

LESSONS for TODAY

from the

***MAJOR
PROPHETS***

**LIFE-LESSONS FOR THE
PEOPLE OF GOD**

by Keith S. Andrews

Lessons For Today from the Major Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Daniel

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LESSON 1

THE ROLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET

THE NEED FOR REVELATION

A. Man cannot discover God, God must reveal Himself.

1. Man takes his finite understanding and extrapolates it into infinity.
2. Man takes his human character and extrapolates it into divinity.
3. Man can only discover a god created in his own image!

B. The means of God's revelation

1. "General revelation" - God reveals Himself through His creation.
2. "Special revelation" - Revelation through the inspired spoken and written words of men.
3. "Personal revelation" – God revealed through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHET

A. The prophet is one who "speaks for God," or who stands as God's representative before the people.

1. The Hebrew word for prophet, *nabi*, means "one who has been called."
2. One was a prophet because of the *calling* and *empowering* of God, not because of training or heritage.
3. It was the *Spirit of the Lord* who spoke through the prophet. The words of the true prophet were, therefore, the revealed Words of God.
4. The prophets of God were often called "seers," *ro'eh* or *hozeh*. This name refers to one who sees the situation from God's perspective. "*Who can know the mind of God except the Spirit of God?*"

B. Office established in the person of Moses

1. Earlier godly men were called "prophets."
 - Jesus numbered Abel with the prophets (Lk. 11:50-51).
 - Enoch is called a prophet by Jude (Jude 1:14).

NOTES:

REVELATION - It is not possible for us to know what another person is thinking unless they communicate their thoughts to us in some way. If this is true of other people, how much more is it true of God!

Pagan gods and goddesses tend to be creatures of immense power who have the same weakness as men, the same goals and objectives as men, and the same methods of achieving their goals as men (consider those of the Greeks and Romans). Remember Isa. 55:8-9 "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

- In Abimelech's dream, God refers to Abraham as a prophet (Gen. 20:7).
2. The office of prophet was patterned on the relationship between God and Moses (Deut. 18:18).

ELEMENTS OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

1. Encouraging trust in God's power and mercy rather than human strength, merits, or wisdom.
2. Reminding the people that safety and blessedness depend on faithful adherence to the covenant.
3. Encouraging the people with God's promises of redemption and restoration.
4. Demonstrating God's sovereignty through fulfilled prophecy (See Isa. 42:9; 44:7-8).

Read Deut. 18:15-22.

1. Why was the prophetic office established? **So that the people of God could be instructed and encouraged without direct contact with God Himself. (They greatly feared God).**
2. How were the people to respond to the words of the prophet? **The people were accountable to God for their response to the prophet's words.**
3. How were they to know false from true prophets? **The prophets were also held accountable for their words. If a prophet said anything that did not come to pass, he was to be put to death.**
4. God called many prophets to speak His words to His people. Did any of them perfectly fulfill this promise? (Consider Deut. 34:9-12). **It would seem that no prophet after the era of Moses fulfilled this promise as Moses had (i.e., had "face to face" communication with God)**
5. Is the ultimate fulfillment of this passage to be found in Jesus? (Compare this passage with Jn. 6:14, 7:16, 8:28, 12:48-50, 14:23-24; Acts 3:22-23). **Yes, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise.**
6. Jesus Christ is our Prophet, our Priest and our King. Considering Deut. 18:19, how should we receive His words as recorded in the Gospels? **We should expect that God will hold us accountable for our response to them.**

THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

There is some controversy today concerning the prophetic ministry. Some contend that God calls and empowers prophets today to communicate His Word to His people. Others contend that God communicates in the present time only through His written Word (the Bible). In any case, this much is sure; the message of the OT prophets (Ill to the left) is essential for the church today!

THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

- A. Exalting God and encouraging the people to a life of faith.
- B. Warning the people of the consequences of sin and encouraging them in fulfilling their covenant responsibilities.
- C. Proclaiming the gospel of hope.
- D. Proving that our God is sovereign over history.

LESSON 2

THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

THE HISTORICAL FOCUS OF THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

A. The immediate need

1. To proclaim or explain God's will to the people
2. To apply God's Word to the present life situation
3. To instruct or correct

B. The near future

1. To call to repentance or warn of judgment
2. To remind the people of their covenant relationship and responsibilities.
3. The fulfillment of these prophecies was in the future of the first hearers, but in our past.

C. The far future

1. Spoke to the people's situation from the perspective of God's over-all plan of salvation history.
2. Fulfillment is often universal in scope.
3. The fulfillment is in our future as well as that of the first hearers.

D. While the message is *to* the people of God, it may be *about*:

1. God's people – their moral, ethical, and religious conduct.
2. Surrounding nations – the people are often reminded that God rules sovereignly over all nations.
3. The world – God superintends His creation according to His own will and purpose and will forever.

PROPHETIC LANGUAGE

A. God spoke through the prophet in 1st person

See. Isa. 43:14-21, 45:18-19

B. The words of the prophet are attributed to God.

1. "This is what the LORD says"
2. "This is what the sovereign LORD says"
3. "Hear the word of the LORD, . . ."
4. "Then the word of the LORD came to me: . . ."

NOTES:

Prophecy and *preaching* have the same three basic purposes:
1- proclamation or explanation
2- application to life
3- instruction or correction

QUESTION: Do preachers need the spiritual gift of prophecy?

The prophet's warnings were often conditional. Much like a parent saying, "If you don't get down from there you'll fall and hurt yourself!!"

Prophecy gives man God's point of view. The eternal perspective does not come naturally – it requires revelation.

NOTE: The primary purpose of predictive prophecy is to teach God's people that *He is the God of history*. In spite of the fact that it may not seem to be so, God's purposes will be carried out. (See Isa. 44:6-8, 46:10-11).

It is significant to note that the prophet delivered, not just God's *message*, but God's *words*. (Discuss the difference – *verbal plenary inspiration*).

C. Prophets delivered their message by:

1. Brief oral statements
2. Long oral speeches
3. Descriptions of their visions
4. Writing their message
5. Symbolic actions

At times, the prophets were required to live out or dramatize the message as well as proclaim it or write it. It was significant that their actions had to match their words. [Relate this to *lifestyle* or *relational evangelism*.]

LITERARY STYLES OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

A. Poetry

1. Because of its rhythm and form, poetry is more easily memorized.
 2. Ideas can be more clearly explained using poetic forms.
- **Synonymous parallelism** – the second line expresses a thought identical or similar to that of the first line.

A *“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,*
A’ *your sins like the morning mist.”*
(Isa. 44:22)

A *“Hear the word of the LORD,*
You rulers of Sodom;
A’ *listen to the law of our God,*
You people of Gomorrah!” (Isa 1:10)

Synonymous parallelism is quite helpful in providing explanations of things. In the example, we see that “offenses” and “sins” are alike; and that the “word of the Lord” and the “law of our God” are the same – also that they are to be listened to!

- **Antithetical parallelism** – the second line expresses a thought which is in sharp contrast to that of the first line
- +A *“They do not cry out to me from their hearts*
-A *but wail upon their beds.*
+B *they gather together for grain and new wine*
-B *but turn away from me.*
+C *I trained them and strengthened them,*
-C *but they plot evil against me.”*
(Hos. 7:14-15)
- **Synthetic parallelism** – the second (or subsequent) line continues or adds to the thought of the first; often creating a type of progression.

