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▶▶ LESSON

01

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

We must study and understand the whole Bible, not just parts of it.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Acts 7

TEACHING AIM:

To understand why it is important to study the Old Testament.

OUTLINE:

Introduction

Basic Structure

Seven Periods of Israel's History

LIFE APPLICATION:

The Old Testament is the foundation of the Bible.

MEMORY VERSES:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (*Matthew 5:17-18*)



INTRODUCTION

We received the term “Old Testament” (OT) through the writings of Apostle Paul, who declared, “For to this day the same veil remains when the OT is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away,” (2 Corinthians 3:14). The word testament means, “covenant.” In the Bible, we learn about two great covenants, the OT and the New Testament (NT). The OT is the old covenant that God established with the people of Israel, and the NT is the new covenant that God established with the entire world. Why should we study the OT? There are several reasons why we should study the OT. We must understand the OT in order to understand the scriptures as a whole, because it is the introduction and basis for the NT. Without understanding the Old Covenant, it is impossible to understand the need for the New Covenant. It is impossible to understand Jesus Christ! In fact, the NT age began with John the Baptist quoting the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. Jesus himself drew heavily from the Law and the Prophets and stated that He came to fulfill the Word of the Law and the Prophets. Even at the close of the Bible, John’s Revelation is full of references to the OT. Not only is the OT a general introduction to the NT, it is an introduction to Jesus Christ and the prophecy of Jesus as the Messiah. From Genesis to Malachi, the Holy Spirit carefully lays out a beautiful picture of the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ). Understanding of these Messianic passages strengthens the foundation of our Christian faith. The OT is the shadow of the NT. The OT is the prophecy and the NT is the fulfillment.

In the last hundred years, Christians have watched the OT being bitterly attacked on many fronts. Critical scholars have left many doubting the divine nature of the Scriptures, especially the OT. Only those who truly understand the Bible can stand up to challenge the critics. Rather than being defensive, we must acknowledge the immense evidence that the OT offers to assert the truth of the Scriptures. Much of the historical evidence for Christianity involves fulfilled Messianic prophecy that comes directly from the OT, especially from books like Daniel and Zechariah.

Finally, the most important reason why we need to study the OT is for our own spiritual growth. The Bible teaches us that God is unchanging, so we can learn a lot about Him from the OT. The OT also contains many more examples of actual men and women of faith than the NT. Studying the struggles, failures and victories of people like David, Esther, and Moses can greatly help us to live a victorious Christian life. The fulfilled prophecies serve to encourage us as we wait for the second coming of the Messiah.

BASIC STRUCTURE

The Old Testament contains 39 books, written from around 1500 BC to 400 BC by many different authors. It is written in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic and is divided into four sections:

1. **Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. **History:** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
3. **Wisdom and Poetry:** Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs
4. **Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

In the New Testament, the Old Testament is referred to as the Law, Prophets and Writings, or sometimes just as the Law.

SEVEN PERIODS OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY

The Old Testament is essentially the story of the people of Israel. In the next 9 lessons, we will study the history of the people of Israel, God's dealings with Israel, and the promise of the Messiah. The history of Israel can be divided into seven periods:

1. The Period of Creation and the Calling of the Family of Abraham
2. The Period of the Birth of a Nation - Enslavement and Deliverance
3. The Period of Wandering, Conquest, and Settlement in Canaan
4. The Period of Judges
5. The Period of Kings
6. The Period of Exile
7. The Period of Return

In each lesson, we will look at one period. After looking at these seven periods, we will see how the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

LIFE APPLICATION:

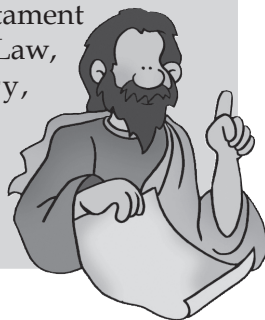
THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE BIBLE

Study the memory verse of the week. Notice how much importance Jesus is putting on the Law and the Prophets. Jesus says that He is the fulfillment of the OT. Since Jesus gives such importance to the OT, shouldn't we as well? The best way to learn the OT is to think of it as a foundation for the NT. It provides the necessary background before the Messiah could come. Now, what is a building

without a foundation? It is something easily toppled, and of limited value. In the same way, if you do not understand the OT, your knowledge of the Bible will be weak and easily toppled. We should love God and His whole Word, as recorded in the OT and NT.

Review Questions:

1. Read Matthew 4:1-11. How was Jesus able to defeat Satan? What book did He quote? What does this say about what Jesus was memorizing?
2. From memory, write out the 7 periods of Israel's history. This will be very important for future lesson.
3. When the early Christians found themselves in difficulty, they prayed a very important prayer. Read it in Acts 4:23-31. What book are they praying from? Have you memorized sections from this book? If not, choose a chapter from it and commit to memory.
4. We discussed how the Old Testament is divided into four sections viz. Law, History, Wisdom and Poetry, Prophets. Beside each of the books stated below, write down the letter corresponding to the section it belongs to:



Ezekiel	_____	Leviticus	_____	Ecclesiastes	_____
Isaiah	_____	Psalms	_____	Ruth	_____
Judges	_____	1 Kings	_____	Numbers	_____
Esther	_____	Genesis	_____	Joel	_____
Proverbs	_____	Daniel	_____	Ezra	_____
Jeremiah	_____	Jonah	_____		

CREATION AND THE CALLING OF A FAMILY

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

God has been at work in history from the very beginning.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Genesis 1; Hebrews 11

TEACHING AIM:

To understand that God created the universe and chose the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the family through whom He would bless the world.

OUTLINE:

About Genesis; Creation and Fall
From Seth to Abram
The Covenant Given to Three Men
Joseph and the Move to Egypt

LIFE APPLICATION:

In order to be used by God, we must be willing to forsake what is most valuable in our lives.

MEMORY VERSES:

God said to Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (*Genesis 12:2-3*)



ABOUT GENESIS

The OT begins with a section known as "The Law," which in Hebrew is Torah. The Torah consists of five books, also called the Pentateuch (Pent-A-Tuck): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

In this lesson, we will examine Genesis - the book of beginnings. It is the first book of the Pentateuch and the first book of the Bible. It contains an account of the creation and the story of how God called a family (the first period of Israel's history - remember the seven periods!). The book of Genesis is divided into two major halves: the first half is about the beginning of mankind (Genesis 1-11) and the second half is about the beginning of the chosen nation, Israel (Genesis 12-50).

CREATION AND FALL

Genesis begins with the creation of the heavens, earth, all creatures, man, and woman (Genesis 1-2). The beginning of the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3) and marriage (Genesis 2:23-25) is also portrayed. Although Adam and Eve are created innocent, they are given a free will to either obey or disobey God. Satan, who comes as a serpent, tempts Eve to doubt God's word. Because they choose to disobey God, they lose their fellowship with God and shame overcomes them. This event is called the "Fall." Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Later, we read about two of Adam's sons - Cain, who brings to God the fruit of his crops, and Abel, who brings to God the first-fruit of his flock. The Lord accepts Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's, not because of what the actual sacrifice was, but because Abel brought his best sacrifice by faith (Hebrews 11:4).

FROM SETH TO ABRAM

Adam and Eve have another son by the name of Seth. Notably, Seth's descendants include Enoch (who is taken up to heaven), Methuselah (who lived 969 years), and finally Noah. Noah has three sons -- Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God grieves on account of the wickedness of the people during Noah's time. Only Noah is found to be righteous, and God tells Noah to build an ark, because He is going to destroy all the earth with a flood (Genesis 6). Only eight people board the ark: Noah and his wife; his sons Shem, Ham, Japheth; and their three wives (Genesis 7). The flood ends and the ark lands in the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4). After the land dries, the eight people get out of the ark and Noah builds an altar to God. God gives the rainbow as a covenant that He will never again destroy all life on earth with water (Genesis 9:9-17).

Even at the new beginning after the flood, the people of the world build the tower of Babel in defiance to God. God judges this effort by sending a confusion of different languages, and the people are scattered (Genesis 11:1-9). After this account, the lineage of Shem is chosen by God for the continuation of the Israelite nation. Shem's descendants include Terah, who is the father of Abraham, "the father of many nations." Terah, Abram, Sarai (Abram's wife), and Lot (Abram's nephew) live in Ur of the Chaldeans. Here, a covenant is first given.

THE COVENANT GIVEN TO THREE MEN

God tells Abram who is living in Ur of the Chaldeans to depart to a new land, and gives Abram a very important covenant (Genesis 12:1-3). Abram obeys and goes to a land called Haran and then later to Canaan. God tells Abram that Canaan will be the Promised Land for him and his offspring. Abram is promised descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15). Yet, years pass by and Sarai fails to bear the promised heir. Frustrated, Sarai and Abram decide that Abram should have a child through Hagar, Sarai's maid. And apart from God's plan, Ishmael is born. Despite this, when Abram is ninety-nine years old, God gives the covenant of circumcision and changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations" (Genesis 17). Sarai's name is changed to Sarah. Finally, the child of promise, Isaac, is born through Sarah (Genesis 21). God tests Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Much later, Isaac is led to marry Rebekah, and they have twins: Esau, the firstborn, and Jacob. When the boys grow up, Jacob takes Esau's birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew. The covenant that God gave to Abraham is then repeated to Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5). In an act of deception, Jacob robs Esau by taking their father's blessing, which was intended for Esau. Esau is angry and plans to kill Jacob. Rebekah warns Jacob to flee to Haran and to stay with her brother Laban.

On the way to Haran, Jacob lies down to sleep with his head upon a stone and sees a dream of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. The same covenant that was given to Abraham and Isaac is then renewed with Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15). Jacob ultimately arrives in Haran where he meets Rachel. Jacob wants to marry her and agrees to work for Laban for seven years in exchange for her hand in marriage. However, Laban is treacherous and gives Jacob his eldest daughter, Leah, instead he agrees to work for another seven years, and finally marries Rachel. Jacob has twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. He also has a daughter, Dinah.

Jacob prospers in Haran under Laban, but eventually decides to leave. He leaves for Canaan, where he fears meeting his brother Esau. He prays to God for safety within his camp. Before he meets Esau, God, in the form of a man, wrestles with Jacob until daybreak. God touches Jacob's hip and dislocates his thigh. But Jacob holds on to God, demanding a blessing. At that point, God renames Jacob as "Israel" (which means, "struggled with God") and blesses him. On that day, Jacob sees Esau in the distance; he immediately runs ahead of the camp and bows to the ground seven times. The brothers embrace, kiss, and weep. The brothers move into different parts of Canaan and settle.

The twelve tribes of Israel come from the twelve sons of Jacob. God's people are chosen through the line of Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). However, the covenant itself was given to only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The four generations, consisting of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and the twelve are often called the "patriarchs." When God speaks to later generations, He identifies himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). He identifies with these three, because He made His covenant with these three. Even in the NT, the Jews speak of God in reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Acts 3:13). God wants to do three basic things through this nation called Israel: 1) reveal the Scriptures; 2) be a witness to the world; 3) be the people through whom Messiah would come. The journey of this people is the topic of the OT.

JOSEPH AND THE MOVE TO EGYPT

Jacob loves Joseph greatly and gives him a richly ornamented coat of many colors. This causes the other brothers to become jealous of Joseph. They plan to kill him, but one of the brothers, Judah, persuades the others to sell him to the Midianites. They sell him, and dip his special coat in animal's blood and present it to their father in order to convince him that Joseph had been killed by an animal. The Midianites sell him to Potiphar, the captain of the bodyguard of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph is a good and faithful servant there and he becomes the head of Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him, but he refuses. She makes up a story that Joseph tried to sleep with her. Because of this false accusation, Joseph is thrown into prison (Genesis 39:19). But, the Lord is with him and the chief jailer puts Joseph in charge of those in jail (Genesis 39:20-23). He is able to successfully interpret the dreams of a cupbearer and a baker, who were also thrown into jail. The cupbearer, years later, tells the Pharaoh of this, and the Pharaoh calls Joseph into his palace to

interpret his own dream. Joseph does it successfully and is made second in command to Pharaoh. When famine sweeps both Egypt and Canaan, Joseph is ultimately able to bring his entire family down to Egypt to enjoy the prosperity that God has given him (Genesis 45:1-11). So Jacob and his sons settle in Goshen, Egypt.

LIFE APPLICATION:

FORSAKING WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE

Throughout the Bible we see God looking for people who are ready to give highest priority to God in their lives, so that He may bring the lost human race back to His Kingdom, through that person. The one who loves and reveres God the most will be ready to let go of even the most precious things of their earthly life. In the New Testament we see Jesus mentioning this explicitly as to who God can be part of His Kingdom. (Hint: Look up Mark Chapter 10)

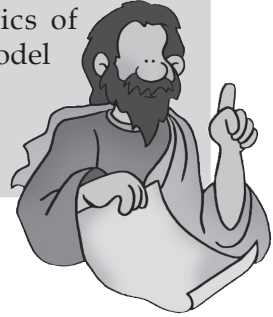
What did Abraham consider as his top most priority in life? In Genesis 22, we see God evaluating Abraham's love to Him, by asking him to give up his most precious gift, his son Isaac, who was born after decades of waiting. Do you want to evaluate your love to God today? Think of what you consider the most important aspects of your in life, and see if your heart is ready to let go of those things if God asked you to. If not, you may want to ask God to help you know Him more.

Review Questions:

1. Draw a family tree from Adam to the 12 sons of Jacob. You can skip generations, but be sure to include people like Abraham, Isaac, Noah, Shem, Seth, Rebecca, and Rachel. Circle those people who are referred to as the patriarchs.
2. After the creation account, the author of Genesis, Moses, tells ten stories which all begin with certain phrases. He does this to make the book of Genesis easier to remember, by grouping it into ten memorable stories. Look up the following passages in Genesis and list the phrases that Moses uses to introduce the stories:
Heaven and earth(2:4) Adam (5:1)
Noah (6:9) Noah's sons (10:1)
Shem (11:10) Terah (11:27)"
Ishmael (25:12) Isaac (25:19)"
Esau (36:1) Jacob (37:2)"



4. Look back at the memory verse. In what way have “all peoples on earth” been blessed through Abraham?”
5. List three positive characteristics of Joseph. In what ways can you model those virtues in your life today?



THE BIRTH OF A NATION

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

God delivers His people from bondage.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Exodus 3, 20

TEACHING AIM:

To understand how God's people were enslaved in Egypt, were delivered by Moses, and how they entered into a covenant with God.

OUTLINE:

Introduction to Exodus
The Life of Moses
Moses and Pharaoh
The Plagues of Egypt
Deliverance and the Covenant
The Golden Calf
Reinstating the Covenant
Leviticus

LIFE APPLICATION:

God is able to deliver you from what makes you a slave.



