible says about each of these topics, and **systematize the truths** from all these various passages to form a **cohesive picture** of what the Bible says about each **topic**. Then we form a theology of each of these topics. So for example we have a theology of man, called anthropology, a theology of end times called eschatology, and so on. We can then lecture of these various topics or write them out sequentially in a Systematic Theology textbook.

Next we come to **Historical Theology**. In Historical Theology we study what the church believed about theology in various times and in various places. In Historical Theology we study how **theology developed** over time. We see how various **movements** in different **times** and **places** in **history** responded and reacted to various events, controversies, or other beliefs. Historical Theology is distinct from Church History because Historical Theology is not just concerned with **what happened** in the church, but **what the church believed** in these various times and places.

Lastly we come to **Biblical Theology**. Biblical Theology studies how the theology of the Bible develops and progresses within the Bible itself. Thus Biblical Theology **traces various** themes and doctrines through the Bible and shows how these themes are expanded upon as the story of the Bible **unfolds**. In Biblical Theology, we seek to understand the main themes of each distinct composition in the Bible (usually books) and how each book develops these themes. Then we see how later books **pick up** and **build upon** the themes and theology in previous ones in growing our understanding of the topic. Thus in Biblical Theology we take different themes that are emphasized in the Bible and trace them through sections of Scripture, showing how they develop as the story unfolds. So we can define Biblical Theology as **the study of how the various themes emphasized by the human authors in the books of the Bible developed progressively under the Spirit's inspiration to write the unified story of God which culminates in Christ**.

### 3. How are the various types of theology related to each other? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: As we can see from our brief study of these three types of theology, they are all the **same** in that each type of theology looks to the **Bible as the source** of knowledge and seeks to **study the Bible** to understand what it teaches about God and His world. Biblical Theology is **not more 'biblical'** than the other two types of theology in that sense. The difference between each type of theology is what is the **organizing principle** in our study of Scripture. All three types of theology answers the question, "How should we organize our study of the Bible?" differently. For Systematic Theology, the study of Scripture is **organized around the categories** of theology that we come up with. So in Systematic Theology we come up with a list of categories and sub-categories, and use those to study through the Bible to find out what it teaches on each of those topics. So Systematic Theology begins with the question, "What does the Bible teach about X topic?"

In Historical Theology, we use what the **church believed** at various **times** and **locations** to **organize** our study of Scripture. For example, we start with the early church fathers and ask, "What did the church believe the Bible taught in North Africa in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D.?" Then we progress through history and see how various **generations** of believers wrestled through what the Bible taught and how various **events** and **controversies** helped to shape the church's theology and theological emphases.

Lastly, in Biblical Theology, the structure of the **Bible itself** becomes the system for organizing how we should study the Bible. So in Biblical Theology we start with a question like, "What themes does the Torah emphasize and how are they unfolded in it?" Then once we determine those themes, we would trace them through the rest of the Old Testament and even into the New Testament. Biblical Theology is concerned with seeing how later passages of Scripture **elucidate** and make earlier passages of Scripture **more explicit**. In

contrast to *Systematic Theology* which presents the **end result** of our study of Scripture, *Biblical Theology* shows how **theology progresses** in the Bible.

4. How is theology different than Exegesis or Application of Scripture? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: In order to understand what (Biblical) Theology is, it is important to **distinguish** it from **Exegesis** and **Application** of the Bible. **Exegesis** is the systematic process of **drawing out** what the original author of a book of the Bible meant to his original audience. Exegesis is concerned with the question “What did this passage of the Bible **mean** to the **original recipients**?” So Exegesis is about finding the meaning of a passage in its context.

The **application** of the passage seeks to answer the question, “So what?” Once we have understood what a passage meant to those to whom it was originally written, we always want to seek to understand how that passage **applies to us**. While there is only **one valid meaning** of a passage, there are a **myriad of possible valid applications**. Applications can involve everything from what does this passage teach me about God, His values, or His plan, how does it inform my worldview, what does it teach about man and how we relate to various people, or specific actions and attitudes that we need to live by as Christians. But application always applies to me in some way. The **theology** of a passage is a **part of the application** of it related to our thinking. The theology of a passage is the **truths** and **principles** that the passage teaches about any topic.

Take for example, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:17: “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” The **meaning** of the passage is that Paul was telling Timothy that the elders who **lead well** were to receive both **honor** and **pay**. That is the meaning of the phrase ‘**double honor**’. The Greek word ‘honor’ used here has the **meaning** of both honor and pay, so Paul is using a **word play** to show that all elders are worthy of **respect**, but some were additionally worthy of **pay**. This is made clear by the support Paul gives in the following verses. We also see that Paul makes a distinction and allowance for **two types of elders**, those who are **paid** and those who are **not**. Some elders are **lay elders**, and some are **full time**. And which elders should the church pay? The ones who ‘lead well.’ The word often translated ‘rule’ in English translation is more literally the word for **leading**. And then Paul clarifies more specifically what he means by leading well, those who **work hard** in **preaching** and **teaching**. So once again we see that Paul makes a distinction among elders. All elders lead, but some work especially hard in preaching and teaching the word and those are the elders who should be paid. There is more that could be said about the interpretation of the passage, but that is the basic meaning of what Paul wrote to Timothy.

So what are valid **applications** of this passage? One valid application would be that both **paid and lay elders** are to be part of the church. Likewise, all elders are **worthy of honor and respect**. Another application would be that **elders should be paid** to free them up to spend their time preaching and teaching. Another valid application would be that **I should personally give honor** to all the elders of my church by not speaking disrespectfully to them when I disagree. Another application would be that **I should give money** to the church on a regular basis so that there can be full time elders who work hard at preaching and teaching.

The first three of these applications have to do with **what I should think or believe**, while the last two applications have to do with **what I should do**. So while the last two are valid and good applications, they are not theology. The first three applications on the other hand are truths that can be integrated into our **theology**. Note that what we should **do flows out** of the theology of what we **believe**. If we were doing Biblical Theology, we could trace the **theology of leadership** through the Bible into the church to see how God wants leaders to lead, or we could see how the church accomplishes God’s mission of advancing the kingdom



through the **advancement of the truth**, or we could trace a **theology of preaching and teaching** through the Bible and see how it develops. If we were doing Systematic Theology, we could fit these truths into our understanding of Ecclesiology, the theology of the church.

Hopefully that helps us to see how **exegesis** is always the **basis for our theology** and our **theology should always inform and affect our priorities and the way we live** our lives. These are two very important truths. Theology should always be based upon careful and correct interpretation of the Bible. If we don't properly understand why the original author wrote what he did to the original audience, we cannot derive **proper theology** from Scripture. And our theology must **always change our lives** consistently with the truth that has been learned. We can know a truth properly, and yet misapply that truth. Head knowledge must become heart knowledge, and transform our priorities, values, and desires. If either one of these truths is compromised, the purpose of the Bible has been distorted, and the Sword of the Spirit will not cut.

### Why should we do Biblical Theology?

#### 5. Why should we start with Biblical Theology rather than Systematic Theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: As we said previously, Systematic, Historical, and Biblical Theology are **all valid methods** of studying the Bible. But as should be clear from defining each of them, they each have their proper place. We would suggest that Biblical Theology should **proceed** Systematic Theology, which should **proceed** Historical Theology. This doesn't mean that you must always do them in that order, but that proper understanding of the prior is necessary for understanding the latter.

As Preston Sprinkle once gave an example, studying the Bible is like **getting to know a person**. We could try to get to know someone by asking them **questions that are important to us**, like what they think about our president, immigration, robotics, tennis, and church. But those are my interests. We might not learn very much about what the other person was passionate about. How much better to start by **asking people to tell us their story**. Tell me about your childhood. What was growing up like for you? What was your transition into adulthood like? Eventually we might get to know a person well enough to answer many of the questions that are important to us, and we could even probably write down a systematic presentation of what that person is like and what is important to them. But it is best to start to get to know someone by hearing their story, and thus to see **what they value and why, and how they came to be** who they are.

So why should we start with Biblical Theology? The Bible wasn't written as a systematic theology textbook. God didn't come down from heaven and give us His full and final revelation. He didn't just give us His **answers. The Bible was written as a story over time**. And that brings us to one of the most important principles for studying the Bible, the principle of **Progressive Revelation**. God **unfolded His truth** over time on purpose. The Old Testament points to and **establishes the need for Jesus**. Foundational principles are laid out so that when Jesus comes onto the scene we have a **framework for understanding** Him and His message. We can see this clearly taught and explained in various passages such as Mat 5:17; Luk 24:27; Gal 3:24; Heb 1:1-2; and 1Pe 1:10.

It is important to point out that **later revelation never contradicts prior revelation**, but as the story unfolds the truths become **more explicit**. Like a sapling that grows into a great tree, the sapling isn't fundamentally different than the tree, just not as developed. The more we study the **Torah**, the more we see that **all the core truths of the Bible** are contained in the first revelation God gave. Truths such as salvation by faith, imputed righteousness, the Trinity, substitutionary atonement, the future reign of the Messiah, and many more are all taught by the Torah in kernel form.

So an important implication of this is that we need to keep each section of Scripture **in its context**, **not reading later revelation into the former**, but keeping in mind the **original authors intent**. Later authors are definitely aware of what was revealed before them and build upon previous truths. But they are definitely not aware and are not interacting with passages of Scripture that were written after them! So we need to be fully aware of **where we are at in the story**, and how early themes will **develop into rich theology**.

We could look at many examples, but just to illustrate the principle, we will look at the theology of **justification by faith** in the Old Testament. All throughout Genesis there is an emphasis on the **faithfulness of God**. He is shown to be the **One who keeps covenant**. And so there is a large emphasis on people needing to be in **right relationship** with God. In one of the key passages of the Torah, in Genesis 15:6 Moses writes about Abram “Then he **believed** in Yahweh, and He **reckoned** it to him as righteousness.” This is very clear. God counted Abram’s faith as righteousness. This clearly shows that Abram wasn’t completely righteous in himself. But by being **united to God by faith** he was **counted as righteous**. Later in the Torah we come to Deuteronomy 6, one of the key passages at the heart of God’s covenant. At the end of this key chapter Moses writes, “It will be **righteousness for us** if we are **careful to observe** all this commandment before Yahweh our God, just as He commanded us” (Deu 6:25). At first glance, it appears as if this passage is saying that people will be righteous if they obey God’s command. But upon more careful study we see that is not what the passages says. Actually, it doesn’t say “we will be righteous”, but “it will be righteousness **for us**,” or even “righteousness **will be ours**,” or “we will **have** righteousness.” This is very intentional wording. Righteousness **for us** means that the righteousness is not something we achieve. It clearly implies that we are counted righteous, like we saw earlier in the Torah. Clearly Moses understood that we couldn’t be righteous ourselves by obeying the Law. And the text also doesn’t say that we will be righteous “**if we obey** God’s commands,” but that righteousness will be for us “**if we are careful** to obey.” In other words, it is our care to obey, our heart to obey, that results in righteousness being for us, not our perfect obedience. So once again we see that we do not become righteous by attaining to God’s righteous standard, but by trusting and believing in Him and caring about what He says. So the Torah makes clear that **righteousness** comes from being in a **right relationship** with God, that relationship of **humble faith**.

We could continue tracing this theme of **justification by faith** through the Old Testament and see key passages like Habakkuk 2:4, Isaiah 53:1, Job 1-2, and others that continue to build on this theme. But the point is that while none of these passages **elaborate** and **expound** upon the theme of justification by faith like Paul does in Romans and Galatians, these themes are nevertheless **clear in the Old Testament**, just **not as fully explained** and **developed** as they will be later.

So we also see from the beginning that God **created humanity to rule** (Gen 1:26). And yet even in spite of our rebellion against His goodness God **promised** a Serpent Crusher would come from the woman who would crush the head of the Serpent (Gen 3:15). It is **not explicitly clear** at that point in Biblical revelation that the Messiah would be a **future king** who would establish **God’s kingdom** and defeat sin, death, and Satan forever, and yet we find those basic core tenets of Christianity scattered throughout the Torah from the very beginning of the story.

And so one of the beautiful realities that emerges from seeing the Bible as an unfolding story is seeing both the **unity** and **diversity** of the Bible. Each passage, book, and author each has **distinct themes, emphases, and threads** that are incorporated into their writing. And yet at the same time, each author and book plays a part in **unfolding the ongoing story of God**.

The Bible is such an **amazing** and **unique** book. With so many authors writing over a period of over **1500 years**, in so many **contexts** and in so many different **genres** and forms of writing, the truth is communicated

with such **variety** to impact us whatever our situation. The same truth can be looked at from so many different angles. The same truth can be subtly woven into a **narrative** that draws us in, or preached directly to us in a **sermon** addressed to the church. These will hit us different ways and can apply in every different context around the globe. God's truth is cross-situational: cross-generational and cross-cultural. No matter what the key issues and problems any individual or group is facing, the Bible has the **values** and **principles** in it to **shape our worldview** to address those issues.

And yet the fact that the Bible is inspired and One truth author of every book of the Bible is God Himself ensures that this **storyline** in all of its various acts, are incredible **unified**. None of the various compositions **contradict** each other, but **build upon** one another and ultimately point to God's plan to glorify Himself though Jesus Christ and His plan to reconcile the world to Himself and bring His kingdom through Jesus' death and resurrection.

