



DISCOVERY UNIT 5 TEACHER'S GUIDE

Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah

The Prophecy of Joel

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The Account of Jonah

Jonah 1:1 — 4:11

The Prophecy of Amos

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Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

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restoration of their land and reprieve from invading armies were given to the nation, if the Israelites would turn to the Lord with all their hearts (Joel 2:12-13).

The second chapter gave the beautiful promise of God to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh in the latter days. Peter referred to this prophecy on the day of Pentecost and indicated that the Lord had fulfilled this prophecy before their eyes (Acts 2:16-18).

Some of the promises described future events, when the day of the Lord will come in full force against the enemies of God. In the last days, God will spare those who have turned to Him wholeheartedly, and will provide the deliverance that was promised to Israel in chapter 2.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What natural calamities did Joel describe in chapter 1 as an object lesson to warn the people of God’s coming judgment?

A severe locust plague (1:4), followed by famine (1:10), and fire (1:19). Joel used the terrible destruction and loss to illustrate the condition that would accompany the day of the Lord. It is likely that the widespread destruction of vegetation caused a famine to occur, having destroyed the existing crops and the seed for the next planting. The fire mentioned in verse 19 may have been a separate calamity, or may be a reference to future events. It is not always clear when Joel was referring to happenings of his time or to apocalyptic events.

2. In chapter 1, verses 13 and 14, Joel addressed the priests, who were the leaders of the people. What did Joel instruct them to do? Why do you think he spoke to them?

The priests were instructed to humble themselves and lament over the present situation, to fast, to call a solemn assembly of the elders, and to cry to the Lord. The priests were the elders of the community and the representatives of the people before God. They were looked upon as examples, and if the priests were to humble themselves, abstain from food, and entreat the Lord for mercy, the people would presumably do the same. The priests had been guilty of backsliding and forsaking the Lord. Those who led the people into sin should have been the first ones to turn and lead them back into righteousness.

3. How did Joel describe the day of the Lord in chapter 2?

The day of the Lord was described as a day of darkness, gloominess, clouds, fire, and desolation. Joel alluded to an army that will run like horses and rumble with the noise of a wildfire, and will destroy everything in its path. Just as swarms of locusts had filled the sky and obscured the sun, marching forward in thick ranks and eating up every green thing in their path, even so a mighty army will come and destroy

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6. What spiritual promises did the Lord make to the people if they would repent of their sins? Joel 2:28-29

God promised to pour out His Spirit upon all people regardless of age, gender, or social status. After all that He promised to do for them in the natural realm, He continued with promises of spiritual restoration and an abundance of His blessings. No longer would the Spirit of God be reserved for a select few, but all could expect and hope for His infilling. God intended for everyone to partake of His blessed Holy Spirit.

7. What judgment did God pronounce upon Israel's enemies, and why? Joel 3:8

God said He would sell their sons and daughters into captivity. He would judge them for the violence they had done to His chosen people, Israel. The nations had profaned His Temple, scattered His people abroad, and sold innocent boys and girls into slavery and prostitution. Sons and daughters of those who disobey God today might also pay a price. Ask your class how a lack of spiritual knowledge or distorted spiritual values might impact succeeding generations. Bring out that a failure to serve God could have devastating results in a family.

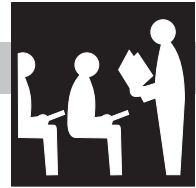
8. Joel told of a natural disaster to speak to the people regarding their need for true repentance. Consider some of the major tragedies which have occurred in recent years. How can you use such events to bring up the subject of Christ's second coming with your friends and co-workers?

Current events, such as crime, terrorist attacks, wars, and natural disasters bring fear and a sense of a person's mortality. This can be a springboard to discuss where true security and peace can be found.

CONCLUSION

The day of the Lord is coming when He will return to judge the wicked and will spare those who have turned to Him with all their hearts. An outward show of religious zeal or humility will not suffice, as God is able to discern true repentance from that which is insincere and fleeting. What is the condition of your heart today?

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The Account of Jonah

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Jonah 1:1 through 4:11

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”
(Jonah 3:10)

BACKGROUND

Jonah's ministry took place during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.). He may have been one of the young prophets of the school mentioned in 2 Kings 2:3. It was Jonah who prophesied that King Jeroboam II would be successful in expanding Israel's borders back to where they were in the days of King Solomon. (See 2 Kings 14:23-25.) Israel was prosperous and largely peaceful at this time.

Nineveh was a very large city, the largest of this era. In the last verse of the book, God asked a rhetorical question of Jonah, “And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?” This verse indicates the size of Nineveh. The city had 120,000 young children, which means that most likely the population of the city proper was nearly one million. It was the capitol of the Assyrian Empire, which was the most dreaded enemy of Israel at the time.

The Assyrians were feared because of their cruelty. They often impaled live victims on poles, and killed babies and small children so they would not have to be cared for. One hundred years later, the prophet Nahum said that Nineveh was guilty of “evil plots against God” (Nahum 1:9), exploitation of the helpless (Nahum 2:12), cruelty in war (Nahum 2:12-13), idolatry, prostitution, and witchcraft (Nahum 3:4).

As a prophet of Jehovah, Jonah knew that God's judgment would come upon Israel if the people followed the ungodly example of Jeroboam. He may have guessed that the Assyrians would be the vehicle for that judgment. No doubt he loved the people of his own nation as much as he was repulsed by the cruelty of the idolatrous Assyrians.

Some historians believe that the third-person style of writing used in the Book of Jonah indicated that it was recorded after Nineveh's repentance. After Jonah realized his mistake of being angry with God, perhaps he went back and recorded the account.

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Casting lots is referred to several times in the Bible. This act was much like drawing straws and was intended to ascertain the will or direction of the gods. At times, Israelites also cast lots as a method of finding God's will. The sailors Jonah traveled with cast lots to discover the offender who had caused the storm that was putting their lives in danger. God used the lot to point out Jonah's guilt.

The Book of Jonah is a great illustration of God's mercy and desire that no one perish. The response of the people of Nineveh is remarkable because members of every social stratum chose to repent.

SUGGESTEDRESPONSETOQUESTIONS

1. We know that Ninevah was the largest city of its era. What problems are inherent to evangelizing a large city?

In Jonah's case, just spreading the word was a challenge. There was no mass media to help him, although word of mouth, no doubt, worked effectively. The greater metropolitan area of Nineveh was approximately sixty miles. Jonah spent three days walking through it.

Today, many evangelistic methods are available, and dispersal of information and travel are fast. However, challenges and problems still exist when evangelizing. Ask your students to mention some of these problems. Their answers may include getting people to pay attention, touching people's hearts rather than just their minds so they will respond, etc. One-on-one witnessing continues to be one of the most effective methods of spreading the Gospel. Your students may have some witnessing experiences to share.

2. In what ways is God's mercy evidenced throughout the story of Jonah?

When Jonah refused to follow God's command and boarded a ship to Tarshish, God could have just capsized the ship and destroyed Jonah and all those on board. Instead, He gave Jonah a chance to revisit his decision.