“What the locust swarm has left,
the great locusts have eaten;
what the great locusts have left,
the young locusts have eaten;
what the young locusts have left,
other locusts have eaten.” (Joel 1:4)

B. Apocalyptic literature

1. Characteristics

- Consists of dreams and/or visions
- Often includes angel messages
- Addresses those who are living through a crisis

2. Common subjects

- Two ages – this present age / the age to come
- Apostasy
- Salvation for the people of God
- The resurrection of the righteous
- An anti-God figure
- The Messiah
- The triumph of right and the judgment of evil

3. Helps for interpretation

- Remember that the imagery is symbolic. Don't press for an overly-literal meaning.
- Look for the main point of the passage.
- Consider the historic context.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

– It almost seems that writing of this type is purposely difficult to understand. The word Apocalypse, however, comes from a Gk. word which means, "an uncovering or revealing." Properly understood, this literature serves to make things which *were obscure* more *clear*.

In some ways, the word pictures in apocalyptic literature must be handled like the parables – the meaning is in the big picture rather than the details. It is easy to "miss the forest for the trees."

LESSON 3

ISAIAH'S CALL AND MINISTRY

I. THE OBJECT OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY

Read the opening verses of Isaiah (vv. 1-4). Here we see a clear picture of the condition of the people of Judah. Describe their relationship to God. **They had forsaken God; "turned their backs on him." (is this possible?)**

Read vv. 10-17. Have the people abandoned the practices of the Hebrew religion? **No** How would you describe the problem? (Consider also 2 Tim. 3:1-5). **They had "religion" (i.e., form/ritual) without relationship. They had a form of godliness, but did not serve God Himself.**

Isaiah's ministry was to reveal the truth concerning the condition of the covenant people from God's point of view.

Isaiah served the people of God under kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. During the early part of this period Judah was economically prosperous and politically successful. In this atmosphere of prosperity, the people came to think of themselves as self-sufficient--they developed an attitude of carnal self-confidence.

God was preparing to intervene. Isaiah was His chosen vessel to issue the call to repentance. As Gleason Archer wrote, "a holy God will not permit unholiness in His covenant people and will therefore deal with them in such a way as to chasten and purge them and make them fit to participate in His program of redemption." Isaiah's approach was two-fold:

- 1) to point out the sinful and rebellious condition of the nation and the need for repentance.
- 2) to proclaim the hope of redemption and the faithfulness of God.

Would this be a valid pattern for us to follow in sharing the gospel?

Yes. Repentance requires an acknowledgment of sin.

Conversion requires an acknowledgment of one's lost condition.

NOTES:

RELIGION WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP

True worship is a response. It follows that one who loves God will, as a result of that devotion, desire to serve and to obey Him. The acts of worship, apart from a true and living relationship, are meaningless. They are, in fact, an abomination to God. Read and consider 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 15:8; Amos 5:21-24; Matt. 9:13.

WE MUST BE CAREFUL THAT OUR WORSHIP IS NOT, AND DOES NOT BECOME, A ROUTINE OF "GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS!"

SECULARISM - Modern secularism is little different from the attitude of Judah under Uzziah (i.e., carnal self-confidence).

Even in the midst of condemnation we find words of hope. Read vs. 18. Is this hope unreasonable? Why or why not? (Consider also Acts 17:2, 18:4). **The gospel is the truth. The truth is the basis of rationality. Its source is God who is the source of rationality. To deny God is unreasonable!**

Read and compare Isa 1:18, 43:25, 44:21-23; Ps. 51:7. Who will accomplish the redemption of God's chosen people and for what purpose? **It is the Lord Himself who is the Redeemer. He has accomplished this for "his own sake," because of His mercy and love, to fulfill the promises of the covenant.**

II. ISAIAH'S COMMISSION

Read Isa. 6:1-13. It has been suggested that it was because the king (Uzziah) had died that Isaiah was suddenly able to see the true King, Yahweh Himself, who sits on the throne and rules over the affairs of nations (see vs. 1). Read 2 Chron. 26:16-22 for an account of the circumstances of Uzziah's death.

What is the result of Isaiah's vision of God (vs. 5; also consider Ex. 33:18-20; Luke 5:8; Rev. 1:12-18)? **It is not in comparing ourselves to other men that we become aware of our sinful condition, but when we see ourselves in relation to the living God. Isaiah has recognized his own unrighteousness. How was Isaiah prepared for his mission? (vs. 6) His sin was removed and his guilt taken away (not the same thing--discuss).**

The mission given to Isaiah seems to be one without hope of a positive result (vv. 9-13). What do you think is God's purpose in sending Isaiah? **Perhaps the message was aimed toward the faithful remnant or perhaps it was given so that the people of Judah would be without excuse.**

To whom is the church to preach the gospel? (See Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19; Ps. 96:3) **The gospel is to be preached to the lost. It is a message of hope for sinners, it is light for those who live in darkness.**

THE RATIONALITY OF THE GOSPEL - It is often claimed by secularists that belief in God is unreasonable. For them, faith = belief in that which is unprovable or trust in that which has no basis in fact.

The phrase "blind faith" is commonly used to describe biblical faith. However, biblical faith has as its basis the revelation of God, presented and preserved in His Word (the Bible) and confirmed in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. In addition, there is the witness of countless lives through the ages which testify to the truth of the gospel. In order to reject the truth of the gospel of God, one must first reject evidence which is obvious. Consider Rom. 1:18-22; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:3-4.

Lesson 4

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT, RESTORATION, CONSOLATION AND REDEMPTION

PROCLAIMING GOD'S JUDGMENT

Read Isa. 5:1-7. Notice that the vinegrower has planted his vineyard "on a fertile hillside" (vs. 1), that he "dug it up and cleared it of stones," that he "planted the choicest vines," and that he "built a watchtower and cut a winepress." Having done all this, what sort of crop should the vinegrower expect (vs. 2)? **A bountiful crop of "good grapes."** What sort of crop did the vineyard actually produce? **The vinegrower found only "bad grapes."** In vv. 5-6 we see the response of the vinegrower. What does he plan to do? **Take away the hedge, tear down the wall, stop pruning and cultivating, not command the clouds to rain on it.**

In vs. 7 we see that the vinegrower is the Lord and that the vineyard represents the people of His covenant. The Lord's response to their lack of fruitfulness sets a pattern that we will see played out again and again in Isaiah. In vv. 5-6 we see the removal of God's *protection*, His *provision*, and His *blessing*. This is the character of God's judgment upon His own people.