And so, as we study the Bible, we want to give each individual author and book its **distinct voice**. We want to be careful not to **erase** the various **colors** and **strains** of the Bible by mixing all the truths together into one big pot. We want to sit and hear narrative, poetic songs, speeches, debates, and letters. We want to shout on the heights and weep in the depths. We want to see how the **truth develops** and **unfolds** to the **climax** of Jesus' death and resurrection, and hope in light of the glorious **conclusion**.

6. What are some of the dangers of starting with Systematic Theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: **The danger of defining our own categories.** When we come to the Bible with categories and questions that we are seeking to have answers to, it is very easy for us to **project those categories** onto the Bible. But we want the priorities and **themes** to come **from the text itself**. This is the danger of having the **wrong emphases**. It can also lead to the danger of thinking we know the text and the point of the author, when really we are just seeing the answers to our questions in the text, not his main point(s). All of us have probably experienced learning some new truth or doctrine, and then in reading the Bible we see that truth everywhere. That is good. But it reminds us that the **lense** with which we approach the Bible greatly affects how we read the Bible. So we want to begin by asking ourselves what **themes are important to the author**, so we can see what he is emphasizing and let that be the lense through which we read the book.

**The danger of prooftexting.** When we are looking for **answers** to our **questions**, it is very easy to **miss the point** of the passage we are studying. We need to understand each passage in **context**. And we also need to understand each passage and how it **fits into its book as a whole** to truly understand what the author is saying. To truly understand a passage, we need to understand **why** the author said what he did and how what he said **further his overarching message**. Otherwise it is very easy to miss-interpret and mis-apply texts, because we are **missing the point** for which they were written.

**The danger of cross-referencing.** When we are trying to answer questions that we have come up with about the Bible, it is very easy to **override** the more **difficult to understand passage** with the easier to understand one. Thus we often end up giving the passages that we understand more weight in answering our questions. But we need to understand each of the passages properly in its own context to understand how they both might fit together and into a **cohesive theological picture**. So we shouldn't cross referencing similar passages in order to interpret them. We study each passage in its context to interpret it. We can cross reference to understand how multiple passages **fit together** into a **comprehensive** and **cohesive theme/thought/theology**. We cross reference to **synthesize** (or even check ourselves), but not to interpret per se. So for example when we see Paul say that "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:28) and James say, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone" (James 2:24), we need to understand what

each passage is saying in context and not just allow the passage we understand to override the one we don't. Both James and Paul are making important inspired points that need to be **understood in their contexts**, without quickly glossing over one when answering our questions. Likewise, Matthew says "**Many are called, but few are chosen**" (Mat 22:14), while Paul says that those who are **predestined are 'called'** (Rom 8:30). So if we are developing a theology of 'calling', we need to understand that these authors use the concept of calling very differently, and each have a unique point. So in some senses everyone is called to be a Christian, and in some senses only those whom God has chosen are called to be Christians. Both are true, but they are true in **different senses**. Good theology often makes many **careful distinctions** like this and is constantly seeking to understand **nuances** and how truths fit together like this.

**The danger of falsely systemetizing.** We **can't always understand** how two truths are compatible and nicely systemetize them. Sometimes we just have to **hold on** to the fact that two passages are **both true**. The Bible clearly teaches that God is **sovereign** and **predestines** peoples to salvation (Joh 6:37, 44; 15:16; Act 13:48; Rom 9; Eph 1:5, 11; 2Th 2:13; 1Pe 2:8). But the Bible also teaches that **men choose** and are **responsible** for their actions (Jos 24:15; Eze 18:23-32; Heb 2:1-3; 4:11). Sometimes two truths seem incompatible and we can't figure out how they aren't. So we need to be very careful when reconciling two seemingly incompatible truths to not **override** one with the other. Yet before we just throw our hands up and say that two truths cannot be reconciled in our finite minds, we need to ask '**in what sense**' something can be true, and yet something else that sounds contradictory can also be true. Sometimes we just learn that two things are both true, but true in different **senses**. So we **suspend theological categorization** until the text has been traced and understood. Sometimes that means **patiently waiting** and **meditating** on texts, even for years. There are **no genuine contradictions** in Scripture, in the mind of God. But we are **finite**.

**The danger of thinking we know 'the answers'.** When we start with our questions and seek to answer them from the Bible, it can tend to give us the **impression** that we have the answers. But when we start with the questions and themes that the **Bible develops**, and see how these get elaborated on and developed through the whole of the Bible, it tends to show us how rich and **deep God's truth is**, how little we are able to **fully plumb the depths** of it, while at the same time giving us **confidence** to the degree that we **understand** the truths that we trace.

These dangers don't mean that we shouldn't do Systematic Theology, but only that we should start by having a **solid foundation** in Exegesis, and then Biblical Theology, before we move on to Systematic Theology.

7. What place do the various theologies have? What are the benefits of each type of theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: So as we said, all three of these main types of theology **have a place**. We are not against systemetizing what Scripture says. In fact, **we all systemetize**. It is the way God made our natural human minds that when we hear similar things we start to categorize. When we hear things that sound contradictory, we try to figure out **how they can both be true**. Also, it is often very important to be able to **analyze** and **critique** entire systems and not just the interpretation of individual verses. We need to be able to see how interpreting Scripture different affects our entire belief system. In fact, this is an important part of being able to refute false teaching (Tit 1:9). So Systematic Theology has an important place in studying the Bible. But as we have shown, we believe that its place is **after** we have done good Biblical Theology. Likewise, Historical Theology has a place. We want to understand the **blind spots** of the church in our **generation**. We want to see **how we got to where we are**. We want to understand how **other people** got to where they are. We need **historical perspective**. We want to be wise about **lessons** learned in the **past**. We don't want to **react**

and over-react to various errors, but to positively **chart a course** that is set by Scripture. And so Historical Theology is also a valuable discipline.

### How should we do Biblical Theology?

#### 8. Where do we start? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: So being convinced that Biblical Theology is where we should start doing theology, how do we begin? In Biblical Theology we want to find the **themes** that are **emphasized by the Biblical authors** and not impose the themes we find most important upon the Bible. So how do we find what themes are **central** to the Bible? We propose that we must begin by finding the main purpose and primary themes of **individual books**. If we go back to Bible Study Methods, remember the principle of **Dual Authorship** of Scripture. This principle teaches that every word in the Bible has **two authors**, its human author and God. While God supernaturally inspired the human authors to write exactly what He wanted through the Holy Spirit, **God never overrode the human authors'** personality and will in the process. So this means the way to understand what God wants to communicate to us is through understanding the **human authors' intentions** to their original audiences.

This is why we don't start doing Biblical Theology by trying to figure out the major themes that run through sections of Scripture (such as the Prophets, Paul's Writings, or even the whole Old Testament, New Testament, or Bible). We **first need to understand individual books** to see what the original author was **emphasizing** and what themes each book develops. Each composition in the Bible was written for a specific **purpose** to a particular **audience**. That **context** and **framework** is vital for understanding what the author is emphasizing in his composition, what his **main themes** are, and how they relate to his **overall purpose**. This focus on the **individual books** of the Bible and seeing how each book develops and emphasizes its own theology is an important and useful guard against **reading overarching themes and storylines** through the Bible that aren't emphasized by the original authors. When we are studying larger sections of Scripture, it is very easy to find or **define our own 'metanarrative'** that in reality ends up being foisted upon the text rather than drawn out of it.

So we begin by studying the **theology** of individual books of the Bible. Then, as we understand individual books of the Bible we can study **how they build** upon the **emphases** and **theology** of the revelation before them, and **trace** how the **theology** of the Bible **develops**. Since God is indeed the author of the Bible who inspired it, we are **guaranteed** that the overall process of studying these books will result in a **unified vision, theology, and storyline**.

So you can see now why we place the Biblical Theology of the Old Testament class after we have **carefully studied through each book of the Old Testament**. That is where we must start. So we have walked through each book of the Old Testament and have studied their **purpose, structure, and message**. We have noted the **major themes** of each book as we walked through them and have worked to see how the major themes of each book **tie together** with its **overall purpose**. Our job now it to take a **step back** and look at how the themes and theology of each of those individual books fits together into a **larger story** woven together by God.

As we mentioned in Bible Study Methods, understanding the primary message and themes of a book of the Bible is a **cyclical process**. As we study through a book we come up with a **rough idea of the primary message and purpose** of the book. And then we come up with what we think are the other **major themes** of the book and how they **relate** to the primary message. Then we go back again and study the **details** of the book, and with this **overarching vision** of the **message and purpose** of the book as a whole, we **better see** and

understand the point of each of the details of the book. But also as we study those details, it helps to **refine** the primary message and major themes of the book and how they relate to each other. And so we continue in this process of seeking to understand the details and understanding the whole, continually getting a better understanding of each the more we understand the other. And thus we grow in our understanding of the themes and message of each book of the Bible.

And so as an aside, it is important to remind ourselves that Biblical Theology is not a method of **interpretation** per se. What one author of a book **emphasizes** may not be the same as what another author emphasizes. But as we are studying the **themes** and **theology** of the Bible as a whole, it does help us to look for **threads** that weave their way through the Bible as a whole. Ultimately, there is **cohesive message** in the Bible. Ultimately, it is all about God's plan to bring His Kingdom through Covenant relationship with His people through the death, resurrection, and reign of the Messiah. But, there are many **contours** and aspects to how that plan is **unveiled**, and so not every book of the Bible will necessarily expound upon those themes directly. So we need to keep our focus on what individual books of the Bible teach, and be careful about reading our theology into the emphases of the original authors.

As an example of this principle, suppose we were studying the concept of **faith** through the Old Testament. And suppose we came to the book of **Habakkuk** to study faith. It would be easy to look at Habakkuk 2:4 which says that the "righteous will live by faith" as an important aspect of the teaching of the Bible on faith. But in order to truly understand that verse, you need to understand it **in light of the message of the whole book of Habakkuk** which is all about faith. The book of Habakkuk teaches us that faith is **trusting God even when you don't understand Him**. It would be easy to get caught up in the debate of whether Habakkuk 2:4 should be translated 'faith' or 'faithfulness' without realizing that the whole book of Habakkuk is about an **unflinching trust** in God in the midst of extreme confusion because of wicked injustice. So that verse is indeed key in our study of faith, but more significantly, the theology of the whole book is what truly expands our theology of what faith is.

So our point is that we must start with understanding the theology of individual books before moving on to see how that theology develops and weaves its way through the Bible as a whole.

#### 9. What is the scope of our Biblical Theology? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: So now that we have studied the individual books of the Old Testament, we are ready to trace the theology of these books. But before we start, we need to set the **scope** of our study. Since Biblical Theology is **tracing themes** through Scripture, we need to define which **section of Scripture** we wish to trace themes through. Biblical Theology can simply trace themes through **individual books** of the Bible. We have already been doing Biblical Theology on this level. Take for example the book of **Job** that we recently studied. We saw that the main point and theme of Job is that **wisdom is the fear of God**. But we also saw that **right/righteousness** is a major theme related to the theme of fearing God. So we saw that Job is introduced as a righteous man. God even brags about Job's righteousness. Later, Job's 'friends' debate with him if he is righteous. Job responds by longing for vindication, and defends his righteousness. And in the end God vindicates Job and says that he was right. So we could talk about what each of these individual parts of the book of Job teach us about righteousness and then fit all of these teachings together into a **cohesive picture of what the book of Job teaches about righteousness**. And this is what we have been doing through each of the books of the Old Testament.

But then we can also **trace** the theme of **righteousness** throughout all of Wisdom Literature for example. We could see what similar writings such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes teach about righteousness. But we could

also go further and look at what the **whole Old Testament** (or even the whole Bible) teaches about righteousness. And that is what we will soon in a following lesson.

So when we do Biblical Theology we need to decide what **section of Scripture** we want to trace a theme or themes through. Hopefully, since we have already studied the individual books, the theme or themes that we select will be based upon what the books themselves are emphasizing, and not merely themes that we find interesting.

And when we select a section of Scripture to trace a theme or themes through, we should also be aware of the **various collections** of writings in Scripture. It wouldn't make much sense to trace themes through unconnected sections of Scripture. For example we could study the theme of righteousness through Genesis, Judges, Isaiah, and Psalms, and see how each of these books builds upon the previous book's treatment of righteousness. But we would be **missing many steps** of development in between and would have a **fragmented picture** of how this theme of righteousness develops in the story. In particular, it would be very difficult to get a good picture of the theology of righteousness in Genesis without studying the rest of the Torah. It would probably be better to simply do a study of what the whole Torah says about righteousness, since it is a single composition by a single author and has a singular message if we wanted to do a more focussed and limited study. Or we could do a study of righteousness through Isaiah, but showing how Isaiah builds upon prior revelation of what righteousness is. It's not that studying themes through disconnected books is bad, but that we need to be aware of **where we are at in the story** and aware of any leaps we may be making in the storyline and how that may affect our study.