MEMORY VERSES:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:2-3)

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

In Genesis, we learned about the family of Jacob - Period I of Israel's history. We will now look at Period II of Israel's history. By the time we reach Exodus, Jacob's people have been in Egypt for around 370 years and their numbers have reached the hundreds of thousands. Exodus depicts the story of the birth of Israel as a nation. Through the great person of Moses, the people are delivered from bondage and they make their journey (exodus) out of Egypt (this gives the book its name). The book of Exodus can be divided into two main parts. First, Israel is delivered from slavery (Exodus 1-19) and second, the law is given and the tabernacle is made at Sinai (Exodus 20-40).

THE LIFE OF MOSES

At the opening of Exodus, we realize that the Israelites no longer had the favored status they enjoyed as Joseph's kin. Instead, they were put to forced labor (Exodus 1:1-14). Pharaoh, fearing the growth of the Israelites into a group large enough to rebel, wants to reduce their population by killing newborn Hebrew males. He declares that all Hebrew newborn boys are to be thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:15-22). A handsome son is born to a Hebrew couple from the house of Levi (a son of Jacob). To save the child's life, they put him into a basket and place the basket in the Nile River. The daughter of Pharaoh finds this basket with the child. She takes the baby out of the river, and names him Moses (Exodus 2:1-10). Miriam his sister follows the basket and speaks to Pharaoh's daughter offering to bring a nurse to take care of the Hebrew child, and brings his own mother to be his nurse, yet Moses grows up learning the Egyptian ways. When he is much older, he witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Moses kills the Egyptian and hides the dead man's body in the sand. Pharaoh hears of this act and attempts to kill Moses. Moses fears for his life and flees to Midian, where he marries Zipporah (Exodus 2:11-22).

MOSES AND PHARAOH

With Moses in Midian and the Israelites in agony in Egypt, God remembers His covenant with the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:23-25). God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush and commands him to deliver the people from Egypt. Here, God reveals his own name to Moses - Yahweh, which means, "I am" in Hebrew. In most versions of the Bible this is written out

as LORD (note the distinction between Lord and LORD). Initially, Moses comes up with excuses to avoid taking up God's commission for him, but after a period of dialogue between him and God, he finally agrees (Exodus 4). God gives miraculous powers and authority to Moses and his brother Aaron in order to convince the people that they have been sent by God. They perform miraculous signs before the Israelites and the Israelites believe (Exodus 4:31). They go to Pharaoh with their petition, but he only increases the Israelites' workload. The people and Moses alike become disheartened (Exodus 5).

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

Moses goes to God, discouraged, and God reaffirms His purpose. God then deals 10 plagues upon Egypt; with each plague, Moses demands that the Israelites be released. Pharaoh refuses each time. The first nine plagues are: the Nile turning into blood; frogs overcoming the land; the dust of the land turning into gnats; swarms of flies infiltrating all of Egypt except Goshen; Egyptian livestock dying; boils coming on men and animals; a hailstorm destroying the land; swarms of locusts devouring the remains of the land; and darkness covering the land (Exodus 7-10). The tenth and final affliction is one where all the firstborn sons of every household die except the households who killed a male lamb or goat, not more than a year old without blemish and applied its blood to the sides and top of their door posts. The slain lamb becomes the Passover lamb, and should be eaten completely by the household along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs during that night. Whenever a family does these things, they commemorate the "Lord's Passover" (Exodus 11-12). The Passover Lamb is a picture of Christ. Christ's death would later save them eternally, just as the lamb did for them in Egypt. Indeed on Passover night, the firstborn sons of Egypt die and the people of Israel are released from the bondage of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:31).

DELIVERANCE AND THE COVENANT

God leads the people out from Egypt under the leadership of Moses through a cloud by day and pillar of fire at night. But Pharaoh's heart is hardened and the Egyptians pursue the Israelites with horses and chariots. Cornered against the Red Sea with Pharaoh approaching from behind, the people panic. God parts the sea and allows the Israelites to escape through that, and he closes the sea on the Egyptians who followed them and they were all drowned (Exodus 13:17; 14:31).

As the Israelites travel through the wilderness, God provides for them. He gives them a special bread-like food called manna that appears on the ground every morning (Exodus 16). Next, a group of people called the Amalekites to attack the Israelites without provocation. In the first physical battle the people experience, the Israelite warriors are led by a young man named Joshua. The Israelites are able to prevail in battle only as long as Moses holds up his hands. After two people help prop up Moses' hands, Joshua's forces eventually defeat the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). Later, God brings the Israelites to Mount Sinai where he gives the Law in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21) and other regulations (Exodus 20:22-23:33). The people accept the covenant that God offers and Moses writes the Law down. The people offer burnt offerings, and Moses reads the law that he has written down. Again, the people agree. Moses sprinkles blood on the people and repeats their oath (Exodus 24:1-8). This event is sometimes called the ratification of the covenant. The leaders Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu (Aaron's two sons) eat a covenant meal with God. God calls Moses to go to the mountain top by himself so that through Moses God could give the people detailed knowledge on how to serve Him. Moses remains on the mountain for forty days and nights, while God gives him further instructions, including details about the Ark of the Covenant and a movable tabernacle, which the people were to build unto God (Exodus 25-31).

THE GOLDEN CALF

Moses stays a long time on the mountaintop. The people become anxious and uncertain of the whereabouts of Moses and decide to make a golden calf and worship it instead of God (Exodus 32:1-6). When the forty days and nights are over, God tells Moses to go down to the people. God decides, therefore, to destroy the Israelites, because they disobeyed God. Moses intercedes for the people, and God decides not to destroy them (Exodus 32:6-14). Moses finally comes down and sees that the people are indeed worshipping a golden calf that was put together by his brother Aaron. Burning with anger, he breaks the tablets that God gave him, destroys the calf, rebukes Aaron, and calls the people who wished to follow the Lord to his side of the camp. Those who come to his side are commanded to kill the others who stay back. He then pleads to God for forgiveness for the rebellious deeds of the people. However, God answers by inflicting a plague on the people (Exodus 32:31-35).

REINSTATING THE COVENANT

Eventually, Moses goes up to the mountain again with new stone tablets and God repeats the first covenant. The Ten Commandments are written again on the new stone tablets. When Moses descends from the mountain, his face shines so brightly that he wears a veil (Exodus 34). The next section describes how the people build the tabernacle (Exodus 35-40). The book of Exodus ends by describing how the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and how the cloud settled upon it (Exodus 40:34-38).

LEVITICUS

Leviticus outlines how the people of Israel were to live. The laws it describes come from God's message to the people at Sinai. A key, representative verse is "You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own" (Leviticus 20:26). The name Leviticus comes from the fact that the Levitical priests (descendants of Levi, beginning with Aaron) administered the law. At a first reading, the book might seem strange and ritualistic, but it is important to remember that the laws were given to remind the people of their sin that separated them from God and how a sacrificial offering was needed to reconcile them back to God. This book thus serves to point forward to the coming Messiah. We now know many of the laws in Leviticus to be in accord with medical principles of hygiene, infection, pollution, quarantine, and preventive medicine (Exodus 23:25). These principles were not known until quite recently and illustrate that the OT is God's Word and that He was and is the designer and sustainer of our physical bodies. The Israelites, when they put their trust in God, would thus live healthy lives.

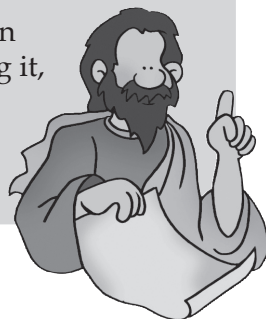
LIFE APPLICATION:

GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER YOU FROM WHAT MAKES YOU A SLAVE

The Israelites were enslaved to the nation of Egypt and God delivered them. This has tremendous application for our lives today. What are you enslaved to? Many young people today are enslaved to drugs, sexual sins, negative peer groups, or popularity contests. Spend a few minutes and prayerfully look at your life. What is it that enslaves you? God wants to and is eager to deliver you from your bondage. Like the people of Israel, He will hear your cry. Ask God for deliverance right now.

Review Questions:

1. Review that covenant from last week that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Summarize that covenant.
2. In the book of Exodus, God makes a covenant with the whole people of Israel. God tells the people his laws, starting with the Ten Commandments. The people respond in Exodus 24:3. What, therefore, is the covenant? How does it differ from the covenant we looked at last week?
3. Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20. After reading it, try to write out the Ten Commandments from memory.



WANDERING, CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

When God's people obey, their enemies are defeated.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Numbers 13-14; Deuteronomy 8; Joshua 1-6

TEACHING AIM:

To understand why God's people did not immediately enter the Promised Land.

OUTLINE:

Introduction to Numbers	Beginning of a Journey
The Twelve Spies	In the Desert
Preparing to Enter Canaan	Deuteronomy
Introduction to Joshua	Jericho
Conquering Canaan	

LIFE APPLICATION:

Obedience to God is the foundation of the Christian life.

MEMORY VERSES:

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18)



INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS

The book of Numbers begins where book of Exodus left the people of Israel, that is, near Mount Sinai (or Mount Horeb, as it is also called). The book is called Numbers, because of two censuses that are recorded in the book. The book records the wanderings of the Israelites through the desert as they attempt to move into the Promised Land. It covers about thirty-eight years, beginning two years after the exodus from Egypt.

THE FIRST CENSUS AND THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY

At the beginning of the book, we see a census that the Lord commanded to number all of the males over twenty that were eligible for military service. The Levites are exempted from this, because their duties are with the tabernacle. The precise formation that they are to move in is described, which is organized by tribe (Numbers 2). It might be noticed that thirteen tribes, instead of twelve, are listed. This is because the tribe of Joseph is commonly divided between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. God directs the people as seen earlier through the pillar of cloud by day and by the pillar of fire at night (Numbers 9:15-23). Where the cloud moved, the people followed.

Now, the journey begins (Numbers 10:11). Quickly after they set out, people begin complaining and the fire of the Lord consumes some of them. Moses offers a prayer that causes the fire to die down (Numbers 11:1-3). Next, the people complain that they are growing tired of God-given manna and want meat instead (Numbers 11:4-6). So God sends them quail. While the people are still eating the quail meat, some are killed by a deadly plague that God brings upon them, because of their craving (Numbers 11:31-34).

THE TWELVE SPIES

The people are now in the Desert of Paran and twelve spies are sent out to explore the northern land of Canaan. Moses instructs the spies to examine the people, towns, fortification, and soil. After forty days, the spies return, with pomegranates and figs, to the people who are in the Desert of Paran at Kadesh-Barnea. They report that the land is good, but the people there are strong and huge (Numbers 13:17-33). All of the spies except Joshua of Ephraim and Caleb of Judah advise against entering the land. Joshua and Caleb plead with the people to trust in the Lord and enter the land

(Numbers 14:5-9). The people talk of stoning Joshua and Caleb. Suddenly, the glory of the Lord appears to the Israelites and God considers destroying the people and making Moses into another great nation. Moses pleads for the people and God forgives them (Numbers 14:10-20). But God commands the people to go back into the desert (Numbers 14:25). God declares that out of all the men above age twenty, only Joshua and Caleb will see the Promised Land. (Numbers 14:29-30). The others would die in the wilderness. Israel must wander the desert for forty years, a year for each of the days the spies were in the land (Numbers 14:34). The ten spies who brought bad reports died of plagues. With all this, the people see their error and decide to go up into the land. Moses tells them not to do so, because the Lord was no longer with them (Numbers 14:41-43). In spite of this warning, the people go up and are badly beaten (Numbers 14:44-45).

IN THE DESERT

Thirty years pass and Miriam dies (Numbers 20:1). Just as before (Exodus 17:1-7), the people complain to Moses and Aaron, this time concerning water. Moses goes to the Lord and the Lord instructs Moses to speak to the rock to bring forth water. There at Meribah, Moses and Aaron lead the people to the rock, but instead of speaking to it, Moses strikes it, and water flows from the rock. However, because Moses fails to obey God's command completely, God declares that Moses and Aaron will not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-12). The Israelites traveling east come upon Edom, the land of the descendants of Esau, and ask for permission to cross the land. This request is denied, and the people are forced to make a southern loop around Edom. In the same year that Miriam died, Aaron dies (Numbers 20:22-29). As the people continue to travel, they defeat the Canaanite king of Arad, after the people ask God for victory (Numbers 21:1-3). They go and defeat Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan (Refer Old Testament Maps from your Bible and locate these places).

THE SECOND CENSUS AND PREPARING TO ENTER CANAAN

The second census of the book follows (Numbers 26). Joshua is appointed as the next leader of Israel, since Moses cannot enter Canaan (Numbers 27:12-23). The Midianites are attacked and killed, and their spoils are divided (Numbers 31). The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh want to remain on the east side of the Jordan and ask Moses for permission. It is granted, provided that they help

Israel defeat the Canaanites in battle; otherwise, they must cross the Jordan. They agree to this condition. The entire journey of the Israelites from Egypt is summarized (Numbers 33). The ideal boundaries of Canaan that Israel will soon possess are described (Numbers 34). The remaining nine and a half tribes are to be given land by lot. The Levites will not have a set region for themselves, but will have 48 cities throughout Israel.

DEUTERONOMY

As we begin Deuteronomy, we note that the people are just across the Jordan on the east side, ready to enter the promised land of Canaan. Here we read Moses' final three addresses to the Israelites, where he brings together many elements of law and history from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers as they apply to their conquest and settlement in the Promised Land. Moses dies at the conclusion of Deuteronomy and leadership is given to Joshua. The name Deuteronomy means second law, which refers to the fact that Moses repeats much of the law in his farewell addresses. He stresses obedience. Moses chronicles their history from the time of the Exodus and discusses the lessons which they must learn from their past.

Moses begins his final address with a command for the people to write down what they have heard (Deuteronomy 27:3). Various offenses that can result in curses upon the guilty are recited (Deuteronomy 27:11-26); Moses details the blessings of obedience and curses of disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-68). The third address ends with a final plea to choose blessings over curses, and life over death (Deuteronomy 30:1-20). Moses passes the leadership to Joshua in the presence of the people (Deuteronomy 31:1-8). Moses writes down the law and entrusts it to the Levites (Deuteronomy 31:9-13). God tells Moses he will soon die and warns Moses that the people will soon rebel. Moses goes up to Mount Nebo across Jericho in preparation for his death. Moses blesses each of the tribes individually. He finally dies and the people mourn for thirty days (Deuteronomy 34:1-8). Deuteronomy ends with a tribute to Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

After the events in the book of Deuteronomy, we are at the point where the people are ready to cross over into the Promised Land. The book of Joshua describes how the people move into the promised land of Canaan and conquer it. It is divided into two main parts: the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1-12), and the occupation of the Promised Land (Joshua 13-24).

