

CHAPTER 9

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations

The Prophets

In our journey through the Old Testament we have traveled through the five books of Moses, the Historical Books and the Poetical Books. We have now arrived at the last section of the Old Testament: **The Prophetic Books**. There are 16 prophetic books in the Old Testament, and each book bears the name of the prophet who wrote it. For example, who wrote the book of Daniel? _____ Who wrote the book of Micah? _____ What prophet wrote the book of Malachi? _____

The Major and Minor Prophets

Often people divide these 16 books into two groups: the *major* prophets and the *minor* prophets. There are four major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. They are called major prophets because their books are greater in size (their books are longer and contain more pages and more chapters than the minor prophets). There are 12 minor prophets: the last 12 books in the Old Testament. They are called minor prophets because their books are less in size (these books are all very small and contain few chapters each). For example, the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters whereas all of the 12 minor prophets have only a total of 67 chapters combined. Does this mean that the major prophets are more important than the minor prophets? Does the size of a book tell you how important the book is? Think about the New Testament. Is the Gospel of John more important than the book of 1 John just because it has more chapters? _____ ***All of God's Word is important!*** Jesus said that man must live by _____ which proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4)! The one chapter book of Obadiah is just as important as the 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah! **If God said it** and if it is part of the Bible, then it is important! Therefore, the minor prophets are of ***major importance*** (and so are all the other books of the Bible)!

The Ministry of the Prophets

The prophets were men that God raised up to give His message to the nation during days of spiritual decline (see Chapter 5 of these notes). God spoke through these men. Often the prophets would say, "THUS SAITH THE LORD!" and then they would give their message. Turn through some of the pages in the prophetic books and try to find phrases like these:

"Thus saith the Lord"

"saith the Lord"

"The word of the Lord came unto me saying..."

God spoke through these men!

Before, During or After?

Most of the prophets lived during the time of the kings. However, others lived during the

Babylonian Captivity and some lived after the Babylonian Captivity. The Babylonian Captivity is also called the Exile (a forced removal of the Jews from their native country).

1. Most of the prophets wrote their books *BEFORE THE EXILE* (see chapter 1–**Crown**)
2. Ezekiel and Daniel wrote their books *DURING THE EXILE* (see chapter 1–**Captivity**)
3. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi wrote their books *AFTER THE EXILE* (see chapter 1–**Construction**)

Isaiah—Presenting Israel’s Messiah

Isaiah is one of the prophets who lived and who wrote *BEFORE THE EXILE*. The first verse of the book tells us the names of four kings who reigned during Isaiah’s lifetime (see the list of kings in Chapter 5). Isaiah carried on his ministry about 700 years before the time of Christ. Tradition tells us that this faithful prophet was cut in two with a saw during the reign of wicked King Manasseh (see Hebrews 11:37).

Today there are many people who are trying to cut Isaiah’s book in two! These unbelievers say that there must have been at least "two Isaiahs" (two authors of the book). They say that the person who wrote the last half of the book of Isaiah (chapters 40-66) must have been different from the person who wrote the first half of the book (chapters 1-39). They say that the man who wrote the second part of Isaiah must have lived at least 200 years after the time of the prophet Isaiah.

Why do they say such a thing? Here is the main reason: In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 a man is mentioned by the name of C_____. Cyrus was a Persian king who lived in the second half of the sixth century B. C., about 200 years after the time of the prophet Isaiah. How could Isaiah mention by name a king who was not even born yet and who would not be born until many years after Isaiah’s death? That would be like George Washington mentioning the name of the person who was elected President in 1980 or 1984! The unbelievers who read these verses think that the person who wrote about Cyrus must have lived in the days of Cyrus or even later.

These unbelievers overlook one important fact. The living God is able to declare "the _____ from the _____" (Isaiah 46:10), and God knew all about Cyrus hundreds of years before this man was ever born!

Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah! How do we know that? *THE BIBLE SAYS SO!* In John 12:37-41 two passages from Isaiah are quoted. The first (verse 38) is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 53 (the second half of the book) and the second (verse 40) is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 6 (the first part of the book), and the Bible says that Isaiah (Esaias) wrote both of them!

A Miniature Bible

The book of Isaiah is like a "miniature Bible." How many books of the Bible are there? _____ How many chapters in the book of Isaiah are there? _____ The book of Isaiah is divided into two major parts: Part 1 (chapters 1-39) and Part 2 (chapters 40-66). Part 1 has 39 chapters just like the Old Testament has _____ books. Part 2 has 27 chapters just like the New Testament has _____ books. Also Isaiah 40 (the first chapter of Part 2) begins the same way as the New Testament begins, with John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3)! Compare Mark 1:3.