Another way to limit our study of themes is to study what individual **authors** say about particular themes. So for example we can look at the Chronicler's theology of God's covenants, or Solomon's theology of wisdom, or Paul's theology of salvation, or John's theology of love. Individual authors can and do have distinct emphases that flow throughout their writings, and so it is a useful endeavor to seek to trace themes through multiple books that they have written.

And of course we can study themes through the entire Old Testament, entire New Testament, or even through the entire Bible. But sometimes it can be helpful to **limit the scope** of our study of the development of a theme so that we can be more **comprehensive** in our understanding of its development in a section of Scripture.

10. What methods do we use to understand how the theology of each book fits into the larger story? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: So now that we have our task laid out, tracing the themes and theology of individual books of the Bible through a larger section of Scripture, **how** do we go about that task? Just like with good interpretation, good theology begins with **good questions**. So we want to ask questions like how do the Biblical authors and books **build upon one another**? How do they **quote** one another? What **key words** and **themes** does a particular author **pick up** from a previous one? What **promises** and **prophecies** are made that will come to **fulfillment** later? Where do we see **needs** established, **examples** given, and **tastes** of something greater shown that **anticipate** something to come? Where and how does a given section fit into the **overarching storyline**? How is what this book teaches the **same** and how is it new and **different** than what came before and what comes after?

Those key **questions** form the basis for our **methodology** in doing Biblical Theology (note that some of these categories come from <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/biblical-theology>).

So now we are going to look at them in more **detail** to help us to discern how the theology of each book fits into the larger picture.

Let's begin with understanding the **plotline** of the Bible. As we have already emphasized, the Bible is a **unified story**. So **each book** of the Bible **fits** into that storyline. As with any good story, there is character development, setting, foreshadowing, anticipation, mystery, plot twists, conflict, a climax, and ultimate resolution in God's story. In order to understand any book of the Bible, we must see how it fits into these elements of the story. Where are we at in the plotline? What are our main characters doing here? What is revealed here that was a mystery earlier, or what is hinted at here that will be fully unveiled in the future? And to see how each book fits into the story we also have to have an **overarching idea** of what the story is about. This is one of the reasons for doing Biblical Theology. It helps us to see what the Bible itself emphasizes as its **main narrative** so we can see how every book of the Bible fits into that narrative.

As an example, take the book of **Judges**. If we didn't keep in mind Judges places within the biblical storyline, we would definitely **miss the point**. Judges occurs before the first king of Israel, and before the king after God's heart, **King David**. The heroes in the book of Judges are not very exemplary. We would not do well to read the book as an example for us. Moreover, Judges is not in the New Testament. So this means that the judges are not Spirit-indwelt in the way the New Testament believers are. They still have faith and there are lessons we can learn from their faith and lack of it, and they are at times empowered by the Holy Spirit, but they lack the **true heart transformation** that can only come as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus Judges helps to show the **need for the New Covenant**. When we look at Judges in the storyline, we see its point is to **establish the need for a righteous King**. So we need to keep Judges in its proper place.

In some of the later lessons we will walk through some of the **major themes** of the Old Testament. We do this so that we will have a **grid for understanding** the **main lines** of how the **story unfolds** and be able to fit each book of the Bible into that storyline.

Moving on, one of the most obvious ways to **trace the theology** of the books of the Bible through the Bible is to trace the **important themes** through the Bible. As we study book of the Bible, we find the **key words, ideas, and themes** that are emphasized. And so after we have studied through the books of the Bible, we start to see which of these themes are predominant in the Bible. So one of the key ways to do Biblical Theology is to look for these key words and themes.

**Word studies** can be helpful in this pursuit of biblical themes. Often a key word will capture the heart of **some theological idea**. Key words like grace, faith, righteousness, holiness, and many others are important to trace through the Bible. But we also need to be aware that sometimes **key ideas** that are related to one of these key themes is **not** communicated using the same **key words**. Often we need to look for **synonyms** that convey the same or similar ideas. And we also need to be aware that almost always words will have **multiple meanings**. Sometimes all of these meanings can be significant for a certain aspect of theology. But often, some of the meanings of a word will be more significant than others in the development of a theme.

And lastly, we also need to take note that **meaning** is not only carried in individual words, but in **sentences and paragraphs**. This means that sometimes a key theme will be developed in a thought or flow of thought without using a **particular word** that we are looking for. So for example we can find a passage that really teaches a lot and exemplifies the concept of grace, even though words or synonyms for grace aren't used. This once again reminds us of the necessity of **understanding books as a whole** and not merely trying to trace key words, themes, and ideas apart from tracing and understanding the flow of thought, structure,



and message of individual books. So sometimes a passage may develop a **key theme without** using a particular **key word** to look for.

Getting more specific, another way we can trace theology through the books of the Bible is to specifically look at how the **biblical authors interact** with one another. Often authors will specifically **quote** or **reference** a piece of revelation that came before them. Sometimes these quotes and allusions can be difficult to detect. Good **cross-referencing Bibles** and **commentaries** can be of help here. But when we see a Biblical author quote another passage of Scripture, he is obviously **building upon** what came before in some way. So look for quotes and allusions and spend a lot of time **understanding how the quote was functioning in the original context**, and then study how the biblical author is taking that idea and building upon it. Keep in mind that although it doesn't always **appear on the surface** that the New Testament authors are quoting the Old Testament in a way that **fits with its original intent**, the more we study the original passages the more we will see that there is much more **intended and implied** in the original quote than is surface apparent. The New Testament writers are picking up on themes that are actually present in the intention of the Old Testament. Don't write off that the New Testament authors are completely changing the meaning of the Old Testament. We don't give the Old Testament writers enough credit for the **depth of their theology**, the **nuances of the themes** that they develop, and the **intended implications** they were **subtly** unpacking in their context.

Next we want to always take note of **promises** and **prophecies** and their **fulfillment**. By very nature of promises and prophecies, there is a **future** aspect to them. Often we see the biblical writers **clarifying** and **expanding** upon earlier promises and prophecies as God **continues to reveal** His plan. Often we see the **fulfillment** of various prophecies come to pass, especially in the gospels. These promises and prophecies keep the storyline moving forward, and are a good reminder to us that **God is sovereign over history**, and indeed He is the one who is ultimately behind **moving His story forward**. So always take note of promises, prophecies, and fulfillments, and see how they move the story along.

Next we want to talk about **types**. A type is defined as a person, event, or idea that **prefigures** one that comes later, often specifically related to **Christ**. Thus many people see **Joseph** as a type of Christ. It is pointed out that he is a special son of his father who is sold by his brothers and ends up saving them. Some people have come up with long lists of similarities between Joseph and Jesus. Thus these people would point out that Joseph prefigures Jesus.

One of the dangers of looking for types is in trying to find similarities and finding ones **not intended** by the authors. Thus it is easy to get into the realm of **subjectivism** and **speculation** in emphasizing things that the original authors weren't emphasizing. The key question to always ask ourselves in understanding the point of some passage is **what the author meant and intended to communicate**. Was the author trying to draw a comparison? Was he trying to establish a need for someone greater? Rather than seeing every **correspondence** between some person, event, or idea and Jesus as a type, I think it is helpful to realize that in one sense, **all themes prefigure** and **point** to a greater reality. Since Jesus is the **perfect embodiment** of justice, mercy, peace, wisdom, salvation, and many more themes, in one sense, any previous passage that speaks on these themes (or their opposites) **ultimately pictures** (or establishes the need for) **Him**. This is not to say that the authors are **emphasizing these connections**. And so I don't prefer to use the **language of typology** unless it is clear that an author is specifically drawing out a comparison or pointing to the future. But ultimately, seeing **connections** and **development** of themes is just **good biblical theology**.

So for example, Cain pictures the kind of **slavery to sin** that Jesus defeated in the desert and ultimately on the cross. Noah pictures the kind of **trust and faithfulness** that is perfectly embodied in Jesus. It is not to say

that these men were types of Christ, as if the authors were trying to portray them as hints of a greater someone to come. But as the authors develop the **great themes and truths** of the Bible, ultimately, all of these tie together in the climax and consummation in Christ in some way. But we need to be careful against **over-analysis** and **over-emphasis** on details that weren't important to the original author in trying to make connections and find similarities.

And lastly, as we study books and how their theology develops, we want to take note of **continuity** and **discontinuity** with other revelation. It is important to note that as God continues to reveal Himself, there are many things said that are the **same** or **similar** with what came before. We should expect this since God never changes and His truth is always the same. But we also want to take note of **significant changes** and **new developments** in the story. When Jesus died, the veil was torn in two and the Old Covenant was broken. Jesus Himself at the last supper said as He inaugurated communion that it was the New Covenant in His blood. So there are definitely key moments in history where truth is revealed in new ways that wasn't understood before. While at the same time, we need to keep in mind that **God's whole plan** was laid out clearly in kernel form in the Torah, and the rest of the Bible is simply **unpacking that same plan**.

So those are the kinds of questions we want to ask when doing Biblical Theology. Remember that we don't want to start with our categories that we want to trace through Scripture. We want to **start by understanding books of the Bible**. What is **emphasized**? What is **repeated**? What does the **structure** of the whole book point to? What does the **setting** and **context** of the book point to in terms of its message? And as we develop the major themes and theology of books, we ask **questions** to seek to tie that **theology** into the **major storyline** of Scripture.

#### 11. Is there a primary theme in the Bible, and if so, what is it? (1-2 paragraphs)

A: So now we come to the final question before we dive in and model Biblical Theology. Is there one **primary theme** of the Bible? Another way to ask this question is to ask, "What is the **center**?" "Does the Bible have a **single unifying theme**?" Many theologians have sought to answer this question. Before we dive in, we need to be aware of some dangers.

First of all, we need to be aware of the danger of coming up with a theme so **broad** that it is not helpful. For example, we could say that the single unifying theme of the Bible is God. That of course would be true. The whole Bible is about God. But that statement isn't specific enough to be helpful in us trying to find the primary storyline of the Bible. We need something that can help us to see the **major archs** and **movements** in the Bible.

On the flipside, coming up with a theme that is too **narrow** is also unhelpful. Any theme that is too narrow will **exclude the vast majority** of the Bible and won't be able to come together into a **comprehensive view of the storyline**.

Some of the major themes that have been suggested as the center of the Bible include: **Kingdom, Covenant, Salvation and Judgment, Promise, Life, the Presence of God, and the Glory of God**. These are all major themes in the Bible that tie integrally into the main storyline and we will look at most of them in some way in our following lessons.

We unfortunately don't have a lot of time to investigate the center of the message of the Bible. But in preview, I think the theme of "**Kingdom through Covenant**" captures that main storyline (I should say that I

disagree in many ways with the book “Kingdom through Covenant” in what that means, but I do believe in the **concept** of “Kingdom through Covenant” as central).

So very briefly, why would I suggest that “Kingdom through Covenant” is the main theme of the Bible? We must begin with **Genesis**. As we saw in studying the Torah, Genesis lays the **foundation** for the Torah, and indeed for the rest of the storyline of the Bible. And in analyzing Genesis, we found that Moses structurally laid out Genesis **1:26** and **12:1-3** as the two key texts at the center to his message. Genesis 1:26 establishes that mankind was created in the very **image of God** for the **purpose of ruling**. That establishes the **kingdom of God** as one of the key themes of the Bible. Indeed, as we trace the storyline of the Old Testament and even into the New, we see that the kingdom of God is a major theme. When Jesus came onto the scene, what did He preach? “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand” (Mat 4:17). Likewise, when we get to the very end of the story in the book of Revelation, what is the predominant theme? Revelation 5:9-10, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a **kingdom** and priests to our God; and they will **reign upon the earth**.’” And also in Revelation 11:15 preparing for the climactic conclusion to God’s story we hear, “The **kingdom** of the world has become the **kingdom of our Lord** and of His Christ; and He will **reign forever** and ever.” So we see that at the beginning and the end, and at the key climax of the story when Jesus arrives on the scene, the kingdom of God is the predominant theme that the Biblical authors emphasize.

But the kingdom wasn’t the only main theme we saw at the beginning. Also back in Genesis we saw that Genesis 12:1-3 was key. There God made a **promise** and **covenant** to Abraham. God promised to bless the whole world through his seed. Then that unconditional promise is the basis for all the other promises and covenants in the Old Testament, culminating in the hope of the **New Covenant** which came in Jesus. And so when we come to the New Testament we find that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the basis of the New Covenant and the heart of the gospel as Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-4. And so as we just saw from Revelation, it is the **sacrifice of Jesus as the Lamb of God** which brings the Kingdom of God. And the entire Bible culminates at the end of Revelation in the glorious **wedding supper of the Lamb**, where God marries His bride, the church. **Marriage** is the prime example of a **covenant** in the Bible. And so when we talk about covenant, we are really talking about how we can have a faithful relationship with God. And as we see all throughout the Old Testament, especially culminating in the Psalms, the predominant character quality of God that is praised is His **covenant-faithfulness**, His hesed. That is because the story of the Bible is about His **faithful pursuit of relationship** with His creation to **glorify His Son**.

