

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

Class Objective: Build students’ faith in Jesus by revealing Christ’s supreme role in the Bible’s overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

An Eternal Throne

A Man After God’s Own Heart

Focus Statement: There's a reason Jesus is identified as "Son of David." A thousand years before Jesus’ birth, David set the standard for Israel's kings as “a man after God’s own heart.”

Matthew opened his gospel account by showing Jesus’ ties to some of the Jewish people’s giants of the faith. “**The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**” (Matt. 1:1). Being the **Son of David** was about more than genealogy for Jesus. He would frequently be referred to that way in the gospel accounts by all different sorts of people:

- **Matthew 9:27** _____
- **Matthew 12:22-23** _____
- **Matthew 15:22** _____
- **Matthew 20:29-30** _____
also Mark 10 and Luke 18
- **Matthew 21:9** _____
- **Matthew 21:15** _____

David lived a thousand years before Jesus. While David was Israel’s greatest king, he was not its first. The story of his rise and reign is chronicled in **I Samuel** and **II Samuel**, which were treated as a single book in the Hebrew Scriptures. The book opens with and is named for Samuel, Israel’s last judge. Through his leadership, God delivered Israel from the Philistines and gave them peace with the Amorites (I Sam. 7:12-17). Yet, Israel wanted a king over them “**that we also may be like all nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles**”, even though God warned they were rejecting Him and a king would be a source of hardship for the people (I Sam. 8:19-22). Nevertheless, they persisted, and God led Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel’s first king. Read **I Samuel 10:17-27**.

- **What made Saul seem like a good candidate to be king?**

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- What was concerning about him?

Saul experienced some success early on. Yet his cowardice and arrogance would lead him to be unfaithful to God repeatedly, with grave consequences. After Saul made an unlawful sacrifice, Samuel told him, **“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you”** (I Sam. 13:14).

Remember, Moses had anticipated that Israel would one day want a king like the nations, so he gave instructions for that king to **“learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment”** (Deut. 17:19-20). Saul did not live up to this. God would ensure Israel's next king would be different. Read **I Samuel 16:1-13**.

- How was the anointing of David to be king different than that of Saul?

- Did David immediately start reigning as king after being anointed?

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From his triumph over Goliath to his repeated refusal to harm Saul despite being fiercely persecuted by the mad king, David was a model of heartfelt covenant faithfulness. In II Samuel, he even mourned for Saul when he was killed in battle (II Sam. 1). Because of this faithfulness, God gave unprecedented success during David's 40-year reign. He took **Jerusalem** after Israel's earlier failures and made the heavily fortified city once ruled by Melchizedek to be the capital. (II Sam. 5:6-10; cf. Josh. 15:63, Gen. 14). He decisively defeated the Philistines (II Sam. 5:17-25). Then David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, establishing the city not only as the political but also the religious center of Israel. God would then make a covenant with David that gave the term "**son of David**" its significance. Read **II Samuel 7:1-17**.

- What is God's covenant with David, and what prompted Him to make it?

- What does "Messiah" (Hebrew) or "Christ" (Greek) mean?

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Digging Deeper: In what ways was Jesus anointed?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Luke 4:14-21	
Acts 10:34-43	

How does Jesus reign?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Matthew 28:16-20	
I Corinthians 15:20-28	

How are Jesus' followers anointed, and how will we reign?

<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
II Corinthians 1:19-22	
Revelation 1:4-6 Revelation 5:6-10 Revelation 22:1-5	

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Crying Out to God

Focus Statement: The Psalms are more than just pretty words from the pen of King David and other inspired men. Though composed centuries earlier, these heartfelt cries to God find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Singing has always been important to God's people. One of the very first things we see Israel doing after crossing the Red Sea into freedom from Egyptian slavery is singing (cf. Exo. 15). As the Torah concluded, Moses taught them a song God gave to **"confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring)"** (Deut. 31:19-22, 32:1-47). So, it should be no surprise that there is an entire book of the Bible consisting of nothing but songs. With songs like **Psalm 90** being attributed to Moses and **Psalm 137** referencing Judah's Babylonian exile, **The Psalms** were composed over a thousand-year period by many different authors.

Out of 150 psalms, _____ are directly attributed to David by the title, while **Acts 4:25** tells us he also wrote _____ and **Hebrews 4:7** says _____ was his, too. He indirectly influenced another 24 psalms by organizing the sons of Korah and appointing Heman, Ethan, and Asaph – all psalmists – to music ministry (I Chronicles 9:19-22, 15:16-17). The Psalms were a major part of David's legacy: at the end of his life, he was described as **"the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel"** (II Samuel 23:1).