Israel's Great Messiah

In many of the Old Testament books we catch glimpses of Israel's promised Messiah. We have already seen this in the Psalms (see chapter 7). In Isaiah's book we can see the Saviour more clearly than in any other Old Testament book. Here are some examples:

1. In Isaiah chapter 7, which verse tells us that the Messiah will be born of a virgin? Verse: _____
What does the word Immanuel mean (see Matthew 1:22-23)?

2. In Isaiah chapter 9, which verse tells us that the Messiah will be both God and Man? Verse: _____

As Man He will be a child who is born! As God He is the Son who is given (see John 3:16) and He will be called "the Mighty _____" (see Isaiah 9:6).

3. Perhaps the greatest prophecy about the Messiah in all the Bible is found in Isaiah 53. Verse after verse in this chapter tells us that the Messiah will die **for our sins!** See verse 5: "But He was wounded (pierced through) for _____ transgressions, He was bruised for _____ iniquities." The wonderful good news found in Isaiah 53 can be summed up in five words (see 1 Corinthians 15:3--"Christ _____ for _____ sins!").

Remember, these amazing prophecies about who Christ is and His birth and His death were all written by Isaiah about 700 years before Christ was born in Bethlehem! God knows "the _____ from the B _____" (Isaiah 46:10)!

Israel's Great King

There are many passages in the book of Isaiah that tell us about the promised **kingdom**, when Jesus Christ will rule and reign as KING over all the earth. Consider the following passages:

1. Isaiah 2:1-5
What does this passage teach us about the kingdom?

2. Isaiah 9:6-7
What does this passage teach us about the kingdom?

3. Isaiah 11:1-9

What does this passage teach us about the kingdom?

Is There More Than One Messiah?

As we read the different passages about the Messiah in the book of Isaiah, we discover that this Person is described in two different ways:

1. ***A SUFFERING MESSIAH WHO DIES.*** In Isaiah 53 we learn about the suffering and death of the Messiah.
2. ***A KINGLY MESSIAH WHO RULES FOREVER.*** In Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 11:1-5 we learn about a Messiah who will be King over all the earth and who will rule and reign forever!

At first glance it might seem that these passages are describing two different Persons: 1) A Messiah who suffers and dies. 2) A Messiah who rules as King. Some of the Jews who lived long ago read these verses and thought there must be more than one Messiah! Even in John 12:33-34 the Jews were very puzzled. How could a dead Christ live forever?

Some of the Jews believed that there would be two Messiahs. The suffering Messiah they called "the son of Joseph," and the royal Messiah they called "the son of David."

The New Testament solves this problem and shows us that there is only one Messiah: Jesus Christ our Lord. In the New Testament we learn that there is one Messiah but there are two comings to earth:

1. *The First Coming* was when Jesus Christ came to earth to suffer and to die on the cross to save sinful men (1 Tim. 1:15).
2. *The Second Coming* will be when Jesus Christ will come again to judge and rule the world (Revelation 1:7).

The Gospel According to Isaiah

The book of Isaiah presents the good news of salvation in a very clear way. It is possible to show a person how to be saved just by using the book of Isaiah. This can be done when sharing with Jewish people who accept the Old Testament but who do not accept the New Testament. As you do the following matching problem you will discover some of the important truths that the book of Isaiah teaches about Christ and salvation:

1. _____ God is perfectly holy .	VERSES IN ISAIAH: A. 1:18 B. 6:3 C. 7:14; 9:6 D. 45:21-22 E. 53:1 F. 53:4-5 G. 53:6 H. 53:10 I. 55:1 J. 55:6-7 K. 59:2 L. 64:6
2. _____ All men are sinners, like lost sheep who have gone astray.	
3. _____ Sin (iniquity) separates sinful man from a holy God.	
4. _____ Though He was God, Jesus Christ became a man and was born of a virgin.	
5. _____ Our sins were laid upon Christ and He died for our iniquities.	
6. _____ Death did not conquer Him, but He rose again so that He could "prolong His days and see His seed (those He saves, His children)."	
7. _____ God offers man complete forgiveness of sins. Our sins will be "white as snow."	
8. _____ Man is told to turn from his wicked way and seek the Lord.	
9. _____ Man cannot be saved by good works. All his righteous deeds are as filthy rags before God.	
10. _____ Salvation is a free gift, "without money and without price."	
11. _____ To be saved men must believe the report about Christ and what He has done for us.	
12. _____ To be saved man must look unto the only God and the only Saviour.	

Have you believed this wonderful good news? Are you trusting this great Messiah as your personal Saviour?

A Key Chapter

One of the very important chapters in the book of Isaiah is chapter 6. This is a very personal chapter which tells us about the man Isaiah and about two things which he saw:

1) **Isaiah saw the Lord!** In verse 1, Isaiah said, "I _____ also the _____" and in verse 5: "for mine _____ have _____ the King, the _____ of hosts." As Isaiah caught a glimpse of God, what was the one thing about God that he saw (see verse 3):

- a. God's love
- b. God's holiness
- c. God's kindness
- d. God's goodness

2) **Isaiah saw himself!** Isaiah saw himself as he really was in verse 5. He first saw how **holy** God was, and then he understood something about himself. What did he say about himself (verse 5)?

- a. "Oh how wonderful I am!"
- b. "Oh how intelligent I am!"
- c. "Oh how happy I am!"
- d. "Oh how sinful and unclean I am!"
- e. "Oh how righteous I am!"

When a man begins to see his true condition before God (to see himself as God sees him), then he is ready for God's gracious forgiveness and cleansing (read verses 6-7).

Have you seen and understood God as He is revealed in His Word? Have you gone to the Bible and learned how holy and righteous and pure God is?

Have you seen yourself as you really are before God? Have you seen yourself as sinful and unclean? Are you willing to let the great Messiah save and forgive you?

Because of what God has done for you, are you willing to be available for God's use and to do His will whatever it is (see Isaiah 6:8)?

**God is holy.
I am sinful.
The Messiah died for me (Isaiah 53)
God can forgive
Lord, thank You, Here am I!**

The Gospel, the Good News of Christ, the Messiah, can be rejected but the Government of God is inescapable! If you reject Him as Saviour you must someday face Him as your Judge!

Jeremiah and Lamentations

These two books can be studied together because they were both written by the same man, the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah began his ministry about 60 years after Isaiah's death. He wrote his book about 600 years before the time of Christ. Jeremiah spoke his message during the last years of Jerusalem, before the city was destroyed by the Babylonians. He faithfully warned the people of the coming judgment because of their sins, even though they refused to heed his warning. He spoke God's message during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah, beginning with Josiah and ending with Zedekiah. How many of these kings were good kings (see the chart in Chapter 5)?

Jeremiah sounded forth God's warnings to the Jewish people during the last days of the kingdom of Judah (the Southern Kingdom, see chapter 5). What were these days like? The people who lived during these days are described by God in Jeremiah 1:16:

"And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their _____, who have _____, and have burned incense unto _____, and worshipped the works of their own hands (idols)."

These were the people to whom Jeremiah was sent with his message of warning and coming judgment! For about 50 years Jeremiah was God's voice to Judah and to the city of Jerusalem.

The Unloved Prophet

When Jeremiah preached God's message, he did not have a very friendly audience! At the beginning of his ministry God told Jeremiah just what to expect: "And they shall _____ against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am _____ thee, saith the LORD, to _____ thee" (Jer. 1:19). God wanted Jeremiah to know that he would be persecuted by his own people, but that the LORD would deliver him and take care of him. Jeremiah was not a very popular preacher!

Jeremiah's message was not a very popular message either. Read the message of judgment found in Jeremiah 19:15. Do you think the people of the land would be pleased to hear this? What happened to Jeremiah because of his preaching (Jeremiah 20:2)?

Jeremiah was a voice for God, but he spoke to deaf ears. Did people hearken to his message (Jeremiah 37:2)? _____ What did they do to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:15)?

Later he was dropped into a terrible kind of prison: **A muddy pit** (see Jeremiah 38:6)! But no matter what they did to Jeremiah or where they put him, God was always with him! He was unloved by the people but greatly loved by his God!

Jeremiah's Ministry

His parish (the people he preached to):

AN APOSTATE NATION (people who had turned away from the Lord).

His message:

COMING JUDGMENT AND DOOM! THE BABYLONIANS ARE COMING!

His popularity:

HE KNEW HOW TO MAKE ENEMIES!

His habitat (place where he lived):

OFTEN IN A PRISON

His encouragement:

THE LORD WAS WITH HIM AS A _____ TERRIBLE ONE (Jeremiah 20:11).

His motivation:

GOD'S WORD WAS BURNING IN HIS HEART (Jer. 20:9).

Key Words

The word "Babylon" is found 164 times in this book! Again and again Jeremiah warned the Jews that God's judgment was coming because of their sins, and that God would send the Babylonians to destroy their city and take them away as captives. The Jews did not like to think about Babylon but Jeremiah kept reminding them of the judgment that was coming. One example of this is found in Jeremiah 20:5: "Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their _____, which shall spoil them, and _____ them, and carry them to _____." Jeremiah's constant message was this: *"The Babylonians are coming! God's judgment is coming!"*

Another key term is the word "backsliding." It is found 13 times (see Jeremiah 3:22; 5:6; 14:7; 8:5; etc.). Because of their sins the nation was sliding back away from the Lord. God can heal the backslidings of His people but they must R_____ to Him (Jeremiah 3:12,22).

A third key term is the word "obey." It is found 18 times. Again and again Jeremiah gave the people this message: "ye have _____ obeyed the voice of the _____ your God" (Jeremiah 42:21; see also 3:13; 9:13; 32:23; 40:3; etc.). God's people refused to do what God said and because of this they were in trouble. The same thing is true for people living today. Those who do not obey God's voice are in trouble. God's blessing is on those who obey and God's curse is on those who do not obey (see Jeremiah 11:3). *Even today it pays to obey!*

"Return Unto Me!"

One of the key verses in the book of Jeremiah is found in 4:1--"If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, _____ unto _____." God's people had turned away from the Lord and they were living in disobedience and sin. In this verse God is calling the people back to Himself! God spoke to the people through Jeremiah by saying, *"Turn back to God! Return unto God!"*

Did the people do what God said? Did they return to the Lord? Notice the sad words found in Jeremiah 5:3. What are the last five words of this verse? _____

_____ God wanted them to come to Himself. They refused to come! Compare John 5:40. Does Jesus Christ want people today to come to Himself (Matthew 11:28 and John 6:35,37)? _____ Have you come to Him, or have you refused to come?

God is Faithful!

Jeremiah's book also has some good news in it! Even though judgment was coming, Jeremiah knew that a brighter day was coming also! God is a faithful God, even though His people are not! Because of God's great faithfulness, He is going to do something wonderful for the nation Israel in the future.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God tells about a wonderful **new covenant** that He will someday make with the nation Israel. In the past God gave the children of Israel the law of Moses. Did they keep this law or break this law (Jeremiah 31:32)? _____

In the future God will do something very special. "I will put my _____ in their inward parts, and write it in their _____ and will be their _____ and they shall be _____ people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Will God forgive their sin (Jeremiah 31:34)? _____ Will they all know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34)? _____

This **new covenant** will be made with Israel at the time of the kingdom, when Jesus Christ returns to earth as KING OF KINGS. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah also tells us about this glorious kingdom. One of the passages that describes this great kingdom is Jeremiah 23:5-8. Who do you think is the great King that these verses speak of?

Lamentations

Jeremiah lived to see the terrible invasion of the Babylonians as they came into the land of Palestine and conquered the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah warned the people that this would happen, and then he saw it happen with his very eyes (see Jeremiah chapter 39).

What did Jeremiah think about this judgment? Did he rejoice and say, "I'm so happy that these wicked people are getting just what they deserve!" No, Jeremiah had a broken heart! He wept and mourned for his people the Jews. Even though they hated him, he loved them.

Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet" or "the prophet of the broken heart." Did he really shed tears for his people (Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17; 14:17)? _____

After Jerusalem was destroyed Jeremiah wrote the book which we now call **Lamentations**. The word "lament" means "a crying out in grief and sorrow." The weeping prophet was mourning for his beloved city and his beloved people.

The book of Lamentations is one of the poetry books (see Chapter 7). It is an alphabetical poem or song (see chapter 7). For example, the first chapter has 22 verses and the first verse begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second verse begins with the second letter, etc. Lamentations has been called "a hymn of heartbreak, a psalm of sadness, a symphony of sorrow and a tale of tears." It is the wailing wall of the Bible.

Key Verse

Lamentations 1:18 is the key verse and gives the reason why Jerusalem is in ruins. The Lord is R_____ but His people are sinful and have rebelled against Him! But the book of Lamentations also has some good news and hope (3:21). God is **faithful** even though His people are not! When God judged His nation He did not destroy the Jews completely. He could have done this and they deserved this, but God did not utterly consume them! Why not? The answer is found in Lamentations 3:22-23: "It is of the Lord's _____ that we are not _____, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy _____." Because of the mercies and faithfulness of God their destruction was not total! God is not through with the nation Israel. He has a wonderful future for them! Even though they rejected Jeremiah and his message (and later rejected Jesus and His message), God still did not cast away His people (Romans 11:1). God is faithful even though His people are not!

As we read the book of Lamentations, we need to look beyond Jeremiah and his tears and see Someone else who is weeping! God's own heart was broken because of the sins of His people. We must never forget that God hates sin but He loves the sinner. ***The prophet of the broken heart reveals that the sin of the LORD's people brings suffering to the LORD's heart.***

Centuries later when God Himself came to earth He did just what Jeremiah had done! He wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). In many ways the ministry of Jesus was similar to the ministry of Jeremiah. For the most part, the message of Jesus fell upon deaf ears. He was rejected by His own people (John 1:11). The people hated Him and even crucified Him, but He loved them. He was so **WILLING** ("I would have"--Matt. 23:37), but they were so **UNWILLING** ("ye would not"--Matthew 23:37).

God is never delighted and joyful when people are living in sin and headed for judgment. God's message for people today is the same as it was for the people who lived in the days of Jeremiah: ***Return unto Me!*** Will you return or will you refuse? The **sins** of the **saints** always brings **sorrow** to the saints!

The Turning Point