And so we can sum up the storyline of the Bible as God **bringing His Kingdom** to earth through **covenant relationship** with Him in Jesus. The Bible is **God’s story**. It’s about **His faithfulness**. Ultimately, the Bible is **doxological**. All of history is about Him so that He would get the **glory**. We were created to **rule for Him and under Him in perfect relationship to Him**. So He is the one who **saves** us to **rule** as He intended through Jesus being our **King** to lead us and our **sacrifice** to **forgive** and **transform** our hearts to be in right **relationship** with Him. The **four major covenants** of the Bible form the basis for the **storyline** of Scripture. It is all about God’s **promises** and His **faithfulness** to bring about His **plan** restore right **relationship** and **rule** to His people. God is the One who does all this through the **New Covenant**, the **death** and **resurrection** of Jesus and His peoples’ **transformed hearts**. So He gets all the glory. There are obviously many more **details** that tie into that storyline, but the idea of Kingdom through Covenant traces two of the most key themes in the Bible and shows how they **relate** to each other in a way that helps us to see how the **story unfolds** and moves to its **glorious conclusion in Christ**. So we will dive into those themes and others and see how they unfold in the Old Testament as a preparation for studying and understanding the message and theology of the New Testament.

12. Application: How is Biblical Theology practical? How does it shape our worldview and practice?

## 2. Hymns and Covenant Psalms

**Scripture:** Overview of Psalms and Psalm 1, 8, 67, 100, 103, 115, 145 (Hymns), and 50, 89, 132 (Covenant Psalms)

**Theme:** Yahweh is Worthy to be Praised because of Who He is

### Objectives:

- To understand the nature and style of Hebrew poetry
- To understand the various genres of Psalms, and what characterizes each of them
- To meditate on God's nature and thus to stir our hearts to worship Him for who He is
- To see how music, emotions, feelings, and our hearts are tied together

### Reading:

- Read "Patterns for Life: Structure, Genre, and Theology in Psalms" at: <http://www.crivoice.org/psalmgenre.html>
- Look at "Psalm Types" at: <http://www.crivoice.org/psalmtypes.html>
- Skim through Psalms noting the different types of Psalms
- Read Psalm 1, 8, 67, 100, 103, 115, 145, 50, 89, and 132 twice each

### Questions:

1. What kinds of genres and sub-genres are within the book of Psalms? (1 paragraph)

*A: Note that the genres I have identified the various psalms as are generalizations, and should not be taken strictly. Some of the psalms fit into various categories well, while others defy categorization. Some of the psalms even seem to fit into multiple categories. Yet it is still helpful to notice patterns in the different types of psalms and to recognize the similarities. That said, the book of Psalms as a whole fits into the genre of Hebrew poetry. These poems were intended to be sung and used in corporate worship for the nation of Israel. Thus they have an artistic dimension to them in addition to a theological one. Within Psalms, we are going with three basic genres with various sub-categories: Laments, Thanksgiving Psalms, and Hymns. Laments express the **sorrow** of the psalmist, although usually move to **hope**. Thanksgiving Psalms give Yahweh **thanks for His action** in some particular circumstance, while a Hymn **praises Yahweh for who He is**. Some of the sub-categories include imprecatory psalms, penitential psalms, royal psalms, salvation history psalms. Each of these have different characteristics that bring them together.*

2. What are the purposes of the Psalms? How do their settings fit into that purpose? (1 paragraph)

*A: The Psalms is the songbook for the nation of Israel. All of these poems were meant to be sung! God created people to be both **rational and emotional** beings. Music has a special way of hitting our emotions. Yet note that the Psalms are not mere emotionalism. Each psalms is full of **deep theology**. Truth is what should cause us to feel properly. And as we sing and confess profound truth, **music helps our hearts to feel** what are minds are confessing to be true. As we look through the various settings of Psalms, we see that many of the Psalms were written for **specific occasions** within national life within Israel. Whether when going to Jerusalem, dedicating the temple, or written for specific occasions, the psalms deal with such a **vast range of emotions** and how we should **think** and **feel** properly in every situation. We see timeless truths about God to **worship**, amazing works of God to be **thankful** for, sin and brokenness to **lament** and **repent** over, the faithful promises of God to **hope** in, and the amazing salvation of God to **love** Him for. When we don't have the words or **composure** to **articulate** and remind ourselves of truth and how we should **feel**, through Psalms we can*

*express* the profound truths we **cling to** in song to God. Written over the whole span of Israel's history and for every occasion, Psalms really is a summary of Old Testament theology and a grid by which to see how theology should impact our hearts and lives.

### 3. What are the key elements of Hebrew poetry? (2 paragraphs)

A: **Parallelism** is the most important aspect of Hebrew poetry. The parallelism can be in terms of syntax, meter, and sound, but the primary parallelism is that of thoughts and ideas. There are several different types of parallelism including: Synonymous, Antithetical, Staircase, N+1, Chiasm, Inclusio, and Acrostics.

Synonymous- Two lines are roughly parallel and more or less say the same thing. Since they are nearly synonymous, the two lines can help mutually interpret one another. This is especially helpful since poetry is often terse (short and without much elaboration/explanation). This adds clarity and reinforces what is said. Often the second line may still add something new to the first, so don't write it off as being completely redundant!

Antithetical- In this type of parallelism, the two thoughts are contrasting. But just as with synonymous parallelism, the two lines both work together to convey a single thought, and can be used to mutually interpret one another.

Staircase- With staircase parallelism, the first half of the second line somewhat summarizes or repeats the first line, but the second half of the second line moves beyond and expresses a new thought not present in the first line.

N+1- With this type of parallelism, there is a statement about a number of things (N), but then a similar statement made about the one number larger (N+1). This type of parallelism gives a framework for a list to be given in poetic form. Often, it also emphasizes the last item (N+1) as the climax to the series.

Chiasm- This type of parallelism, named after the Greek letter X which describes the form, has a series of parallel lines in opposite order such as ABCB'A' where B' is parallel and similar to B and A' is similar and parallel to A. The center of the chiasm (C) receives the emphasis. This type of parallelism is quite common in Hebrew and so it is tempting to find large chiasmic structures spanning entire books. While this may at times be appropriate it is here suggested that some examples seem contrived when there isn't clear parallelism of syntax or words but only of vague ideas spread over large sections. Nonetheless, true chiasms do occur and can be small or large.

Inclusio- This type of parallelism can be called 'bookends' and often marks a larger section of Scripture. It takes the form of ABA'. What differentiates inclusio from chiasm is that A and A' are much shorter than B (whereas in chiasm each part is of roughly the same length). The purpose of inclusio is to mark off a section and show that it is a single unit of thought.

Acrostic- This can be considered a type of parallelism where every line of the poetry begins with the next letter of the alphabet, starting with Aleph (the 'A' of Hebrew). Thus a true acrostic will have a multiple of 22 lines (there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet). There are several purposes of acrostics. One is that it makes memorizing the poem easier. Secondly, it emphasizes the totality of the subject matter covered (from A to Z). Thirdly, an acrostic emphasizes order, everything is in place.

**Sound** combinations of various types can be used in Hebrew poetry to aid memory, give emphasis and give an overall poetic feel to a composition. There are various types such as assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), consonance (repetition of consonant sounds), alliteration (repetition of the same initial sounds), and rhyme (repetition of the same end sounds). Obviously, these cannot be detected in English translations and the Hebrew needs to be consulted to appreciate the style of the writing.

**Word Plays** are also common in Hebrew poetry (as well as in narrative). These can often be used to emphasize a specific point that an author is trying to make. They can often be ironic, comical, or otherwise witty. Some examples include turns (where same word from the same root is repeated and used in the same way), root play (where different words from the same root is repeated but used in different ways), polysemantic pun (where a pun is made with the same word being used with its different meanings), and paranomasia (words from different roots but that sound similar are used).

**Poetic Devices** that are also common in English can be found in Hebrew such as:

Metaphor – figure of speech in which a phrase applies to something that isn't literally applicable.

Simile – a comparison between two things that aren't alike using as or like. Satan is like a roaring lion.

Irony – a rhetorical device where the surface meaning is the opposite of the intended meaning.

Idiom – the meaning of a phrase is not deducible from the words' normal meanings.

Metonymy – using an attribute to represent the thing meant.

Imagery – figurative language that appeals to our senses.

Allusion – an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it.

Merismus – two extremes represent the entirety of something.

**Structure** is also an important aspect of Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poems can often be broken up into stanzas, and the stanzas be broken up into lines. Understanding the overall broad structure of a poem is important in analyzing its contents so that we can properly see how the parts fit together. Colons describe the number of colons that make up a line: mono-colon, bi-colon, tri-colon, etc. There can be many variations on the structure. Often which type of colon the poem uses can be used to break up the stanzas (for example a tri-colon may mark the end of a stanza where the rest of the poem has been bi-colons).

4. Look at the headings and postscripts in Habakkuk 3 and comment on what we learn about psalm headings and postscripts from this psalm in Habakkuk. Compare and contrast the headings and postscripts in Psalm 4 for example. How does this effect how we look at the headings in the book of Psalms? (1-2 sentences)

A: Notice how in Habakkuk 3, the psalm has both a prescript **and** a postscript! A man by the name of James Thirtle came up with a theory that our psalm titles in the book of Psalms seem to be miss-divided due to the meaning of the inscriptions being lost and thus they became meaningless titles. Thus if we take Habakkuk 3 as an example, the authorship of the psalm goes in the prescript, but that other musical notations and dedications go in the postscript (ie. for the choir director...). By recognizing this and redividing the psalm titles we find that many of the titles now fit much better with their respective psalms than before. Notice the following examples: In Psalm 55:6 it says, "Oh that I had wings like a dove..." and then in the postscript of the psalm (Psa 56:1) we find that it is according to 'the dove of the distant terebinths.' Note also the prescript of Psalm 30 which says it is for the 'Dedication of the house' while Psalm 30 doesn't appear to be anything about the temple, while Psalm 29 is a theophany of God's appearing that seems very appropriate for talking about the temple, the place of God's dwelling.

5. What is compared and contrasted in Psalm 1? How is this comparison/contrast used by the author to make his point? What is this point? Describe how these two things are portrayed in this psalm. (1 paragraph)

*A: Psalm 1 compares and contrasts two **ways** of life, the way of the **righteous** and the way of the **wicked**. The use of the analogy of the two ways invites hearers to realize that there is a choice that needs to be made, which way will I go on. We see these two ways are described as a means of showing the blessing and benefit of choosing God's way. The person who chooses God's way will be firmly established like a tree and prospering, while the person who chooses the wicked way will be unsettled and will come to ruin. So we see that to choose the way of the righteous means for us to not walk in the wicked way, but to delight in God's Word, and to constantly meditate on it. What **input** we take into our lives will affect the **outcome** of our lives! So if we want to end up at the right destination, we better start on the right path! In one sense this psalm is an invitation to allow God's Word to shape the input in our lives that forms the blessed outcome.*

6. Comment on the shift and contrast that takes place in Psalm 8 between verses 4 and 5. Meditate and comment on what this teaches us about humanity and our place in God's plan. (1 paragraph)

*A: Psalm 8 begins with David pondering the awesome majesty of God. In light of the vastness of creation, he ponders how small and insignificant man is. But in light of this truth, as he moves to verse 5, David is amazed that God made man just a little lower than gods (ie. angels) and even **crowned mankind with glory and majesty!** Part of that glory and majesty is mankind's commission to rule over the earth for God. Here, David is in essence reflecting on the amazing truth that man is made in **God's image**, made to rule as God's vice-regents on earth. In light of God's majesty (which begins and ends the psalm), it is truly amazing that God designed for mankind to play such an integral part of His creation!*

7. Noting that Psalm 67 is structured as a chiasm, outline the psalm. What is the connection between verses 1 and 2? What is the connection between verse 7a and 7b (make sure to read this psalm in the NASB to see this connection)? What is the connection between 4a and 4b? What is verse 4 about and why is this significant? How many different words in this psalm emphasize people/earth/the world? How does this help us to understand the point of this psalm? (1 paragraph)



A: Psalm 67: A Psalm, A Song

May God Be **gracious** to us  
& **bless** us  
& **cause** His face to shine upon us  
In order that be known Your way in the earth  
& Your salvation in **all** the nations

Selah

May the peoples praise You, O God  
May the peoples praise You, All of them

May the people groups be glad and shout for joy  
Because You will judge the peoples with uprightness  
and the people groups in the earth  
you will lead

Selah

May the peoples praise You, O God  
May the peoples praise You, All of them

The earth gives it's produce  
God, our God blesses us  
May God bless us  
In order that all the ends of the earth may fear Him

A: Notice how in my translation I bring out that the connection between verses 1 and 2 and verses 7a and 7b as being clearly one of **purpose**. This is clear in the Hebrew text. The psalmist is praying that God would bless His people for the purpose of the world coming to know Yahweh and His salvation. This is key. This is at the heart of the Old Testament, and goes back to Genesis and Genesis 12:1-3 as the purpose for the nation of Israel. The connection between 4a and 4b is one of cause. **Why should the people shout for joy? Because God is coming to reign!** God's coming righteous reign is cause for celebration. Verse 4 is at the center of the chiasm, and thus receives emphasis. It is in light of this future hope of the righteous kingdom that the world should rejoice! Thus this psalm encapsulates so beautifully the essence of the purpose of God in the world. Notice how many different words there are repeated in this psalm emphasizing the whole world: people (5), people groups (2), nations (1), and earth (4). God's plan for His world is that all people would worship Him, coming to know Him and His salvation through His people being blessed and proclaiming Him, rejoicing that one day His righteous kingdom will come when there will finally be perfect worship of the whole earth!