The Psalms cover the full range of human experience, and they often give us a glimpse at the heart of the "man after God's own heart." _____ is a joyful anthem declaring David's love for God after being delivered from his enemies (cf. I Sam. 21:10-22:1). _____ expresses his deep sorrow after Nathan the prophet confronted him over his sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 11-12). Yet, they were not just David's words: **"the Holy Spirit says"** is how the Hebrews writer quotes Psalm 95 before later attributing it to David, too (cf. Hebrews 3:7, 4:7).

Because they are inspired, the Psalms give us godly ways to express all kinds of emotions, something we see in the example of Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 27:46). Yet, it does not stop there: as with the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, the things written in them are ultimately fulfilled by Jesus (cf. Luke 24:44-49). Read **Psalm 2**.

- **What would this Psalm have originally meant to David? Who would "Anointed" and "Son" have applied to first?**

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The apostles saw how what the Spirit inspired David to write was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus. (They also set a great example for us of a way to pray the Psalms.) Read **Acts 4:23-31**.

- **How was this Psalm ultimately fulfilled by Jesus?**

Later in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle Paul preached, **“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’”** (Acts 13:33). That was not the only psalm he saw Jesus' resurrection fulfilling: he also quoted, **“You will not let your Holy One see corruption”** (Acts 13:35). Read **Psalm 16**.

- **If you knew nothing about Jesus, what might you think this Psalm was about?**

Psalm 16 played a pivotal role in how Peter explained – for the first time! – how Jesus' suffering and rising from the dead fulfilled what was written. Read **Acts 2:22-36**.

- **According to Peter, what made David more than just a thousand-year old songwriter?**

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- How does Jesus complete the Psalm more than reading it without Him?

The way the apostles treated these songs as prophetic was not something new. Read **Psalm 110**.

- What about the situation of the Jewish people in the first century AD would have made them hope this thousand-year old song of David was prophetic?

Without Jesus, there were some serious issues harmonizing their hope for the Son of David with what the Scriptures actually said. Read **Matthew 22:41-46**.

- How was what God was doing with the "Son of David" different than what they expected?

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Digging Deeper. Practice what we learned by reading **Psalm 22** and **69 twice**: once to see how we understand it without Jesus, and once to see how the story of Jesus fulfills it.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Read Psalm 22 .	If you knew nothing about Jesus, what would you think this was about?
Re-read Psalm 22 .	Based on what you know about the story of Jesus from memory, what are things that you see Him fulfilling from this Psalm?
Read Psalm 69 .	If you knew nothing about Jesus, what would you think this was about?
Re-read Psalm 69 .	Based on what you know about the story of Jesus from memory, what are things that you see Him fulfilling from this Psalm?
Read Matthew 27 & John 19 .	What details from these Psalms did the inspired apostles see Jesus' fulfilling? Were there any you missed? Were there any you noticed that they did not specifically label in these passages?

Bonus: Read **John 2:13-17**, **John 15:18-25**, and **Acts 1:15-20** for other ways Jesus and His Apostles saw His story fulfilling these Psalms.

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Building a House

Focus Statement: David's son Solomon possessed great wisdom and built one impressive temple; but he had nothing on Jesus.

By his great love for God, David set the standard for kings in Israel. His reign was not spotless, though. His affair with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband was so egregious it earned a passing mention in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:6; cf. II Samuel 11-12). It affected more than just his legacy, too: the later years of his reign were full of sexual immorality, murder, conspiracy, and rebellion that often began with his own children.

Like **I-II Samuel**, **I Kings** and **II Kings** were a single book in the Hebrew Scriptures. Together, they told the story of all of the nations' rulers, starting with David's son Solomon around 970 B.C. and ending with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Given God's promise to David to establish the kingdom of his son in **II Samuel 7**, things go really well at first. Read **I Kings 4:20-5:7**.

- How does this description of life in Israel during Solomon's reign fulfill things we read about from the Torah?

It is no surprise that much of the Bible's "wisdom literature" is associated with this period. While scholars sometimes debate the precise dates and authorship of these books, they each state connections to the wise and prosperous reign of Solomon.

a collection of wise sayings showing how life *should* work, where godly conduct is rewarded and ungodly conduct suffers its consequences.

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a sermon by "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" who surpassed all who came before in wisdom and riches and found it all empty without God.

an emotionally charged "Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" describing the romantic relationship between a beautiful shepherdess and her beloved.