Compare the preceding passage to Jesus' words in John 15:1-8. In what ways do the two passages relate? **In both cases the Father is seen as the vinegrower, in both cases we see the requirement of fruitfulness, in both cases we see the need for pruning. It is clear that there is no difference in the requirements for Israel or the church.**

In chapters 13-23 we find prophecies of judgment upon the unbelieving nations that surround Israel (Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus [Syria], Cush, Egypt, Tyre [Phoenicia]). This section concludes with a prophecy of judgment upon the whole earth in chapter 24. Who is to be the object of this judgment? (vs. 2) **No one is excluded on the basis of station or position.** What is

NOTES:

THE VINEGROWER AND THE VINEYARD – The grapevine is used in a symbolic way throughout Scripture. Its product is seen to symbolize *joy, prosperity, and blessedness* – as is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). It is only a right relationship with God that produces such fruit. The vine itself often represents the people of God. [QUESTION: Why did Jesus refer to Himself as the vine? – identification w/the church]

Vines require constant care to keep them productive. They must be regularly pruned and cultivated.

GOD'S JUDGMENT (vv. 5-6) God is not destroying the vineyard, as He surely could, by sending down fire from heaven. He is simply removing His gracious provision.

1- The *wall* and the *hedge* had been provided to protect the vineyard from vermin, vandals, and thieves.

2- God's *pruning* and *cultivation* allowed the vines to produce fruit unhindered by overgrowth, briars, and thorns.

3- The *rain* is necessary for health and growth.

DISCUSS HOW EACH OF THE ABOVE IS MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN AND IN THE CHURCH TODAY.

the offense that is being judged? (vs. 5) **The people have disobeyed the laws and violated the statutes--they have been disobedient.**

Notice the sudden emergence of praise in vv. 14-16a. Even as vs. 6 hinted, there is a faithful remnant. These, the people of God, the church, are preserved. Notice that they come from the *west* (vs. 14), from the *east* (vs. 15), from the *islands of the sea* (vs. 15), from the *ends of the earth* (vs. 16). Even in the midst of judgment, God has not forgotten His covenant, nor has He abandoned His people.

The time of distress for the ungodly nations is a time of redemption for the people of God!

The prophecy ends in victory for our God and for His people (vs. 23).

PROCLAIMING HOPE

Where the previous chapters have dealt primarily with the sins of the God's people, His call to repentance, and His judgment, chapter 40 begins a new section which proclaims *consolation, hope, redemption, and restoration.*

Read Isa. 40. The message is clear, "*your hope is in the Sovereign Lord who transcends all else. What He wills is what shall come to pass!*" In this passage we see God's *forgiveness* (vs. 2), His *glory* (vs. 5), His *authority* (vs. 8), His *sovereignty* (vs. 10), His *power* (vs. 12), His *wisdom* (vv. 13-14), His *majesty* (vs. 15), His *supremacy* (vs. 18ff, 25ff), His *grace* (vs. 29-31).

Read Isa. 65:17-25. Isaiah's prophecy was to those who were soon to be carried into exile in Babylon. It was important for them to know that, even as they faced the day of their exile, there was a day of restoration coming. Read Revelation 21:1-22:5. Compare and contrast the two passages.

ISA. 24:1-16

The judgment depicted in these verses is similar to that symbolically depicted in the vineyard. God simply withholds His protection, provision, and blessings. The result is a world left to the ingenuity and wisdom of men (see vs. 5). Vv. 7-13 present an interesting picture. *It would seem that the party is over!* That is for the ungodly, the worldly, for those whose hope is in self rather than in God! **The contrast between their words of despair and the joyous proclamations of God's people (vv. 14-16) is stark!**

ISA. 40 – Discuss how each of these attributes of God applies to the believer:

Forgiveness – God Himself has dealt with our guilt and the penalty for our sin on the cross.

Glory – God is worthy of honor and praise.

Authority – We do not need to fear that God will change or fail.

Sovereignty – There is none who rules over God or who can contradict His Word or will.

Power – God can do as He wills. His promises, therefore, are sure.

Wisdom – The Lord's plan and His purposes are perfect.

Majesty – god is greater than any and all of our difficulties.

Supremacy – No idol, no ruler, no power is anything when compared to our God.

Grace – God meets the needs of all who trust Him because it is His plan and purpose to do so.

Lesson 5

THE MESSIAH IN THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH

WHAT IS “MESSIANIC” PROPHECY?

A. Messianic prophecy deals specifically with the *person and office of Messiah*.

1. A descendant of David who would rule the nations as supreme king.
2. One who would rule with righteousness and justice.
3. One who would rule with power and might.
4. Only when the Messiah is clearly in view should the prophecy be considered “Messianic.”

B. Soteriological prophecy

1. Deals with the general idea of God’s redemptive purpose and the time when this purpose will be achieved.
2. Does not deal explicitly with the role or person of Messiah.

C. Eschatological prophecy

1. Relates to the end of this present age and the establishing of the age to come.
2. While God is central, the Messiah figure is absent.

THE “THRONE NAMES” OF MESSIAH (CHRIST)

One of the clearest descriptions of Messiah is found in chapter 9 of Isaiah. Verses 6-7 present a striking portrait of His person and office. In Messiah, the dismal picture of the previous chapter becomes a picture of victory and hope.

A. *Wonderful Counselor*

This is counsel in the sense of plan, design, or purpose. Messiah is the One who brings to fruition the wonderful plan and purpose of Yahweh.

B. *Mighty God*

This phrase literally means, “God the helr, the mighty warrior.” The power of Messiah is so great that He can defeat all evil.

NOTES:

MESSIANIC PROPHECY

There is a large body of prophecy that deals with the *results* of Messiah’s work or with the *redemption* of God’s people in a general sense but which does not deal with or mention Messiah specifically. Such prophecy cannot properly be considered “Messianic.” Compare Isa. 1:18 or Isa. 44:22 – which are soteriological but not Messianic – with Isa 53:2-5.

THE THRONE NAMES OF CHRIST

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR – it is “in Christ” that the redemptive plan of God comes to fruition. His was, and is, not a matter of happenstance, but is the outworking of the eternal plan of God. Consider Eph. 1:3-6 and 1 Pet. 1:18-21.

MIGHTY GOD – Like Isaiah, we have, unclean lips and live among people of unclean lips.” For us to overcome evil by our own strength is clearly impossible. There is not evil that can stand before Christ, however. He is Lord of all! See Rev. 19:9-16, 17:14; Php. 2:9-11.

EVERLASTING FATHER – One might worry that his relationship with God through Christ is subject to change, that he might, for some reason, be rejected by God or stolen away from Him. Christ’s relationship with those

C. *Everlasting Father*

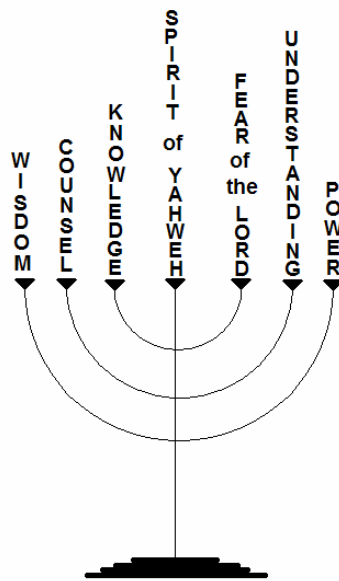
The Messiah's care for His adopted family is never-ending. (Compare "Mighty God and "Everlasting Father" with Isa. 40:10-11, 63:16; Deut. 1:30-31; Ps. 103:13-17).

D. *Prince of Peace*

Through Messiah, a reconciliation shall be established between God and man. The rule of Messiah is a reign of peace between man and man as well.