God had mercy on the heathen sailors by allowing them to discern the guilty person and also to witness God's power to instantly calm the storm.

Mercy was granted to Jonah when he cried out from the belly of the fish.

Although God had every intention of destroying the city of Nineveh, His mercy was extended when the Ninevites repented of their sins. Chapter 3 ends with this statement, "God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

3. In Jonah 2:9, Jonah refers to a vow he made. What do you think that vow may have been?

We are not told what specific vow Jonah made. As a prophet of God, he should have been dedicated

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(We will not receive God's forgiveness unless we forgive others.)

7. God's charge to Jonah was also directed to the Children of Israel, and is directed to us today. What is that charge?

The Children of Israel were charged to be God's messengers to those who were lost and dying and did not know about Him. This is exactly what we, as Christians, are expected to do today. We are to spread the Gospel to those around us.

In Jonah's time, there may have been some prejudice and hatred toward the Assyrians. Today, also, people can hold hatred and prejudices. Discuss with your class the importance of reaching out to those of other nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, classes, etc. You might ask them to suggest ways to overcome these hindrances or to give personal examples.

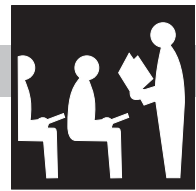
8. How can we avoid being a “Jonah” today?

When God bids us to do something for Him, we must do it without murmuring or complaining. If we choose to go our own way, God, in His mercy, may choose to stop us, but the circumstances will not be pleasant. It is so much better to be willing to follow His leading from the start.

CONCLUSION

God's mercy is displayed throughout the Book of Jonah. He wants both Jews and Gentiles to know of His grace and redemption. Let us determine to follow His leading in our lives!

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The Prophecy of Amos

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Amos 1:1 through 9:15

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.” (Amos 8:11)

BACKGROUND

Amos, whose name means “burden” or “burden-bearer,” was a shepherd and fig grower from Tekoa, which was located ten miles south of Jerusalem. He prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, having been given a message from God condemning the nations who had sinned against Him and harmed His people. He started by condemning Syria, then Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and, finally, Amos’ homeland of Judah. Amos then confronted the northern Israelites regarding their sins and warned them of impending judgment.

Israel had become politically and spiritually corrupt due to prosperity and idol worship. Wealth caused the people to become complacent in their religious practices and oppressive to the poor, even to the point of selling them into slavery. Their economic prosperity was due in part to military successes during the early part of the reign of King Jeroboam II. Idolatry was practiced throughout the land, including Bethel, which was supposed to be the nation's religious center.

The worship of the Canaanite god Baal had been incorporated into Israel's worship of God. Baal, which means "lord" or "husband," was the name commonly given to the Canaanite storm god, Hadad. This god was often represented as a bull, the symbol of fertility. The images of bulls built by Jeroboam I at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-33) most likely provided occasion for mixing the worship of Baal with the worship of God.

Amos is thought to have prophesied and written this book from about 793 B.C. to 740 B.C., during the reigns of King Jeroboam II of Israel and King Uzziah of Judah.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Read Amos 7:14-15. How was Amos qualified to be a prophet? How are people qualified to serve the Lord today?

The Lord called Amos to the office of prophet and gave him the message to give to the people. Amos was

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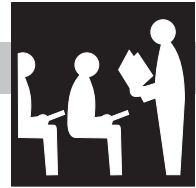
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The Message of Hosea

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Hosea 1:1 through 7:16

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:6)

BACKGROUND

Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel from around 760 to 715 B.C. While his contemporaries, Micah and Isaiah, carried their messages to the nation of Judah, Hosea (whose name means “salvation”) prophesied the judgment that was to come upon Israel for its idolatry.

Israel's last six kings had been especially corrupt, and under the reign of Jeroboam II, the country had prospered materially but decayed morally. Jeroboam II was followed by a series of kings, and the political and social condition of the nation continued to plummet. Hosea saw Israel fall to Assyria in 722 B.C.

Hosea's assignment was to show the idolatrous people of Israel how they had been unfaithful to God, and he was to accomplish this task by marrying Gomer, a woman who would be unfaithful to him (chapter 1). Later, he would redeem his wife out of prostitution and slavery and accept her back into his household (chapter 3). This "living parable" was incorporated into his prophecies in order to show that although judgment was coming upon Israel, God wanted to restore his people to a right relationship with Him.

Through the history of the Children of Israel, God has demonstrated to all mankind the great lengths He will go to in order to maintain or restore His covenant with His chosen people. Time after time, the Israelites violated their covenant vows, yet God continually wooed them back to His side through the voice of His prophets and by allowing painful circumstances to come their way.

The message of Hosea is still applicable today, because it shows God's love for all people. His love includes those who have committed spiritual adultery, and He calls them back to Himself. He has paid the price for their freedom. Even though the actions of sin are so repulsive and sickening that one could hardly imagine why God would want the backslider to return, yet His love and forgiveness are extended.

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1. The Book of Hosea begins with God asking the prophet Hosea to do a very difficult thing: he was to marry a woman that he knew would be unfaithful. It is hard to imagine Hosea's thoughts and feelings when given such a command, but he was obedient to the Lord and married Gomer (Hosea 1:3). What are some ways people respond when God requires them to do something difficult or very painful in order to benefit others?

The point should be made that God's ways are higher than our ways, and His plans sometimes involve personal pain in order to accomplish a greater good. We cannot easily undergo a painful situation, but like Jesus at Gethsemane, we can learn to pray, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Through the names of Gomer's children, God was indicating that judgment was going to fall on the nation of Israel. King Jehu had massacred King Ahab and his family in the valley of Jezreel (2 Kings 10:1-11), so Hosea was announcing God's judgment upon Jehu's dynasty. His kingdom would come to an end in the valley of Jezreel, the very place where Ahab's family was massacred. "Lo" is a negative prefix, so Lo-ruhamah means "no mercy" and Lo-ammi means "not my people."

Without acknowledging God, some people credit their prosperity to their hard work, their education, luck, good money management, or the right financial advisors. Discuss how the focus must be on God as the Giver of all blessings and abilities. What can be the end result of failing to properly acknowledge God for blessings and abilities?

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images or metaphors might describe people's relationships with God today?

Israel is compared to an unfaithful wife (Hosea 2:2), a sick person (Hosea 5:13), and a crooked bow (Hosea 7:16).

Here are some possible metaphors you can mention in response to the second question, if your students need help getting started: a tree, a yo-yo, a baby, a traveler, a leaky bucket, or a candle.

9. Hosea used several visual metaphors to describe God: a husband and father (Hosea 2:1-5); a moth (Hosea 5:12); and rain (Hosea 6:3). What image would you use to describe God? Why?

Possible images or metaphors for God are: water, fire, a rock, wind, light, the sun, a bridegroom, a potter, or a king. Explain to your students that these images are only tools for us to use in order to begin to comprehend the glory and majesty of God.

CONCLUSION

Through the prophet Hosea, God used everyday objects and life events to communicate to the nation of Israel and to all people that would hear or read Hosea's prophecy. As we live our "ordinary" lives and keep our hearts open before the Lord, He will reveal himself to us. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD. . ." (Hosea 6:3).