JERICH0

The book begins with God commissioning Joshua and the people accepting his leadership (Joshua 1). Tactically, let us examine how the Israelites are to conquer Canaan, or Palestine. Being across the Jordan on the east side, the plan is to wedge into Canaan, splitting it into two halves, and to divide and conquer. The first stronghold on the west is Jericho, so Joshua sends out two spies to examine the city. There they encounter Rahab, who saves them from the king of Jericho by hiding them in her house. She would become an ancestor of David, and later of Jesus himself. (When we arrive at the book of Ruth, we will study this.) The spies thus return safely (Joshua 2). But now the people are faced with the challenge of crossing the Jordan. Joshua tells the people to consecrate themselves, for on the following day, God would work a miracle. Carrying the Ark of the Covenant, when the priests put their feet into the river, the water stopped flowing and the people have dry land over which to cross (Joshua 3). The Lord instructs the people how to defeat Jericho, by marching around it for six days, blowing trumpets without speaking. On the seventh day, the trumpets blow and the people shout, causing the walls to go down. They destroy the city, saving only Rahab and her family (Joshua 6).

CONQUERING CANAAN

Continuing the wedge into Canaan, the next city to be targeted is Ai. Joshua again sends up spies to scout the place, and they return with a favorable report. Three thousand Israelite warriors go up to fight against Ai, and are badly defeated. We learn that one man, Achan had taken silver and gold from Jericho, an act that the Lord had forbidden. Because of this sin, they lose the battle in Ai. The sin of Achan is revealed and Achan, his family, and his possessions are stoned and burned (Joshua 7). Now free of this besetting sin, the warriors return to Ai, ambush it, and then totally destroy it (Joshua 8). After this, Joshua reads aloud the entire book of the Law that Moses had commanded to the people. The Israelites then defeat the people in southern Canaan. In one battle, the Lord kills the enemy armies with hail and holds the sun up to allow for complete defeat of the enemies (Joshua 10:1-15). The kings of the southern confederacy are hung at Makkedah (Joshua 10:16-28). The conquest of southern Canaan is detailed (Joshua 10:29-43). After this conquest, the people return to Gilgal. Jabin, king of Hazor, assembles an even stronger northern alliance. But after a long battle, the Israelites drive them out (Joshua 11). Hazor is destroyed and the northern area is taken. The kings who had been conquered by Israel under Moses and Joshua are listed in Joshua 12.

God distributes the land of Canaan and the land across the Jordan to the tribes of Israel (Joshua 13-21). Much of Canaan remains unconquered and each tribe will complete the task independently. Each tribe receives an inheritance of land, while the Levites are given 48 cities throughout Canaan. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh return across the Jordan to their land. Closing the book is Joshua's farewell address and death. He emphasizes obedience and calls for them to trust in the Lord (Joshua 23-24).

LIFE APPLICATION:

Obedience to God is the Foundation of Christian Life

Throughout this lesson, the dominant theme has been obedience. When the people obeyed, they prospered. When they disobeyed, they were punished. Of the twelve spies, only two were obedient to God. Even when Moses disobeyed, he was punished. When they fought the city of Ai, the whole army was defeated, because of the disobedience of one soldier. However, when the people were obedient, they were able to defeat huge armies. They were able to conquer many kings, when they came into Canaan, because they obeyed God.

Many people who go to church think the foundation of the Christian life is a mere intellectual belief in God. This is false. As James says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder" (James 2:19). The real foundation of Christian life is actually obeying God. Those who obey God are blessed, while those who do not are cursed. It is difficult to obey God when you are going through difficulties. Can you remember some of the most difficult times of your life when it was hard for you to obey God? Always remember that you can defeat any circumstance, if you obey God.



Review Questions:

1. Take a map of Canaan and draw the path of the Israelites from Egypt, to Kadesh-Barnea, around Edom, and into the Promised Land. How much longer is the route they took, in comparison to the one that God actually intended before the spies disobeyed?
2. Deuteronomy has been described as Jesus' favorite book in the OT. When He is in the desert (see Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13), He quotes Deuteronomy to overcome temptation. How many times does He quote Deuteronomy? Write out the references to Deuteronomy that He cites.
3. Consider Achan's sin as described in Joshua chapter 7. One sinner in the army caused the whole army to be defeated. What are the implications of this principle for today?



THE PERIOD OF JUDGES

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

When God's people disobey, disaster follows.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Judges 2, 6, 7

TEACHING AIM:

To understand the apostasy-judge cycle.

OUTLINE:

Judges and the Apostasy-Judge Cycle

Failure to Conquer

The First Four Judges

Gideon

Jephthah

Samson

The Book of Ruth

LIFE APPLICATION:

Faithfulness to God.

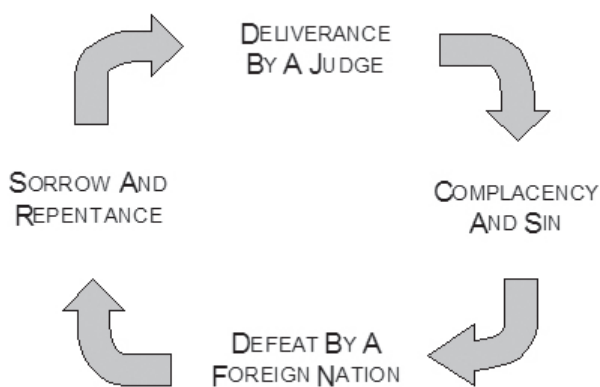
MEMORY VERSES:

They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger. In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist." (Judges 2:12 & 14).



JUDGES AND THE APOSTASY-JUDGE CYCLE

At this point, the people of Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, have just advanced into the promised land of Canaan. The land has been divided and given to the tribes of Israel, so that each tribe might defeat the people who were living in their own region, with the ultimate goal that Israel would solely inhabit the entire land. However, they turn away from God and fail to drive out the enemy tribes of the land. Because of their sins, God allows them to be oppressed by different nations of the land. The Israelites then cry out to God in their misery and God sends them a judge, a person who leads the Israelites in victory over their oppressing nation (Judges 2:16). After having defeated a particular enemy, the judges would maintain civil and military peace. However, after his death, the people would turn away from God again. This pattern of falling away (sometimes called apostasy), oppression, and deliverance by a judge occurs seven times in the book of Judges. This “apostasy-judge” cycle looks like this:



Judges contains the dismal record of an unfaithful Israel when “every man did what was right in his own eyes.” This famous phrase is found several times in Judges and is also in the last verse. There were fourteen judges in Israel’s history: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel. Twelve of these people are portrayed in the book of Judges, while Eli and Samuel, the last two, are portrayed in the First Book of Samuel.

FAILURE TO CONQUER

At the beginning of Judges, we see Israel making some conquests in southern Canaan. But, more striking is the failure of

certain tribes to conquer the land that was allocated to them and completely drive out all of its earlier inhabitants (Judges 1). God had commanded the Israelites to drive out the foreigners in the land and to destroy their idols and false deities so that the Israelites do not become ensnared by them (Deuteronomy 7). From the very beginning, Judges is a record of disobedience. Because of the people's disobedience, an angel of the Lord appears to them at a place called Bokim and tells them that God will not drive out the foreigners off their land and that the foreign gods will ensnare them (Judges 2:1-5). After Joshua's death, the people turn away from the Lord (Judges 2:6-3:6). As a result, a foreign king, Cushan-Rishathaim of Aram, oppresses the Israelites, and they cry out to God.

THE FIRST FOUR JUDGES

In response to His people's cries, God raises the first of the judges, Othniel, who delivers the people in war against Aram (Judges 3:7-11). After forty years of peace, the people again practice evil, which results in the people being handed over to the Moabites, whose king was Eglon. The Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites together attack Israel and succeed in making the Israelites subject to Eglon for eighteen years. God raises up the second judge Ehud, a Benjamite, who assassinates Eglon. Ehud then gathers the Israelites to defeat the Moabites, resulting in a peace period of eighty years (Judges 3:12-30). Very little is written about the next judge, Shamgar, who also saves Israel (Judges 3:31).

After Ehud and Shamgar, the people again do evil, and the Lord allows them to fall into the hands of Jabin, king of Hazor. The Israelites are oppressed for twenty years and finally cry out to God (Judges 4:1-3). The next judge (the fourth one), a prophetess named Deborah, delivers the people from Jabin. She and Barak lead the armies of Israel to victory against Jabin's armies, which are commanded by Sisera (Judges 4:4-16). Sisera escapes on foot and tries to hide in the tent of Heber and Jael. Jael, Heber's wife, attends to Sisera, which gives him a false sense of security. Jael waits for Sisera to fall asleep, and then drives a peg through his head, killing him (Judges 4:17-22). Deborah and Barak sing a song celebrating God's victory (Judges 5). Sometimes, Barak is also considered a judge.

GIDEON

After yet another forty years, the people again do evil and are subdued by the Midianites. The Midianites are particularly cruel, and so Israel again cries out to the Lord (Judges 6:1-6). In response,

God raises up another judge (the fifth one), Gideon. The angel of the Lord comes to Gideon and tells him to save the people from Midian. When the Midianites and Amalekites assemble in a valley, Gideon wants to attack them and so he sounds a trumpet to summon his fellow Israelites. Wanting a sign from God that he would be victorious, he places a wool fleece on the floor and asks for dew to be on it, while the ground is dry. This happens and the next night he asks that the fleece be dry and the ground wet (Judges 6:33-40). With both signs fulfilled, Gideon decides to attack.

The Israelites gather to form an army of thirty-two thousand men. However, God tells Gideon to reduce the size of the army to serve as a reminder to the Israelites that it was the hand of God and not the strength of the army that would deliver them. Gideon then asks for the fearful to leave; twenty-two thousand men leave, leaving behind only ten thousand. The Lord tells Gideon that there are still too many men and instructs him to separate men on how they drink water to quench their thirst. Those who lap the water are instructed to stay — only three hundred men remain (Judges 7:1-8). That night, God tells Gideon to attack the valley where the Midianites are camped. The Lord tells him that if he is afraid, he should go down to see the camp himself. He goes down to the Midianite camp, and hears a man and his friend recount a dream and interpretation that says Gideon will defeat the Midianites (Judges 7:9-14). Encouraged, he leads his three hundred men down to the camp, where they blow trumpets and break jars. With this surprise, the Midianites and the Amalekites attack each other in the camp, allowing Israel to defeat them. The kings of Midian are also killed (Judges 7:15-8:21). We also read of Gideon's shortcomings: how he creates an idol to himself and takes many wives. Israel enjoys forty years of peace under Gideon. Nevertheless, after he dies, the people again give themselves over to Baal worship (Judges 8:22-33).

JEPHTHAH

After Gideon, two other judges are briefly mentioned: Tola and Jair, who together save and judge Israel for forty-five years (Judges 10:1-5). Tola and Jair are the sixth and seventh judges of Israel. After Tola and Jair, the Israelites again turn toward evil, and are then subdued by the Philistines. They cry out to God, but the Lord tells them to cry out to the gods they have chosen. The people reply that they have sinned and plead for rescue (Judges 10:6-16). The Lord, in his mercy, raises up another judge, Jephthah. Jephthah, the son of Gilead, was born of a prostitute, sent away from his family, and was not to receive an inheritance. He settles in the land of Tob,

where he lives in the company of adventurers (Judges 11:1-3). Sometime later, the Ammonites are fighting Israel, and the elders of Gilead call on Jephthah to deliver them, promising him that if he were victorious, he would be allowed to lead the people afterwards. He agrees and tells the Lord that if He will give the Ammonites into his hand, he will sacrifice whatever comes out of his door when he returns from battle (Judges 11:4-31). He defeats the Ammonites, and when he returns, his daughter, his only child, comes out dancing to greet him. The daughter herself tells Jephthah to keep his vow, but asks for two months to wander in the hills and to weep with her friends. She does this, and Jephthah then sacrifices her (Judges 11:32-40). So even Jephthah, the mighty judge, did not understand that the Lord was unlike pagan gods and did not want human sacrifice. He judged Israel for six years. After him, three judges are briefly mentioned: Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (the ninth, tenth, and eleventh judges). They judge Israel for twenty-five years (Judges 12:7-15).

SAMSON

After the time of the eleventh judge, the Israelites again do evil and become subject to the Philistines for forty years. The angel of the Lord appears to Manoah, a Danite, and his childless wife and tells them that they would have a son who would begin the deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines. This son was to be a Nazirite — his hair could not be cut, nor could he take fermented drink. In time, the woman gives birth to a son, and he was named Samson (Judges 13). He would be the twelfth judge of Israel and the last mentioned in the book of Judges.

Samson has numerous conflicts with the Philistine people, including one involving a Philistine woman, whom he wants to marry. Samson judges Israel for twenty years (Judges 15). He eventually falls in love with Delilah and loses his strength, because he is deceived (the Philistines cut off his hair). He is captured, his eyes are gouged out, and he is forced to entertain an assembly of Philistines. There he begs God for His intervention, and God enables Samson to knock down the pillars of the building, killing himself and many Philistines, including their rulers (Judges 16:4-31).

THE BOOK OF RUTH

This short book describes a family living during the time of the judges. Despite the wickedness of the time, we see a beautiful example of God's divine plan in action and His moving among those who love him. A husband and wife from the line of Judah from

Bethlehem, named Elimelech and Naomi, and their two sons move to Moab, because of a famine (Ruth 1:1-2). In Moab, Elimelech dies. Their sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Then Naomi's sons die (Ruth 1:3-5). Hearing that the famine had ended back in Israel, Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem and tells her daughters-in-law to return to their own homes in Moab. Orpah does so, but Ruth decides to go with Naomi against Naomi's wish. (Ruth 1:6-18). Ruth pleads with Naomi. Naomi finally allows her to go with her and they go to Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:19-22). Being poor women, Ruth goes to collect the leftovers from the harvest (this provision for the poor was made in Leviticus 19:9-10). She unknowingly does this in the field of Elimelech's relative, Boaz. Boaz's mother was Rahab of Jericho (we saw Rahab in the book of Judges). Boaz and Ruth get married, and they give birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:13-22). Thus, the descendant of Ruth and David is Jesus.

LIFE APPLICATION:

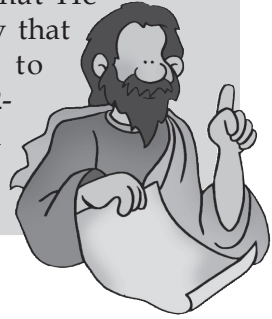
Faithfulness to God

An expression that you might have heard is being "a fair-weather friend." A fair-weather friend is someone who is a friend when things are going well, but stops being a friend when the times get tough. Some people are to God like "bad-weather friends." They seek him only in bad times and neglect him when things are going well. Look at how many people become "religious" when a family member or friend dies, or when they lose something valuable to them. God certainly does hear people when they cry out in despair, but this is not all that he desires. He wants us to love Him in good times and in bad times.