MESSIAH AND THE SPIRIT OF YAHWEH

A. Isaiah 11:2-9



B. Messiah's calling (Isa. 61:1-3 and Luke 4:16-21)

1. Preach good news
2. Bind up the brokenhearted
3. Proclaim freedom from bondage
4. Inaugurate the year of jubilee and the day of vengeance.
5. To comfort all who mourn

MESSIAH, THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF YAHWEH

A. Isaiah 7:13-14

B. Isaiah 42:1-7

C. Isaiah 50:4-10

D. Isaiah 52:13-53:12

E. Isaiah 63:1-6

who have been given to Him is "everlasting." It is a secure relationship because it is based on His faithfulness and power. See Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:5; rom. 8:15; Jn 1:11-13.

PRINCE OF PEACE – Apart from the intervention of Christ, man is in a hopeless condition. He is incapable of achieving peace with God OR with his fellow man. See Isa. 48:22; Rom. 3:10-17; Lk 19:41-44. In Christ we find peace with God and, ultimately, peace with one another and with nature. (Isa. 11:6-9).

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

It is important that we not make false distinctions when we talk or think about the Holy Spirit.

Consider the following:
Spirit of Jesus – Acts 16:7; Php 1:19

Spirit of Christ/God – rom. 8:9; Php. 3:3

Spirit of His son – Gal. 4:6

Spirit of Truth – Jn 15:26

Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation – Eph. 1:17

Though there is a diversity of titles in the NT, there is but one Spirit of God. It is the same Spirit that was present at Jesus' baptism who ministers to and through us today.

QUESTION: Is Jesus still fulfilling His Messianic calling? If so, how?

Lesson 6

JEREMIAH'S CALL AND MINISTRY

GOD CALLS JEREMIAH

Read Jer. 1:4-10. At what point was it determined that Jeremiah should be a prophet of the Lord? (vs. 5) **Before Jeremiah was formed / before conception**

Who made this determination? **God** To whom was Jeremiah appointed a prophet? **Jeremiah was a prophet to the nations** Jeremiah's mission was six-fold. Which of these seem to be positive? (vs. 10)

to build

to plant

Which seem to be negative?

To Uproot

To Tear Down

To Destroy

To Overthrow

Why do you think that God put the negative things first? **In the same way that plowing precedes planting, sometimes the old must be torn down to make room for the new.** How might this be applied to God's dealings with individuals? **God does not "patch up" our old life. He gives us a new life "in Christ." (2 Cor. 5:17)**

As with many who speak the truth to a generation that is more comfortable with falsehood, Jeremiah found his calling a difficult one. Read Jer. 20:7-9. Is Jeremiah compelled to speak forth the word of God? Why or why not? **While it would not be correct to say that Jeremiah was "compelled," it is clear that he was called and was made very un-comfortable when he was disobedient to his calling**

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Jeremiah was the last of the "pre-exilic" prophets.

1. His ministry was primarily to Judah.
2. He prophesied in the years just prior to the Babylonian exile and during the time of the siege of Jerusalem.

B. Jeremiah prophesied under the rule of 5 kings

1. Josiah (during his reign the book of the law was found and read to the people)
2. Jehoahaz
3. Jehoiakim

NOTES:

JEREMIAH'S CALL -

Remember that a prophet is "one who is called." This is an example of God's Sovereignty and of His foreknowledge of the individual.

Jeremiah's call to be a "prophet to the nations" was not fulfilled in his lifetime unless one considers his Egyptian captivity at the end of his life to be the fulfillment. His prophecy, however, has certainly served as an instruction to the nations through history.

Consider Jer. 12:14-17, 24:5-7, 31:27-28. Regarding the need to remove the old to make way for the new, consider Mk. 2:21-22.

4. Jehoiachin
5. Zedekiah

C. Jeremiah did not go into Babylon at the time of the deportation. He was, instead, at a later date, abducted and carried into exile in Egypt where he died.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book of Jeremiah not chronological in order. It is for this reason that the NIV study bible calls it "one of the most difficult prophets to follow." Though some scholars maintain that it has been arranged topically, even this is difficult to demonstrate. It is known that Jeremiah's prophecies were written down by Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary. It is possible that he edited and organized them as well. Read Jer. 36 for an interesting account of Baruch's role in the preservation of Jeremiah's prophecy!

THE TWO SINS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Read Jer. 2:13. What are the two sins of the people?

1. They rejected the true and living God, His Word, and the covenant
2. They made "gods" of their own that could not hear or save.

Jesus said, "I will give you living water" (see Jn. 4:10-14). It is a sad thing when the people of God reject the living water that the Lord provides. Notice in Jer. 2:13a that it is man who has forsaken God and not God who has forsaken man. Is there evidence of this sin today? Comment. **The modernist has rejected the very existence of God. God has been excluded from public life in western civilization. The result is that the benefits of a relationship with God have also been excluded. God responds to unbelief and disobedience by removing His blessing and His protection and His provision.**

It is one thing to forsake the living and true God. It is quite another thing to fashion a replacement for Him. How do men "dig their own cisterns?" **Unregenerate man, being true to his nature, has put himself in the place of God. He looks to self, to his own wisdom and understanding (science) for salvation. Modern man rejects the very idea of sin!**

The incident with Jehoiakim presents a picture of those who respond to the Word of God by *rejecting its message* rather than by *complying with its instruction* (consider Jer. 26:12-13). The burning of the scroll hardly stopped the Babylonian invasion that it predicted. The king's response did, however, result in a curse upon himself and upon his family.

Lesson 7

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES OF WARNING AND HOPE

A CALL TO FAITHFULNESS

Jeremiah's primary warning to the people of God is to remain faithful in their covenant relationship. It is their unfaithfulness that is the root cause of the distress that is coming upon them. Read Jer. 3:6-8. To what does God compare this unfaithfulness? **Adultery within the covenant of marriage**

Consider James 4:4. How does James apply the same term? **James applies the term to a general worldliness (friendship with the world).**

The unfaithfulness of Judah went far beyond a simple turning from God. Their sin took on a far more vile character. What is described in the following passages?

Jer. 2: 5b, 9:13-14 **The people have abandoned God and His law and have turned to the worship of idols and demons (Bals)**

Jer. 44:16-17 **They have turned to the worship of a goddess (the "Queen of Heaven")**

Jer. 7:30-31, 19:5, 32:34-35 **They have offered their children as human sacrifices**

Read Jer. 2:20-28. Here we see a picture of futility. The people have turned away from the true and living God and have made gods of their own design. Their gods of wood and stone, however, are powerless to help them. It is a sad picture, but a familiar one. How might this passage be applied to the life of the modern Christian? **While Christians do not become actively involved in worshipping gods of wood and stone, they may easily begin to depend on (trust, put their faith in) things or people rather than God. Nothing in this life can replace the work of Christ, the love of the Father, or the empowering of the Holy Spirit!**

What are the benefits of faithfulness?