The other book of "Old Testament wisdom literature" has a much different setting. Yet at a key moment, the main character quotes God in 28:28, "**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding,**" showing it is right at home with the other books.

a discourse on the problem of suffering among a godly man who suffers terrible tragedy; his friends who come to comfort him and try to explain why the suffering happened; and God Himself.

When considered with **the Psalms** (with Psalms 72 and 127 attributed to Solomon), the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures spans the human experience and shows how to live it all in a godly way. While the Psalms are one of their most quoted books, the New Testament writers do not directly quote from the other wisdom books often. Still, the impact of these books is felt. From childhood and through His ministry, Jesus stood out for His wisdom, personally embodying these books (cf. Luke 2:40, 52; Matthew 13:53-54). The Apostle Paul wrote, "**And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'**" (I Corinthians 1:30-31). The New Testament letter of **James**, Jesus' half-brother and a leader of the church in Jerusalem, was a lot like Proverbs: "**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him**" (James 1:5).

Yet, wisdom is about much more than giving and receiving good advice: it has to do with living in God's presence. This is a theme we see throughout the Bible.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Who was in God's presence?</i>	<i>How do we see wisdom, abundance, & God's presence?</i>
Genesis 1-3		
Exodus 29:43-46 Exodus 33:12-16 Deuteronomy 4:5-8		

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So, consider how fitting it is that after describing Solomon's wisdom, God's rich blessings, and the rest they experienced that the next thing we see is the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Read **I Kings 8:1-30**.

- What did having this temple accomplish for Israel?

As Solomon continues his prayer of dedication, he prays over specific situations the people could encounter – and in fact, situations they *would* encounter throughout the rest of I-II Kings!

- I Kings 8:31-40 _____
- I Kings 8:41-43 _____
- I Kings 8:44-53 _____

Solomon then concluded his prayer with a benediction. Read **I Kings 8:54-61**.

- How did this prayer reflect some of the Torah's highest hopes for God's people?

Humanity's sinfulness – including Solomon's – meant it would be 1,000 years before his prayer would be fully realized. When a Son of David did realize it, though, He went all the way. In **Matthew 12:1-8**, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees for how His disciples plucked grain to eat on the Sabbath. He responded with an example from David's life (cf. I Samuel 21:1-6) and compared it to the priests' "work" in the temple. He then made a stunning statement in 12:7:

"I tell you, something _____ than the _____ is here."

Later in **Matthew 12:22-42**, when the crowd wondered whether Jesus was the promised "Son of David", the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign from Him. Jesus replied in 12:42:

"The _____ of the _____ will rise up in judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the _____ of _____, and behold, something _____ than _____ is here."

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Now that Jesus has come, the abundance and wisdom made possible by the presence of God is with us in a way beyond the wildest dreams of Israel's kings.

Digging Deeper: For all the importance the Jewish people placed on their physical temple (which by Jesus' day 1,000 years after Solomon had been destroyed, rebuilt, and extensively renovated), they had missed the reality of God's presence with His people. Read **John 1:14-18** and **2:13-22**.

- How did God "dwell with His people" through the true temple, Jesus?

When we recognize this about Jesus, it changes how we see ourselves as His followers. Read **Ephesians 1:3-23** and **2:18-22**.

- What is God's temple now and how is it built?

Through gift of the Holy Spirit, we experience God's presence with all of the wisdom and abundance that brings. Read **Colossians 1:9-14** and **3:12-17**.

- What are some of the specific things Paul instructs us to do to experience the wisdom and abundance that comes from being in God's presence?

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Neither Solomon's sin nor God's anger were sudden: God showed how He is "**merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**" (Exodus 34:6). God tolerated many things, though they ultimately contributed to Solomon's downfall.

- I Kings 3:1 _____
- I Kings 3:2-4 _____
- I Kings 9:24 _____
- I Kings 10:23-29 _____

Notice how these transgressions set the stage for his unfaithfulness as he clung to his foreign wives in love. There is much we can learn here about God's character. He is very patient, and His grace covers a lot. Yet, when we consistently choose to do things our own way instead of His, it will ultimately produce a heart "**not wholly true to the LORD.**"

So it was that Israel's "rest" with God ended: "**And the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon**" (I Kings 11:14). In fact, He raised up three, the most damaging being Jeroboam the son of Nebat. An industrious official working under Solomon, Jeroboam would receive the ten northern tribes that God was going to take from Solomon's heirs as punishment for his unfaithfulness (I Kings 11:26-33). God was upfront with Jeroboam: He wouldn't afflict David's house forever, but He would build Jeroboam a "**sure house**" like David's too, if he would obey Him (I Kings 11:34-40). Jeroboam chose otherwise, making two golden calves and appointing his own priests for fear that the people would abandon him if they went back to Jerusalem to worship (I Kings 12:25-33). This sin of Jeroboam would stain Israel for the next 200 years: every king who followed continued it, until Israel was finally overthrown by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Solomon's son Rehoboam did not do much better, committing more sins "**than all that their fathers had done**" as idol worship at the high places and male cult prostitutes were allowed in the land (I Kings 14:21-24). Unlike Israel, Judah would periodically be ruled by a son who did right like David, though. Read **I Kings 15:1-15**.