8. What does Psalm 100 call us to and why? (2-3 sentences)

A: This psalm calls all the earth to shout joyfully to Yahweh, to serve Him, knowing that He alone is God, thanking and worshiping Him for who He is **because** He is good and faithful! God's faithfulness and loyal covenant love is the most frequent cause for praising God in Psalms. We rejoice in God's choice of us as His bride and His faithfulness to that covenant!

9. What does Psalm 103 call us to and why? What does it mean to bless Yahweh? List the reasons the psalmist gives for doing so. (1 paragraph)

A: This psalm repeatedly call us to **bless Yahweh**. For Yahweh to bless us to for Him to bestow good upon us. For us to bless Yahweh is to acknowledge the good that Yahweh has done for us! God wants to be worshiped and praised for who He is and what He has done! Then the psalmist goes on to enumerate many of the blessings that Yahweh has bestowed upon him. These include God's great **forgiveness**, His **salvation**, His **judgment** and action on behalf of His people and His character as being **gracious and compassionate**. God is compassionate and His loyal love never stops! Even though we sin and are weak, God understands and forgives us and keeps on loving us! What an amazing God! Surely He is to be praised and may His name be blessed forever!

10. Why does God deserve glory according to Psalm 115? What words are repeated? What is the point of verses 16-17? (1 paragraph)

A: Once again God's **loyal love** and **faithfulness** are the basis of the psalmist giving praise to God. God is not like idols, He is the one who can act, He is the one who can be faithful to those who trust Him! How foolish it is to **trust** in an idol who is nothing and can do nothing! Thus we should trust Yahweh, the great Creator, for He is faithful and powerful to act on behalf of His people! God has created us to trust Him so that when He acts on our behalf, we can praise Him! He has given us life so that we will bless Him! **The earth is the stage upon which God can clearly display His faithfulness on acting on our behalf so that we can then live dependent upon Him, giving Him all the praise! This life is all about displaying God's faithfulness!**

11. What should our response be to God according to Psalm 145? What truths about God is David responding to in this psalm? (1 paragraph)

A: Because God is so great, we should constantly be proclaiming His greatness! There is a huge emphasis in this psalm on **speaking!** We should not be silent in light of who God is! We should constantly be talking about God's mighty deeds, everything that He has done and is doing! David meditates on so many different character qualities of God in this psalm! God is so merciful to us even though we are so undeserving! He is so good! And yet He is also so powerful! He reigns and rules as the King! He is provider and is also righteous. Because of who Yahweh is, we must constantly be speaking His praises, and may this be true of all flesh forever and ever!

12. What is the setting of Psalm 50? What pleases God according to this Psalm? (1 paragraph)

A: Psalm 50 is set in a court setting. God shows up as the righteous judge and calls His people to appear. He then testifies against His people, because their sacrifices are not what He wants. He wants us to be in a relationship of dependence upon Him, trusting and obeying Him. He tells His people to call out to Him in the day of trouble, that is what pleases Him (50:15)! He will then rescue and receive the glory for it! He wants us to be dependent upon Him and when He acts for us, He wants us to be thankful! **God does not need to be pacified, He wants to be glorified!**

13. What is the main topic/theme of Psalm 89? Where is there a major break in the psalm? How do the two halves of the psalm relate to each other? (1 paragraph)

A: God's faithfulness and the Davidic covenant are the twin main themes of this psalm. God always keeps His promises! He acts powerfully on behalf of His people because of what He said He would do! At verse 38, the psalm takes a drastic turn. In the first half of the psalm God is praised for His faithfulness, specifically His faithfulness to David and the Davidic covenant. But at verse 38 the tone shifts drastically because even though Yahweh is always faithful, something is terribly wrong! His people are a reproach, the covenant is

*not being upheld at the moment as the nation is lowly and in the dirt. And so the psalmist cries out to God to remember His covenant and to act in accordance with His faithfulness! He longs for God to fulfill His good plan for His nation and for act on behalf of His Davidic king! In the end, he blesses Yahweh even though things aren't right, because ultimately he knows that Yahweh will keep His word!*

14. Note that Psalm 132 is a Psalm of Ascents. What were these used for? What is Psalm 132 calling on Yahweh to do and why? (1 paragraph)

*A: Most likely, these Psalms of Ascents (120-134) were sung by the Jews as they went up to Jerusalem for the three festivals yearly. In Psalm 132 the psalmist leads the people to call out to Yahweh that He will remember the Davidic covenant. God promised to forever cause the Davidic throne to be established in Jerusalem, and so the psalm calls out to Yahweh to keep His promise! This would have been a very appropriate song for the Israelites to sing as they walked up to Jerusalem, the capital city of the kingdom of God. They **longed** for God to fulfill the Davidic covenant and bring the true son of David who would institute God's righteous kingdom on earth!*

15. Application: What do we learn from these psalms about what we should worship God for?
16. Application: What do we learn from psalms about the interplay between music, theology, emotions, and worship?

### 3. Royal Psalms

**Scripture:** Psalm 2, 45, 46, 47, 72, 96, 97, 98, and 110

**Theme:** Praise Yahweh because He Reigns and will Reign

**Objectives:**

- To fear and trust Yahweh, the King of the universe, who reigns over all in His sovereignty
- To anticipate and long for Israel's coming king who will reign in righteousness over earth

**Reading:**

- Read Psalm 2, 45, 46, 47, 72, 96, 97, 98, and 110 twice each

**Questions:**

1. Noting that Psalm 2 can be broken up into 4, three-verse stanzas, summarize each stanza. Comment specifically on what 2:7 means, and how it relates to 2:6, and 2:8-9. (2 paragraphs)

*A: Also note how each stanza has a different speaker (foreign nations, the Lord, the King, and the Poet). The first stanza is about how the nations of the world want to throw off God's rule and want autonomy and freedom from God's righteous reign. Stanza two is the Lord's response to their rebellion: He will laugh at their insubordination and bring wrath upon them through the King He has installed. The third stanza focuses in on the reign of the King: He is installed in Jerusalem with the world as His inheritance and will rule with a iron rod over the earth. In the last stanza, the poet therefore addresses the kings of the earth and warns them to worship Yahweh and submit to the Son, because His righteous wrath will be against all who rebel against Him, but will bless those who seek refuge in Him.*

*The statement that Yahweh makes in 2:7 about the Son is a **coronation** declaration. This would have been typical language for these coronation ceremonies. Before the king's son was coronated, although he was the son, he hadn't experienced directly the primary rights he had as son, namely that of being heir to the throne. So the statement, "Today you are my son" isn't a statement that before that day the son hadn't been a son, but that 'today' ('today' is often used in **official covenantal language**, much in the same way we put dates/signatures on official documents) was the day of him coming into the **full rights of sonship**. This is corroborated by 2:6 which speaks of Yahweh's installment of His King in Jerusalem and of 2:8-9 which speaks of the Son's inheritance and rule which He had just come into.*

2. Explain the progression of Psalm 45 by giving a summary of each of the following sections: 45:1, 2, 3-5, 6-7, 8-17. Who is this song addressed to? What language in the song would lead us to come to a conclusion about who the song is addressed to? What do you think the setting and purpose of the song is? (2 paragraphs)

*A: The psalm begins with the introduction which gives us the setting to the song: it is a love song addressed to a king which in the opening line we see is written by a ready and excited writer. He then moves into extolling the king for his beauty in verse 2. In verses 3-5 the king is extolled for his conquer of his enemies, and verses 6-7 then talk about his peaceful, righteous and joyous reign. Verses 8-17 then switches to talking about the king's bride and marriage and that ultimately the sons that they have who will be princes in the earth. The song ends with praise to the king throughout all generations.*

We see at the beginning of the song that it is addressed to a king, and is a love song. The immediate question that comes to mind is whether or not this is some sort of allegory worshiping God as the king or whether it is about a human king. We see language and hints at both of these throughout the song which is what makes this song difficult. On the one hand, the story of the song is profoundly human, a love song to a king entrenched in all the trappings of a human kingdom. On the other hand, much of the language of the song seems far too exalted for any human king. Lines like "God has blessed you forever," "your majesty," "Your throne O God is exalted forever and ever," and "I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever" all give the impression that this song is written to God. Many have suggested that the setting as a royal psalm seems to be the enthronement or marriage of a human king and that therefore the language is merely hyperbolic but is referring to an earthly king. One of the biggest questions is what the phrase, "Your throne, O God, is exalted forever and ever" means. Upon careful grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text, I have come to the conclusion that alternate translations ("your divine throne", etc.) of this phrase don't do justice to the grammar.

In light of these considerations, I consider it best to take this song as a royal psalm which is indeed written to and for a human king and probably sang at the occasion of a king's coronation or wedding, yet not strictly written for or about any individual human Davidic king at the time of writing. Instead, the song praises the **ideal** Davidic king who would come, conquer, and reign in righteousness. The language is too exalted to refer to any merely human king, and thus does have implications of the divinity of the coming Messiah. This human Davidic King is addressed as God and will be worshiped and praised forever, something that never could have been said about any of the kings of Israel's history.

3. What is Psalm 72 and how do we see this from the form of the individual verses of the psalm? From it what do we learn about God's plan for His nation and His world? (1 paragraph)

A: Psalm 72 is a prayer for the king as we see almost every verse is in the form of an imperative or request. From this prayer we can see what **God's ideal for His nation** was. God intended His **mediatorial king** to reign over His people with righteousness, and thus to bring peace to the people. He was intended to care for the lowly and yet rule in power over all the earth. All nations were to serve Him because he would be a just and righteous king, filled with compassion. Thus God would bless His nation and through His nation impact all of the earth. The nations were to bless God's king. Thus all of the world would be filled with God's glory. Once again we see this idea was beyond that of even Solomon, Israel's greatest king in many respects (and author of this psalm).

4. Comment on the three people involved in Psalm 110 verse 1. Who wrote this psalm and why is that significant? How and why is the interplay of these three people very important? What then are verses 1-3 all about? In the context, what then is said in verse 4 and why is this so significant? Why do you think the author brings in Melchizedek at this point? How then is the psalm concluded in verses 5-7? (2 paragraphs)

A: In verse 1 we have three distinct people involved: the speaker (me/my), Yahweh, and the Lord. What is so significant here is that David is the author of this psalm, and he refers to an individual who is distinct from Yahweh as 'his Lord.' Given that David was God's representative to rule on earth and that there was no one higher than him as the king, this has clear implications that the person David is here addressing is the coming Messiah. That David realized this Messiah must be greater than himself is huge! This has clear implications for the deity of the Messiah, that while he is a man, he is also so much more than just a man. Thus we see that verses 1-3 are all about the Messiah, His sitting at the right hand of Yahweh in the place of prominence and power until the day comes when it is time for Him to rule. It is noteworthy that the

*Messiah's sitting at God's right hand in the place of power is for the purpose of waiting until it is time to rule in which day the people that submit to His righteous rule will be vast.*

*We then come to verse 4 which completely changes gears and catches us offguard. Having just talked about the reign of the Messiah, we see in context the same person being talked about and said that Yahweh has sword about Him that He is a priest from the order of Melchizedek. This appears to come out of nowhere! The king is also a priest! And moreover, He is a priest not from the order of Aaron, but from an entirely different order, that of Melchizedek. This anticipates the insufficiency of the Aaronic priesthood in that the Messiah would be a priest according to an entirely different order. Melchizedek himself is an interesting figure in the OT, a king-priest who blesses even Abraham and to whom Abraham tithes. He comes out of nowhere in the biblical account! So this psalm reminds us that in the future reign of the Messiah the separation of the kingship from the Davidic line and priesthood from that of Aaron that had been necessitated by the sinfulness of men will no longer be needed in the completely righteous reign of the Messiah who will be a priest according to a completely different order!*

*The psalm then concludes by returning to the theme of the Messiah's reign, who with the Lord at his right hand will conquer and reign in power. This psalm is an amazingly rich song which extols the coming of the Messiah in accordance with God's promises who will reign in perfect righteousness as a king-priest over the earth! He is greater than David as David's Lord, and yet will rule on the earth as God's perfect representative. How awesome that will be!*

5. Noting that the 'Selahs' of Psalm 46 break it into three stanzas of four verses each, what is each stanza about? How do each of these stanzas combine to form the overall message of the psalm? (1 paragraph)

*A: The first stanza emphasizes that God is our help in trouble, no matter how big those troubles are! In the second stanza, we are reminded of the peace and tranquility of the city of God, the place where God dwells that is therefore immovable and secure. In the last stanza we are called to behold the power of God in destroying His enemies, and then exhorted to be quiet and know that He is God and will be exalted among the nations! All in all this psalm reminds us of the sovereign power of God who reigns over all the earth and therefore calls us to humble and quiet trust in Him!*