Ex. 19:5-6a **To belong to God and to serve Him alone**
Ps. 103:17-18 **God's everlasting love**
Lk. 19:17 **Responsibility, the opportunity to serve**
Rev. 2:10 **A crown of life**

NOTES:

ADULTERY - the sin of unfaithfulness. It is interesting that God uses the metaphor of divorce in this passage. In Matt. 19:8-9 Jesus says that marital infidelity (i.e., adultery) is the only acceptable reason for divorce. *FAITHFULNESS IS THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN ALL RELATIONSHIPS.*

WORLDLINESS - A person who is worldly (secular) lives his life as if there were no God. He acknowledges no standard and rejects all accountability.

BAAL WORSHIP - The word "baal" in the general sense means "lord" or "master." It is used in this general sense in certain biblical passages, even by a woman to describe her husband! In a more specific sense, though, Baal is used in reference to the primary god in the Canaanite pantheon. Baal is, in a sense, the "lord of demons." In Canaanite thinking, Baal ruled over lesser local deities. The Hebrews of Jeremiah's time had come to think of Yahweh as the "Baal" of the Israelites, "lord of the land." See Ps. 1-4.

QUEEN OF HEAVEN - Although not all scholars agree, it is most likely that the "queen of heaven" is a reference to the Phoenician/Syrian goddess, Ashtoreth or Asherah. The worship of this goddess of fertility was lewd. References to "Asherah poles" are common in the OT. (See Jer. 17:1-2)

THE PROMISE OF GOD

As terrible as Judah's apostasy might have been, it in no way annulled the promise of God. Though it required a purifying exile, Yahweh would restore His relationship with his people. The uprooting and destruction would simply be a prerequisite to God's planting and his building. What is the message of each of the following passages?

- Jer. 30:3 **God's plan is to return his people to the land of promise**
- Jer. 30:11 **His people will be disciplined but not destroyed**
- Jer 30:18-21 **He will allow them to rebuild their city and to repopulate the land**
- Jer 31:23-25 **God will see that proper worship is restored**

JEREMIAH'S PREDICTION OF A 70 YEAR CAPTIVITY

Read Jer. 25:1-14. There is not any universal agreement as to the exact meaning of this prophetic prediction. The major deportation of the Hebrews by Nebuchadnezzar took place in 586 B.C. The Babylonians were conquered by the Persian Empire in 539 B.C. Within a few years, a Jewish remnant was allowed to return to the land. This accounts for a time span of about 50 years. It is interesting, however, to consider the Temple rather than the presence of the people in the land. The Temple was destroyed in the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The rebuilding of the Temple was completed in 516 B.C.; exactly 70 years after its destruction!

Read Jer. 29:10-14.

Describe God's plans for his people (vs. 11). **He promises to prosper them, to give them hope and a future**

What were the great sins of the people that led to their exile?

Unfaithfulness to the living and true God and worship of false gods What does God require of them before they are returned from their captivity? (vv. 13-14) **That the people would seek Him with a whole heart** In what way is this important to us as well? (Consider Deut. 6:5; Josh. 22:5; Prov. 3:5-6; Mk. 12:28-30; Col. 3:23-24). **It is not possible to serve God with a divided heart; if we are to serve God, we must serve Him and Him alone.**

There is much said in the church today about "prosperity." Jer. 29:11 is often used as a "springboard" to launch into a discussion of how it is God's plan and purpose to make His people wealthy and comfortable. QUESTION: How do you understand "prosperity" in the kingdom of God?

Lesson 8

EZEKIEL'S CALL AND MINISTRY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ezekiel could be called, "the prophet of the exile." He was deported from Judah to Babylon in 597 B.C. (eleven years before the fall of Jerusalem) along with King Jehoiachin and "all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans-- a total of ten thousand" (2 Kings 24:8-15). It fell to Ezekiel to present "God's point of view" to the exiles. Their exile was not a failure on the part of God to protect His people from an enemy. Their exile was God's discipline upon a rebellious people who must repent and turn back to the God of their fathers.

Ezekiel was a priest, although it is uncertain whether he ever served in the Temple. His first vision came to him in Babylon at the age of 30--the age when Levites normally begin their priestly duties (See Ez. 1:1-3). Ezekiel was married, but his wife died (See Ez. 24:16-18). There is no mention in the book of Ezekiel's children.

EZEKIEL'S CALL AND THE ENABLING SPIRIT

Read Ez. 1:4-9, 22-28. What are the primary components in Ezekiel's vision? (Don't be overly specific) **Cloud, lightning, bright light; 4 living creatures (angels?); a glassy expanse; a powerful voice; a throne; fire; a rainbow; the glory of God.**

Compare Rev. 4:2-7, Dan. 7:9. Are there enough similarities to think that John and Daniel are describing the same scene as Ezekiel? **Yes** If so, what are they describing? **John says that his vision is of "the throne in heaven." It would seem that this is a vision of the heavenly sanctuary.**

When Ezekiel's vision is complete, he falls face down. Much like Isaiah, Ezekiel has come face to face with God. He has seen himself in the light of God's holiness and majesty. Read Ez. 2:1-2. When Ezekiel hears the voice of God, what is he told to do (vs. 1)? **God tells Ezekiel to stand up.**

How is Ezekiel able to do what the Lord instructed (vs. 2, consider also 8:2-3, 11:1, 24, 37:1)? **Ezekiel is lifted up by the Spirit of God. God has instructed Ezekiel, but has also provided the means to answer the call!**

NOTES:

PROPHETIC FORMS IN EZEKIEL:

Oral Communication - Ezekiel often simply came before the people and proclaimed the Word of the Lord to them.

Visions - It is difficult in this context to differentiate between visions and dreams. In any case, the content is solely from the Lord. The major visions in Ezekiel are:

- 1) Chapter 1 - the throne room of God.
- 2) Chapters 8-11 - Jerusalem
- 3) Chapter 37 - the valley of dry bones.
- 4) Chapters 40-48 - the New Temple

Metaphorical Actions - Often the message was demonstrated or "acted out" in some way by the prophet. This was probably done to intensify the impact of his message. Examples are:

- 1) 4:1-3 - modeling the siege of Jerusalem
- 2) 5:1 - Shaving his head and beard
- 3) 12:3-7 - digging through a wall
- 4) setting his face toward the objects of his oracles

Prophetic Discourse - Some is poetic, some is prose. historical /theological narrative--often allegorical. (ex. chap. 23).

SPIRITUAL ENABLEMENT -

What makes Christians different from anybody else? Why should they be any more able to provide comfort and help than anybody else? It is the presence of the living God that makes the difference! Eph 6:10, Zech. 4:6, 1 Cor. 2:4-5; 2 Chron. 32:7-8.

How might Ezekiel's experience be applied to our lives? Does God require us to fulfill our calling by means of our own strength and wisdom? How is God's calling fulfilled through us? Comment.

When God guides He also provides. He gives us whatever is needful for us to do what He has called us to do.

EZEKIEL AS WATCHMAN

Read Ez. 2:3-5. To whom is Ezekiel sent? **To Israel.** Does it seem that the people will respond positively to Ezekiel's message?

No. How is Ezekiel to evaluate the people's response (see vs. 7)?

Ezekiel's calling is to speak the words regardless of the response.

What might God's purpose be in sending Ezekiel on an unfruitful mission? **Perhaps God wants the rebellious ones to be without excuse. God has done His part in sending them a prophet to warn them.**

Read Ez. 3:16-21, 33:1-9. What is the purpose of the watchman?