The Retribution Upon Israel

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Hosea 8:1 through 14:9

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy;
break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the
LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you”
(Hosea 10:12)

BACKGROUND

Hosea 8, and the remainder of the book, demonstrate the anger of God upon a constantly backsliding people. Through the prophet, God began to describe the terror of judgment that would befall Israel because of sinful living. Even though the people were rejoicing because of their great harvest, and nominally recognizing Jehovah, it appeared that much of their celebration was really in honor of Balaam. The warning was loud and clear that their rejoicing would soon cease.

The more the people of Israel prospered, the more flagrant their moral and religious corruption became. Their hearts were divided, and they served idols rather than the one true God. They were instructed in the first commandment to worship only Him, and to have no other gods before Him. They had ignored this commandment, and because of that, retribution would come.

In chapter 11, the prophet referred to the early history of Israel. Even though God was full of wrath and judgment, His heart was still the heart of a father.

Although the book was written to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was equally guilty. Therefore, all of Israel's glory would be turned to shame.

The thirteenth chapter begins a discourse on the rebellious attitude of Israel, and the people's persistence in shameless idolatry. It opens with a reference to the tribe of Ephraim, which originally had occupied a position of prominence in the nation. Because of Ephraim's apostasy and evil influence on all of Israel, God condemned it to total destruction.

In chapter 14, the people of Israel were called to repent and turn to God, the only One that could help them. Even though judgment was coming, God was giving hope, if only they would turn to Him. The prophet looked ahead to the day when Israel would return to the God of their fathers and love His laws. The result of obedience would be the bountiful blessings of a loving God.

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1. Why did the Lord refuse to respond when Israel cried out to Him in a time of trouble? Hosea 8:3,4

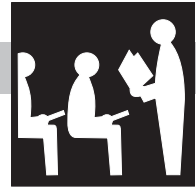
Discuss with the class that verbal repentance or just being present in the midst of those who worship God is not enough. Repentance requires a change of heart and conduct. Tragically, those who professed that they knew God rejected Hosea's message. They did not repent, so divine retribution was sure.

2. What doctrinal teaching is reinforced by God's declaration that He would love the people of Israel no more? Hosea 9:15

Discussion could lead to various ways this false teaching is proclaimed today (predestination, eternal security, no victory over sin, etc).

Hosea spoke of fallow ground. This is ground that has been so neglected and hardened that seed will not penetrate it. Ground of this sort has caused famines even though rain has fallen. Tell your class that if they take a shovel and dig up the hard soil under a puddle after a rain, they will probably find that the moisture is no more than an eighth of an inch deep. Under that thin layer of moisture is dry, hardened earth. The fact is, rain does little good when the ground is too hard. The water just evaporates when the sun comes out. The ground must be broken up and cultivated in order to benefit from the rain.

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The Prophecy of Micah

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Micah 1:1 through 7:20

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”
(Micah 6:8)

BACKGROUND

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah (about 740—687 B.C.). He was a native of Moresheth near Gath, a village in southwest Judah located about twenty to twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Micah's name means, "Who is like Jehovah?" He was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah, with whose ministry and prophecies he had many points of contact. In contrast to Isaiah, who was a prophet of the court and came from a prominent family, Micah was a country prophet who came from a poor family.

Although stern in tone, Micah's prophecy has a poetic style similar to Isaiah's words. Some commentators refer to Micah as a "sister book" to Isaiah or "Isaiah in shorthand."

Micah denounced Samaria and Jerusalem as centers of evil that infected the two kingdoms of which they were capitals. One could find in these wicked cities examples of all the evils of that time. Micah's list included fraud, theft, greed, debauchery, oppression, hypocrisy, heresy, injustice, extortion, lying, murder, and other offenses.

In chapters 1 through 3, Micah prophesied against Samaria and Jerusalem. He first denounced Samaria and prophesied her overthrow. He saw with sorrow of heart the judgment that was about to sweep over Judah, and that his own people of southwest Judah would feel the weight of the invasion. Covetousness and robbery demand punishment, but a glimpse is given of God's mercy to the remnant of Israel.

Chapter 3 gives one of the most stinging denunciations against selfish rulers and false prophets in the prophetic literature, closing with the prophecy that the Temple and Zion would be destroyed.

Chapters 4 and 5 are filled with promises. After Jerusalem's destruction and restoration, it was to become the spiritual capital of the world, and to her, God would bring His exiles from Babylon, in spite of all opposition from the heathen nations. The most noted of Micah's prophesies is chapter 5, verse 2, which

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predicted the location of Bethlehem Ephratah as our Lord's birthplace.

The last two chapters outline God's controversy with Israel. What fault could Israel find with Him? Israel responded by wanting to know God's requirements, and received the answer that He demanded nothing but justice, mercy, and a humble fellowship with God. Israel's sins were pictured in all their vileness, and the nation, through the prophet, confessed the truth of the indictment, placing itself entirely in the Lord's hands for mercy and protection. The Book of Micah closes by prophesying of the return to the land of Israel, followed by an outburst of praise for a God that is forgiving and kind.

It is possible that Micah's denunciations were a reflection of the wicked reign of King Ahaz, and that the closing prophesies of mercy and forgiveness represented the good reign of King Hezekiah. Jeremiah 26:17-19 indicates that Micah died in peace during King Hezekiah's reign.

SUGGESTEDRESPONSETOQUESTIONS

1. When did the "word of the Lord" come to Micah? (Micah 1:1) How does the Lord's word come to us today?

The "word of the Lord" came during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The Lord's word comes to us today through reading the Bible, hearing the Word preached, testimonies of those who have been born again, Gospel literature and music, and through prayer.

Illustrate the different ways that God's word comes to us by having your students recall the first time they can remember the Lord speaking to them, and asking them to share the circumstances.

2. What was the cause of God's judgment against Israel? Micah 1:5-7; 2:1-2

The cause was sin. The people had sinned against God by practicing idolatry. Their lives were full of wicked covetousness, oppression, and violence. The point should be made that God will ultimately judge all sin.

3. How was Micah's message received? (Micah 2:6-11) How is God's message received today?

The people did not like Micah's message. During his ministry, they only wanted prophets who would say what they wanted to hear. The prophets that Micah spoke against had encouraged people to become comfortable with their sins.

The students should conclude that God's message is received in the same manner today. Class discussion should bring out that only a desire for the truth will cause us to be affected by God's message. Also bring out that truth will always be in harmony with the Bible.

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7. According to the key verse, how do we please God?

The key verse, Micah 6:8, mentions three things that God requires of us. First discuss with your students that God's requirements cause movement in three dimensions: outward, inward, and upward.

- *Outward: "to do justly" requires us to deal righteously with our fellowman.*
- *Inward: "to love mercy" requires a personal commitment to God's plan, and manifests itself in a right relationship toward God and our fellowman.*
- *Upward: "to walk humbly with thy God" requires a right attitude toward God and a determination to walk in continuous fellowship with Him.*

Class discussion should bring out that outward, inward, and upward areas of our service are each connected to the others.