Are you to God like a "fair-weather friend" or a "bad-weather friend?" Remember that both extremes are not God's will. We must remember that God is a "friend who sticks closer than a brother." Reflect back on your life right now and think about the times when you failed God – were they in good times or in bad times? Pray that God will help you to be faithful to Him in all times.

Review Questions:

1. Draw the apostasy-judge cycle described in the Introduction, from memory. Using only your bible, write the twelve judges in the book of Judges in chronological order.
2. As we saw with Samson, the judges sometimes sinned. What was Samson's main flaw? What can we learn from his life?
3. By the close of the OT, God grows so weary with the cycle of sin and defeat that He promises to do something new that will enable the Israelites to overcome sin. Read Ezekiel 36:22-27. What is the primary reason God gives the Holy Spirit?



▶▶ LESSON

06

THE PERIOD OF KINGS

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Nations prosper if they follow God.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

1 Samuel 8, 15; 1 Kings 12;;2 Kings 24-25"

TEACHING AIM:

To understand how Israel went from a theocracy to a monarchy, the succession of the kings, the division of Israel, and the fall of the two kingdoms to Assyria and Babylon.

OUTLINE:

First and Second Samuel
Samuel the Prophet-Judge
Saul Made King
Saul Disobeys and Loses the Kingship
David Becomes King of Israel
Strife in David's Kingdom
First and Second Kings
Solomon Becomes King
King Solomon and the Division of the Kingdom
The Two Kingdoms Fall
First and Second Chronicles

LIFE APPLICATION:

The Lord looks at the heart.

**MEMORY VERSES:**

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD. (Psalm 33:12)

FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

The First and Second Books of Samuel depict the transition from the time of the judges to the time of kings. (First and Second Samuel were originally one book.) The last of the judges, Eli and Samuel, are depicted here, and we read of Israel's first king, Saul, and his downfall. At this time, Israel is still subject to the Philistines as they were when Samson judged them. Samuel, a great man of God and the last of the judges, in response to the people's clamor for a king, anoints Saul under God's direction. Samuel later prophesies against Saul and anoints David as the future king. David, being a man of God, is given success and makes an incredible rise to power. The three main characters of these two books are Samuel, Saul, and David.

SAMUEL THE PROPHET-JUDGE

At the tabernacle in Shiloh (Joshua moved it there in Joshua 18:1), a woman named Hannah cries out to God to give her a son, promising that she would give him back to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:9-18). She has a son, names him Samuel and gives him to Eli. Eli is the priest of the temple in Shiloh and the judge of Israel. As Samuel grows older, he heeds the word of the Lord, and Israel recognizes that Samuel is a prophet (1 Samuel 3:19-21). God pronounces judgment on Eli and his family on account of his wicked sons. His two sons are killed in battle, and when Eli hears this news at ninety-eight years of age, he falls backward from his chair and dies (1 Samuel 4:12-18). With Samuel as judge, Israel regains cities from the Philistines, and the people live in peace (1 Samuel 7:13-17).

KING SAUL DISOBEYS AND LOSES THE KINGSHIP

As Samuel grows old, the fact that his two sons were evil gives the elders of Israel a reason to ask for a king (1 Samuel 8:1-5). God had already prophesied that Israel would want a king, even though it was not in their best interests (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). God, speaking through Samuel, warns the people of the taxes, services, and the cost that they would incur with a king. However, the people want one anyway. The Lord tells Samuel to let them have a king (1 Samuel 8:6-22). Samuel anoints a young man by the name of Saul to be the king. Samuel later assembles the people together at Mizpah, where Samuel tells the people that Saul would be their king, and the people rejoice (1 Samuel 10:17-25).

Sometime later, Saul and his son Jonathan attack a Philistine outpost, and the Philistines respond by attacking the Israelites, and forcing them into a bad position (1 Samuel 13:1-7). Samuel instructs

Saul to wait seven days until he arrives, but Saul does not wait. Before the seventh day ends, he offers a sacrifice to God, thus breaking the Lord's command. Because of this sin, Samuel declares that God would appoint another leader over Israel, "a man after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:8-14). Later, in a critical event, God commands Saul to destroy the Amalekites and their animals because of what they had previously done to Israel. Saul has everyone killed except the Amalekite king Agag, and allows for the best animals to be taken for sacrifice to God (1 Samuel 15:1-9). Samuel hears of this from God and confronts Saul for his disobedience. He tells Saul that the kingdom of Israel is now in someone else's hands (1 Samuel 15:10-29). Later, the Lord sends Samuel to the family of Jesse and tells him to anoint the one whom the Lord will point out to be king. When David, the youngest, comes before Samuel, he is anointed as the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Saul is now tormented by the Lord, and his servants suggest that one skilled in music, David, play the harp for Saul. David does this, and Saul is pleased. David joins Saul's service (1 Samuel 16:14-23).

The Philistines gather for war, and Saul and his forces line up against the Philistines. A Philistine champion over nine feet tall, Goliath, comes out daily to defy Israel at evening and morning (1 Samuel 17:1-16). David, being sent by his father Jesse to bring food to his brothers, sees Goliath and convinces Saul to let him fight Goliath (1 Samuel 17:17-51). David kills Goliath with a stone and cuts off Goliath's head with Goliath's own sword. Saul becomes jealous of David and tries to kill him five times (1 Samuel 18-19). Jonathan, Saul's son, warns David, and helps him escape death twice. They form one of the closest friendships of all time (1 Samuel 20). The final chapters of First Samuel describe David's fleeing from Saul. David runs from city to city with a band of followers, barely escaping capture by Saul. Twice, David has the opportunity to kill Saul, and at both times declines to do so (1 Samuel 24, 26), because he respected Saul as God's anointed. Seeing David's mercy towards him, Saul promises to stop pursuing David. But Saul does not keep his word and keeps pursuing him. The Philistines then gather their forces and attack Israel. In this battle, the three sons of Saul, including Jonathan, die. Saul is wounded by archers and commits suicide by falling on his own sword (1 Samuel 31). First Samuel ends with Saul's burial.

DAVID BECOMES KING OF ISRAEL

After Saul's death, David asks God what he should do. God tells David to go to Hebron, which is in Judah. There, the people of Judah anoint him king over their tribe (2 Samuel 2:1-7). David's

rival, Ish-bosheth (Saul's son), is killed by two men who are trying to help David. With no real leader left in Israel, people from all twelve tribes come to make David king of all Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 5:1-5). Now king over all Israel, David captures Jerusalem and moves there, making Jerusalem the capital of Israel (2 Samuel 5:6-10). (Previously in Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:21, the Israelites were unable to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem.) David begins to move the ark of God to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). God promises David that He would make David's name great and that his throne would endure forever. David responds with a prayer of thanksgiving (2 Samuel 7).

Next we turn to a pivotal event in David's life. During wartime, David stays back in Jerusalem and, while walking on the terrace of his palace, he sees Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, bathing. He sends messengers to bring her over and commits adultery with her. Later, when David realizes that Bathsheba is pregnant with his child, he sends word to his general Joab with the necessary instructions to facilitate Uriah's death on the battlefield. After Uriah dies, Bathsheba becomes David's wife (2 Samuel 11). In all this, David displeases God, and God sends Nathan the prophet to confront David with his sin. God, through the prophet Nathan, rebukes David saying, "...the sword will never depart from your house...." (2 Samuel 12:1-12). David confesses his sin, and God forgives him. However, David must bear the consequences of his sin. His child falls ill and dies (2 Samuel 12:13-19). However, David comforts his wife Bathsheba and they have another child - Solomon (2 Samuel 12:24).

STRIFE IN DAVID'S KINGDOM

Absalom, a son of David and a very handsome man, comes back and steals the hearts of the people, by showing them kindness, and telling the people about the justice he could bring to them (2 Samuel 15:1-12). He conspires to set himself up as king, and David flees, realizing that Absalom now has power (2 Samuel 15:13-23). David gathers his forces together, and the forces of David and Absalom fight in the forest of Ephraim. David orders that Absalom not be harmed. Absalom's hair is caught in a tree, and Joab kills him against David's orders (2 Samuel 18:1-32). David mourns deeply on hearing the news of Absalom's death (2 Samuel 18:33). Thereafter, he takes back charge of the kingdom and restores order.

FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

In the book of the Kings, we see David as the uncontested king of Israel. In First and Second Kings, we read of the succession of

kings that follow David and the extremely important division of Israel into Israel and Judah. First Kings contains the record of the so-called Golden Age of Israel under the rule of Solomon. After his death, Israel soon splits into two kingdoms, and many wicked kings rule these two kingdoms. In Second Kings, we see that Assyria captures the northern kingdom of Israel. Babylon later captures the southern kingdom of Judah. The book of Kings, originally one book, was later split into the two books of First and Second Kings at the time of translation.

KING SOLOMON AND THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

At the beginning of the account in First Kings, we see David, an old man, who will soon require a successor. A contention arises between the sons of David for control of the kingdom and David establishes his son Solomon as king (1 Kings 2:1-12). In a dream, the Lord appears to Solomon and beckons Solomon to ask Him for whatever he desires. Solomon asks the Lord for wisdom to rule the people well. His request pleases the Lord, and God grants him his request, and in addition, promises him a magnificent kingdom (1 Kings 3:1-15). Immediately after this account, we read about how Solomon skillfully handles two prostitutes, who both claim the same child (1 Kings 3:16-28). Solomon's wisdom and his great kingdom make him famous all over the world (1 Kings 4).

However Solomon does not continue in prosperity. He takes many foreign wives. Their gods soon lead Solomon astray as he builds altars to Molech and other false gods (1 Kings 11:1-8). Because of his sins, God tells Solomon that his household would lose its hold on Israel and be left with only one tribe (1 Kings 11:9-13). (We will later see this tribe to be Judah.) God raises up many adversaries against Solomon. One of Solomon's adversaries is a man named Jeroboam. God promises kingship of Israel to Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:14-39). Solomon tries to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam flees to Egypt (1 Kings 11:40). Solomon finally dies, leaving his son Rehoboam as the king of Israel (1 Kings 11:41-43). The people ask Rehoboam how he would treat them, and he responds arrogantly, saying that he would treat them harshly. Consequently, all the people of Israel, with the exception of the tribe of Judah in the south, set Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam, in order to keep the people from going to worship at Jerusalem (located in Judah), makes two golden calves and puts them in Bethel and Dan (both in Israel). The people then worship these golden calves in Israel instead of going to the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12).

So, God's people are divided, with Judah in the south and Israel in the north. The First and Second Books of Kings takes us through the reign of the many kings of both nations, their adventures, and the ministry of the prophets who lived during that time. There reigns in the northern kingdom of Israel, one such king named Ahab. He is particularly evil, as is his wife, Jezebel. God raises up a prophet, Elijah, who condemns Ahab's actions and demonstrates on Mount Carmel that the LORD God of Israel is supreme over all other gods (1 Kings 18).

THE TWO KINGDOMS FALL

The northern kingdom of Israel becomes so wicked that they are conquered by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17). The last king of Israel is Hoshea. Assyria marches southward after they conquer Israel and tries to conquer Judah. However, Judah at that time has a godly king, Hezekiah. King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah pray to God, who strikes the Assyrian army with a terrible plague. Thus, the kingdom of Judah is able to survive the attack from Assyria (2 Kings 19). However, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, is extremely wicked, and God prophesies that Judah will also fall (2 Kings 21). Another kingdom, Babylon, defeats Assyria and becomes the major world power. Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar, defeats the kingdom of Judah. During the reign of the last three kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, Judah is taken away into exile in Babylon. The people are taken into exile into Babylon in three separate periods under each of these kings. Only the very poorest people remain in Judah. The temple itself is destroyed when King Zedekiah is ruling. (Be sure to read 2 Kings 24 and 25 so that you thoroughly understand this time period.) The prophet Jeremiah is one person who remains in Judah, while most are taken away into exile.

FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

Both First and Second Chronicles depict material from the periods found in the books of Samuel and Kings. Although the Chronicles contain information relating to the same period as the earlier four books, its perspective is unique and different from the prior books. Chronicles portrays Israelite history to a people, who have returned from exile. The writer of Chronicles links the people who have returned from exile with their nation's past, emphasizing the spiritual significance of their history. Chronicles places special emphasis on Israel's religious history and God's promises for Israel. Again, David's kingly line is followed closely, as it will be the line of the Messiah.

LIFE APPLICATION:

The Lord Looks at the Heart

At school, there is always the smallest or least popular student, who is ridiculed. Such a person never gets picked to play on sports teams, or is never thought to be “cool.” Did you know that King David was like that? When Samuel went to anoint the next king, no one thought that it would be David – he was the youngest child, and only a boy. But read what Samuel said about this. “The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

We all are tempted to look at outside appearance, because that is all that we as humans can see. But God looks at the heart. In what ways do you judge people? Is it based on how they look! Pray that the Lord will help you to see the world with his eyes, not your own.

Review Questions:

1. From the following list of twelve kings, (a) write a list of kings that obeyed God and (b) write a list of kings that disobeyed God: Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Ahab, Hoshea, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.
2. Solomon falls from God’s favor because he takes many wives. Read this story in 1 Kings 11:1-8. What about his wives made Solomon disobey the Lord? How does this principle affect how you and your parents should select a spouse for you?
3. When Assyria attacks Judah, Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah are together able to defeat this enemy nation. Read the story of how they do this in 2 Kings 19. What was the reason for their success?



THE PERIOD OF EXILE

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

God promises hope to His fallen people.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Jeremiah 25; Ezekiel 3, 37; Daniel 2, 4"

TEACHING AIM:

To understand the period of time that Judah was in exile, and the prophetic messages to the people from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

OUTLINE:

Introduction to the Exile
Ezekiel's Call
Prophecy about the Fall of Jerusalem
The Fall of Jerusalem
Daniel in Babylon
King Nebuchadnezzar
Medo-Persia Defeats Babylon
Jeremiah and the Seventy Years

LIFE APPLICATION:

Being a watchman.

MEMORY VERSES:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)



INTRODUCTION TO THE EXILE

We saw at the conclusion of the last period of Israel's history (Period V, the Period of Kings), that Assyria had defeated the northern kingdom of Israel and that Babylon had defeated the southern kingdom of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar captured Judah in three batches (under Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah) out of their land into Babylon. In this lesson, we will see what happened to the people in exile.