6. What are we called to do and why in Psalm 47? (2-3 sentences)

*A: All the earth is called to worship and sing praises to God because He is a great King over all the earth! All the peoples and nations are nothing compared to God, yet God has chosen the people of Israel as His inheritance. He reigns over the nations!*

7. What are we called to do and why in Psalm 96? (1 paragraph)

*A: In Psalm 96 **all the earth** is once again called upon to **sing praises to Yahweh**. We are to proclaim His greatness to the ends of the earth. We are to do this because Yahweh is not like the idols of the nations, but is glorious. All the earth is continually called upon to worship Yahweh. Ultimately, **Yahweh Himself will come to rule over the earth in His righteousness and faithfulness**. Yahweh is a global God and worthy to be praised!*

8. What do we see in Psalm 97:2-5 and what precedes and follows this? (1 paragraph)

*A: In Psalm 97:2-5 we see a theophany, showing the glorious majesty of Yahweh. This is introduced with the statement that Yahweh reigns in verse 1 and then in 6-12 we are presented with more glorious truths about Yahweh, that His glory is declared by the heavens and have been seen over all the earth. Therefore He is high above the earth and all other gods do not compare to Him. Our response should be to hate evil and love Yahweh, to be glad in Him and to thank Him! He will preserve those who trust in Him!*

9. What is Psalm 98:1-3 about and how does 4-8 build upon that and how does it conclude with verse 9? Comment specifically on what Psalm 98:1-3 says about God's salvation, righteousness, faithfulness, and victory and how these relate to one another. How is God's righteousness displayed in His salvation? (1 paragraph)

*A: Psalm 98 begins with some great truths about Yahweh's salvation and then calls all the earth to sing praises to Yahweh exultantly because He is such a great King! The psalm concludes with the reason for the exuberant praises, because Yahweh's reign is coming! In the first three verses we see that God's salvation being spoken of is His powerful deliverance of His people from their enemies. This is related to His faithfulness because He had promised to bless the nation of Israel in the Abrahamic covenant. Thus here His righteousness is also related here to His vindication of His Word by keeping His promise. This powerful salvation and faithfulness to His promise were done publicly in the sight of the nations, so that they would see who Yahweh is! I don't think God's righteousness is only and always equated with God's covenant faithfulness, but in this text it definitely is... God cares about vindicating His reputation which is on the line because of the unconditional Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. So God will certainly act in power to bring these about as a manifestation of His saving power and faithfulness! I think that salvation is also paired with righteousness in that when God comes and brings His kingdom, it will be a kingdom of righteousness.*

10. Thought question: What is the relationship between Yahweh's current reign and His future reign? Comment on the concept of Yahweh's universal kingdom and His mediatorial kingdom.
11. Application: What responses should we have to Yahweh's current and coming reign?

#### 4. Laments, Imprecations, Penitential Psalms

**Scripture:** Psalm 22, 40, 42, 86, 90, 139 (Laments), 35, 58, 79, 94 (Imprecations), and 32, 51 (Penitential Psalms).

**Theme:** We call out to Yahweh in our Sin and Distress and He Hears us

**Objectives:**

- To learn how to comfort and encourage our own hearts and the hearts of others
- To better understand the concepts of righteousness and vindication
- To be challenged in our humility and need for daily repentance

**Reading:**

- Read Psalm 22, 40, 42, 86, 90, 139, 35, 58, 79, 94, 32, and 51 *two times each*

**Questions:**

1. How does David deal with his emotions in Psalm 22? How does the psalm end? Do you think this psalm is Messianic? Why or why not? (1-2 paragraphs)

*A: David calls out to Yahweh for help, he calls out to Yahweh to save him! Interspersed throughout the psalm are descriptions of his trouble, calls for help and truths about the **faithfulness** of Yahweh. The psalms are real in that the psalmist doesn't pretend that he isn't struggling. Yet there is the movement to constantly **remember** and be **reminded of Yahweh's faithfulness**. Note also how David asks for Yahweh to save him from his trial so that he can **tell** of Yahweh's faithfulness. Then the psalm ends with a strong affirmation of Yahweh's sovereignty. This is a great comfort to the psalmist in the midst of his afflictions. God is a faithful God of salvation. He is the king. Those who have experienced his salvation will tell others of His greatness!*

*This psalm is very often quoted as Messianic. Specifically many of the trials that David went through **anticipated** those that the Messiah would endure. What makes this psalm difficult is that there is very little if anything at all that if reading it without reference to the New Testament would make you think it is referring to anything or anyone other than David. One of the 'avenues' by which this psalm became Messianic is through the authorship of the psalm. Because David is in many ways a type of the Messiah, the Messiah being the son of David, this psalm in God's sovereignty came to anticipate the sufferings that the Messiah would go through by means of the sufferings of David.*

2. What are the first five verses of Psalm 40 about? In light of these first five verses, what are verses 6-10 about? Specifically comment on what 'you have dug my ears' in verse 6 means, and what the flow of thought through 6-10 is. How then does the psalm conclude in 11-17? (1 paragraph)

*A: The first five verses of Psalm 40 are about how blessed it is to **trust** in Yahweh. He is reliable! So our response should be one of obedience from the heart and proclamation of God's faithfulness and salvation in 6-10! The flow of thought in this section is that in response to Yahweh's faithful salvation, He doesn't want sacrifice. He dug our ears, emphasizing that He **created us** (and thus also our ears) and so what He wants is for us to **listen** to Him! Thus we see in verse 8 that in response to God the author is emphasizing that he delights to do God's will from the heart! Moreover, not only does he obey from the heart, but also has proclaimed God's faithfulness and salvation before people! God wants us to not keep silent concerning all His faithfulness, and so this too is a very appropriate response to what God has done. Then in light of that in 11-*



17 the psalmist calls out to Yahweh to preserve him because he is surrounded by trials and his own sin has blinded him. He desires Yahweh to be magnified when people seek Him and He acts on their behalf!

3. What does Psalm 42 teach us about our desires, longing for God and preaching to our own hearts? What phrases are repeated in Psalm 42? (1 paragraph)

A: Notice the ups and downs of **emotion** in this psalm! When circumstances are hard, it takes work to remember the truth about God. It seems like He is distant and can't hear (notice the repetition of "Where is your God? and other questions "Why have you forgotten me?"). So the psalmist cries out to God. He even feels forgotten by God (42:9). But He knows the truth about God and can remember joyful times of worship to God (42:4). We constantly need to **remind** ourselves of God's goodness (notice the repetition of 'remember' in this psalm, 42:4, 6)! We need to long for Him! We need to preach to our own hearts with the truth we know about God but aren't feeling rightly about because our hearts are so fickle! Notice as well the reoccurring phrase, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God for I will yet praise Him for the salvation of His presence." This is psalmist's hope. He needs to constantly preach it to himself. God will save when He comes! The presence of God is what He longs for and hopes in (42:3)!

4. Comment on how God's character has impacted David's perspective in Psalm 86. (1 paragraph)

A: In this psalm David is calling out to Yahweh to save him and to be gracious to him. He is going through a trial in this psalm (86:1, 14), yet we see there is hope because of the character of God. Yahweh is the great God who is able and willing to help! God "is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness" (86:15). God has abundant **loyal love** (86:5, 13, 15). So all throughout the psalm David is calling out to **God to be gracious** (86:3, 16) because that is God's character. I also love the phrase, "Unite my heart to fear Your name (86:11)" because our hearts are so easily divided! We should long for a heart singly and wholly devoted to Yahweh!

5. What is Psalm 90 about and what does meditating on that topic produce in Moses? Comment on verse 12 and also the transition that takes place after it. How does the psalm end in 13-17 and how does this ending fit in with the first 12 verses? Make sure to comment on the last verse of the psalm. (1 paragraph)

A: Psalm 90 is about our finitude. Moses is meditating on the brevity of life and comparing humanity to God. God is everlasting, and we are only for a moment. We are sinful and God knows all our sins. We are all therefore worthy of God's wrath. And so the first portion of the psalm ends with Moses asking God to help us to understand our finiteness so that we will have wisdom. We see in this psalm the connection between **fearing God** and having **wisdom** (verses 11-12). We can only be wise when we understand our relationship to our Creator (a major theme in wisdom literature). Only then can we live life in perspective of what is truly worthwhile. So in the end of the psalm (13-17), Moses turns to calling out to God for **compassion**. We need His loyal love! Especially so in light of our finitude and sin! And so in the last verse Moses asks God to 'confirm the work of our hands.' As we saw in wisdom literature, our work can only have **significance** in light of God. We need Him to confirm our work for it to be lasting and meaningful. Thus I would classify this Psalm as a wisdom psalm because it contains so many important themes from the wisdom genre.

6. What is the topic of Psalm 139 and what does understanding this topic produce? Why do you think the psalm ends in the way it does? (1 paragraph)

A: Most of the psalm is a meditation on God's **omniscience**. He knows everything! He even knows what we are thinking! God formed all our days before they even came to be! This produces gratitude for how God has made us in verse 14, and worship for how awesome and majestic God is in verses 17-18. In verses 19-22 the psalm takes an unexpected turn and David calls out on God to slay the wicked. Although the connection is not explicit, it may be that when David is meditating on how majestic and worthy of worship God is, it causes his thoughts to turn to those who do not give glory to the majestic God (139:20) and this causes him to call out in righteous anger for God's just wrath. It seems clear that David is concerned here with **God's glory** and not his own which can be the only cause for righteous anger. Then he ends with a call to God to test his heart and to lead him in God's way. Here David exemplifies the **humility** that should come from understanding who God is! Thus one of the only appropriate responses to God's omniscience is to willingly lay ourselves bare before God and ask that He lead us and correct us and change us to be pleasing to Him!

7. What are the reasons David wants his enemies to be destroyed in Psalm 35? How did David respond to his enemies' trials? Make sure to comment specifically on what we learn about David's motives in the last three verses of the psalm. (1 paragraph)

A: Verses 3, 9, and 18 of this psalm make it clear that the reason why David wants his enemies to be destroyed is so that he would be **saved** and would exult in that salvation. In verses 13-14 we see that David cared for his enemies during their trials. Ultimately we see that while David does long for his enemies downfall, the motive behind this is **God's glory**. This is because as God's servant, when his enemies **prosper** it appears that God doesn't care about His people. So David indeed does long for **vindication**, but the reason is clear in verse 27 that it is so that **Yahweh be magnified for saving** His servant. David longs to constantly declare God's righteousness so he pleads with God to come and act in power to uphold **justice**. Thus we see throughout the psalm that there is a large emphasis on the wickedness and injustice of his enemies, for this is the basis for David's desire for God to act.

8. Why does David long for God's vengeance in Psalm 58? (1 paragraph)

A: David cares about **upholding God's righteousness**! The gods are not righteous. They don't judge justly. But Yahweh is righteous! And so when David sees the injustice and wickedness of the world, he longs for **God's justice** to be upheld. Ultimately, the purpose for all of this is at the end of the psalm in verse 11. David longs for people to know that Yahweh is a God who acts, who judges justly and rules righteously. God is not absent and silent. He is not passive and uncaring about sin. No! He is the just judge of the earth and He will come and **bring justice and righteousness**. David longs for this!

9. What is Asaph calling out for in Psalm 79 and why? (1 paragraph)

A: Because the nations have destroyed God's people and laid low His temple, Asaph calls out for God to "pour out His wrath on the nations who do not know You" (79:6). Ultimately, like David, Asaph's concern is for **Yahweh's glory** (79:9). This is because when the nations attacked and **reproached God's people**, ultimately they were reproaching Yahweh Himself (79:12 cf. 79:4). The end result of God's salvation of His people by judging His enemies in this psalm as in David's imprecations is that God's people will **praise** Him for acting in salvation (79:13). The psalmist acknowledges that Yahweh's judgment on His nation was just and due to their sin (79:8), but calls out to God for forgiveness that He may act on behalf of His people once again (79:9). Ultimately what is at stake here is Yahweh's glory because His reputation was bound up with that of His people because He had made **unconditional promises** to bless and exalt them. Thus Asaph calls out to Yahweh to glorify His name!

## 10. Summarize the message of Psalm 94. (1 paragraph)

A: The psalmist calls out for Yahweh, the God of vengeance to act! He calls out for Yahweh to **humble the proud**. The wicked exult in their wickedness and crush God's people and afflict the lowly and all the while think that Yahweh doesn't care. But Yahweh is the Creator and He knows the evil hearts of men and will once again in the future judge in righteousness. So the psalmist wants to stand for justice and calls for others to join him in it. God is the one who helps him for God is his stronghold. Ultimately, God will triumph in destroying the wicked.

## 11. Thought question: When or what makes it right to long for God's judgment? Shouldn't we long for peoples' salvation instead of their punishment? Explain. (1 paragraph)

A: A common thread we see in the Imprecatory Psalms is that the psalmist is calling out for God's **righteous judgment** to be revealed, and that for God's own name's sake. It is far too easy to long for God's justice for wrong reasons! We should never long for God's justice because **we** were the offended party! Ultimately, we are deserving of justice just as much as other sinners. **God is the only one who really has been offended!** The only right motive for longing for God's justice is because **God's name** and reputation are in the dirt. Things are not like they should be on earth. God's desire is for there to be perfect justice and righteousness and for all the earth to worship Him. Yet that is not what is happening right now! People rebel and hate God and even go about their lives taunting Him and spitting in His face with no result. It is good and right to long for **God to vindicate Himself** and show that He does indeed care about sin and is powerful enough to do something about it because He is the awesome and holy God of the universe! Jesus taught us to pray that God's kingdom would come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So while we definitely should be wanting God's mercy and compassion to be demonstrated in the salvation of sinners, and it is important that we always keep in mind that we are sinners and no better than any others, we also see in Scripture that it is right to long for God to be shown to be the holy and righteous and powerful God that He is! This is an awesome and terrible thought, but one that pervades Scripture nonetheless (see 2nd Thess. 1 and Rev 6:10).