The watchman is there to sound the alarm when needed.

If the people do not respond to the watchman's warning, who is at fault? **The people themselves.** If the watchman fails to sound the alarm, who is at fault? **The watchman.**

Read Ez. 2:9-3:3. Before Ezekiel could speak God's word to the people he had to do something. What was it? **He had to consume / ingest / assimilate God's Word.**

What do you think this means and how might it apply to those who have been called to ministry today? **One cannot give out God's Word until he has fed on it himself. No one can share what he does not have.**

Read Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8. What is the mission of a disciple of Jesus Christ? **Make disciples of all nations, baptize and teach**

How is that mission to be accomplished? **Through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Is that mission ongoing? **Until the end of the age** How? **Through the church / through the disciples of Jesus Christ.**

In what ways are we and are we not responsible for the success of that mission? **We are responsible for the proclamation of the gospel message. We are responsible to "sound the alarm" when necessary. We are not responsible for the reception of that message.**

It is an interesting thing that, even though God does not put any responsibility on his servants beyond "sounding the alarm," He has not called them to unfruitfulness. Consider Jn. 15:16. *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last".*

Lesson 9

FIGURES AND SYMBOLS IN THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel is filled with imagery, with symbolism, and with figurative language. In this lesson we will look at four representative examples:

- 1) The Prince of Tyre
- 2) The Shepherds of Israel
- 3) Dry Bones
- 4) The Temple of God

THE PRINCE OF TYRE

If you scan through Ez. 27 and the first 10 verses of chapter 28 you will find a description of an arrogant and ungodly, yet prosperous city with an equally arrogant and ungodly ruler. The actual city of Tyre served as the major port and political center of the Phoenicians. Notice in 28:2, 9 that the king of Tyre thinks he is a god. What is he really? **He is an ordinary man**. In your opinion, what was the king's "problem"? **Pride**. What was the source of this problem? (see vv. 4-5) **He was intelligent and wealthy.**

Read Ez. 28:11-19. This second "lament concerning the king of Tyre" has a slightly different character. How is the king presented here?

- vs. 12 - **The model of perfection, wise and beautiful**
- vs. 13 - **Adorned with jewels and present in Eden**
- vs. 14 - **A guardian angel on God's holy mountain**
- vs. 15 - **Corrupted by wickedness**
- vs. 16 - **Was cast out from the presence of God because of sin**
- vs. 17 - **Was thrown down to earth because of pride**
- vs. 18 - **The source of his own destruction**
- vs. 19 - **Shall suffer total destruction**

Can these characteristics apply to the king of the Phoenicians? **No**. To whom do they seem to apply? **Lucifer/Satan**. What conclusions might you draw from the connection that has been drawn in this prophecy? **The power behind the evil ruler is Satan**

NOTES:

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

There are some who take serious opposition to the idea of figurative language in the Bible. The Bible, they contend, must be understood literally. A thoroughly literal reading of Scripture, though, presents us with insurmountable problems. Our Lord, for example, must be both a door and a vine at the same time that He is a lamb and the path. God must be a Spirit with wings who is a tower with hands. The danger in Biblical interpretation does not lie in the understanding of figures and symbols. Their meanings are as obvious as . . . opps, I almost used a simile! The danger lies in the unwarranted allegorization of narrative--in treating as a symbol what is clearly factual. The Red Sea or the Jordan River are not literary symbols; they were real places where actual events took place.

LUCIFER Consider also Isa. 14:12-20. This is a similar passage with the king of Babylon as its object. The name "Lucifer" (bright one) actually comes from vs. 12.

THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

Read Ez 34:1-6, 10-11, 15-16. For what practices does the Lord condemn the shepherds of Israel? **They used the sheep to increase their own wealth and comfort. They do not: strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays or search for the lost. They ruled harshly and brutally. They scattered the sheep.**

What does the Lord promise to do? **He will serve as shepherd to the flock, but will shepherd then with justice.**

Read Ez. 34:23 and compare Jn. 10:11-14. Do you think that Jesus is making a reference to this passage? Why or why not? **No question about it! His listeners must have thought so too, see vv. 19-21.**

Who are the "shepherds" of Israel? **Its religious leaders** Why do you think that shepherds were used in this imagery? **The people were familiar with the role of the shepherd. Shepherds lead and tend, they do not drive and rule.**

How would you apply this passage today? **Jesus, not priests or prophets, is the head of the Church--HE is the GOOD SHEPHERD. Leaders are still called, however, to tend and not to rule, and to lead and not to drive.**

THE DRY BONES

Read Ez. 37:1-14. What was God's question to Ezekiel in vs. 3? **Can these bones live?** This is the very question that Israel was asking about herself (see vs. 11). What is God's promise and purpose as stated in vv. 4-6? **He will restore life to the body and put breath (spirit) into it as well. This is to demonstrate that He is the LORD (Yahweh).**

What is represented by the "dry bones"? **The whole house of Israel (vs. 11)** Why do you think that bones were used in this imagery? **The representation here is of something that is far far beyond hope of recovery. The dead cannot will themselves back to life.**

Has this prophecy been fulfilled in the history of ethnic Israel? (Also consider Ez. 11:17-20). Why or why not? **A portion of Israel was restored to the land, dispersed once again, and in a limited sense, returned again; but always without repentance--always without the "new Spirit."**

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

We know that Solomon's temple was destroyed during the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The temple was rebuilt on a less grand scale by Zerubbabel after the exile. Zerubbabel's temple was later enlarged and renovated by Herod. None of these temples, however, fit the description given by Ezekiel in chapters 40-47.

THE MINISTRY TODAY The essentials of ministry are unchanged. God still requires His ministers to:

- Strengthen the weak
- Minister to the sick
- Bind up the wounded
- Bring back the strays
- Seek after the lost

NEW LIFE This is a clear symbol, not for Israel alone, but for all of mankind, dead to sin and without hope apart from the power of God to bring new life. The promise of "God's Spirit within" (Ez. 37:14) is wonderfully fulfilled in the Church.

Though some scholars contend that this is a description of a physical temple that is yet to be built, it might be better to understand it as a symbol.

Read Ez. 10:18-19, 11:22-23. What is being depicted in these passages? **The presence of God (His "glory") has departed from the temple and from the city (from the midst of His people).**

Read Ez. 43:1-12. What is being depicted in this passage? **The presence (glory) of God returning.**

Consider each of the following NT passages and comment on each.

1 Cor. 3:16	<u>The Church is the temple of God</u>
1 Cor. 6:19	<u>The Believer is the temple of God</u>
2 Cor. 6:16	<u>The Church is the temple of God</u>
Eph. 2:19-22	<u>God dwells in His temple</u>
2 Thess. 2:4	<u>The man of lawlessness will attack the temple</u>
Rev. 3:12a	<u>Faithful believers uphold the structure</u>
Jn. 2:19, 21	<u>Jesus' body (i.e., the body of Christ) is the temple</u>

It is interesting to compare Ez. 40 with Rev. 21:15-22. What are the similarities in the two passages? **Both feature a "tour guide" with a measuring rod, both describe a city**

What is the major difference between the two passages? **While Ezekiel's vision centers on the temple, in John's vision there is no temple.** How might this difference be explained? **While Ezekiel's vision looks forward to the Church age, John's vision looks beyond it. John's holy city represents the final state of perfection. The citizens of that city are only those whose names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 21:27). In the same way that no temple was needed in Eden where God Himself walked with Adam "in the cool of the day," no temple will be needed in the holy city.**

THE TEMPLE AS A SYMBOL

The temple can be seen as a physical representation of three major things:

1) The site of the atoning sacrifice.