EZEKIEL'S CALL

During the capture of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, we saw how God raised up prophets to minister to His people. We saw how Isaiah and Jeremiah were called to Judah. However, God did not leave His people in Babylon, without His prophets. (Remember, those exiled from Judah were taken to Babylon.) In Babylon, God raises up another great prophet, who was called to prophesy judgment and hope to the people — Ezekiel. In 597 B.C., King Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, which led to ten thousand officers, fighting men, craftsman, and artisans being taken into exile. Ezekiel, then in his twenties, was among the exiles (2 Kings 24:14). Five years after this exile into Babylon, God calls him to be His prophet, and his message forms the book of Ezekiel. God first calls Ezekiel when he is by the Kebar River in Babylon, along with the other exiles. There he first witnesses the heavens open and sees visions of God (Ezekiel 1:1-3). This vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord drives Ezekiel to fall facedown (Ezekiel 1:4-28). The Lord begins to speak to Ezekiel, and the Spirit of God enters him and lifts him to his feet (Ezekiel 2:1-2). God commands Ezekiel to deliver His word to a rebellious people - Israel. He commands Ezekiel to eat the scroll that is set before him, and Ezekiel eats the scroll. The Spirit of God then lifts him up and places him among the exiles who live by the shores of the Kebar River. This experience leaves him overwhelmed for seven days (Ezekiel 2:3-3:15). After the seven days, God again speaks to Ezekiel and tells him the consequences of withholding the word of the Lord. God also tells Ezekiel that he will not be able to speak when he wished, but he will only be able to speak when the word of the Lord comes to him (Ezekiel 3:16-27).

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

This is only five years after the exile under Jehoiachin, and Jerusalem has not yet been leveled. It is the reign of King Zedekiah

(2 Kings 24-25). God has Ezekiel prophetically enact the siege and fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel lies on one side of his body for a set number of days and then on the other side for a set number of days, representing punishment for Israel and Judah. He only eats eight ounces of food a day and drinks two thirds a quart of water every day, undoubtedly causing him to waste away (Ezekiel 4). He then shaves his head and beard, divides the shaved hair, and destroys it in different ways representing the terrible fate of the people (Ezekiel 5). After acting the siege out, Ezekiel then speaks this message of doom to the people (Ezekiel 6-7). In another vision, Ezekiel is taken to the temple at Jerusalem where he witnesses all kinds of idolatry. There he sees animal worship, idol worship, and sun worship (Ezekiel 8). Only those who grieve this activity have their lives spared (Ezekiel 9). With this, the glory of the Lord leaves the temple (Ezekiel 10). Ezekiel sees the leaders of Israel giving bad counsel, and he also sees one of them die as a result of God's judgment on them. Ezekiel agonizes and cries out to God in distress at the plight of his people, and God tells Ezekiel that the people will eventually return to the land of Israel (Ezekiel 11).

Ezekiel offers a powerful allegory to describe Jerusalem's unfaithfulness to God and the law of God. The people of Jerusalem are likened to a woman, who is dearly loved and cherished, and yet chooses to become a prostitute (Ezekiel 16). Ezekiel then speaks against the common idea that accountability for sin is intergenerational and describes how one may repent and be forgiven. God tells Ezekiel that he takes pleasure in the death of no one (Ezekiel 18). Ezekiel laments the fate of Israel and describes its rebellious history, which began from the time of Egypt (Ezekiel 19-20). He again reminds the people of the coming judgment in Babylon and subsequent restoration (Ezekiel 21-22). In another parable, Ezekiel describes Israel and Judah as sisters, who each became prostitutes against God (Ezekiel 23). After this, God warns Ezekiel that his wife will die, and indeed, she does. This is symbolic of what will happen to Jerusalem, the city that the people love. God tells Ezekiel that he will be able to speak after Jerusalem falls (Ezekiel 24:15-27).

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE PROSPECT OF HOPE

God gives Ezekiel a title in relation to the house of Israel; it is that of a watchman. The watchman is one who, when he sees doom coming, warns others. By doing so, the blood of those he warns is no longer upon him (Ezekiel 33:1-20). Finally, as Ezekiel has

prophesied for years now, news comes to Babylon that Jerusalem has fallen. With this, Ezekiel is allowed to speak again, although the people in Babylon still do not understand (Ezekiel 33:21-33). Ezekiel then prophesies to the shepherds, and the leaders of Israel. He tells them that they are concerned only with their own interests, and not for those of the flock. Because of their failures, God will hold them accountable for the flock. In addition, God will, himself, tend for the people and care for them. He will also set up his own prince and shepherd, another David (Ezekiel 34). This is the prophecy concerning Jesus, the Messiah. With Jerusalem defeated, Ezekiel tells the people that God will again restore Israel by His mighty power. In a dramatic vision of this restoration, the Spirit of the Lord brings Ezekiel to a valley covered with bones. God brings the bones together and breathes life into the bodies to recreate the house of Israel. God also tells Ezekiel that Israel would not be divided into two kingdoms much longer, but that they would be united under a coming King, another Messianic promise (Ezekiel 37).

DANIEL IN BABYLON

While Ezekiel served among the exiles in the foreign land of Babylon, there was another prophet who served in the court of the rulers of Babylon — Daniel. As we have seen, exile to Babylon took place in three main batches. Daniel was taken as a young boy in the first exile. Being a righteous man, faithful to the God of Israel in the midst of the hedonism and idolatry in the Babylonian courts, he was esteemed by God and given great wisdom and power. The book of Daniel chronicles the story of this great man of God and the tremendous prophetic visions that God granted to him.

In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim, the king rebels and Nebuchadnezzar destroys the land of Judah (2 Kings 24:1-2). During this period, Jehoiakim is taken to Babylon in exile (2 Chronicles 36:6). At this time, King Nebuchadnezzar orders Ashpenaz to bring royal and noble young men who are handsome, knowledgeable, and quick to understand to Babylon. The men brought in are trained in the Babylonian language and culture for three years and then put to service in the king's court (Daniel 1:1-5). (They are among the first batch exiled.) Among these men are Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These four do not want to defile their bodies with the food of the king and ask permission to eat only vegetables and drink only water. They are granted permission to follow their simple diet for a ten-day trial period, at the end of which these men appear healthier in all respects than

their peers who eat the royal diet. The royal officials allow them to continue their vegetarian diet. God blesses these men with knowledge and understanding. They gain favor in the eyes of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:18-20).

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR

A short time later, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. He asks his astrologers and magicians, not only to interpret the troubling dream, but also to describe the dream itself. They shudder at his request and Nebuchadnezzar in fury decides to put the wise men of Babylon to death (Daniel 2:1-13). Daniel hears of this and prays with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to God. That very night, God answers their prayer and reveals the dream and its interpretation to Daniel (Daniel 2:14-23). Daniel recounts the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a statue whose head was gold, chest and arms were silver, belly and thighs were bronze, legs were iron, and feet were iron and clay. In the interpretation given by Daniel, the body parts made up of different materials represent four different great kingdoms. They are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar is pleased with Daniel and exalts him to a high position and acknowledges the God of Daniel (Daniel 2:24-49). But this same Nebuchadnezzar later builds a ninety-foot idol and commands the people to bow down and worship the statue at the sound of music. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do not bow down to this image and some astrologers report this to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:1-12). The king is angered at their adamant stand and throws them into a fiery furnace. The intensity of the furnace is increased seven-fold. But in the fire, another man (Jesus Christ) appears to be walking with them and not one of them is burned. Amazed at the sight, Nebuchadnezzar orders them to come out, and he praises their God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are promoted (Daniel 3:13-30).

In a third episode, the king again sees a dream, which again none, but Daniel, can interpret (Daniel 4:1-18). Explaining the dream, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he will become like an animal and that he should repent. However, Nebuchadnezzar is filled with pride for all he has done, and soon after, Daniel's prediction concerning the king is fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar loses his sanity temporarily, acting like an animal. When his sanity is restored, he finally praises the God of heaven and is restored to his greatness (Daniel 4:19-37). Daniel held the highest position, during the reigns of four kings.

MEDO-PERSIA DEFEATS BABYLON

Over twenty years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, his successor, King Belshazzar, gives a great banquet. While the king and his companions are drinking, he orders that the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, which Nebuchadnezzar had seized, be brought out so that they might drink from them (Daniel 5:1-4). As they drink from the sacred vessels, suddenly, a hand appears which writes on the wall in the royal palace. The king is terrified, and no one can read the message. Daniel is brought in; he is able to read the message that proclaims judgment on the King (Daniel 5:5-28). That night, Babylon is taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire, Belshazzar is killed, and Darius the Mede becomes ruler of the land (Daniel 5:29-31). Some of the dignitaries of the land convince King Darius to order a decree that no one should pray to anyone except the king for thirty days. This order, if disobeyed, was punishable with the death penalty. Once the decree is passed, these officials accuse Daniel whose custom was to pray to God three times a day (Daniel 6:1-13). The king wants to save Daniel but cannot, and therefore, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den. However, God rescues him, and Darius issues another decree ordering that the people revere the God of Daniel (Daniel 6:14-28).

The remainder of the book contains different prophetic visions, which Daniel had at different times. They involve prophecies of kingdoms rising and falling and prophecies about the time that the Messiah will come (Daniel chapters 7-12).

JEREMIAH AND THE SEVENTY YEARS

While most people from Judah went into exile in Babylon, the very poorest remained back, including prophet Jeremiah. Away from Babylon, Jeremiah makes a very important prophecy: the people in Babylon would remain there only for seventy years (Jeremiah 25). Thus Judah would not remain in Babylon forever. In the next lesson, we will see how they returned.

LIFE APPLICATION:

Being a Watchman

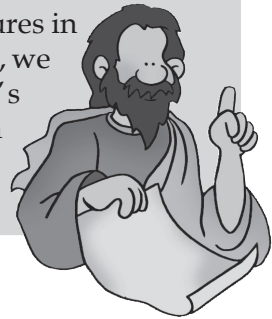
We have all seen security guards before. Their job is to be on the lookout for crimes. If they see a crime happening, it is their job to try to prevent the crime. Even if they do not succeed in capturing the criminal, they at least have to try. A security guard who does not do anything when he sees someone breaking in, or stealing something, is worthless. Indeed, such a person is not a security guard at all!

A security guard is one type of a “watchman.” In Ezekiel 33, God calls Ezekiel a watchman. His job is to warn people of their sin and of God’s judgment. Ezekiel is not concerned whether they listen or not; all he has to do is warn them. However, if he does not warn them, then their blood is on his hands, because he did not do his job.

In the same way, every Christian is called to be a watchman. Your job is to tell your friends that they will face judgment because they are sinning and rejecting Christ. Whether they listen or not is not your concern. But if you do not even warn them, then you are like the security guard who sees a crime happening but does nothing in response. Will you be a watchman for the Lord?

Review Questions:

1. Review the memory verse. Even though the people are in exile, Jeremiah offers them hope. In what ways are we in exile today? What is our hope?
2. Ezekiel twice describes Israel as a prostitute. In the light of the NT (for example Eph 5:25), who is the husband of the prostitute? What is the full relationship that is revealed in Revelation 21?
3. Daniel is one of the greatest figures in the OT. Read Daniel 6:10. There, we see the great key to Daniel’s success. What is it? How can you imitate Daniel?



THE PERIOD OF RETURN

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

God keeps his promises and miraculously saves His people.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther “

TEACHING AIM:

To understand the two major returns of Judah back to Jerusalem and how God saved his people through Esther.

OUTLINE:

Introduction to the Return
Rebuilding the Temple
Ezra Comes to Jerusalem
Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall
Esther Becomes Queen
A Plot Uncovered
Haman Defeated

LIFE APPLICATION:

Great tasks are done by the Spirit.



MEMORY VERSES:

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty. “(Zechariah 4:6)

INTRODUCTION TO THE RETURN

The prophetic word of God, spoken by Jeremiah, indicated that the people of Judah would return to their homeland from exile. This was fulfilled during the time of the Persian King Cyrus, who helped it happen. The books Ezra and Nehemiah portray the events surrounding the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. With no temple or walls in Jerusalem, because of the earlier Babylonian siege, the reconstruction begins. Reconstruction occurs in two separate periods. The first period involves rebuilding the temple under the governor Zerubbabel and the priest Jeshua (or Joshua). The second period involves rebuilding the city walls under the governor Nehemiah and the priest Ezra. The book of Ezra actually portrays the first period and Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah describes the second period. The return to Jerusalem occurs in three different parties. The first and main return includes people like Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Ezra heads the second return eighty years later. Nehemiah heads the third return, coming thirteen years after Ezra's.

ZERUBBABEL AND JESHUA REBUILD THE TEMPLE

The book of Ezra begins with King Cyrus decreeing that the Jews could return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1-4). Cyrus gives the returning party the temple articles, which the Babylonians had taken from the temple under Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1:5-11). Zerubbabel and Jeshua are among the first exiles that return. When the people settle in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel and Jeshua lead the people in building an altar on which they present burnt offerings. They did this in spite of their fear of the surrounding people. After the people build an altar, they begin the construction of the temple. Some people rejoice, while others weep, remembering the glory of Solomon's temple (Ezra 3). There was much opposition to the building of the temple (Ezra 4:1-5). Through trickery and deception, enemies of the Jews try to halt construction of the temple multiple times and succeeded.

However, in the second year of King Darius, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesy to the people telling them to rebuild. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the people begin rebuilding (Ezra 5:1-2). Again opposition arises, but it is unsuccessful because Darius finds Cyrus' original decree and orders that the Jews not be stopped (Ezra 6:1-5). With this favorable edict,

the temple is completed under the rule of Darius (Ezra 6:13-15). The people celebrate its dedication with burnt offerings and later celebrate Passover (Ezra 6:16-22).

EZRA COMES TO JERUSALEM

Sixty years pass before the next section of the book of Ezra. Zerubbabel and Jeshua have passed away, and this is the time of Ezra. (These sixty years fall between verses 6:22 and 7:1. In 6:22 we are under King Darius while in 7:1 we are under King Artaxerxes. Accounts about Xerxes and Artaxerxes are also interjected into chapter 4, which can be confusing when you first read the book of Ezra). In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, Ezra is commissioned by the King to go to Jerusalem and offer sacrifice, help restore the temple, and teach the law (Ezra 7). He and his party then return to Jerusalem under God's protection (Ezra 8). The remainder of the book of Ezra concerns an immediate religious reform that occurs when Ezra arrives in Jerusalem. Ezra hears that the Israelites have intermarried with the people of the land and Ezra makes a prayer of confession (Ezra 9). Because of Ezra's prayer and sadness, the leaders make an oath to rid themselves of this sin. The book concludes by describing how the people deal with this sin and lists those who had sinned in this way (Ezra 10).