## 12. What does Psalm 32 teach us about sin? (1 paragraph)

A: We learn in this psalm that **sin must be covered!** It must be forgiven. Ultimately God does not ignore sin, but there is blessing to the man to whom God does not **account** his sin. When we hide our sin, it wastes away at us. But when we acknowledge our sin, God will forgive it! Thus we should pray to God (32:6) when God may be found, we never want to presume on God's forgiveness, for a time may come when it is too late (either because our hearts become too hardened or the day of judgment has come)! God is a delivering God who preserves His people. Those who humble themselves, confessing their sin will be forgiven. To the one who trusts in Yahweh there is loyal love (32:10). Thus we can rejoice in Yahweh (32:11)!

## 13. What does David call out for and why in Psalm 51? What is David's motivation for asking God to forgive him? (1 paragraph)

A: David calls out for God to forgive him and to cleanse him and ultimately to give him joy. The reasons he gives for wanting this all go back to him being able to proclaim how great God is! His motivation is that he wants to "teach transgressors God's way," and to "sing of God's righteousness," and "to declare God's praise" (51:13-15). It is clear that David is concerned with God's reputation with these motives, and that comes out clearly as well in verse four where David acknowledges that his sin was ultimately only against Yahweh and that he desires God to be justified and blameless in His judgment. Ultimately it is God's compassion that is the basis for His forgiveness (51:1) and thus which receives the praise. It is David's selfless humility (51:17)

*which enables him to be more concerned for God's glory, praise, and justification than his own. And that is the same broken humility that all of us need in light of our sin if God is going to use us for His purposes!*

14. Application: What do we learn from the ups and downs of the emotions of the laments, and how does that help us to think properly ourselves and to encourage others who are down?
15. Application: What do we learn about longing for God's justice from the Imprecatory Psalms, and how can this help us when we are dealing with the injustices of a fallen and broken world?
16. Application: What do we learn about our sin and how to respond to it from the Penitential Psalms?

## 5. Torah, Thanksgiving & Salvation History Psalms

**Scripture:** Psalm 19, 119 (Torah Psalms), 23, 27, 34, 138 (Thanksgiving Psalms), and 105, 106, 135, 136 (Salvation History Psalms)

**Theme:** Give Thanks to Yahweh for what He has Revealed and what He has Done

**Objectives:**

- To see God's faithful loyal love revealed over and over and to have great gratitude for it

**Reading:**

- Read Psalm 19, 119, 23, 27, 34, 138, 105, 106, 135, and 136 twice each

**Questions:**

1. Comment on what Psalm 19:1-6, 7-9, and 10-14 are about? How are these sections related to one another and what then is the overall message of the psalm? (1 paragraph)

*A: Verses 1-6 are about **general revelation** about God. God's creation is constantly declaring His glory for all the world to see. There is no place on earth where we can escape from this revelation. Then in verses 7-9 we see God's special revelation. God has spoken more definitely than just in creation. He has given us His word! In each of these three verses, a synonym for the Word of God is given, then an adjective that describes it, followed by the result it produces. God's Word is what restores and transforms us, giving us wisdom for life. Then in 10-14, we begin by seeing the value of God's Word, it is extremely precious. Part of the reason for this is that God's Word warns us and there is great reward for keeping it. But then the psalm ends with a reflection on discerning our sins. In light of the previous section on God's Word we see that it is a mirror by which our sins are exposed, and so the psalmist ends with a prayer to be acceptable to God. Thus this psalm is all about how God has revealed Himself. He has done this in creation, and yet His ultimate self-revelation is in His Word. His Word is of great value and we should long for it as through it God transforms us and shows us our sin so that we would be more like Him. Thus we should call out to Him to keep us from sin!*

2. What is interesting about the structure of Psalm 119? What is the overarching theme of the psalm? What are some of the key things that are said about this theme throughout the psalm? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again, Psalm 119 is all about God's Word. This psalm is a massive acrostic, with eight verses for every letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This acrostic nature of the psalm helps to emphasize how **perfect and complete** God's Word is. This psalm is so massive there is no way that we can adequately deal with it here, but simply to point out a few key reoccurring themes. In this psalm there is a continual emphasis on the **heart**. We need to **love God's Word**! We need to see its great value because it is so **amazing and valuable**. The problem is that we don't have the right perspective so often. God's Word **revives** us. God's Word **transforms** us. God's Word gives us **wisdom and hope**. It has promises of God to **hope** in, the faithfulness of God to **trust** in, the wrath of God to **fear**, the holiness of God to be **purified**, the glory of God to be **worshiped** and the goodness of God to **delight** in!*

3. What is the imagery of Psalm 23 intended to produce in its hearers? (1 paragraph)

*A: With the imagery in Psalm 23, David portrays in a vivid way how God is our Shepherd. This reminds us of how He is always doing what is good for us, even when it doesn't look that way to us! Sometimes the shepherd needs to lead His sheep through tough spots, but the Shepherd always has a good end in mind. The good Shepherd cares for and even lays down His life for the sheep. The shepherd even goes so far as to pursue His sheep! This should remind and teach us to trust God always, even when it doesn't seem like He is taking us in the right direction!*

4. Summarize Psalm 27. (2-3 sentences)

*A: In this psalm we see that David's hope is the salvation of Yahweh, but more specifically, that salvation is to be in the **presence of Yahweh** (cf. vss. 4, 8 and 13)! God is faithful and will not abandon the one who trusts in Him and so David has nothing to fear! Thus the psalm ends with a call to wait upon Yahweh, being strong and taking courage, because Yahweh is faithful to save!*

5. Comment on the structure of Psalm 34. Noting that it is an acrostic, what makes this acrostic different from 'normal' acrostics? What could be the purpose of this? What then is the purpose of this psalm (comment on how Psalm 34:11 fits into this purpose)? (1 paragraph)

*A: Psalm 34 is structured as an acrostic, yet with the waw line missing and with an extra pe line at the end. This of course is very odd, why would the psalmist go to all the work to write an imperfect acrostic? What is even more puzzling is that this same structure (or ones similar) occur multiple times in the psalms. This would suggest that the structure is purposeful. When we notice that in Hebrew poetry, there are structures such as chiasm that focus on the middle, and others that focus on the end or beginning, we see that by adding the pe line and by removing the waw line the first, middle, and end lines of the psalm are a-l-p. This forms the Hebrew word 'aleph', which is both the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (which is very fitting for an acrostic!) and also the Hebrew word for 'learn/teach'. It is this same middle line of the psalm which says, "**Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.**" These, of course, seem to be too many 'coincidences' to be accidental, and it appears that these 'aleph' psalms are intended to be wisdom psalms about teaching the fear of Yahweh (which as we remember is the major theme of wisdom literature). So this psalm seeks to teach the fear of Yahweh. Thus the emphasis in this psalm is on Yahweh's salvation of the **weak and lowly**. Fearing Yahweh means recognizing His greatness and our weakness. That will cause us to **humbly seek and depend** upon Him! This is the point of the psalm!*

6. Summarize Psalm 138. (2-3 sentences)

*A: David gives thanks to Yahweh and calls the world to do the same because Yahweh is faithful and always **keeps His Word**. Even though He is exalted, He regards the lowly and will certainly execute His purpose for His people!*

7. How do the first ten verses of Psalm 105 introduce its purpose? What then is the rest of the psalm about and how does this accomplish that purpose? (1 paragraph)

*A: The first ten verses of Psalm 105 introduce us to its **purpose**, to proclaim all that Yahweh has done as a **manifestation of His glorious character**. His acts of salvation on behalf of His people show that He is a faithful God who keeps covenant. This is so clearly seen in God's interaction with Israel who constantly rebelled and yet God's purpose for them was never thwarted. This is nothing but grace and the faithfulness of God on display. God's promise to Abraham is everlasting, and God has already shown in history His*

*commitment to keep His Word. Their history also powerfully displays His **saving power on behalf of His people**, but for **His own name's sake**!*

8. Comment on how the first six verses of Psalm 106 introduce its purpose and how that is then played out in the rest of the psalm. What differences in emphasis are there between this and the previous psalm? (1 paragraph)

*A: Once again, much like Psalm 105, Psalm 106 begins with an introduction which helps us to see that the retelling of Israel's history is for the **purpose of showing Yahweh's goodness and loyal love**. He is always faithful to His covenant, and therefore is displaying His **righteousness**. There seems to be a much larger emphasis in this psalm however on Israel's sin, and thus on **God's grace** in keeping His Word despite them. He did this for the sake of His own name and reputation (106:8, 47)!*

9. What is Yahweh praised for in Psalm 135? (2-3 sentences)

*A: Yahweh is to be praised because He is great and He is good! This is seen in His actions, He chose Jacob and acted on his behalf. He smashes idols and has compassion on His people. So He should be blessed continually by all His people, yes, bless Yahweh!*

10. What phrase is repeated twenty-six times in Psalm 136? Why do you think this phrase is repeated so many times in this psalm and why is this concept so central to God's self-revelation in the OT? (1 paragraph)

*A: "For His loyal love is everlasting" is the repeated phrase. God's **hesed** is such a key concept in the OT, meaning His faithful love to and relationship with His people. That the God of the universe created people to be in a relationship with Him is almost incomprehensible. That "God is love" and has shown this love towards His lowly creatures is at the center of who God has revealed Himself to be. We're reminded of the great self-revelation of Yahweh in Exodus 33:19 and 34:6 where Yahweh's goodness, all of His character and attributes, is revealed to Moses and stated as, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion," and, "Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and truth; who keeps loyal love for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." This **loyal love** of Yahweh, that acts on behalf of sinful people is indeed at the center of who Yahweh is, and thus also at the **center of His plan to display His character in Jesus**. Thus the cross is the ultimate display of God's faithful love towards sinners and the preeminent example of God's gracious saving power!*

11. Thought question: What do we learn about worship from the Psalms as a whole? How do the songs we sing in church compare to the Psalms? (1 paragraph)

12. Application: What do we learn from these psalms about gratitude and what we should be meditating on and thinking about if we want to be thankful?

## **6. Kingdom through Covenant**

**Scripture:** The Old Testament

**Theme:** Yahweh will Sovereignly bring His Kingdom through Covenant Relationship with His People because of His Faithfulness

**Objectives:**

- To see how God's Rule in heaven relates to His Rule on earth
- To understand how the various OT Covenants relate to each other
- To see the big picture of what God was accomplishing in the OT

**Reading:**

- Selected Passages listed in the questions.

**Questions:**

1. Trace the theme of **the Kingdom** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about the kingdom: Genesis 1:26; 49:10; Exodus 15:18-19; 19:5-6; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; Judges 17:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8:4-9; 13:13-14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 5:12; 7:8-16; Micah 4:1-4; 5:2-5; Isaiah 2:2-4; 6:5; 9:6-7; 11:1-4; 40:9-10; 42:1-4; 52:7; Ezekiel 34: 23-24; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zechariah 6:12-15; 9:9; 14:9, 16-17; 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 17:11-14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 13:8; 20:6; Daniel 2:44; 4:3; 4:33-34; 7:9-14, 21-22, 26-27; Psalm 2:6-9; 45:6-7; 47:2-8; 72:1-4; 96:9-13; 97:1-2; 99:1-5; 110:1-2 (3-4 paragraphs).

A:

2. Define and explain the relationship between God's universal rule and His rule on earth (1 paragraph).

A:

3. How does humanity and our created purpose fit into God's kingship and rule (1 paragraph)?

A:

4. What do the prophets predict concerning God's kingdom? How do these predictions relate and bring together humanity's purpose and God's rule (1 paragraph)?

A:

5. How do God's universal rule, His rule on earth, His creation of humanity and our purpose, and the future coming of God's kingdom all relate together to form a cohesive picture of the Kingdom of God (1 paragraph)?

A:



6. Trace the theme of **Covenant** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about covenant(s): Genesis 6:18, 22; 7:24-8:1; 12:1-4; 15:18; 17:2-21; Exodus 2:24-25; 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 5:1-7; 6:1-13; 29:1, 14-15; 30:1-6; Joshua 7:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:12-16; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:22-30; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 12:23; Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-8; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 59:16-21; Jeremiah 31:31-40; 33:25-26; Ezekiel 16:8, 59-63; 36:24-28; 37:21-28; Micah 7:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 21:7; Exodus 34:6 (3-4 paragraphs).

A:

7. What do we learn about covenants in general from these passages? What kind of covenants are there in Scripture (1-2 paragraphs)?