Jesus has accomplished this once and for all. There is no need for the symbol after the real has come.

2) His presence as a sign (seal) of acceptance.

Read Ex. 33:15-16. God's presence is the distinguishing mark of His people. The presence of God's indwelling Holy Spirit is his seal upon believers today (Eph. 1:13b-14).

3) The presence of God in the world.

Believers are aware of the presence of God in their midst. The temple/church stands as a signal to the world that God is present.

Lesson 10

THE NEW COVENANT IN JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL

GOD'S ETERNAL COVENANT

Covenant (Heb., *b^erit*) - A statement of a relationship. Covenants may be between individuals, between groups, or between nations. Covenants normally include signs, sacrifices and a solemn oath.

The covenant between God and man is unique for several reasons:

- 1) The covenant between God and man is a *covenant of decree*. It was not an "agreement" between God and man. That is to say, God and man did not "come to terms" upon a set of mutual obligations. God established the terms of the covenant, man is to obey them.
- 2) The covenant between God and man is a *covenant of grace*. It is based entirely upon the mercy of God. While man has much to gain from the covenantal arrangement, God only gives.
- 3) The covenant between God and man is an *eternal covenant*. It does not come to an end when certain conditions have been met. Because it exists by God's decree, it can only be dissolved by God's decree. God is devoted to maintaining the relationship between Himself and His people (See Jer. 33:20-22).

A LAW WITHIN

Read Jer. 31:31-33. What does God promise in vs. 31? **He will make a new covenant with Israel and with Judah**. What covenant does He say that it will be unlike? (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) **Mosaic**. The people were certainly *aware* of God's law; it was already "in their minds." Why were they unable to keep the law? **They didn't have the law on their hearts; their heart attitude had to be changed.**

What will be the differences between the old and the new covenants? **God will restore the right relationship between Himself and His people.** When is the new covenant coming and with whom is it to be made (see vs. 31)? **Future with respect to Jeremiah's time, past and present with respect of ourselves. It includes all the people of God.**

AN UNDIVIDED HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

Read Ez. 11:17-20. In what ways had the people of God exhibited a "divided heart" with respect to their relationship with God? **They had "gone through the motions" of worshipping Yahweh while serving the gods of the pagan nations around them.**

How will God accomplish His purpose in restoring His people to a right relationship with Him? (vs. 19) **He will give them an undivided heart and a new spirit.**

Notice that this is not something that the *people* do; it is a *work of God!*

Read Jer. 32:37-41. Notice the recurring theme in the statements of God's promises. What does God desire? **He will be their God and they will be His people.** What does God promise to give His people in vs. 39? **Singleness of heart and action.**

How long is God's covenant to last? **It is an everlasting covenant (vs. 40).**

These promises go a step further in Ez. 36:25-28. Verses 25-26 and 28 read much the same as parallel passages in Jeremiah. In vs. 27, however, there is an astounding difference. God does not promise just to give His people a "new" spirit. What does He promise? **That He will put "His Spirit" (i.e., the Holy Spirit) within them.**

THE ETERNAL KING

Read Jer. 33:14-16. What is the specific promise of vs. 15? **A just and righteous "branch" from David's line.**

The name given to this descendent of David is "the LORD our righteousness" (Heb., *Yahweh Tsidqenu*). In what way is this important to us? (Consider Php. 3:8-9) **We have no righteousness apart from that which we have in Christ.**

Read Ez. 37:21-28. In the first few verses of this passage, God promises to restore unity to His people. The undivided heart will allow an undivided kingdom for the people of God. Together they will serve and honor their King and Shepherd. Notice in vs. 26 that this is to be a covenant of **Peace** and an **Everlasting** covenant. The final promise is that the presence of God will be with His people forever.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT.

Consider the following passages:

Rom. 8:8-9, 12-16

Gal. 4:6, 5:16, 6:8

1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13

A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Consider also Isa. 4:2-6 and Zech. 6:12-13.

Yahweh = יהוה

Lesson 11

DANIEL'S CALL AND MINISTRY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like the book of Ezekiel, the book of Daniel has the Babylonian exile as its backdrop. The prophet Daniel was deported to Nebuchadnezzar's country several years before the prophet Ezekiel, however. (Daniel's exile began around 605 B.C., while Ezekiel's began about 597 B.C.). When Ezekiel arrived in Babylon he found the Hebrew, Daniel, already established in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar. What does Ezekiel say about Daniel in Ez. 14:14, 16, 18, 20, and in 28:3 and with whom is he compared?

Daniel is listed with Noah and Job, both of whom God Himself called "righteous." He is also recognized for his wisdom.

The Babylonian empire lasted until 539 B.C. when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians. Belshazzar was the last of the Babylonian rulers. Daniel still seems to be in the Babylonian region, however, during the rule of Cyrus the Persian; the man who authorized the rebuilding of the Temple in the city of Jerusalem (See Dan. 1:21, 6:28, 10:1).

THE LANGUAGE AND FORM OF THE BOOK

The book of Daniel deals with two subjects: 1) the historical situation and hope of the *Hebrew people*, and 2) the historical situation and judgment of the *Gentile nations*. These two are kept distinct by the use of language--those portions which deal primarily with the Jewish people are written in Hebrew, those portions which deal primarily with Gentile nations are written in Aramaic. The original language text of Daniel is in Hebrew from the beginning of the Chapter 1 through 2:4a and from the beginning of Chapter 8 to the end of the book. The entire section from 2:4b through 7:28 is written in Aramaic.

The book also contains two distinct styles, historical narrative and apocalyptic. Chapters 1, 3-6 are historical narrative. Chapters 7-12 are apocalyptic. Chapter 2 is a combination of the two literary styles.

NOTES:

THE FALL OF BABYLON TO THE MEDO-PERSIANS:

Astyages, king of the Medes, was defeated by the Persian ruler, Cyrus. The combination of the two powers made them an invincible force in the Middle east. Cyrus' own accounts tell of his armies marching into Babylon without resistance. This confirms the record in Daniel 5.

NOTE: Darius, who was a Mede, was a regent or governor under the authority of Cyrus.

CYRUS IN BIBLICAL HISTORY AND PROPHECY:

Isa 44:24-45:13 - Even though Cyrus was not a believer and did not directly serve Yahweh, God directed his life and accomplished His purpose through him. This is given as a "proof" of God's sovereignty.

Ezr. 1:1-2, 7-8, 5:13-17, 6:3 -

These passages confirm that Cyrus did make the proclamation to order the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple.

DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

Read Dan. 1:1-7, 18-20. What do we know about Daniel from vv. 3-4? **Daniel was an Israelite of "noble birth;" he was strong, handsome and intelligent.**

What was the duration and purpose of the training? **They were to be trained for three years and then enter the service of the king.** Daniel and three of his companions are mentioned by name. What were their Hebrew names? **Hananiah Mishael Azariah** What Babylonian names were they given? **Belteshazzar Shadrach Meshach Abednego**

Read Dan. 3:1-6. What are the king's orders with regard to the image of gold that he has set up? **Whenever the people hear the sound of various instruments they are to fall down and worship the idol of gold.** What is the punishment for those who don't comply with his order? **They will be immediately thrown into a blazing furnace.** Read 3:8-12. What report is brought to the king by his astrologers? **They reported that some Jews were ignoring the king's order.** The report is, of course, true. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abennego did refuse to worship and serve the gods of Babylon. In verse 15, Nebuchadnezzar tells them the punishment and then asks the question, "what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" Read 3:16-18. What is their answer to the king? **Their God is able to save them, but even if He doesn't, they will still serve Him and not the false gods of Babylon.** Do you agree with their "statement of faith"? Why or why not? **We serve and worship the living and true God because He is God and He is worthy of our worship, not because of what He does for us!**

For the "rest of the story" read 3:19-30. Who do you think the "fourth man in the furnace" was? **Angel, "Angel of the Lord" pre-incarnate Christ** What is the king's analysis of the situation? (See vs. 29) **He recognizes the reality and supremacy of the God of Israel. "No other god can save in this way" (vs. 29)**

Read Dan. 6:1-5. What do we learn about Daniel from these verses? **He was known for his honesty and administrative skill.** Read Dan. 6:6-28. Compare Daniel's experience with that of his three friends. In what ways were they similar? **They were both being punished for their faithfulness to God. The three for their refusal to worship false gods and Daniel for his insistence on worshipping the true and living God. All were preserved in their situation rather than removed from the situation.** What was the outcome of each? **The king publicly acknowledged the God of Israel and the Lord's servants prospered.**

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

The "angel of the LORD," mentioned several times in the OT, seems to be an extraordinary angel. When he speaks for God, he often does it in 1st person. He is often worshiped as God and does not reject such worship. The word "angel" actually means "messenger." This designation is, therefore, "Messenger of Yahweh." Some think that the OT "angel of the LORD" is the pre-incarnate Christ, the "Word of God."

Consider the following passages:

- Gen. 16:7-12
- Gen. 22:10-17
- Ex. 3:1-6
- Jud. 6:11-12

GOD'S PRESERVATION:

God often protects his people in their difficulties rather than remove them from their difficulties. DISCUSS!

Lesson 12

DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

DANIEL AND THE GREAT STATUE

Read Dan. 2:1-6. Here we see the king calling together his court magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to give them a "mission impossible." He was asking them to not only interpret his dream, but also tell him the content of the dream. Read 2:10-11. Do the wise men he consulted think this is possible? No. In his anger, the king ordered the execution of all the "wise men" in Babylon. This edict, of course, included Daniel and his friends. Read 2:13-19. After visiting with the king, Daniel talked to his friends. What did he ask them to do? **He asked them to pray--to plead to God for mercy. Note that he believed that God was in charge of the situation.** How did God respond? **God enabled Daniel to fulfill the king's request.**

It is interesting to compare the statements of the king's pagan "wise men" with those of Daniel. Compare 2:10-11 with 2:27-28. What is the essential difference in the two views of God/the gods represented here? **The pagans believed in gods who remained hidden. Daniel knew the living God who reveals truth.**

Read 2:31-44. What are the five primary components of the statue in the king's dream and what does Daniel say that they represent?

Head of Gold	<i>The king of Babylon</i>
Chest of Silver	<i>Another inferior kingdom</i>
Belly & Thighs of Bronze	<i>A kingdom that will rule the earth</i>
Legs of iron/feet of clay	<i>A kingdom mixed of strong and weak</i>
Great Stone	<i>An eternal kingdom</i>

DANIEL AND THE FOUR BEASTS

Read Dan. 7:1-28. This dream would seem to have come to Daniel some time after the Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We can see from vs. 1 that Belshazzar is now king of Babylon. Though the content of the dream is very different from that recorded in chapter 2, its interpretation is very similar. What are the primary components of this dream and what do they represent?

NOTES:

**MAGICIANS, ENCHANTERS,
SORCERERS,
ASTROLOGERS.**

Even though the king considered these men and Daniel to be alike, we must not make the same mistake. While God is a revealer of truth, He does not use the means of magic and astrology to do it. Consider Deut 18:9-15, Isa. 8:19-20.

Lion with wings	<i>A doomed kingdom</i>
Bear-like Beast	<i>A conquering kingdom</i>
4-winged 4-headed Leopard	<i>A kingdom with authority</i>
10-horned Beast	<i>A destroying kingdom</i>
One like a son of man	<i>An everlasting kingdom</i>

There has been much written concerning the "ten kingdoms" and the "little horn" which are part of the vision of the fourth beast. It is important to note at this point that: 1) both spring from, or come out of, the fourth beast; 2) that the ten horns and the little horn exist at the same time; and 3) that their appearance precedes the coming of the "son of man" on the clouds.

DANIEL IN THE CITADEL OF SUSIA

Read Dan. 8:1-14. The two primary components of this vision are the ram and the goat. It is interesting to note that the two horns of the ram did not grow together, even though both are part of the ram (vs. 3). The goat, of vv. 5-7, comes from the west and destroys the ram. Read 8:15-22. This vision is to reveal the events at what time in human history? **The time of the end.** What does the ram represent? **Medo-Persian kings.** What does the goat represent? **King of Greece** Read 8:23-27. While this ruler could be seen to represent Alexander the Great, or Antiochus Epiphanes, or even Adolph Hitler, it would seem more likely that he is the one Paul calls "the man of lawlessness." Compare the description we have just read with that of Paul in 2 Thess. 2:3-12. In what ways are they similar? **He is doomed to destruction, He will take a stand against God, He will be a deceiver, he will be strong through Satan's power.**

Consider the following chart:

DREAMS AND VISIONS IN DANIEL

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Meaning
Gold	Winged lion	XXXX	Babylonian Empire
Silver	Bear	Ram	Medo-Persian Empire
Bronze	Leopard	Goat	Greek Empire
Iron & Clay	Beast	XXXX	Roman Empire
XXXX	Little Horn	Final horn	Antichrist Kingdom
Great Stone	Son of man	Prince of princes	Messiah (Parousia)

A NOTE ON THE ROMAN EMPIRE

It would seem from these prophecies that the Roman empire is the final empire and that the anti-Christ figure, the man of lawlessness, rises out of it. There are several possible explanations:

- 1) These prophecies deal only with those kingdoms that directly effect the Hebrew people. There is, therefore a gap that represents an age in which the Gentiles are prominent.
- 2) The kingdoms of the world, as they exist in our time, are direct descendants of the Roman empire and could be considered extensions of it.
- 3) The Roman empire, with its pseudo representative form of government and a Caesar who served as both emperor and god, stands as a type of the anti-Christ kingdom which is yet to come.

NOTE: In the 1st vision, the kingdom of iron and clay is suddenly and absolutely destroyed by the stone, "not made with hands." This is not an accurate representation of the demise of the Roman empire which took about 1500 years to disintegrate.