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL

The book of Nehemiah continues the story of the Jewish return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the city, which we began to read about in the book of Ezra. Nehemiah, a cupbearer to the reigning king Artaxerxes, gets word of the poor condition of Jerusalem from his brothers and weeps for his people (Nehemiah 1:1-4). He prays to God for success to help restore Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:5-11) and appeals to Artaxerxes to allow him to return. The king grants his request (Nehemiah 2:1-10). When Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, he inspects the walls and decides to organize a rebuilding effort (Nehemiah 2:11-18). Immediately, opposing groups arise who are against this effort (Nehemiah 2:19-20). Nehemiah allocates the task of rebuilding the wall, so that those living near a section of the wall will be responsible for that part of the wall (Nehemiah 3). There was much opposition from the enemy, but armed patrolling teams stationed by Nehemiah frustrate the enemy's opposition. (Nehemiah 4). Finally, after fifty-two days, the rebuilding of the wall is complete (Nehemiah 6:15-16).

Ezra leads a reading of the book of the law, which leads to a confession of sin by the people (Nehemiah 8:1-9:37). With this, the

people make an agreement together, concerning a new dedication to the Lord and His laws (Nehemiah 9:38-10:39). The wall is also dedicated to the Lord (Nehemiah 12:27-47). Nehemiah actually makes a trip back to Babylon and returns to find problems in Jerusalem. The book ends by describing some reforms that Nehemiah makes (Nehemiah 13).

ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN

Between the first and second returns to Jerusalem, there was a gap of eighty years. During these eighty years, a Persian king by the name of Xerxes (otherwise known as Ahasuerus) reigned. During his reign, King Xerxes holds a great banquet and tries to parade his Queen Vashti for all to see her beauty (Esther 1:1-11). However, she refuses and on the council of his advisers, Xerxes deposes her (Esther 1:12-1:22). With this, Xerxes issues a decree to search for a beautiful woman who would become the next queen (Esther 2:1-4). Esther, a Jewish woman from the tribe of Benjamin, is selected to be one of the women presented before Xerxes. She is an orphan who was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. She gains favor before Xerxes and is made the next queen (Esther 2:5-18).

A PLOT UNCOVERED

After Esther is made queen, Mordecai uncovers a plot to assassinate the king and he tells Esther about the plan. The report is investigated and found to be true, and so it is recorded in the annals of Xerxes that Mordecai saved the king (Esther 2:19-23). However, Mordecai does not bow to a high-ranking official in Xerxes' court named Haman, which incites Haman's anger (Esther 3:1-5). Out of his anger, Haman devises a plan to exterminate all the Jews in the world on a specific day. He obtains Xerxes' approval, and the edict spreads throughout the kingdom (Esther 3:6-15). Mordecai sends word of this to Esther who courageously decides to plead to the king (Esther 4:1-17).

HAMAN DEFEATED

On a night when Xerxes cannot sleep, he has the record of his reign read to him. He hears the story of Mordecai's uncovering the plot to kill the king and he decides to honor him. Xerxes makes Haman exalt Mordecai before all the people, an act which greatly humiliates Haman (Esther 6:1-14). After the two banquets Esther prepares for Haman and Xerxes, Esther asks that the order against her people be stopped, so that her people may live (Esther 5:1-7:4). When Xerxes discovers that Haman was behind the Jewish

extermination decree, he orders Haman's execution on the gallows that he (Haman) had prepared for Mordecai. (Esther 7:5-10). King Xerxes allows the Jews to take revenge on their enemies for one day (Esther 8:1-17). The Jews do this and kill the ten sons of Haman (Esther 9:1-10). Esther asks for one more day of vengeance for those Jews who lived in Susa, to which Xerxes agrees. Esther also obtains permission to place the ten dead bodies of Haman's sons on the gallows for all to see (Esther 9:11-15). This day of revenge is celebrated as the Feast of Purim, which is observed by Jews even today (Esther 9:18-32). The book of Esther ends by describing Mordecai's greatness and his good work on behalf of the Jews (Esther 10:1-3).

LIFE APPLICATION:

Great Tasks are Done by the Spirit

Review the memory verse from today. It was spoken by Zechariah to Zerubbabel in the context of trying to rebuild the temple. Both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah had great dreams for the Lord. Zerubbabel wanted to rebuild the temple, and Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls. These dreams must have seemed so impossible at the time. Thus those words "not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit" must have been encouraging since these men did not have great might or power. Right after those words, Zerubbabel is told: "What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground." (Zechariah 4:7).

Even now, you should be cultivating great dreams for God. Do not worry that you are young. God loves to use young people to advance His kingdom. Listen to God, and hear what you are being called to do. The mountains will become level ground before you when God calls you. When the task seems impossible, hear God saying these words to you: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit".



Review Questions:

1. When Nehemiah encountered opposition to his efforts to rebuild the wall, how did he respond? (Read Nehemiah 4). What are the applications of this for today?
2. Though Esther was living in luxury, she did not forget her fellow Jews outside the palace. In fact, she put her own life at risk to help those outside, even though she could have done nothing. If the palace is like the country of America, what are the implications of Esther's righteous example for us today?



▶▶ LESSON

09

JESUS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Isaiah 9; 53:3-6; Zechariah 6:11-13

TEACHING AIM:

To understand how the Old Testament prophesies about Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE:

A Thread in the Old Testament
Prophecies of the Messiah

LIFE APPLICATION:

Giving evidence for Jesus' divinity using the Old Testament when you share the gospel.

**MEMORY VERSES:**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

A THREAD IN THE OT

As we have seen in this unit, most of the OT is dedicated to describing the history of Israel. However, there is a very important thread in the OT interwoven with the story of Israel and God's laws. This thread consists of prophecies about a coming figure, known as the Messiah. The word Messiah is a Hebrew word that means "Anointed One." In Greek (the language of the NT), the word Messiah is translated "Christ." The Messiah, promised to Israel, would be their deliverer and someone to take away the people's sins. In this lesson, we will look at some of the prophecies about the Messiah that are found in the OT.

PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH

The prophet Micah once said, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2). It is fairly obvious that this person of whom Micah is talking about is unusual, because his "origins are from old, from ancient times." However, we do see that this special person will be from Bethlehem. This verse, describing a person not yet known to the people of Israel, is a Messianic prophecy. (Do you understand how Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy?)

Next we turn to Isaiah who said, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2, Mathew 1:18-23). Isaiah continues by saying, "In the future he [God] will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isaiah 9:1-2,6-7).

Isaiah records several things about this person:

- a. He is somehow associated with Galilee. (while Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he was raised in Nazareth, which is in Galilee, and did most of his ministry in various places in Galilee.)
- b. He comes as a child or son.
- c. He will reign on the Davidic throne forever. [there are several other passages in the OT where God says that a king of David's

descent will rule forever (see for example, 2 Samuel 7:16)]. Now, we will look at a passage that describe the later part of Messiah's life. It comes from Zechariah. "Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9; Mathew 21:1-11).

Zechariah declares that the king of Israel will not come on a stallion or in a chariot, but on a donkey. This, of course, is exactly how Jesus entered Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday," on the week that he was crucified.

Isaiah also foretold that the Messiah would be a "suffering servant" who would be rejected by men and bear the sins of the world: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy through his death on the cross. Isaiah's description of how Jesus would take away our sins is truly astonishing.

There are many more passages that we could look at. They include the fact that the Messiah's name would be Joshua (which is Jesus in Greek) and would come to Jerusalem in AD 30! Including the prophecies that we have already examined, here is a list of some passages that predict the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

- a. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- b. Associated with Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2)
- c. Comes as a "child" or "son" (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- d. Descendant of David who will rule forever (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- e. Will come to Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)
- f. Will be rejected by men and suffer greatly (Isaiah 53)
- g. Will come to Jerusalem in AD 30 (Daniel 9:20-25)
- h. Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
- i. Hands and feet will be pierced (Psalm 22:16)
- j. Cast lots for clothing (Psalm 22:18)
- k. Name will be Joshua in Hebrew, which is Jesus in Greek (Zechariah 6:11-13)

- l. Valued at 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:13)
- m. Second coming of Jesus (Psalms 90:13)

LIFE APPLICATION:

Giving Evidence for Jesus' Divinity Using the OT When You Share the Gospel

There was once an atheist college student, who attended a talk where the speaker said, "How many people do you know who had their biography written a thousand years before they were born? Did George Washington, Buddha, Mohammed, Napoleon, or any other person in history? No, but there was one man who did have his biography written before he was born. His name is Jesus of Nazareth." The speaker went on to talk about Psalm 22 where Jesus' crucifixion is described in astonishing detail. This atheist at first didn't believe it, but did some research and came to the conclusion that the speaker was right!

The atheist became a Christian and is now preaching the gospel in India. What will your response be to studying these prophecies? They simply cannot be explained away. They must be confronted. God gave us clear historical proof that Jesus is Lord with the many fulfilled prophecies concerning his life.

When you share the gospel with your skeptical friends, be sure to raise this subject and show them that there is concrete evidence for believing in Jesus. Believing in Jesus is not just a choice based on feelings, but it is a choice based on the mind and rational evidence. For more preparation on this very important topic, you should read the book by Josh McDowell called *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

Review Questions:

For the following Messianic prophecies, write out how the particular prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. If you have difficulty understanding the passage or its fulfillment, ask your teacher for help.

Psalm 2	Psalm 22:16	Psalm 22:18
Psalm 90:13	Isaiah 7:14	Isaiah 9:1-2
Isaiah 9:6-7	Isaiah 53	Zechariah 11:13
Zechariah 9:9	Micah 5:2	Daniel 9:20-25
Zechariah 6:11-13		

SUMMARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Being an approved workman who knows God's word.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Malachi 4:2; 2 Peter 1:19-21"

TEACHING AIM:

To summarize and digest the material from the Old Testament Unit.

OUTLINE:

Summarizing the Old Testament
 Period I
 Periods II and III
 Periods IV, V, and VI
 Period VII

LIFE APPLICATION:

To correctly handle the word of truth



MEMORY VERSES:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

THE CHALLENGE OF SUMMARIZING THE OT

Now that we have finished the task of going through the important parts of the OT, we will spend this week summarizing what we have learned to make sure that you understand it. The teacher will now call on some of you to summarize the whole OT! But don't panic - if you remember the basic structure of the seven periods of Israel's history, it becomes easy. Once you have the proper framework that we have stressed thus far, you merely have to fill in the details into the larger structure that you already know.

PERIOD I

The OT begins by describing the creation of the heavens and the earth. Plant and animal life are made to fill the whole earth. Adam and Eve, the first humans on earth, are created in the image of God. However, they disobey God, and a curse is brought upon all humanity. The descendants of Adam and Eve begin to fill the earth; however, succeeding generations turn against God. The people are wicked, except for one man named Noah. God tells Noah to build an ark, because He is planning to wipe out life on the earth in a flood. Taking his wife, his three sons and their three wives, and every kind of animal, Noah boards the ark, and a great flood covers the earth. After the flood, Noah's descendants again fill the earth. However, humanity again grows wicked, and men try to build a tower to reach the heavens. But God confuses their efforts by giving the people different languages and scatters them all over the earth.

Sometime later, God appears to a man named Abram and makes a covenant with him, declaring that Abram will be the father of many nations and that all will be blessed through him. His name is changed to Abraham. Though his wife Sarah is barren, they eventually have a child whose name is Isaac. God appears to Isaac also and makes the same covenant that he made with Abraham. Isaac and his wife Rebekah have twins, Esau and Jacob. God appears to Jacob as well, making the same covenant a third time. God also changes Jacob's name to Israel. These three men, who receive the covenant, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are the fathers of the nation of Israel, also called the Jews. Jacob, or Israel, has twelve sons who become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. One son, Joseph, is sold into slavery and taken to Egypt. There he ascends into power and later rescues Jacob and his brothers from a famine that sweeps the land. Thus, Jacob and his twelve sons all live together in Egypt.

PERIODS II AND III

In Egypt, Israel grows from the twelve sons of Jacob to a nation over hundreds of years. From among this nation, God raises up Moses, who performs great signs and wonders and delivers the people from Egypt. Moses leads the people to Mt. Sinai where God gives the law to the people. The people are supposed to go directly up into the land of Canaan, but because of their unbelief and disobedience, they are condemned to wander the desert for forty years. There, God miraculously sustains his people and leads them in great victories through Moses, His prophet. Because of disobedience, Moses is not allowed to enter the land, and so his successor Joshua takes leadership and leads the people into the Promised Land. Defeating cities like Jericho and Ai, the people of Israel gain a foothold into the land of Canaan. The people are supposed to continue their conquest of the land but grow complacent and live with the people of the land and fall into idolatry.

PERIODS IV, V, AND VI

Because the Israelites disobey God, they are enslaved by various nations. When their suffering becomes too much to bear, they call out to God and He sends them a judge, a powerful ruler who delivers Israel from the hand of their enemy. However, Israel repeatedly disobeys and is again enslaved by foreigners. Again they call out to God, and He sends them another judge. This apostasy-judge cycle continues many times. God sends fourteen judges, including Samson, Gideon, and Jephthah. The last judge, Samuel, also serves as the prophet of God. The people then clamor for a king. Although God disapproves, God appoints Saul to be the first king of Israel, through Samuel. Saul eventually disobeys, and God anoints another king, David. David's son, Solomon, the next king, builds the temple of God in Jerusalem. The first three kings of Israel - Saul, David, and Solomon - make Israel a great nation.

After Solomon, the nation fragments into two: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Rehoboam leads Judah and Jeroboam leads Israel. After these two, a long succession of kings rule over the separate nations of Israel and Judah. These include kings like Ahab in Israel and Uzziah in Judah. God also raises up prophets like Elijah and Elisha to speak to the kings and to the people. The great world power of Assyria eventually arises which conquers the Northern Kingdom of Israel, because of its idolatry. Assyria fails to conquer Judah in the south, because of the great prophet Isaiah and the godly King Hezekiah. Isaiah warns the people of Judah of the coming destruction, because of their own wickedness and about the coming

kingdom of Babylon. He also depicts the coming of Messiah as the Prince of Peace, Mighty God, and Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world and establish an everlasting kingdom. Israel is swallowed up by Assyria, never to return. But Judah escapes until Babylon conquers Assyria and becomes the next world power. Another prophet, Jeremiah, prophesies that Judah would be taken captive for seventy years under Babylon and then return. As he and other prophets had foretold, Judah and its capital city Jerusalem are eventually conquered by Babylon under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar. The temple is destroyed, and the people are taken into captivity in three separate batches under the kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah successively. In the foreign land of Babylon, prophets like Ezekiel and Daniel continue to speak the Word of the Lord and foretell the coming Messiah and Kingdom of God.

PERIOD VII

After the seventy years are completed, the Medo-Persian Empire conquers Babylon, and King Cyrus allows the Israelites to return to Jerusalem where they rebuild the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, and Zechariah. The Jews are almost exterminated under the reign of King Xerxes, but the Israelites Esther and Mordecai save their people from destruction. Through the later efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah under King Artaxerxes, the people are taught about God, and the walls are rebuilt around Jerusalem. The prophet Malachi completes the message of the OT by foreshadowing the coming Messiah (Malachi 4:2).