A:

8. Summarize the Abrahamic, Mosaic, David, and New Covenants. How are they similar, and how are they different from one another? How do they all relate to each other (1-2 paragraphs)?

A:

9. How is God's plan worked out through the Biblical Covenants and what is highlighted through this plan (1-2 paragraphs)?

A:

## 7. Right Relationship with God

**Scripture:** The Old Testament

**Theme:** God is Righteous and the Only Way to be in Right Relationship with Him is to Humbly Believe in Him for Salvation

**Objectives:**

- To understand the nature of righteousness and justice as character of God and men
- To understand the relational aspect of righteousness and how righteousness comes from right relationship with God
- To see the connection between faith, salvation, and righteousness, and how salvation comes from humble trust in God and God alone

**Reading:**

- Selected Passages listed in the questions

**Questions:**

1. Trace the theme of **Righteousness/Justice** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about righteousness: Genesis 6:9, 22; 7:1; 15:6; 18:17-19, 25; 38:26; Deuteronomy 4:8; 6:25; 32:4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 8:15; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:32; Amos 5:22-24; Hosea 2:19-20; 10:12-13; Micah 7:8-10; Isaiah 11:1-5; 16:5; 26:1-10; 32:1, 16; 42:6; 45:25; 46:13; 50:8; 51:1-8; Zephaniah 3:5; Habakkuk 2:4; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Zechariah 9:9; Job 1:1; 8:3; 13:18; 27:6; 32:1; 33:12, 32; 34:5; 42:7-8; Psalm 1:5-6; 7:8, 17; 19:9; 23:3; 36:5-6; 69:28; 72:2; 89:14; 98:1-2, 9; Proverbs 31:1-9 (3-4 paragraphs).

A:

2. What characterizes righteousness? What does it look like for people to be righteous (1 paragraph)?

A:

3. What is the connection between righteousness and humility and compassion (1 paragraph)?

A:

4. How can people be righteous according to these verses (1 paragraph)?

A:

5. Trace the theme of **Faith/trust** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about faith: Genesis 3:20; 15:6; Exodus 4:1, 5, 31; 14:31; 19:9; Numbers 14:11; Jonah 3:5; Micah 7:7; Isaiah 7:9; 12:2; 25:9; 26:1-8; 28:16; 30:15, 18; 33:2; 36:7, 15; 37:10; Habakkuk 2:4-5; 3:16-18; Proverbs 3:5-6; 29:25; Psalm 9:10; 27:1-4, 13-14; 31:6, 14; 40:3-4; 78:22, 32; 106:12, 24 (3-4 paragraphs).

A:

6. What is the connection between faith and waiting? Why is faith at the heart of salvation (1 paragraph)?

A:

7. Why is humility at the core of belief and faith (1 paragraph)?

A:

8. Trace the theme of **salvation** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about salvation: Exodus 6:6; 14:13, 30; 15:2; Deuteronomy 33:29; Judges 2:16-18; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22:1-4, 47-51; Jonah 2:9; Isaiah 12:2; 33:2-6; 49:6-8; 51:6-8; 52:7, 10; 53:1; Habakkuk 3:1-19; Jeremiah 33:16; Psalm 67:1-2; 96:2; 98:2-3 (3-4 paragraphs).

A:

9. What is the connection between Yahweh's salvation and His righteousness (1 paragraph)?

A:

10. What is the nature of God's salvation and why is it connected to faith (1 paragraph)?

A:

## **8. Worshiping the Unique God**

**Scripture:** The Old Testament

**Theme:** God is Holy, so those who Serve Him must be Sanctified by Sacrifice and thus are Blessed by God and a Blessing to others

**Objectives:**

- To be awed at the holiness of God
- To see the source of and God's design in blessing
- To understand in the priesthood God design for coming close to Him and passing that on to others
- To see the importance of penal substitutionary atonement, but also the need for transformed hearts and not merely external obedience

**Reading:**

- Selected Passages listed in the questions

**Questions:**

1. Trace the theme of **holiness/purity** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about holiness/purity: Genesis 2:3; Exodus 3:5; 19:5-6; 20:8-11; 29:41-46; 31:13; Leviticus 10:1-3, 10; 11:44; 21:1-8; 22:32; Numbers 3:13; Joshua 5:15; Isaiah 1:4; 6:1-3; 29:23; 62:12; Jeremiah 2:7-8; Ezekiel 36:17-28; 37:28; 38:23; 39:7; 44:23; Haggai 2:11-13; Zechariah 14:20-21; Malachi 2:11; Psalm 99 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

2. What is the connection between holiness and purity (1 paragraph)?

A:

3. Why is God to be treated holy according to these verses (1 paragraph)?

A:

4. Trace the theme of **blessing** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about blessing: Genesis 1:28; 2:3; 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; Exodus 18:10; Numbers 6:23-27; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 1:47-48; 8:55-56; 10:4-9; Job 1:10, 21; 2:9; 42:12; Psalm 1:1; 2:12; 32:1-2; 34:1, 8; 67:1-2, 6-7; 72:15-20; 135:19-21 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

5. How are the different types of blessing related to each other? In other words, how is God's blessing of people, peoples' blessing of God, and the priests' blessing of the people related and what does this teach about God (1 paragraph)?

A:

6. Explain God's plan to bless the world and the function of 'priesthood' within that plan (1 paragraph)?

A:

7. Trace the theme of **priesthood** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about priesthood: Genesis 14:18; Exodus 19:5-6; 28:1-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:28-35; Micah 3:11; Isaiah 61:6; Haggai 2:11-13; Zechariah 3:1, 8; 6:11-13; Malachi 2:1-9; Psalm 110:4; 132:9, 16 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

8. Describe all the different aspects of the roles of priests and how this paints a picture of their function and purpose (1 paragraph)?

A:

9. Trace the theme of **sacrifice** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about sacrifice: Genesis 3:21; 22:1-2; Exodus 3:18; 12:3-14, 27; Leviticus 3:1-5; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:22; Hosea 2:13; Isaiah 1:11; 19:21; 34:6; 52:15; 53:5, 10; Psalm 40:6; 50:8-15; 51:16-17 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

10. Explain the importance of penal substitutionary atonement in the Old Testament system (1 paragraph).

A:

11. Yet despite the importance of sacrifice in God's system, what does God say that relativizes their importance and what does He say about what really pleases Him (1 paragraph)?

A:

## **9. God is Near**

**Scripture:** The Old Testament

**Theme:** God is Immanent in History and Works through His Angel and His Spirit and ultimately, His Messiah to Come and Dwell with His people and Make all things right on His Day

**Objectives:**

- To see God's immanence and involvement throughout the Old Testament
- To yearn for God's presence as the central blessing from which all other blessings flow
- To see the need for God's Spirit to empower and to feel our helplessness apart from Him
- To grow in hope for the Messiah to come and make all things right
- To increase our fear of Yahweh's awesome power and to be in awe of His judgment

**Reading:**

- Selected Passages listed in the questions

**Questions:**

1. Trace the theme of **God's presence and His Angel** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about God's presence: Genesis 3:8; 5:24; 17:1; 18:1, 8; 32:30; Exodus 3:2; 13:21; 14:19; 14:24; 29:42-46; 33:1-3, 11, 15-16; 40:21, 34-38; Joshua 3:11; 5:15; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 4:22; 5:4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 6:17; 7:1-5; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:27, 29; Isaiah 7:14; 40:9-10; Ezekiel 1:26-28; 8:2; 37:24-28; 43:2-9; 44:4; Daniel 7:9-14; 10:5-6; Zechariah 1:8, 11-12; 2:8-13; 3:1, 5-6; 12:10; 14:3-5, 9; Psalm 96:11-13 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

2. What does God's presence with His people signify (1 paragraph)?

A:

3. What does the Angel of Yahweh do or signify in the passages where He appears (1 paragraph)?

A:

4. Trace the theme of **God's Spirit** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about God's Spirit: Genesis 1:2; 2:7; 6:3; Exodus 35:31; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 10:9-10; 16:13-16, 23; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 23:2-3; Joel 2:28-29; Micah 3:8; Isaiah 11:1-2; 42:1; 61:1; Ezekiel 3:12; 11:24; 36:26-27; 37:1, 14; 39:29; Haggai 1:14; 2:5; Zechariah 4:6; 7:12; 12:10; Psalm 104:29-30; 143:10 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

5. What does God's Spirit do in the Old Testament, and what does this teach us about His work and role (1 paragraph)?

A:

6. What does the Old Testament teach us about our status without God and our need for Him to work (1 paragraph)?

A:

7. Trace the theme of **Messiah** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about God's Spirit: Genesis 3:15; 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Micah 5:2, 4-5; Isaiah 4:2; 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 50:4-10; 52:13-15; 53:3-5, 11; 61:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-18; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-26; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 2:8-13; 3:8-10; 6:12-13; 9:9-10; 11:9-14; 12:10; 13:7; Psalm 2:1-12; 22; 110:1-4 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

8. What characterizes the coming of the Messiah and what should this instill within us (1 paragraph)?

A:

9. Trace the theme of **Yahweh's Day** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about Yahweh's Day: Obadiah 1:15; Joel 2:1-14; 18-32; Amos 5:18-20; Isaiah 13:6-13; Zephaniah 1:2-18; 2:10-11; 3:8-20; Malachi 4:5 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

10. What will Yahweh's Day be like when it comes? What should our response to this be (1 paragraph)?

A:

## 10. Spitting in God's Face

**Scripture:** The Old Testament

**Theme:** Sin Doubts God's Goodness and Refuses to Trust His Word and that Disbelief and Perspective Spreads and Affects those around us and Justly Receives God's Righteous Wrath as a Result

**Objectives:**

- To understand the inherent authority of God's Word and our need to trust God and His goodness
- To see the heinousness of sin and how it is ultimately rebellion
- To understand the nature of sin as deceit and how the truth is what fights sin
- To understand the corporate nature and affects of sin and the nature of culture's affect
- To feel the weight of God's jealousy for His glory and to be in awe of His righteous wrath

**Reading:**

- Selected Passages listed in the questions

**Questions:**

1. Trace the theme of **the authority of God's Word** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage about the authority of God's Word: Genesis 1:3; 3:1; Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:1-7, 22; 6:1-3, 4-9, 24-25; Joshua 1:8-9; 23:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:22-29; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 13:5, 7-9, 15-22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 1:17; 7:16; 10:17; 14:25; Ezra 7:6, 10; Nehemiah 8:1-13; Isaiah 40:8; 41:21-23; 46:9-11; 55:9-11; Job 32:7-8; Proverbs 3:5-7; 30:1-6; Psalm 1:1-3; 19:10-14; 119:9, 11, 70, 89, 93, 97, 99, 100, 105, 130, 148, 154, 160, 169 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

2. Why does God's Word have authority, and how is this authority connected with His goodness (1 paragraph)?

A:

3. Trace the theme of **sin and rebellion** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about sin and rebellion: Genesis 3:1-7; 4:5-7, 13; 6:2, 5; 13:13; 18:20-21; 50:17; Exodus 20:1-20; 23:32-33; 32:31; 34:6-7; Leviticus 4:2-3; Numbers 15:22-31; Deuteronomy 13:5-15; 22:25-26; 29:14-19; Joshua 7:1; 20:3; 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:33-34, 46; Isaiah 1:4-6; 53:5-6, 11-12; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 3:20-21; Daniel 9:20, 24; Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29; Proverbs 20:9; 21:4; Psalm 19:12-13; 32:1-5; 51:1-6 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

4. What is the nature of sin as doubt, and how is sin connected with the idea of autonomy (1 paragraph)?

A:



5. How is sin connected to our desires, and how are these desires connected to our perspective (1 paragraph)?

A:

6. Trace the theme of **corporate solidarity** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches about corporate solidarity: Genesis 4:9; 18:23-26; Exodus 34:7; Numbers 16:22, 26; 15:1-13; Deuteronomy 29:9-14; Joshua 7:1, 11-13; 22:16-20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 24:1, 15; Obadiah 1:10-12; Ezekiel 3:17-21; 18:1-4, 20; Malachi 1:10-11; Daniel 9:4-14; Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 32:35-36, 40-43; Hosea 9:7; Psalm 58:11-12; Deuteronomy 4:36-38; Proverbs 3:11-12: 12:1 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

7. How does one person's sin affect others and why does God view sin from a corporate perspective (1 paragraph)?

A:

8. Trace the theme of **God's jealousy and wrath** through the Old Testament. Read through the following verses and give a one sentence summary of what each passage teaches on this topic: Exodus 20:5; 34:13-16; Numbers 16:45-50; 25:1-4, 11-13; Deuteronomy 4:24-26; 9:3, 7-8; 29:22-29; 32:16, 21-22; Joshua 7:1; 22:20; 24:19-20; Isaiah 13:9-13; 34:2-10; 59:18; 63:1-7; Micah 5:15; Nahum 1:2-3; Zephaniah 1:18; Jeremiah 21:12; Ezekiel 16:38, 42-43; 23:25; 24:13; 36:5-8; 39:25; Psalm 2:5; 7:11; 110:5 (2-3 paragraphs).

A:

9. How do we come to grips with the topic of God's wrath? What would cause us to see it as righteous and good and what prevents us from seeing it that way (1 paragraph)?

A: