



DISCOVERY

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DISCOVERY

The Prophecy of Joel



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Joel 1:1 through 3:21

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” (Joel 2:12)

BACKGROUND

Although the date of Joel’s prophecy is uncertain, many Bible scholars believe that Joel was one of the earliest of the minor prophets, because both Amos and Isaiah borrowed imagery and quoted from Joel’s prophecy. A further clue to Joel’s era is found in his references to the enemies of Judah: Egypt, Edom, Tyre, Sidon and Palestine (which is Philistia) (Joel 3:4,19). Although Joel prophesied of the captivity of Israel, there was no mention made of the Syrians, Babylonians, or Assyrians, who were enemies at a later date.

The circumstances that prompted this prophecy included a locust plague and subsequent drought, fire, and famine. Joel began with a call to the eldest men to remember whether such a calamity had ever befallen them before. The sum of his argument was that this plague of locusts was the judgment of God. Joel drew an analogy between the natural destruction of the plague of locusts and the “day of the Lord,” indicating that the former calamity would be nothing compared to the latter. The army of locusts was a graphic illustration of the invaders who would be sent in judgment. However, true to God’s grace and mercy, the imminent judgment could be averted by true repentance.

Joel called the people to repentance, beginning with the old men, or elders of the land. He urged them to humble themselves in sincerity, not merely in outward form, and to lament as bitterly as a young wife would grieve at the untimely death of her husband. Next he urged them to proclaim a national day of fasting and prayer, to entreat the Lord for His mercy.

The meat and drink offerings (grain and wine, respectively) were absent from the Temple services due to the widespread destruction of crops and vineyards. Such religious rites were the people’s means of sustaining a proper relationship with God. Even the cattle and sheep were affected as they searched in vain for somewhere to graze.

The heart of Joel’s message was an urgent appeal to repentance, for the day of the Lord would be more terrible than the destruction of locusts. Promises of

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.

QUESTIONS

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

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?

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

4. How could the people avoid this terrible holocaust?
What attitudes and actions was the Lord looking for?

5. What physical promises did the Lord make to the people if they would turn to Him with all their hearts?
Joel 2:18-27

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

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

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?

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?

NOTES



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.

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.

QUESTIONS

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

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

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

DISCOVERY

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.

QUESTIONS

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

2. The statement, “For three transgressions . . . and for four,” is mentioned each time a nation is condemned in the Book of Amos. What does this reveal about the nature of God?

3. Amos 3:10-15 indicates that Israel had become very prosperous prior to and during the years that Amos prophesied. What effect did prosperity have on the Israelites? Amos 8:4-6

4. Did God expect more of Israel than of the other nations? Explain your answer. Amos 2:9-11

DISCOVERY

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.

QUESTIONS

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?

2. Gomer bore three children, and, under God’s direction, Hosea named these children Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi (Hosea 1:4-9). What was the significance of these prophetic names?

3. In Hosea 2:5-8, God indicated that the nation of Israel had mistakenly thought that their material blessings (food, shelter, clothing) came from false gods (specifically Baal, the god of nature). They were ignorant of the fact that the God of Heaven was the true Author of these gifts. People are no different today. To whom or what do people give credit today for their prosperity?

4. God is a God of both judgment and mercy. Chapters 1 and 2 of Hosea begin with pronouncements of God’s judgment upon Israel, but both end with a promise of restoration and God’s mercy (Hosea 1:10-11; 2:14-23). What judgment will come upon people today who do not heed God’s instructions? Give an example of how God’s mercy is demonstrated in our time.

5. God commanded Hosea to do something extraordinary—instead of divorcing Gomer, he was to buy back his unrepentant, adulterous wife and bring her home. God’s love was illustrated in Hosea’s troubled marriage. What great lengths has God gone to in order to show us His amazing love?

6. After spelling out the sins of the nation of Israel (Hosea 4:1-3), the Lord counseled the people not to look for someone else to blame (Hosea 4:4). Why do you think people often blame others when confronted with their own faults or sins?

7. Because Ephraim was the most powerful of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom, Hosea used the name Ephraim as a synonym for Israel. Hosea prophesied that Ephraim, or Israel, would refuse to repent and would fall due to pride (Hosea 5:3-5). Why does pride make repentance difficult?

8. What three visual images does God use to describe the nation of Israel? (Hosea 2:2, 5:13, 7:16) What images or metaphors might describe people’s relationships with God today?

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?

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).

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DISCOVERY

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.

QUESTIONS

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

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

3. What type of ground did God condemn? (Hosea 10:12) How would following God’s instructions change the condition of the ground?

4. What do verses 1 and 4 of chapter 11 tell us about God’s love for Israel? What clue is God giving that would change judgment to mercy and blessing?

5. Hosea repeated one of the most important commandments ever given by God. What was it, and how does that command apply to us today? Hosea 13:4

6. Amid all the judgment and anger God felt toward Israel, what hope did He give for those who had ruined their lives in sin? Hosea 13:9

7. When God reached out in mercy and called Israel to repent, what did He promise? Hosea 14:4-7

8. Who does the God of Israel say is wise?
Hosea 14:9

CONCLUSION

The judgments of God are sure for those who choose not to listen to His warnings. The mercy of God is also sure, and it reaches out to all mankind, but it will not be extended forever. The wise person will let God take charge of every part of his or her life.

NOTES



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 prophecies is chapter 5, verse 2, which

predicted the location of Bethlehem Ephrathah 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 prophecies 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.

QUESTIONS

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

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

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

DISCOVERY



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

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.

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?

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?

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?



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,

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 unfaithfully. 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

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?

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

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 from Assyria. What should they have thought when they heard Isaiah’s prophecies about Egypt?

Isaiah 19:1-4

DISCOVERY



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

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.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

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?

8. Chapter 35 is the antithesis of chapter 34. It tells of the great redemption for the righteous, and it begins the consolation section of Isaiah which will continue, after a brief historical section, in the next four chapters. Verse 8 of chapter 35 tells who will partake of the glories of that great redemption day. Who are they?

CONCLUSION

God promised judgment to those who rejected Him. Yet, in mercy He reached out with the promise of salvation for those who would take it. There are two clear choices: judgment or mercy. Let us choose mercy and we shall rejoice in the glories that await us!

NOTES

DISCOVERY

The Account of Hezekiah



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Isaiah 36:1 through 39:8

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.” (Isaiah 37:16)

BACKGROUND

Hezekiah, King of Judah, is given much attention in Scripture. A total of eleven chapters are devoted to his story: 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32, and Isaiah 36-39. They are similar in content, but a study of these texts will give a richer texture and broader understanding of the reign of King Hezekiah and the lessons we can learn from his story.

Although he was quite human, 2 Kings 18:5 states, “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” At the age of twenty-five, about 715 B.C. and possibly as early as 729 B.C., he began to rule as co-regent with his father. One of his first acts was the cleansing and reopening of the Temple in Jerusalem, which his father had left closed and desecrated. He was instrumental in restoring worship at the Temple, while destroying hills and groves that encouraged false worship. His reign continued for 29 years.

In Isaiah 36-39, we read of the developing political crisis in the area, which finally came to a climax. After the military fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), Judah struggled with Assyria. Hezekiah first tried to bribe Assyrian King Sennacherib. Sennacherib accepted of the treasures but then soon invaded Judah. There is also indication that Hezekiah had previously attempted to secure Judah by an alliance with Egypt, the other major military power of the day. When the mighty Assyrian army stood outside the gates of Jerusalem demanding surrender, Hezekiah’s confidence in God was greatly tested by blasphemous accusations made by envoys of Sennacherib.

Bible scholars generally agree that the account of Hezekiah’s sickness (Isaiah 38) and reception of envoys from Babylon (Isaiah 39) actually took place before the Assyrian invasion (Isaiah 36-37). It appears that this change of chronology was intended by the prophet as a bridge between the two parts of Isaiah. Chapters 36-37 end the first part with emphasis on Assyria, while chapters 38-39 introduce the second part with emphasis on Babylon.

QUESTIONS

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

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?

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?

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

5. What was King Hezekiah's response to the news from the prophet Isaiah of his impending death? (Isaiah 38:2-3) What followed Hezekiah's response?

6. Isaiah 38:10-22 records Hezekiah's reflections after recovery from his near fatal sickness. How does the king describe life and the purpose for living?

7. Following his recovery, Hezekiah entertained diplomatic guests from Babylon (Isaiah 39:1-2). Was there anything wrong with doing this? Why or why not?

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?

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?

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.

NOTES



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.

QUESTIONS

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

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?

3. Isaiah 42:1-4 makes reference to Christ, and is quoted and confirmed in Matthew 12:18-21. Part of Christ’s mission on earth was to demonstrate God’s righteousness and to be a Light to all nations (Isaiah 42:6). What is righteousness, and who is supposed to be righteous?

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

5. The people of Israel were witnesses to the fact that there was no God beside the God of Heaven (Isaiah 44:6). How did the prophet reveal the utter foolishness of pagan idolatry, of which Israel was a part? Isaiah 44:9-20

6. What did the prophet emphasize in verses 20-22 of chapter 45?

7. Isaiah predicted that Babylon would show no mercy to the Jews, and would be judged accordingly. She would boast of the fact that she was the queen and would continue forever. But in a moment, the judgment for her sins would catch up with her. To whom would the people of Babylon look for advice to prepare for her destruction? Isaiah 47:12-15

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?

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.

NOTES



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.

QUESTIONS

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

2. In Isaiah 49:1-7 the prophet referred to opposition to the Messiah’s ministry, and in Isaiah 50:5-6, we read specific details of His suffering. What characteristics of the Servant are revealed in these verses?

3. The prophet began chapter 51 with a reminder of God’s past help (verses 1-3) and a reassurance regarding Israel’s future (verses 4-8). Verses 9-10 record either the prophet’s words or the prayer of the righteous remnant to God. What petition was made of Him in these verses? How did God respond (verses 12-16)?

4. Isaiah 52:7 says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” Explain this verse and note how it relates to the Redeemer.

5. Chapter 53 describes the substitutionary death of the Servant on behalf of Israel and all people. In verse 6, what is meant by the phrase, “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him”?

6. Through the years, Jerusalem has been battered and destroyed by foreign nations. What will happen to it in the Messiah's Millennial Kingdom? Isaiah 54:11-17

7. In chapter 55, the millennial blessings promised to Israel expand beyond its borders to the Gentile nations. The invitation from God's Servant in this chapter is to come (verses 1-5) and to seek (verses 6-13), and concludes in the subsequent chapter, where the invitation is to worship (verses 1-8). What specific imagery is used in verses 1-2 of chapter 55, and what is the message being given?

8. Chapter 56 ends with an indictment of the spiritual watchmen of Israel. The prophet condemns them with biting sarcasm as "blind" and "ignorant," and refers to them as "dumb dogs" because they were negligent and consumed by self-indulgence. According to Isaiah 56:12, what false assumption was held by the watchmen, as well as the people in general? What warning does this give for our day?

9. Chapter 57 continued the prophet's lament over the idolatry of the people, which he described as spiritual adultery and prostitution. The people had adopted aspects of the pagan cultures around them, and were practicing sorcery, magic, and sexual abominations. They also had made alliances with pagan nations, and trusted them for protection instead of looking to God. According to verse 13, what would be the outcome of this misplaced trust?

10. After condemning the wicked idolaters, encouragement was offered to the godly remnant. In Isaiah 57:15, who did the "high and lofty One" promise to revive? What great lesson of the spiritual life does this reveal?

11. In chapter 58, the prophet rebuked those who practiced false or hypocritical worship and pointed out the blessings of true worship. In our Christian walk, we must take care that our worship of God at church does not become a formality or a mechanical exercise. What are some ways we can keep our worship authentic and fresh?

CONCLUSION

God's judgment of Israel foreshadows what will occur on the final Day of the Lord when all the nations will be judged. Then "the Redeemer shall come to Zion" (Isaiah 59:20), and His glorious kingdom will be established. God's "chosen" people will also be God's "cleansed" people, and the glory of their Messiah and Lord will radiate from Mount Zion.

NOTES



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

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.

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?

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

4. Isaiah predicted that a change of name would reflect a change of status for Israel (Isaiah 62:4). What name changes did God pronounce for His people? Why are they significant?

5. The prophet calls for the people to prepare the way (Isaiah 62:10). He entreats them to make a highway, gathering out the stones, and to lift up a standard. What is he calling the people to do? In what tangible way can you “prepare the way,” and “lift up a standard” for the Lord?

6. Isaiah described a figure approaching Jerusalem who was glorious in apparel, traveling in greatness of strength. The source of the red stain on His garments depicts the blood of His enemies after He had trodden them down in the winepress (Isaiah 63:1-3). How does this prophecy of Christ have significance today? How can we be encouraged by this victory?

7. God tells us that all our righteousness is like filthy rags (64:6). Does this mean there will be no good works in our lives? Explain. List some good works that God would have us do.

8. God says that He does not care much for great feats or sacrifices that one may make for Him (Isaiah 66:1-2). He promises to look to the one who has a poor and contrite spirit. What does it mean to be poor and contrite in spirit?

9. According to Isaiah 66:7-13, why does God know how to comfort us?

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!

NOTES