LIFE APPLICATION:

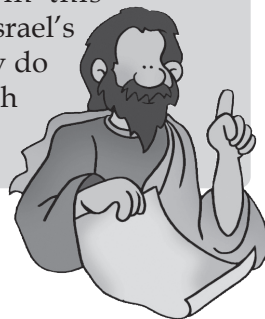
Correctly Handling the Word of Truth

Study the memory verse of the week. Now that you have a better understanding of the OT and its relationship to the NT, you have a foundation to study the Bible. As we conclude this unit on the OT, it is essential that you continue to study the Bible on your own so that you become better at handling the word of truth. Notice that the person whom God approves is one who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). This verse clearly teaches us that the approved workmen are those who know God's word well. This will involve reviewing these lessons and fitting in future sermons and bible studies into this framework that we have developed in this unit. With God's help, you can become a young man or a young woman who does not need to be ashamed and can handle the word of truth correctly.



Review Questions:

1. Write the important characters from each of the seven periods of Israel's history
2. In Acts 7, Stephen gives a partial summary of the OT. Read his speech in this summary. Which periods of Israel's history does he touch on? Why do you think he spends so much time talking about the OT?



▶▶ LESSON

01

INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Jesus calls people to become His disciples.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Luke 14:28; Mark 1:17; 2:14; 10:21;
Matthew 4:18; 8:22; Luke 9:57-62;
Matthew 8:34-35; Matthew 11:29-30

TEACHING AIM:

To introduce the concept of
Christian discipleship.

OUTLINE:

What is Discipleship?
Importance of Discipleship
Preparing for Discipleship

LIFE APPLICATION:

Are you a Believer or a Disciple?

**MEMORY VERSES:**

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

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

The simplest meaning of a disciple is a “learner” or “follower.” Socrates, John the Baptist, and Gandhi had disciples. However, being a disciple of Jesus Christ is different than following any world leader, because Jesus is God. A believer is anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Only a believer can become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Disciples are born again believers who have surrendered their lives to the Lord in absolute submission. A disciple should also be a learner and a follower. Every disciple must be loyal and faithful to Jesus. Becoming a disciple is a deliberate choice made by following Jesus with a greater commitment. Discipleship is the practice of being a disciple. Therefore, a true disciple will recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and be willing to put Him ahead of every pursuit in life.

IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship, the practice of being a disciple was commanded by Christ as seen in the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20) where Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations. Jesus also provided His followers with a model to follow. In doing so, He taught, trained, and equipped His disciples to be fruitful. Jesus was the authority on discipleship and it is evident in His own words as seen in the Bible.

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

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (John 15:8).

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (John 8:31).

A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master (Matthew 10:24).

PREPARING FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Believers who desire to become a disciple should prepare themselves by counting the cost of discipleship. Jesus asked, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit

down and estimate the cost, to see if he has enough money to complete it?" (Luke 14:28). You will learn about "The Cost of Discipleship" in this unit. In addition, every disciple has to undergo training, which in the Christian perspective involves following Jesus and His commands. Jesus "the Master Teacher" personally called people and said, "Come and follow me" (Mark 1:17; 2:14; 10:21; Matthew 4:18; 8:22; Luke 9:57-62). This requires taking His yoke upon us and learning self-denial, submission, and suffering from Him (Matthew 11:29-30; 8:34-35). Every disciple should live a disciplined life, bear fruit, be willing to suffer and bear the Cross for Jesus. Discipleship is a rewarding experience.

LIFE APPLICATION:

Are you a Believer or a Disciple?

God expects that every believer should become a disciple. The call of discipleship entails a deeper commitment. The qualifications to become a disciple are not based on our ability, but availability, determination, obedience and commitment. The significance of discipleship is that Jesus Himself commanded it in the Great Commission. We must be disciples and have the responsibility to make disciples of all nations. Now stop for a moment and reflect upon your life. Are you a believer or a disciple?

Review Questions:

1. What is discipleship? What do you learn about discipleship in the following scripture portions? Luke 14:27; Luke 14:33; John 15:8; John 13:35; John 8:31; Matthew 10:24
2. Who can become a disciple of Jesus?
3. What is the difference between a believer and a disciple?
4. Why is Christian discipleship important?



▶▶ LESSON

02

BECOMING A DISCIPLE

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

A disciple is a believer, a learner, a follower, and a role model.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Romans 10:9; Mark 2:13-16

TEACHING AIM:

To understand the stages of discipleship.

OUTLINE:

Receiving Christ
Learner
Follower
Role Model

LIFE APPLICATION:

Discipleship Starts with You.

**MEMORY VERSES:**

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

RECEIVING CHRIST

Receiving Christ is the first step in becoming a disciple. How can you receive Christ? The Bible says, “if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:9, 10, 13). The essentials of salvation are summarized in these verses. Faith begins from the heart and includes emotions, intellect and will; it takes hold of the whole person. Receiving Christ “by faith” requires a public commitment of oneself to Jesus as Lord in word and action.

LEARNER

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me” (Matthew 11:29). He said that people were to ‘learn’ from Him. He used the Greek word *Mathefy* which suggests that disciples are learners. A Christian should be a life long learner like Jesus. There are many examples in the Bible where Jesus learned by listening and asking questions (Luke 2:46). Jesus urged His disciples to “learn a lesson from the fig tree” (Matthew 24:32). Another example is seen in Hebrews, “Although He was a Son; He learned obedience from what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Discipleship requires continuous learning and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

One of the most important characteristics of a disciple is the ability to teach, since people only learn to the extent that they are taught. The most important responsibility of the Sunday school ministry is to teach children. This involves a process of change - in terms of what children know, feel, and do. Discipleship involves discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Paul, a disciple of Jesus Christ, said he has committed himself daily to a program of discipleship, like a dedicated athlete. Paul had a goal of winning the prize and pleasing his master, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, disciples should discipline their lives to follow Jesus Christ.

FOLLOWER

Jesus called people to follow Him; those who followed Him became His disciples. The Bible tells us that Moses, John, and Jesus had disciples. This shows another important characteristic of disciples: they follow or imitate the life and teachings of their masters. David Watson in his book, *Discipleship* says, “A disciple is a follower of Jesus. He has committed himself to Christ, to walking Christ’s way, to living Christ’s life and to sharing Christ’s love and truth with others. The verb *to disciple* describes the process of encouraging another person to be a follower of Jesus; it includes the methods used to

help that person become mature in Christ and to be in a position where they can disciple someone else.

ROLE MODEL

A Christian should be like his master Jesus Christ- holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. A disciple should follow His example, and grow into the likeness of Jesus. Jesus said that when a disciple is fully trained, he will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). A disciple should reproduce the lifestyle of Jesus Christ. Paul was an excellent role model of Jesus Christ, his master. Paul said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Peter said Jesus has left an example for us to follow, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Paul is advising Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

LIFE APPLICATION:

Discipleship Starts with You.

Discipleship is a learning process. From a *learner*, the disciple becomes a *follower*. Finally, one becomes a *role model through* a lifestyle marked by obedience, love, and fruitfulness. God expects us to be a continuous learner, progressing follower, and a role model. Have you considered becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? If you desire to be a disciple, pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Review Questions:

1. How can a person receive Christ to become a believer?
2. Describe some of the ways in which Paul is asking Timothy to be a role model as mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:12?
3. What are the three stages of discipleship?



▶▶ LESSON

03

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

No pain, No gain.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-27, 57-62; 14:25-27;
Matthew 8:18-22; 16:24-28; John 15:20

TEACHING AIM:

To learn about the cost of discipleship.

OUTLINE:

Discipleship Involves a Cost
Discipleship Involves Self-Denial
Discipleship Involves Taking Up our Cross and
Following Christ
Discipleship Involves a Life Long Commitment

LIFE APPLICATION:

What Does Christ Want From Us?

MEMORY VERSES:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and
take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34)



DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES A COST

Disciples of Jesus Christ should be willing to forsake anything that disallows them from following Him. This is the cost of being a disciple. We must replace the friendship of the world with the friendship of Christ. Though salvation is free, discipleship is costly. Everything that Jesus said about discipleship involves giving up oneself (self-denial), taking our cross daily (daily demand), and devoting oneself to the work of the Kingdom through faith and obedience.

DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES SELF-DENIAL

Jesus said, “if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). What does it mean to deny ourselves? It means following Christ and His commands above our own desires. This also means giving up one’s ego, and denying of the attitude “I.” An “I” attitude often prevents one from seeing the viewpoint of others. We must deny things of the flesh and surrender our lives to be molded to the mind of Christ. You cannot be a true disciple without practicing self-denial.

DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES TAKING UP OUR CROSS DAILY AND FOLLOWING CHRIST

Jesus said, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 9:23). The cross stands for suffering, ridicule, and death. It is the attitude, not the amount of suffering and shame we endure that counts in God’s sight. To take up the cross may involve much persecution, as has been the case in many countries of the world.

DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES A LIFE LONG COMMITMENT

Discipleship requires long term, life-long commitment. When Jesus called His disciples, they left everything, denied themselves, devoted themselves to the work of the Kingdom and relied on the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 10:28). Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26). Being a disciple involves loving Him more than family relationships, possessions, and even our own life. Giving your life in service to Christ and others can be very rewarding. Discipleship involves a lifelong battle against sin, through the crucifying of sinful desires (Romans 6). As a disciple, one must be

ready to experience the hostility and persecution that comes from standing against Satan, the powers of darkness, and false teachers who distort the true gospel (2 Corinthians 10: 4,5; Galatians 1: 7 - 10). Like Jesus, Christians may also suffer ridicule and persecution from the world (Mark 8: 15, 31).

LIFE APPLICATION:

What Does Christ Want From Us?

Remember Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23). Christ wants us to understand that discipleship involves a cost, and self-denial. It involves taking up our cross daily and following Christ, as a life long commitment. As a disciple of Jesus, are you willing to do what Christ wants from you? Do you think it's difficult for you to be a disciple? The Holy Spirit will strengthen and encourage you. Your obedience and commitment to discipleship is the most important step in this process.

Review Questions:

1. What should you sacrifice to be a true disciple of Jesus?
2. What does it mean to deny yourself?
3. Jesus asked his disciples to take up your cross daily. How will you do this in your life?
4. List three ways in which you can show your commitment and dedication as a disciple of Jesus?



▶▶ LESSON

04

THE MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Jesus Christ established a new model of discipleship for us to follow.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Mark 5:8,9

TEACHING AIM:

To study the two discipleship models.

OUTLINE:

The Old (Rabbi) Model

The New (Jesus) Model

LIFE APPLICATION:

A New Model of Discipleship.

**MEMORY VERSES:**

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

(John 13:15)

THE OLD (RABBI) MODEL

David Watson, a renowned authority in the study of discipleship has explained this model. According to him, the concept of discipleship was practiced from the early Bible times. In secular Greek, the word discipleship means an apprentice in some trade, student of some subject, or a pupil of some teacher. The disciples of Moses were students of the Mosaic Law. These disciples submitted themselves completely to their Rabbi (Guru) and were not allowed to study the scriptures without the interpretation and guidance of their teacher. Yet, they were expected to become teachers themselves after extensive training. In this model, a disciple chose his own master and voluntarily joined his school. The Rabbi model included academic study and practical training outside the classroom. Often the disciple spent as much time as possible with the teacher, at times living with the master in the same house. The Rabbis taught as much from example as by word, therefore the disciple had to watch, observe, and learn from his master's daily conversation and habits. A good example of this model is found in the story of Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 19:19). Similar practices were present in many Asian countries including India. Some of the commonly observable practices are given below.

- a. All disciples were expected to live with the master to observe and learn from their life
- b. When accompanying the master, the disciples were expected to walk behind them
- c. Disciples served their master in practical ways such as setting up benches, and desks in classrooms, cooking, and working in the fields.

THE NEW (JESUS) MODEL

The arrival of Jesus into this world marked the beginning of the New Covenant (New Testament), and the beginning of the church. Jesus Christ introduced a new model of discipleship. The characteristics of this new model are listed below:

- a. **Jesus called His disciples to follow Him:** Jesus personally called Simon and Andrew, James and John, Levi, Philip, Matthew and others to follow him. Jesus said, "you did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16).
- b. **Jesus called His disciples to commit to Him:** Jesus Christ asked His disciples to follow Him, to be with Him, and fully committed to Him.

- c. **Jesus called His disciples to life-long obedience:** Jesus called His disciples to unconditional obedience. The discipleship of Jesus must follow His teachings, His path, and accept His plan and will for their lives.
- d. **Jesus called His disciples to a simple life:** Jesus called His disciples to a life of humility and simplicity. They were told not to take with them gold, silver, copper, two tunics, sandals, or a staff. They were to trust their heavenly Father to provide for them.
- e. **Jesus called His disciples to suffer:** Jesus called His disciples to follow Him; they had to be willing to walk His way, which was the way of the cross. If they were to share their lives together, they would share not only their joys, but also their pains. Life for the Master ended with rejection, pain and agonizing death. Discipleship also involves spiritual grief. It is in the midst of suffering that God works most profoundly in the lives of disciples.
- f. **Jesus called His disciples from different groups of people.** Jesus called His disciples from various ethnic groups with diverse backgrounds. They were fishermen, tax-collectors, physicians, etc.
- g. **Jesus called His disciples to become like Him:** In the New Testament, discipleship is not to an individual, but to Christ himself. The call to discipleship involves Jesus' unique invitation to become like Him (Luke 6:40) and to be a full participant in His mission. "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" links discipleship with carrying the good news to all (Mark 1:15,17; Luke 5:10).
- h. **Jesus called His disciples to serve:** The disciples were called to be with Jesus, they were also commissioned to go and preach and to 'heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons'. When Jesus called Simon and Andrew to follow Him, He told them that He would make them fishers of men. The occasions in which Jesus sent the twelve or the seventy out in two's (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-20) show that He expects disciples to be fully involved in service to others.

LIFE APPLICATION:

A New Model of Discipleship

Jesus Christ has introduced a new model of discipleship, which involves an ongoing relationship and interaction between the

teacher and student (a lifelong process). It is a personal call to follow, commit, serve, live a simple life, suffer, and become like Jesus. Having understood, this new model, how can you apply this in your life?

Review Questions:

1. Jesus called His disciples to all of the following, except:
 - a. To suffer
 - b. To serve
 - c. To establish a religion
 - d. To commit
2. List a few of the ways in which the disciples of Jesus Christ suffered for their master.
3. What are some of the differences between the Rabbi model and the Jesus model of discipleship?.
4. Jesus Christ personally called his disciples to follow Him. From the following verses, name the disciples.
 - a. John 1:43 _____
 - b. Mark 1:16,17 _____
 - c. Mark 2:14 _____



▶▶ LESSON

05

THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Successful Discipleship is a deliberate choice, which requires action and effort.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Colossians 3:16; Revelation 1:3;
2 Timothy 2:15; Psalms 119: 11;
Joshua 1:8; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 1:8, 4:13.

TEACHING AIM:

To learn about successful discipleship.

OUTLINE:

Abide in the Word
Fellowship of Believers
Witnessing

LIFE APPLICATION:

Successful Discipleship Is Your
Response to God's Call.

MEMORY VERSES:

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." (John 8.31)



ABIDE IN THE WORD

The word of God is a disciple's foundation. The Bible says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). A disciple can abide in the Word by hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating the Word.

- a. *Hearing the Word* is the first step to abide in the Word. A disciple must have a desire and develop a regular habit of hearing the word of God. There are various means of hearing the word of God such as hearing a sermon, and listening to a Audio Bible. The Bible says that blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it (Revelation 1:3b).
- b. *Reading the Word* will increase your knowledge, which will help you to be deeply rooted in the Word. A disciple should adopt a plan for reading the entire Bible once a year. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy (Revelation 1:3a).
- c. *Studying the Word*: A disciple can study the Word of God by hearing and reading the Word of God. A disciple should study earnestly to present their life as a person acceptable to God (2 Timothy 2:15).
- d. *Memorizing the Word* of God will protect you from sin. The Psalmist says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalms 119:11).
- e. *Meditating the Word* is how you put "you" in the verse and how you put the verse in "you." It becomes alive when you meditate on it. A disciple must meditate on the Word of God. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will prosper in your ways and be successful." (Joshua 1:8).

FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Fellowship is having a common relationship with the Father and the Son in the body of Christ. It is where the Spirit, in bonds of love, and in singleness of purpose unites us. Fellowship around the Word in prayer is essential. The gathering of Saints (people of God) for prayer, mutual support, and edification brings unity and growth. Fellowship with other spirit-filled Christians is important for a successful discipleship. It provides a disciple with support and mutual accountability. Every fellowship opportunity must be considered as a time to exhort, support and admonish one another.

Many lessons can be observed and learned from the lives of other spirit-filled disciples and believers. The Bible says that “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

EFFECTIVE WITNESSING

A successful disciple should be an effective witness. A witness is one who testifies about what he has heard, seen, and experienced. As a disciple, it is very important to understand that all Christians have an obligation to be a witness of the gospel. The disciples of Christ have the responsibility to communicate that Jesus is Lord and Savior of all, and to call people to become His disciples. It is mentioned in Acts 1: 8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. This mandate is a continuing New Testament theme. Successful discipleship means being an effective witness. This is clear from Peter’s sermon recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 2:14-40). After Jesus Christ was captured and taken away, some Jews asked Peter if he knew Jesus Christ. They repeated the question three times and Peter (disciple) denied Jesus (Master) three times, instead of witnessing. However, after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, he became an effective witness and proved to be a successful disciple. Three thousand people were saved through his sermon on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gave Peter courage and boldness for witnessing (Acts 4:13). The power of the Holy Spirit is essential for effective witnessing.

LIFE APPLICATION:

Successful Discipleship Is Your Response to God’s Call

Hear the Word and meditate on it; read the word and meditate on it; study the word and meditate on it; memorize the word and meditate on it. Meditation helps you to understand the Word of God, store it in your mind, and helps you to apply it in your life. As disciples of Jesus, we should regularly attend the fellowship of saints to encourage one another and not neglect the fellowship of saints. The Holy Spirit can help us in effective witnessing. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit was able to lead three thousand people through one sermon. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, are you abiding in the Word, attending the fellowship of saints and relying on the Holy Spirit for effective witnessing? Pray today that God will help you to be a successful disciple.



Review Questions:

1. Jesus asked his disciples to _____ so that they may not fall into temptation.
2. When Peter preached _____ people were saved on the day of Pentecost.
3. List five ways of abiding in the word from this lesson.
4. What are some of the benefits of fellowship?



▶▶ LESSON

06

THE EVIDENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

True disciples will show the evidence of discipleship.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

John 13:34, 35; John 8:31; John 15:8, 16;
Galatians 5:22, 23

TEACHING AIM:

To learn the evidence of discipleship from the teachings of Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE:

Three Evidences of Discipleship
Obedience to the Teachings of Jesus Christ
Love One Another
Bearing Fruit“

LIFE APPLICATION:

Disciple Must Bear Evidence (Fruit) of
Discipleship in their Lives.

MEMORY VERSES:

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,
showing yourselves to be my disciples.
(John 15:8)



THREE EVIDENCES OF DISCIPLESHIP

How will anyone know if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? There has to be observable or visible evidence (proof) as a result of following Jesus Christ and His teachings. The internal commitment and continuous relationship with Christ produces visible behavior. Jesus Christ taught His disciples three evidences of discipleship such as obedience, love and bearing fruit.

OBEDIENCE TO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

To the Jews who believed, Jesus said, “If you hold (obey) to my teaching, you are really my disciples. (John 8:31). True disciples of Christ will continue to obey the words of Christ. When Jesus asked His disciples to hold on to His teachings, He was asking them to obey and follow His teachings and doctrines. Discipleship is an abiding (living) condition. In addition to receiving God’s truth, we must also hold on to the truth and walk in it. We become genuine disciples of Christ, after we receive the truth, love it, keep it, and walk in it. Continuance in the word (teaching) proves the evidence of discipleship.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Jesus Christ loved us so much that He gave His life for us through His death on the cross. Likewise, He wants us to love one another so that the world will know that we are His disciples. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34,35). Love (agape) must be the distinguishing characteristic evidence of disciples of Jesus Christ. This agape love is a self-giving and sacrificial love that seeks the good of others. Christians must help each other in trials, care for the feelings and reputation of others, and deny themselves to promote another’s welfare. When these things are done and seen by others, it is an evidence of discipleship.

BEARING FRUIT

This is to My Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last (John 15:8, 16). Jesus Christ expects His disciples to bear fruit and prove that we are His disciples. Jesus Christ asked His disciples to bear much fruit showing the world that they are His disciples.

To explain this, Jesus Christ said, "I am the true vine and my father is a gardener... Remain in me, I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself- it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:1, 4,5). In other words, the fruit should be visible or evident to everyone. The fruit is the result or consequence of our obedience to His teaching (John 8:31; 15:5). In other words, if we are obedient to His teaching, the fruit or evidence will certainly follow. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23). God expects to see the fruit clearly visible in our daily lives. However, if a disciple is not living according to the Holy Spirit, he cannot produce the fruit of spirit. Those who are not led by the spirit are living in the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). The evidence of living in the flesh includes sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery, idolatry, and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. After having dedicated ourselves to a life of obedience to His Word, our lives should bear evidence of discipleship in the Holy Spirit.

LIFE APPLICATION:

Disciple Must Bear Evidence (Fruit) of Discipleship in their Lives

How can we show the evidence of discipleship in our lives? Obedience, loving one another and bearing fruit are the three ways of showing the evidence of discipleship. A disciple should invest their time, talents, and money in building up their faith and obedience to the Word of God. This will enable them to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Keeping your hearts and minds pure and holy at all times is essential for the evidence of discipleship in your life. Do not forget to spend time in the word and in prayer. Take a moment to reflect on your life. Seek the counsel and guidance of the Holy Spirit when you are facing temptations.



Review Questions:

1. Share an experience from your life where you demonstrated that you were a disciple of Jesus Christ by your obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ?
2. What are some of the ways in which you can show your love for one another so that the world will know that we are His disciples?
3. What are the seven fruit of the Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23?



▶▶ LESSON

07

SERVANT DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Jesus calls men and women to become disciples and we must respond to Him in obedience.

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Matthew 10: 24, 25; 11: 29, 30;
Philippians 2: 5 – 8; Luke 6: 47 – 49

TEACHING AIM:

To learn about becoming a servant disciple.

OUTLINE:

Servant Attitude
Submission
Obedience
Humility“

LIFE APPLICATION:

Developing a Servant Attitude.

MEMORY VERSES:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God some thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2: 5-7)



SERVANT ATTITUDE

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, it is very important to have the same attitude of Christ. Jesus said, in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me" which suggests that discipleship is like putting on a yoke. Jesus possessed all the qualities of someone who was willing to serve others, such as those mentioned below. He is an example to all who wish to be His disciple. Someone who wishes to follow Jesus must face life's issues with an attitude similar to that of Jesus. Matthew 10:24 says, "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." Therefore, it is important to understand the significant qualities of a servant.

SUBMISSION

In ancient times, it was customary for the conqueror of a region to place a staff, which was called a yoke, across two upright poles and require that the captured people pass under it. Yoke implies submission. "Submit" comes from the two Latin words *sub* (meaning "under") and *mitto* (meaning "to put"). So submission means putting oneself under the authority of another. A yoke is placed over an animal, like an ox for plowing the soil. Charles Spurgeon explains, "Take my yoke" as meaning, "If you will be saved by Me, I must be your Master and you must be My servant; you cannot have Me for a Savior if you do not accept Me for a Lawgiver and Commander. If you will not do as I bid you, neither shall you find rest to your souls." Jesus Christ has always been God by nature, equal with the Father, but He let go of His privileges and glory in heaven in order to submit to the Perfect Will of God The Father, so that mankind might be saved. Philippians 2:7 says, "He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." Jesus "emptied Himself" of his heavenly glory, rights, and position, which was a voluntary restraint on his capacities, and an acceptance of suffering, misunderstanding, ill-treatment, hatred and a cursed death on the cross. It is important to note that although Christ remained fully divine, while taking on the human nature with its temptations, humiliations and weaknesses, He was without sin.

OBEDIENCE

In Luke 6: 46, Jesus asks, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" By this, Jesus was establishing obedience as an essential element in the Christian life. Quite clearly, a group of people followed Jesus, who made verbal profession of discipleship, as they were calling Him their Master, but they were disregarding His teachings. The above verse indicates that Jesus

cannot be our Lord without our obedience; if He is not our Lord, we do not belong to Him. Both Christian discipleship and servanthood involves obedience to Jesus Christ.

HUMILITY

Disciples of Jesus Christ must be humble like Jesus. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross”. This verse signifies how essential humility is to true discipleship. It is very hard to be humble, because this requires practicing self-denial, where one needs to die to self and take up the cross. The humility of Jesus is seen throughout His ministry. Jesus ministered to the meek, needy, poor, downtrodden, and ordinary people. Humility is a prerequisite.

LIFE APPLICATION:

Developing a Servant Attitude

Disciples of Jesus Christ must have the same attitude as that of Christ, who was completely submissive to the Will of His Father (Master). Our Master, Jesus, expects us to have the same attitude of Christ and submit ourselves to Him. Therefore, it is important that we submit to our authorities, as the Word of God commands us in Hebrews 13:17, which says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” Being brought up in a Christian Church and attending Sunday School, a student of the Word must understand that submission to one another in the church is essential to one’s spiritual growth. We must obey His teachings and acknowledge His Lordship in our lives. Humility is a true hallmark of a disciple of Jesus. Let us reflect upon our lives and see if we have the same attitude of Christ. We must make all efforts to be submissive, obedient and humble in our life.

Review Questions:

1. What are the attitudes of a servant disciple?
2. Give two examples of the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ?
3. What decisions are you willing to make to have the attitude and nature of Christ?



LET'S PRACTICE DISCIPLESHIP

OVERVIEW

LIFE ISSUE:

Are you ready to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

BIBLE PASSAGES:

Matthew 5:16; Psalms 19:11;
I Timothy 5:18; Revelation 22:12

TEACHING AIM:

To understand the practical aspects of discipleship and encourage students towards discipleship.

OUTLINE:

The Lord Jesus Wants His Disciples to Show
The Lords Jesus Christ Wants His Disciples to Tell
The Lord Jesus Wants to Reward His Disciples

LIFE APPLICATION:

Becoming a Disciple.



MEMORY VERSES:

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.
(Revelation 22:12)

THE LORD JESUS WANTS HIS DISCIPLES TO SHOW

Jesus told his disciples to let the light of His love shine through their lives so that others would be drawn to God and would know that they are His disciples (Matthew 5:16). You can show others by the way you live that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- a. *Your Obedience* – Will a non-Christian friend or peer be able to see your obedience to parents, the law, people in authority, and God and identify you as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- b. *Your Love* – Do you love others with a godly love so that the world will know and identify you as a disciple of Jesus Christ? Do you have the love and compassion of Jesus towards the poor and needy?
- c. *Your Fruit* – Does your everyday life reflect God’s love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, so that others may identify you as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

THE LORDS JESUS CHRIST WANTS HIS DISCIPLES TO TELL

Jesus Christ has instructed His disciples to tell others about the good news and to make disciples of all nations. Because you are a disciple of Jesus, He wants you to tell the good news about salvation to as many people as you can – friends at school, children in the neighborhood, brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents – anyone who doesn’t know Him as Savior.

THE LORD JESUS WANTS TO REWARD HIS DISCIPLES

Discipleship involves denying yourself and taking up your cross daily. This means you may have to lose, give up or sacrifice your possessions, time, priorities, or other things for the sake of the gospel. Jesus has promised that they will receive a hundred fold in this life and eternal life in the world to come (Heaven). You will receive rewards for keeping the Word of God (Psalms 19:11). The laborer is worthy of his reward (I Timothy 5:18). Finally Jesus says “And behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me to give every man according to his work shall be (Revelation 22:12).”

LIFE APPLICATION:

Becoming a Disciple of Jesus

You have just completed a study on discipleship. Do you have the confidence that you are a believer of Jesus Christ (born again

Christian)? If not, your first step is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He will forgive your sins and make you a child of God. (If you need help, ask your Sunday School Teacher to lead you in a prayer of confession to accept Jesus into your life.)

If you are confident that you are a child of God, have you considered becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? With the help of Holy Spirit and faith in God, we urge you to take a step of faith to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is fulfilling, challenging, and a rewarding experience.

Review Questions:

1. Identify areas of your life where you can show that you are disciple of Jesus Christ through obedience?
2. Do you have any fruit of the spirit in your life? What decisions will you make to bear the fruit of the spirit so that others will know that you abide in the teachings of Jesus and that you are His disciple?
3. What major decisions are you willing to make in your life to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Examples of some decisions that you could make: I will read the Word of God and pray more than before to hold on to the teachings of Jesus. I will love my brothers and sisters more than before. I will seek the fruit of the Spirit and show the world that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. Please write down your decisions and keep it in a secure place. Pray over it daily. Seek the help of the Holy Spirit and agree with your Sunday School Teacher in prayer about your decisions and God will help you!