8. The Book of Micah closes with promises of mercy and restoration. Give an example of how God extends the same promises to individuals today.

Your students may offer their personal testimonies, or a well-known testimony in response. Remind the students that mercy was extended to all, but only those who have been born again have received God's promise of restoration.

CONCLUSION

God is still calling sinners today. May we be faithful like Micah to declare His Word, demonstrate His love and mercy, and walk humbly before both God and man.



Prophecies Regarding Judah and Israel

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 1:1 through 12:6

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

BACKGROUND

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was reared in aristocratic surroundings in the land of Judah, and ministered during the reigns of: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. Isaiah was called to be a prophet about 740 B.C., the year Uzziah died. His last dated ministry was in 701 B.C., although most of Isaiah 40-66 must have been written during the reign of Manasseh before Isaiah's martyrdom around 680 B.C.

Isaiah is considered the most literary of the writing prophets, and he incorporated vivid word pictures in his prophecies. His writings contain both prose and poetry, and the beauty of his words has been an inspiration down through the ages. Isaiah's primary message was to Judah, although he also wrote to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was taken into captivity during his ministry. Isaiah also directed a portion of his prophecy to nations that surrounded Israel and Judah at the time.

The main point of Isaiah's writing in chapters 1-12 was to warn of judgment and to call the people of Judah and Israel back to God. In chapter 6, he described his personal call. Then, in chapters 7-11, he foretold of the Messiah and entreated the people to return to salvation and holiness. Isaiah promised a time of restoration for the Jewish people and also a time of peace for the world in the distant future.

King Ahaz of Judah (7th chapter) was informed that Rezin, King of Syria had joined with Israel to attack Judah in about 734 B.C. Isaiah was instructed by God to go with Shearjashub (his son whose name meant “a remnant will return”—a reminder of God’s mercy) to meet with King Ahaz. They were to meet the King “at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field.” The conduit of the upper pool refers to the Gihon Spring, which was east of Jerusalem and was the city’s main water source. The fuller’s field was used to lay fresh woven cloth or other clothing to dry and whiten in the sun.

When Isaiah and his son met with King Ahaz, the prophet told Ahaz that God would not allow Judah to

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be taken over at that time. Although Judah was at other times attacked during Isaiah's ministry, the land did not fall into captivity during Isaiah's lifetime.

As often happens, the people resented Isaiah's message of admonition and judgment, and tradition tells us Isaiah suffered a martyr's death at the hands of Manasseh, King of Judah around 680 B.C.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Isaiah's ministry was largely warning of judgment for the sins of Judah and Israel, and pleading for the people to repent. How does this setting parallel today?

Our society is similar to the society in Isaiah's time. God had given the nations of Judah and Israel prosperity, and the people had become complacent and had forgotten the source of their blessings. They had fallen into sin and were ignoring Isaiah's plea to repent. Today, our world has largely forgotten God, sin is rampant, and there seems to be little concern for the warnings in the Bible.

Discuss with your class ways we, as Christians, could let our material blessings come between us and God. Although we may not immediately fall into the gross sins and the heathen practices of Judah and Israel at the time of Isaiah, we could let God's love leak out by becoming comfortable, and neglecting things such as church attendance, daily devotions, and the Lord's work. We could let pleasures, entertainment, or careers occupy too much of our time and attention. Follow up with ways we can guard against this happening.

2. One of the sins in Judah which displeased God was the people's lack of mercy toward the poor, fatherless, and widows (Isaiah 1:23; 10:2). In what ways can we show kindness to those in need?

We should have a generous spirit. We should keep our eyes open for those who may be in need, especially of the body of Christ. Wisdom and prayer should accompany any monetary gift, but our generosity may not always include money. A bag of food, or clothes our children have outgrown, may be the appropriate thing. Also, a helping hand around the house or in the yard may answer the need for an older person or one who is sick. Your class may have some good suggestions on how to show kindness. Some may be able to relate an example from their own experience when someone's generosity met a pressing need.

3. God was angry over the sin of idolatry in both Israel and Judah, and he led Isaiah to expound about the King of Assyria who trusted in his own power (Isaiah 10:10-15). Why is God so displeased when people put anything in their lives ahead of Him?

God wants to be first, and placing anything before Him is, in effect, having an idol in our lives. There is no difference between making an idol out of wood or metal, or trusting in one's own abilities to be

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Prophecies Regarding Foreign Nations and the World

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 13:1 through 27:13

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” (Isaiah 13:11)

BACKGROUND

In chapters 13 through 23 of the Book of Isaiah, the focus shifts from Judah and Jerusalem to God’s pronouncement of judgment on ten Gentile nations (see chart below). These prophecies are called “burdens,” which in the original language meant “to lift up.” Divine judgment was going to be lifted up, and the prophet’s solemn messages were a heavy weight as he lifted up his voice in warning. He knew that cities would be destroyed and thousands of people would be killed.

Knowing of these coming judgments on the Gentile nations should have impacted Israel for several reasons:

- When Gentile nations oppressed them, the people should not have despaired because God had stated that He would eventually punish those nations.
- The people should have seen the futility of forming alliances with these nations.
- Israel and also the Gentiles should have recognized that God has authority over all earthly powers.
- This knowledge should have strengthened the faith of the people.

Babylon was listed first in Isaiah's condemnation. In 586 B.C., the Babylonian empire would destroy Jerusalem and the people of Judah would become their captives. From Genesis (the tower of Babel) through Revelation, Babylon typifies those who are defiant toward God, while Jerusalem often symbolizes the chosen of God.

In chapters 24 through 27, the prophecy broadens to include judgment to the whole world in the end times. God revealed to Isaiah, as to other Biblical writers, details regarding the Tribulation, causing these chapters to sometimes be referred to as “Isaiah’s Apocalypse.” The word “Behold” (Isaiah 24:1) indicated a future event. Individuals as well as nations would be judged. However, these chapters also hold out hope. God would provide deliverance, blessing,

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and protection for His people. After Israel was purged, they would be gathered and restored.

Isaiah's prophecies were received with scorn and unbelief by many of the people of his time. But God's Word has proved itself unfailingly. Fulfilled predictions regarding former nations reinforce Isaiah's prophetic statements about events which have not yet transpired.

Country	Reference
Babylon	Isaiah 13:1
Assyria	Isaiah 14:25
Palestina	Isaiah 14:28-29
Moab	Isaiah 15
Syria	Isaiah 17:1
Ethiopia	Isaiah 18:1
Egypt	Isaiah 19:1
Edom	Isaiah 21:11
Arabia	Isaiah 21:13
Tyre/Phoenicia	Isaiah 23:1

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Chapter 13 of Isaiah speaks of the fall of the great city Babylon. What verses foretold not only the fall of this city but also gave the identity of the conquerors?

The destruction and doom of Babylon was predicted in verses 19 and 20. These two verses indicated total annihilation of this city. Verse 17 prophesied that the city would be overthrown by the Medes. Point out to your students that this prophecy came to pass when Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall during Belshazzar's feast (about 539 B.C.) nearly 200 years after Isaiah spoke these words. Your class should conclude that prophecies yet to be fulfilled will come to pass just as surely.

2. What did God say would happen to Moab? (Isaiah 15:1-3). Why? Isaiah 16:6

Isaiah speaks of the destruction and downfall of the Moabite nation. Looking back from a present-day vantage point, we can see that this came to pass. The Moabite nation was conquered several times before finally succumbing to Arab control. This judgment came upon Moab because of its pride. Moab, the father of the Moabite nation, was conceived by Lot and his eldest daughter after they fled from Sodom and Gomorrah. Through the years, the Moabites, as a country, despised the Children of Israel and caused them great trouble.

Discussion should bring out that the sinful may appear to flourish for a time, but God will eventually judge their evil deeds if they do not repent.

3. Early in the history of the Children of Israel, the Egyptians had enslaved them, and God brought about a miraculous deliverance through Moses. Yet years later in Isaiah's time, some of the people of Judah wanted to form an alliance with Egypt as protection

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Isaiah 19:1-4

4. The city of Tyre was part of the Phoenician nation that was located on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the area of Lebanon today. The Phoenicians had built up a vast network of trade with surrounding countries, and they had a fleet of ships that were used to export goods. Yet Isaiah saw a time when this prosperous nation would fall, and their economic collapse would affect many of the nations around them. Who planned Tyre's destruction and why? Isaiah 23:8-9

5. Isaiah 24 details many happenings that will come to pass in the earth in what will be a universal desolation. List three of the happenings described in this chapter.

6. Those who are delivered from God's judgment will certainly rejoice, and in chapter 25, Isaiah prophesied of this praise. What are some of the future deliverances that God promises in Isaiah 25:6-12?

God promises a feast and celebration. He will “swallow up death in victory,” and tears will be

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Prophecies Against Ungodly People

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 28:1 through 35:10

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” (Isaiah 28:16)

BACKGROUND

Isaiah was a master of words, and a prophet who was used by God to reveal many of the mysteries of God's plan, as well to warn of the judgments to come. Chapters 28 through 35 contain prophecies of woe, intermixed with prophecies of hope and salvation.

Of the eight chapters covered in this lesson, five of them begin with the words: “Woe to...” Chapter 28 says, “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim...” Ephraim refers to the country of Israel. This was a warning to Judah and Israel that God was disgusted with their sin, and He likened them to drunken men, stumbling about in the midst of their uncleanness and vomit. He declared that their pride and beauty would be beaten down, and would be as a fading flower.

Chapter 29 begins with, “Woe to Ariel. . .” *Ariel* means “lion of God,” and was referring to Jerusalem. Although the people had a form of godliness and were observing religious festivals and talking about the Lord, they continued in their sin. God promised judgment upon them.

“Woe to the rebellious children. . .” begins the 30th chapter. Judah had rejected God’s counsel and His promise to protect them, seeking an alliance with Egypt to protect them from the Assyrians. In doing this, Judah was refusing to trust in the Lord and to obey Him. Chapter 31 continues with the same theme, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help. . .” God wants His people to put their trust in Him, and to allow Him to fight their battles. It is only through Him that victory can be obtained.

Chapter 33 begins, “Woe to thee that spoilest. . .” This was directed to the Assyrians who were a distress to Judah at the time. God promises judgment to those who oppose His chosen people. This includes those that are His, whether they are Jew or Gentile. The righteous will go through a refiner’s fire, but a remnant shall be saved.

In contrast to those that open with “Woe. . .” Chapter 32 begins, “Behold, a king shall reign in

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righteousness. . .” speaking of Jesus who will set up His worldwide reign. Chapter 34 starts, “Come near, ye nations, to hear. . .” and goes on to tell the people of judgment to come. Chapter 35 begins, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad. . .” and describes the redemption and beauty and glory that will come to God’s people.

God is just. His judgment is tempered by His mercy. That is the message Isaiah was bringing to the people.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. God said He would lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and that He would sweep away the refuge of lies (Isaiah 28:17). What do you think is meant by this statement?

The plummet or plumb line is used by builders to establish a perpendicular point of reference so the building is true and square. (A suggestion would be to bring a plumb line to class and demonstrate how it is used.) Not only will the plumb line show that the wall is vertically straight, but it will also show whether the wall has bulges or not. God’s Word is our plumb line. If we measure every thought and action by His Word, we will have a spiritual temple that is true. We will not be deceived by lies from the enemy of our souls.

2. God said that though the people approached Him with their mouths and honored Him with their lips, their hearts were far from Him (Isaiah 29:13). How is this verse applicable today?

There are many people who talk about God and who may pray or sing His praises on Sunday, but for the rest of the week, they live for their own pleasure without regard to the commands or will of the Lord. They say they love God, but it does not come from their hearts. True love from the heart can only occur after we have been redeemed through Jesus’ Blood. Then it is a daily walk of grace as we endeavor to please and obey the Lord. The praises will come from our hearts and the Lord will love to hear them.

3. The Lord spoke of rebellious people who wanted to hear only “smooth things” (Isaiah 30:9-10). How could we be in danger of feeling the same way?

Most people do not like to hear criticism. Yet the Bible tells us that a true friend may at times correct us. Or, it may be a word spoken from the pulpit that fits our situation. Let us be open to suggestions for improvement. Let us not be easily offended, but thankful if we can learn something which will make us a better person. We need a full, spiritual “diet.” If we hear only about the love of God, and never about His judgment, or ways in which we can improve, we will have an unbalanced perspective of who God is, and we may not have the incentive to endeavor to grow spiritually.

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4. Judah did not trust in God, but looked to Egypt for protection (Isaiah 31:1). Why do you think this displeased the Lord so much? How can this apply to us?

God had promised that He would take care of Judah and protect her from her enemies if they would do what was right. Judah disregarded God's promise and attempted to find help on her own.

There are many wonderful promises in the Word of God for us. We have the choice to ignore them and try to work out our lives using our own resources, or we may claim God's promises for our own. Often, we must seek for these promises. If we are unwilling or too indifferent to seek, we will not find, and that is what displeases the Lord.

5. In Isaiah 32:2, the prophet gives a promise of a hiding place and “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” To whom is this promise given and how can we apply it?

The promise is to those who are righteous before the Lord. How many times we feel that we are in a “weary land”? How often do we feel we need a hiding place? In today’s ungodly society, God’s people can relate to these promises on a daily basis. When we need a helper, a friend, a refuge, a feeling of peace, the everlasting arms of love—whatever our need—we just “go to the Rock” as the song says. You may discuss with your class ways they “go to the Rock” in times of trial.

6. God described those who are righteous—who have come through the fire and have stood true—and their reward (Isaiah 33:14-16). In your own words, describe a righteous person as portrayed in verse 15.

God describes a righteous person as one who walks according to God's law, one who speaks truth and kindness, one who hates the getting of personal gain unjustly and at the expense of others, one who will not get involved with criminal violence, and one who will not look at wickedness with pleasure. Discuss with your class examples of each of these actions that are to be embraced or avoided.

7. Chapter 34 speaks of a culmination of judgment at the end time. It predicts fearsome things to come and is a wrapping up of the section of “woes” from the last several chapters. What do you think God is trying to tell us in this chapter?

God is again warning of judgment for sin. He wants people to know that the price is never too large to pay to avoid the terrible things that will face those who are not right with God. He calls all men everywhere to repent of their sins and to find His great salvation. He warns us that we must stay close to Him and obey His commands. There will be no surprises at the judgment. Mankind has been properly warned, and those who ignore the warning will be speechless when they face God.

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1. In our text, King Hezekiah faced three major crises. What were they? Isaiah 36:1; 38:1; 39:1

The second crisis was his illness and impending death as prophesied by Isaiah. This crisis was personal in nature and drove the king to prayer. The third crisis was the reception of Babylonian political envoys. This crisis was more subtle than the first two, and Hezekiah gave intimate knowledge of the kingdom to foreigners, and apparently took credit for the treasures of the kingdom.

Discuss the three different ways Hezekiah responded to each crisis. What can we learn from his responses?

2. In Isaiah 36:4, Rabshakeh, the Assyrian field commander or representative, began a blasphemous discourse with King Hezekiah's representatives concerning confidence and trust. How did he try to tear down the trust and confidence of the people of Judah? How is this similar to Satan's attacks upon our confidence in God?

First, there was an assault on the leadership of King Hezekiah, decrying his ability to prepare for such a crisis. This was specifically noted in reference to his previous alliance with Egypt. (Isaiah also rebuked this alliance in chapters 30:1-7 and 31:1-3)

Second, Rabshakeh asserted that if the people claimed trust in the Lord, Hezekiah had made worship more difficult for them (traveling to Jerusalem).

Third, he claimed that the Assyrian army was operating at God's instruction so the people of Judah should surrender.

Finally, he shouted to those who could hear on the surrounding walls to disregard Hezekiah's charge to trust in God's deliverance from the Assyrian army. He claimed that the Hebrew God Jehovah would be no different than the gods of the surrounding countries in His inability to deliver them.

In times of crisis, Satan may attempt to get us to question the authority and trustworthiness of our leaders. He points out their human frailties and shortcomings without mentioning the way God has used them profitably for His kingdom. The devil also tries to devalue true worship and fellowship, offering something more appealing to our human desire for ease and pleasure. Often the enemy of our souls tries to claim that he is operating as an emissary of God. (See 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.) Finally, Satan shouts

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into the ears and hearts of believers that God cannot be trusted to deliver.

3. What was Hezekiah's response to the blasphemous accusations which were made to his representatives and then again directly to him in a letter from the Assyrian King Sennacherib? (Isaiah 37:1) How did God honor this response?

After hearing the accusations, Hezekiah humbled himself (tore his clothes and put on sackcloth) and went immediately to the house of the Lord. He also sent word to the prophet Isaiah that a crisis was upon them. Isaiah quickly offered a three-part encouragement from the Lord: 1) Don't be afraid of hollow words, 2) The King of Assyria will depart for his own land, and, 3) He will die violently in his own land.

When the accusations were repeated in a letter, Hezekiah again went to the house of the Lord and then he spread the letter before God and prayed. Again, God promised deliverance for Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:22, 31-35), departure of the Assyrians (Isaiah 37:23-29), and that God would provide food for His people (Isaiah 37:30) following the crisis.

Ultimately God showed the Assyrians that He was different than the gods of the surrounding countries when He slew 185,000 soldiers in one night, defending Jerusalem and the people of Judah as He promised.

4. What did Hezekiah's prayer in chapter 37:15-20 encompass? How can we apply this in our own prayers?

Hezekiah's prayer was amazingly similar to the prayer of the Early Church in Acts 4:24-31. He acknowledged first that God is the "Lord of hosts," which means Lord of the armies. He is the personal God of Israel who dwelt with them "between the cherubim" in the Holy of Holies within the Temple. He acknowledged that God is not one of many but the only God and the Creator of the universe. Then the King went on to ask for God's direct intervention: "hear," "open thine eyes," etc. He reminded God that the reproach was not so much of Israel but rather of God. He affirmed the reality of the crisis, telling God that Sennacherib had destroyed other nations and their gods, but he was mindful that their "gods" were only human constructions and not divine. Finally, he asked for God to save Judah from the crisis. His intent was not only for deliverance, but also that the nations might know the sovereignty of God and that God's name would be glorified.

Our prayers in times of crises (other times also) should begin with an acknowledgement of the deity, authority, and personal nature of God to us. Our hearts must be focused on Him alone and not on any other options for deliverance, understanding that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all. We should then follow with our requests, laying before God the crisis

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A seemingly innocent act of receiving diplomats who congratulated Hezekiah on his recovery turned to disaster. In his gladness over being given additional years of life, the king apparently became lax in his protection of the security of his kingdom. A diplomat who reveals the financial and military assets along with the geographical advantages and disadvantages of a country certainly makes that country, government, and its inhabitants vulnerable.

While there was nothing technically wrong with fulfilling his diplomatic responsibilities, Hezekiah apparently took more credit for the blessing of God than was warranted. The combination of lax attitude and pride was displeasing to God and brought judgment to the entire nation in the forthcoming Babylonian captivity.

As Christians we must be always on our guard. The enemy of our souls does not always come with an obvious attack like that of the Assyrian army or even with a personal attack like that of Hezekiah's sickness. Sometimes Satan's attacks are subtler; yet they can have a long-term impact on us and those whom we influence. They may come in areas that are not specifically sinful but simply distract us or expose us to the influence of ungodly people and ideas.

8. Why did Hezekiah say it was good that the judgment for his misdeeds would fall on the next generation? Was this arrogance on his part? Why or why not?

It does not seem that Hezekiah was arrogant in his answer but simply resigned to God's pronouncement of judgment and its terms. None of us want judgment to fall on us or on those who follow us. Poor decisions always have consequences, and although repentance delivers us from the eternal power and penalty of sin, it does not always bring deliverance from the consequences of sin in our lives here on earth. We must resolve to patiently and continually follow the will of God even in the face of consequences for past actions.

9. What types of crises are we likely to face as Christians today? How can we respond in ways that will be pleasing to God and profitable for our eternal destiny?

Students will likely respond with issues much like those in Hezekiah's life story: attacks by enemies, problems at school or in employment, family problems, sickness, or subtle attacks of pride for our prosperity, influence, or accomplishments. Our response should be like that of Hezekiah when he refused to listen to ungodly discouragement and prayerfully submitted all of the crises to God and His perfect will. We must proceed with great care so as not to allow the enemy of our souls to stage a "sneak attack" while our spiritual guard has been let down. God has promised deliverance for His glory, so we must keep focused on His perfect will and purpose for our lives.

CONCLUSION

Two great lessons can be learned from Hezekiah and his life story. The first is that our confidence must be in God alone. He is bigger than any circumstances or crisis that may confront us along life’s way. The second is that mankind is quick to forget the blessings and deliverances that God provides and tend to put confidence in ourselves. We must be vigilant to keep our confidence in God alone if we are to make our calling and election sure.



The Prophetic Consolation

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 40:1 through 48:22

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10)

BACKGROUND

Moving from chapter 39 to chapter 40 of this book, the theme changes from that of judgment to one of salvation. The prophet Isaiah saw beyond Israel's current distress and Judah's prospect of captivity to a future day of salvation.

God was to spare Judah from Assyria's threat of destruction and later deliver His people from the Babylonian captivity. Along with warning the people of impending judgment, Isaiah offered them hope and comfort. He foretold the time when Babylon—a future evil world system—would be destroyed.

This section of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 40:1—48:22) is often called the Book of Consolation. The first words of the 40th chapter, *comfort ye* meant both “repent” and “console,” which indicated that comfort comes after true repentance. The words *my people* referred to the people of God who had a covenant relationship with Him. These chapters also introduce God’s chosen Servant, who would be Israel’s means of redemption.

Some refer to this section of Isaiah as the New Testament in miniature, since it opens with the words used by John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3), and contains many references to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and King.

Within these chapters, Isaiah also emphasized the greatness of God in contrast to the vanity of heathen idols. Note how often God said to His people, Israel, “Fear not” and how often He assured them of His pardon and His presence.

God's message of comfort in this section was not merely a strengthening of the people of Israel in their outward deliverance. It was a deep and inner work of God in their hearts.

It is no surprise that for centuries God's people have turned to these chapters to find encouragement and assurance when encountering difficult days in their lives. God says to all of His people, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee." He encourages us to take comfort in Him.

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1. What is your concept of God as you take into consideration Isaiah 40:12, 15, and 22?

The songwriter wrote, “He’s big enough to rule the mighty universe, yet small enough to live within my heart.”¹

2. Judah was facing the threat of destruction by Assyria, which was one of many reasons to fear. What was one reason *not* to be afraid? (Isaiah 41:10-14) How does this promise apply to us?

When God makes a promise, He keeps it. We need not fear the world as we represent Him, because God's presence is with us. He has established a relationship with us and we have God's assurance of strength, help, and victory over sin and the devil. What are some promises that God has proven true to you personally?

Righteousness is right actions, right attitudes, and right relationships, all based on a right standing with God. When we repent of our sins, He forgives us and takes away our sins; He restores us as His children. He not only gives us His righteousness, but He also empowers us to demonstrate it to others.

4. In spite of Israel's deliberate sin against God and their rejection of Him as their rightful King, what did He say He was to them? (Isaiah 43:3, 14) What did Israel fail to do? Isaiah 43:22

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to share accounts of how they have obtained God's direction in the past.

8. The people of Judah and Israel had become comfortable and complacent in their state of obstinacy. Chapter 48 is a plea for them to consider their destiny in view of God's past dealings on their behalf. God had put them into the furnace to refine them and prepare them for their future work (Isaiah 48:10). What are the symptoms today of complacency in a person's spiritual walk?

It might be interesting to make a list of "symptoms" on a board. Your students' suggestions may include: sporadic attendance at church, little if any time in prayer, discontentment, increase of non-church or non-spiritual activities, a critical spirit. After you have made the list, ask your students what we can do to combat or correct complacency in our spiritual lives.

Some people today feel secure because they go to church, live in a Christian home, or reside in a Christian country. These things cannot give us a relationship with God. We have to trust Him personally with all of our hearts.

CONCLUSION

These chapters detail the futility of wickedness and idol worship, and also explain the peace God gives to those who follow Him. Today, like the people of Isaiah's day, we must make the choice whether or not to follow God and have His peace.



Prophecy of the Redeemer

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 49:1 through 59:21

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”
(Isaiah 53:5)

BACKGROUND

This portion of the Book of Isaiah is filled with consolation and hope as the prophet unveils God’s promise of redemption through the Messiah. Isaiah spoke more about the Messiah than any other Old Testament prophet, describing the Redeemer of Israel as both a suffering Servant and a sovereign Lord.

In chapters 49-59, the prophet presented a sequence of portraits of the Servant and His mission as the agent of salvation to the Jews and the Gentiles. He foretold that the Prince of Peace would come to pardon Israel's sins, redeem the people from their wickedness, and institute peace in their midst. As the suffering Servant of His people and a Light to the surrounding nations, He would humbly offer Himself as a sacrifice for many—calling those with “ears to hear” to hearken to God’s voice and turn back to Him.

Israel had not been forgotten; the Messiah would bring the nation back from captivity and would restore His people to the Promised Land. The prophet also foretold that the Messiah would set up His own Millennial Kingdom where He would rule with righteousness, and would bring comfort, deliverance, and renewal to His people.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. How is God's purpose toward the Gentile nations described in Isaiah 49:6? What impact does this purpose have on us?

The Gentile nations were in a state of darkness before the coming of Christ. Christ would be a “light” to them, bringing salvation to “the end of the earth”—to the extremity, border, or outermost coast. Isaiah also stated that the Messiah’s ministry would bring liberty to the captives (verses 8-13) and love and hope to the discouraged (Isaiah 49:14-50:3).

In response to the second question, bring out that, as Gentiles, this declaration means we too can be recipients of this wonderful “light” and enjoy the blessings that come from trusting in God’s Servant and our Redeemer for salvation. As a follow-up to this

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The spiritual watchmen and the people themselves falsely assumed that all things would continue as they were, and were unheeding of the prophetic warnings given them. In our day, too, some fail to consider the coming judgment of God, and neglect His offer of salvation. Instead, they continue on in their daily lives, assuming that the next day will be just as the one before. The fact is, no one can be sure of tomorrow. Every person should be ready to meet God today.

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The Messianic Kingdom

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 60:1 through 66:24

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” (Isaiah 60:19)

BACKGROUND

The final chapters of Isaiah are filled with consolation and hope as Isaiah unfolds God's promise of future blessings through His Messiah. There are many beautiful descriptions of a new creation in which God will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing eternal peace.

Our text proclaims the prophecy of the glory of Jerusalem in the last days. It begins by saying that the Messiah will come to Jerusalem. This light that shined is not just for Jerusalem alone but for all mankind. God will send the Messiah, as a Servant, who would die to take away sins. Later, God will set up His own kingdom as the faithful Prince of Peace who rules with righteousness. He will then come as sovereign Lord.

Isaiah proclaimed that God promises comfort, deliverance, and restoration in His future kingdom. The Messiah will rule over those who have faithfully followed Him. What a bright future for those who are faithful!

These last seven chapters are like windows that allow a glimpse into a future time. The Hebrew writers often did not cover events in a chronological manner. Many people today are used to thinking sequentially, so it is important to realize that prophecies that are together in Scripture may cover different time periods. Some of the events in Isaiah happen at Christ's first coming to earth as Redeemer; others pertain to Israel returning to its homeland to become a nation (1948); some of the events occur during the Millennial Reign; and some deal with the New Heaven and New Earth. We understand the order of these events by looking at the whole of God's Word.

Isaiah predicted many events right down to the finest detail. He prophesied that Jerusalem would fall more than 100 years before it happened (586 B.C.), and that the Temple would be rebuilt about 200 years before it occurred. In more recent times Israel has, as promised, become a nation again after 2000 years. This very small country (slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey) is featured in the daily news of the

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world. Israel has received billions of dollars in aid and assets from all over the world as prophesied throughout today's text. Surrounded by enemies, Israel has one of the most-feared military forces in the world. This tiny country is blossoming and has become an object of international attention to the superpowers of the earth.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Consider for a moment a time when you have had to cope with a circumstance that left you feeling like you were in total darkness. Perhaps you could see no way out. Why is it appropriate to portray God in terms of light?

Discuss the feeling and consequences of being in darkness. Darkness absorbs color and becomes only confusing shades of grey, then black. You might bring up how a path can be seen clearly when there is light, but when the sun goes down and dusk sets in, the shadows cause the path to disappear. That is why it is so dangerous to hike in the mountains when it gets late in the day. When we cannot see our way, unease or even panic can set in. When this happens in the spiritual realm, we may feel panic and helplessness for a time, but peace comes when we remember that Jesus is the Light. As we turn to Him, He will lead us in a clear path, and the confusion and fear will go away. The path may lead through the valley of the shadow, but His Light within will comfort us.

As a follow-up question, you could ask: In what way could you serve as a light to the darkened world around you? Bring out that we can be a reflection of Jesus. When we live to honor Him, our lives will be a testimony of truth. If we reach out in love to those who are in spiritual darkness, they will often be attracted to the Light we reflect. You may discuss with your class practical ways to do this.

2. According to Isaiah's prophecy, what are some of the things in store for those who remain faithful?

Some day, God will set up His kingdom upon this earth, and we will reign with Christ. Those who persecuted or despised us will then serve us. We will spend all eternity with the One who loves us so much. It truly will be worth it all when we see Jesus! You may take some time to discuss with your class more of the wonderful glories of Heaven that await those who are faithful.

3. God has given us many beautiful promises (Isaiah 61:1-3). There are those who have nothing but ashes to show for their lives. Some suffer from depression or a “heavy spirit.” Some are broken-hearted. What are some of the promises God offers these people? How can you apply these promises to your own life?

*God has promised to bind up the brokenhearted,
to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning
and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

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have not yet been completely fulfilled, God is our Father and has a strong parental love for us. He will nurture us as a mother does a child. When Jesus came to earth, He experienced the difficult things that we go through, and therefore has an understanding love.

Ask your class how we should react to those around us who are hurting. Bring out that we should be quick to identify someone who is suffering, and be ready to give hope to the troubled heart. We may need to help with a physical need for someone in want. Or we may have opportunity to give emotional comfort and empathy to one who is suffering grief or despair.

CONCLUSION

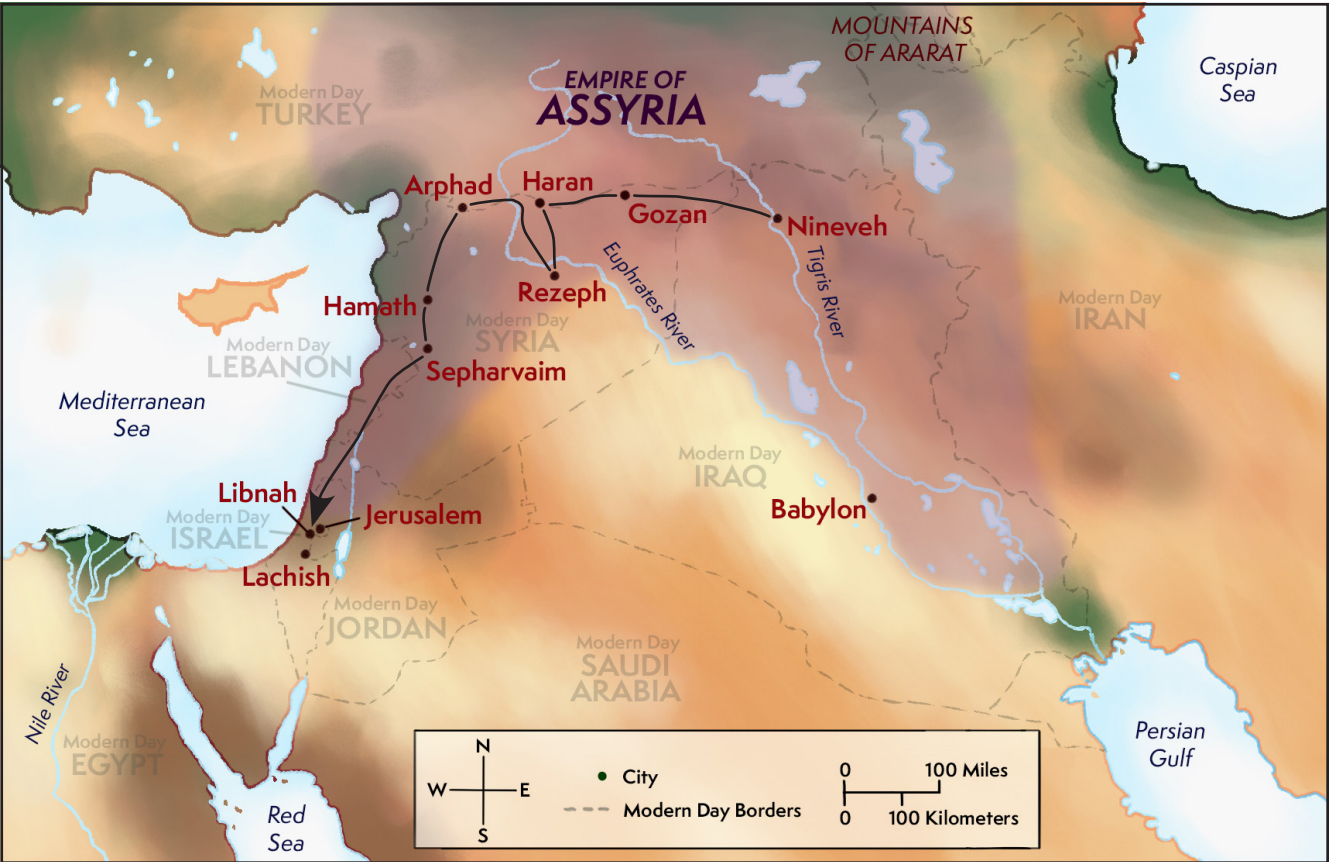
Isaiah concluded his prophecy in these final chapters. His message was one of denunciation of sin, and hope for people who seek the Lord. How relevant His message is today!

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A map of the ancient Empire of Assyria and its surroundings. The empire is shown in a reddish-brown color, covering parts of modern-day Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Key locations marked include Tarshish (with a note: "(More than 3000 miles west, possibly in Modern Day Spain)"), Nineveh, Joppa, and Jerusalem. The map also shows the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Caspian Sea. Modern-day borders and countries are indicated with dashed lines and labels: Modern Day TURKEY, SYRIA, IRAQ, IRAN, LEBANON, ISRAEL, JORDAN, SAUDI ARABIA, and EGYPT. The Mountains of Ararat are also labeled. A compass rose and a scale bar (0 to 100 miles and 0 to 100 kilometers) are included in the bottom right corner.

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Assyria's Conquest Reaches Judah



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