- **How do we see God's character through His dealings with Abijam and Asa?**

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From the Division of the Kingdom to Fall of the House of Ahab (930 - 841 B.C.)

Prophets of Israel

Rulers of Israel (930 - 722 B.C.)

Rulers of Judah (930 - 586 B.C.)

Prophets of Judah

	<p>Jeroboam (I Kings 12:25-14:20) reigned 22 years, "this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth"</p>	<p>Rehoboam (I Kings 12,14:21-31) reigned 17 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD"</p>
	<p>Nadab (I Kings 15:25-32) reigned 2 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father"</p>	<p>Abijam (I Kings 15:1-8) reigned 3 years, "walked in all the sins that his father did"</p>
	<p>Baasha (I Kings 15:33-16:7) reigned 24 years, "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of Jeroboam"</p>	<p>Asa (I Kings 15:9-24) reigned 41 years, "But the high places were not taken away. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true to the LORD"</p>
	<p>Elah (I Kings 16:8-14) reigned 2 years Zimri (I Kings 16:15-20) reigned 7 days, "walking in the way of Jeroboam"</p>	
	<p>Omri (I Kings 16:21-28) reigned 12 years, "did more evil than all who were before him"</p>	
<p>Elijah (I Kings 17 - II Kings 2)</p>	<p>Ahab (I Kings 16:29-22:40) reigned 22 years, "did more to provoke the LORD... than all the kings of Israel who were before him"</p>	
	<p>Ahaziah (I Kings 22:51-II Kings 1:18) reigned 2 years, "walked in the way" of his father Ahab, mother Jezebel, & Jeroboam</p>	
<p>Elisha (II Kings 2 - 13)</p>	<p>Jehoram/Joram (II Kings 3-8) reigned 12 years, "evil...but put away the pillar of Baal"</p>	<p>Jehoram (II Kings 8:16-24) reigned 8 years, "walked in the way of" father-in-law Ahab: "Yet the LORD promised to give a lamp to [David]"</p>
		<p>Ahaziah (II Kings 8:25-10:36) reigned 1 year, "walked in the way of the house of Ahab"</p>

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From the Fall of the House of Ahab to the Fall of Israel (841 - 722 B.C.)

<p>Elisha (II Kings 2 - 13)</p>	<p>Jehu (II Kings 9-10) reigned 28 years, "Done well" in punishing Ahab's family, but "did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam...that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan"</p>	<p>Queen Mother Athaliah (II Kings 11:1-20) reigned 6 years, "arose and destroyed all the royal family"</p>	
	<p>Jehoahaz (II Kings 13:1-9) reigned 17 years, "did what was evil...followed the sins of Jeroboam"</p>	<p>Joash (II Kings 11:4-13:24) reigned 39 years, "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away"</p>	
	<p>Jehoash/Joash (II Kings 13:10-24) reigned 16 years, "did what was evil...did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam"</p>	<p>Amaziah (II Kings 14:1-22) reigned 29 years, "did what was right...yet not like David...the high places were not removed"</p>	
	<p>Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23-29) reigned 41 years, "did what was evil...did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam"</p>		
	<p>Zechariah (II Kings 15:8-12) reigned 6 months, "did what was evil...the sins of Jeroboam"</p>		
	<p>Shallum (II Kings 15:13-16) reigned 1 month</p>	<p>Azariah (II Kings 15:1-7) reigned 52 years, "did what was right...Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away"</p>	
	<p>Menahem (II Kings 15:17-22) reigned 10 years, "did what was evil...the sins of Jeroboam"</p>		
	<p>Pekahiah (II Kings 15:23-26) reigned 2 years, "did what was evil...the sins of Jeroboam"</p>		
	<p>Pekah (II Kings 15:27-31) reigned 22 years, "did what was evil...the sins of Jeroboam"</p>	<p>Jotham (II Kings 15:32-38) reigned 16 years, "did what was right" but high places not removed</p>	<p>Micah</p>
	<p>Hoshea (II Kings 17:1-6) reigned 9 years "did what was evil"</p>	<p>Ahaz (II Kings 16:1-20) reigned 16 years, "did not do what was right...even burned his son"</p>	<p>Isaiah</p>
<p>FALL OF ISRAEL TO ASSYRIA (II Kings 17:6-23)</p>			

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From the Fall of Israel to the Fall of Judah (722 - 586 B.C.)

<p>Hezekiah (II Kings 18-20) <i>reigned 29 years, "did what was right...according to all that David had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent..." "He trusted in the LORD...so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him"</i></p>	<p>Isaiah</p>
<p>Manasseh (II Kings 21) <i>reigned 55 years, rebuilt high places, erected idol altars (including in the Temple), burnt his son, and led the people "astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel". Became cause of Babylonian exile.</i></p>	
<p>Amon (II Kings 21:19-26) <i>reigned 2 years, did evil "as Manasseh his father had done"</i></p>	<p>Zephaniah Habakkuk</p>
<p>Josiah (II Kings 22:1-23:30) <i>reigned 31 years, "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left". Repaired the temple, read the Law, removed idol altars (including Jeroboam's in Bethel), and kept Passover for the first time since the judges.</i></p>	
<p>Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:31-35) <i>reigned 3 months, "did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:36-24:7) <i>reigned 11 years, "did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:8-9) <i>reigned 3 months, "did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>BABYLON CAPTURES JERUSALEM (II Kings 24:10-17)</p>	<p>Jeremiah Lamentations Daniel Ezekiel Obadiah</p>
<p>Zedekiah (II Kings 24:18-20) <i>reigned 11 years, "did what was evil"</i></p>	
<p>FALL OF JUDAH TO BABYLON (II Kings 25)</p>	
<p>BABYLONIAN EXILE</p>	<p>Haggai Zechariah Malachi Joel (?)</p>

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At key moments in the story, God delivered messages to the kings of Israel and Judah through His **prophets**. As Israel's end drew near amidst their persistent continuation of Jeroboam's sin, many of these prophets pair their proclamation of God's coming judgment with hope for the eventual rebuilding of David's tent. One such messenger was **Amos**, who announced God's impending judgment during the lengthy and prosperous reign of **Jeroboam II**, over 750 years before the birth of Jesus. By his own account, he was **"no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'"** (Amos 7:14-15). Wasn't that a great background for someone with a prophecy about David? Read **Amos 9:7-15**.

- What does "raising up the booth of David" mean to a divided people facing destruction for unfaithfulness?

The prophet **Micah** delivered a similar message a short time after Amos. Tensions were high as Israel allied with Syria to wage war on Judah; but Micah foresaw destruction for the wicked and rescue for Zion's faithful. His prophecy included the rising of a David-like king who oversee a **"return to the people of Israel"** and of peace. Read **Micah 5:1-5a**.

- How does Micah tie this coming ruler to David without saying the great king's name?

Isaiah prophesied around the same time. Even as God lopped off the branches of the wicked, his vision of the son who would shoot forth to sit on the throne of David and bring together all peoples was glorious. Read **Isaiah 9:1-7** and **10:33-11:10**.

- How are these prophecies ultimately fulfilled by what Jesus accomplished?

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Prophets and Kings

Focus Statement: The biblical prophets were a wild crew selected by God Himself to deliver important messages to people who often didn't want to hear them. There was healing for those who did receive them, though – especially now that Jesus has come.

We classify the final 17 Old Testament books in our English Bibles as the **Major and Minor Prophets**. The primary distinction between the Major Prophets (**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations** – which is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah, **Ezekiel**, and **Daniel**) and the Minor Prophets (**Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi**) is not their importance but their length: the Major Prophets are longer. The Hebrew Scriptures as Jesus knew them organized things differently. Our Minor Prophets were contained in a single book called "The Book of Twelve". In fact, everything after the Law was simply called "**the Prophets**" or "**the Prophets and the Psalms**" (cf. Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).

While we associate "prophecy" with "predicting the future", that was not the only – or even the primary – role the Hebrew prophets fulfilled. They were God's spokespeople, delivering messages that applied His Law (especially Deuteronomy's blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience) to the people's present situation. Current events were a major part of the message, and many of the prophetic books opened with references to who reigned at that time (Isaiah 1:1, Jeremiah 1:1-3, Ezekiel 1:1-3, Hosea 1:1, Amos 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Haggai 1:1, Zechariah 1:1).

You became a prophet by God choosing you. Some variation of "**the word of the LORD came**" often kicks off the action in I-II Kings and the prophets' books. After Jeroboam set up his golden calves for Israel in 930 B.C., "**a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel**" (I Kings 13:1). Around 740 B.C., Isaiah saw a vision of the LORD asking, "**Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?**" to which he responded with his freshly purified lips, "**Here I am! Send me**" (Isaiah 6:1-13). "**The word of the LORD came**" to Jeremiah around 627 B.C., telling the young man "**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations**" and promising to "**put my words in your mouth**" (Jeremiah 1:4-10).

The prophets could be pretty wild characters. God often called them to act out their prophecies in dramatic, attention-grabbing, and even scandalous ways.

- _____ married a prostitute to symbolize Israel's unfaithfulness (1:2)
- _____ walked naked for three years to speak against Egypt & Cush (20:1-6).
- _____ strapped on a yoke bar to command submission to Babylon (27:1-11).
- _____ acted out carrying his baggage into exile (12:1-16).

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

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When people would receive the word from the LORD, He would relent of the disaster the prophets foretold, even in the case of Gentile cities like Nineveh (Jonah 3-4). This shows how prophecy is about more than "predicting the future": the future could change based on how people responded to God's word. As it was, the prophets' messages were often rejected. When Judah's good king Jehoshaphat made peace with Israel and planned a joint-campaign to free a city from the Syrians, he wisely told Israel's wicked king Ahab, **"Inquire first for the word of the LORD"** (I Kings 22:5). **"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil'"** (I Kings 22:8). The unfaithful kings often viewed the prophets as traitors, while the predictions of national calamity were unpopular with the people.

This is why Jesus concluded the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount by saying, **"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you"** (Matthew 5:11-12). As Stephen said before the Jewish Council stoned him, **"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it"** (Acts 7:52-53).

Our "Major and Minor Prophets" were not the only active prophets in Israel and Judah. Many prophets were unnamed, simply being described as a "man of God", "prophet", or "sons of the prophets" (I Kings 13:1, 20:13, 20:35). One of Israel's most famous prophets was active almost a century before the prophetic messages began to be written down. Read **I Kings 17:1-24**.

- **How do we see the Torah being applied through Elijah's prophetic ministry?**

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Elijah's ministry set wicked Israel on fire – *literally!* Ahab had added to the “sin of Jeroboam” the worship of Baal. Elijah famously confronted Ahab in **I Kings 18**, proving who the true God is by calling fire from heaven in a dramatic (and somewhat comical) contest with the 450 prophets of Baal. This high point was soon followed by a deep low when the wicked Queen Jezebel forced him to run for his life. Yet, when he arrived on Mount Horeb (i.e. Sinai) in **I Kings 19**, Elijah witnessed wind, earthquake, and fire before hearing the voice of the LORD in a low whisper.

“**Have you found me, O my enemy?**” Ahab later asked when Elijah returned to confront him over the murder of Naboth for his vineyard (I Kings 21:20). Because of this evil, God declared, “**Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel**” (I Kings 21:21). This disaster was delayed until the days of Ahab's son, though, because Ahab humbled himself before God upon hearing it (I Kings 21:27-29).

The prophet dressed in “**a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist**” called down fire from heaven on the soldiers sent by Ahab's equally wicked son Ahaziah (II Kings 1). Elijah's story ended when “**chariots of fire and horses of fire**” took him “**up by a whirlwind into heaven**” (II Kings 2:11). Elijah was such a prominent figure for the people of Israel, that Jesus brought him up during one of His very first public sermons. **Read Luke 4:14-30.**

- **How was the reaction Jesus received similar to that of Elijah?**

By quoting Isaiah and referencing Elijah, Jesus made a clear statement about Who He is and what His ministry would accomplish. In fact, it was where the Law and Prophets had been leading all along.

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God's Messenger

Focus Statement: The prophet Elijah may have literally set Israel on fire through his ministry, but it was all just a preview of what was coming next.

Elijah was more than just a man living in the wilderness who dressed in **“a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist”** (II Kings 1:8). His impact on unfaithful Israel during the wicked reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel was legendary. It's hard not to think of Elijah upon hearing Isaiah's prophecy about a **“voice in the wilderness”** a century later. Read **Isaiah 40:3-5**.

- What would God accomplish for His people by fulfilling this prophecy?

The people were eager for that **“glory of the LORD to be revealed”**. During Isaiah's ministry, the northern kingdom of Israel would fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Despite repeated warnings from prophets like Elijah, Elisha (Elijah's successor), Amos, and Hosea, **“they would not listen, but were stubborn”** (II Kings 17:14). As Hosea had said, **“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols”** (Hosea 11:1-2). Like the nations around them, they worshipped idols, sacrificed their children, and used divination; and it all started when Jeroboam set up the golden calves for them to worship (cf. II Kings 17:15-23). **“Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only”** (II Kings 17:18). Assyria eventually resettled other peoples to live in the cities of Israel, later bringing some Israelites back to **“teach them the law of the god of the land”** (II Kings 17:24-28). This resulted in a people of mixed heritage who **“feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children”** (II Kings 17:41). These people were the ancestors of the Samaritans in Jesus' day.

Judah had its problems, too. **“Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced”** (II Kings 17:19). While that nation outlasted Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah eventually fell, too. Between 400-500 years before the birth of Jesus, Malachi (whose name means “Messenger of God”) was a prophet to Judah after Jewish exiles had returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. Recognizing God still wasn't present with the people as He had promised and the people were repeating some of the same failings of earlier generations, Malachi prophesied a day when the LORD would set the wicked ablaze. Who better to associate with such a day than Elijah? Read **Malachi 4:1-6**.

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- Recognizing that Malachi is the final Old Testament book in our English Bibles and likely the final prophetic book chronologically, what would faithful Jews be looking for next?

This prophecy led many in Jesus' day to be looking for Elijah to come (Matthew 16:14, 17:10, 27:47; Mark 6:15; John 1:19-28). At the time, they didn't know that the angel Gabriel had told the old priest Zechariah that his barren wife Elizabeth would miraculously conceive a baby who would go before the Lord **"in the spirit and power of Elijah"** (Luke 1:17). So, when John the Baptist **"came preaching in the wilderness of Judea"** wearing **"a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist"**, he turned some heads (Matthew 3:1,4). Read **Luke 3:1-21**.

- How was John's ministry like that of Elijah and the other prophets?

Jesus would make the relationship between John and Elijah crystal clear to Peter, James, and John. Appropriately enough, He did this right after they witnessed Him speaking to Elijah himself. Read **Matthew 17:1-13**.

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- How does this incident show us that the story God is telling throughout the Bible really is all about Jesus?

- How did John fulfill Malachi's prophecy, and how was this different than what many expected?

While it was not what anyone expected, the way Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets never ceases to amaze. John's fulfillment of Isaiah 40 is just the tip of the iceberg: Isaiah's prophecies of hope for God's people were so thoroughly fulfilled by Jesus that his book became one of the most quoted in the New Testament.

Digging Deeper: Read another explanation Jesus gave of John the Baptist relationship to Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, and Himself in **Matthew 11:1-18**. You can also see John's own discussion of it in **John 3:22-36**.

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The Servant of the LORD

Focus Statement: Isaiah the prophet spoke words of hope to God's people struggling in a rapidly changing world. Now that Jesus has come, those words can mean even more to us.

The prophet Isaiah was active in the southern kingdom of Judah from 740 to 681 B.C., during the reigns of good kings Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah and of exceptionally bad king Ahaz (II Kings 15:1-17, 15:32-38, 16:1-4, 18:1-18). During this 60-year period, the world as they knew it was changing and the pressure on God's people was growing. When Israel (i.e. "Ephraim") under wicked king Pekah formed an alliance with Syria, they really turned up the pressure on Judah and its wicked king Ahaz. Read **Isaiah 7:1-17**.

- **What would this prophecy originally have meant for King Ahaz?**

- **How does Jesus ultimately fulfill this prophecy?**

Isaiah's prophecy came to pass within decades when Syria and Israel both fell to Assyria. God had a purpose, and He wanted to accomplish it through Judah choosing to be faithful and just. Yet if they wouldn't, He would work through a faithful remnant or even the pagan world powers.

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When Jesus and His apostles walked the earth 700 years later, Isaiah's messages about God's purpose and hope resonated so much that the New Testament writings directly quoted him 105 times. Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah are the Old Testament books that the New Testament quotes most. A particular favorite was Isaiah's "servant songs". Read **Isaiah 42:1-9**.

- How would the servant of the LORD be different from other people?

It seems obvious to us that Jesus fulfills these prophecies, but we have the advantage of reading **Matthew 12:15-21**! These "servant songs" were not originally associated with the "Son of David". Many Jews read them as prophetic descriptions of Israel's vocation as God's people, who like "the servant of the LORD" suffered a great deal. Once you know the story of Jesus, though, these prophecies take on a much different character. Read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**.

- What is missing if we read this prophecy as only being about Israel?

- How does the story of Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, several threads were being woven that would culminate in the person of Jesus Christ – not only in the details of His life but in what He accomplished. As **Isaiah 44:3** said, "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." The ultimate answer to Israel's – and all of humanity's – problem with sin and death was found in Jesus' sacrifice for sins and in the coming of the Spirit who would raise Him from the dead and transform hearts.

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A New Heart

Focus Statement: Disaster came to Judah when God handed the nation over to Babylon in punishment for their unfaithfulness. Yet even in exile, the prophets spoke with hope that God was preparing a new covenant that would bring with it a complete change of heart.

The northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. A few decades later, the prophet **Nahum** foretold the eventual fall of Nineveh, Assyria's capital. Yet even as God demonstrated His mastery over history – using Assyria to punish Israel's unfaithfulness while still eventually punishing Assyria for its own persistent wickedness – Judah was reigned by Manasseh, a king who set records with the length of his reign and its total wickedness (cf. II Kings 21). During his 55-year reign (686-642 B.C.), **“he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD”**, including:

- Rebuilding the high places (which his father, good king Hezekiah, had destroyed) (21:3);
- Worshipping idols, including in the Temple itself and burning his son as an offering (21:3-6);
- Using fortune-telling, omens, mediums, and necromancers (21:6); and,
- Shedding innocent blood **“till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another”** (21:16).

Things fared no better during the brief reign of his son, Amon. Yet, the tide turned when his grandson Josiah reigned from 640-609 B.C. The prophets **Zephaniah** and **Habakkuk** denounced wickedness in Judah just as Josiah undertook a major reform effort (cf. II Kings 23). The results were significant: **“Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him”** (II Kings 23:25). Josiah embodied what the Torah taught kings to be.

“Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there’” (II Kings 23:26-27). They did not have to wait long. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem during wicked king Jehoiakim's reign and brought back some Temple vessels and young people from the royal family and nobility, including **Daniel** and his friends (cf. II Kings 24:1-7, Daniel 1:1-4). In 597 B.C., he besieged Jerusalem again and carried away the wicked king Jehoiachin, many officials and royal family members (including the prophet **Ezekiel**), and treasures from the Temple and palace (II Kings 24:10-17, Ezekiel 1:1-3). When wicked king Zedekiah later rebelled against the empire which appointed him, Babylon besieged Jerusalem a final time. A famine began, Zedekiah was captured, his sons were slaughtered, the Temple and every great house in Jerusalem were burned, and the city walls were broken down. Babylon left only the poorest behind as **“Judah was taken into exile out of its land”** in 586 B.C. (II Kings 25:21).

Lamentations captured the mood well: **“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess**

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among the provinces has become a slave” (Lamentations 1:1). Yet, hope remained. “**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him’**” (Lamentations 3:22-24). This curse for unfaithfulness paired with hope for forgiveness and blessing had deep roots. Read **Deuteronomy 30:1-20**.

- What did Moses say God would do when the people returned to Him?

- Why couldn't the people keep God's commandments, and what was God's answer?

Judah's prophets eagerly awaited fulfillment of this promise. “**The word of the LORD**” came to **Jeremiah** in 627 B.C. when he was just a young man living under Josiah's reign in Judah, and his prophetic ministry continued until the Babylonian exile (1:1-8). As Judah's wicked kings reigned and false prophets deceived the people, Jeremiah's message of the impending disaster brought him fierce persecution. Popular or not, he was right: Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem nearly two decades before it happened, while proclaiming that captivity would last 70 years as God made Judah, the surrounding nations, and eventually even Babylon drink the cup of the wine of His wrath (25:1-29). Yet as desperate as that was, there was hope for what God would do next. Read **Jeremiah 31:31-34**.

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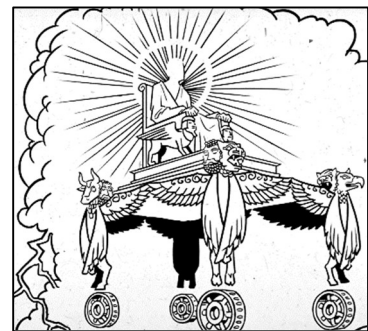
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- What would be different about the new covenant God would make with Israel?

- What is God's part in making this new covenant, and what is our part?

Ezekiel communicated a similar message through his startling visions. Living in exile with the first group of captives taken by Babylon in the years leading up to the fall of Judah, he saw a vision of cloud, fire, wheels, four living creatures, and a gleaming human appearance seated on a throne that was **"the likeness of the glory of the LORD"** (1:28). Because of Judah's unfaithfulness, the glory of the LORD – which had filled the Temple when Solomon brought the ark of the covenant into it back in **I Kings 8:10-11** – left Jerusalem until that time when God would gather His people back and give them **"one heart, and a new spirit"**, removing **"the heart of stone"** and giving them **"a heart of flesh"** (10:1-11:25).



"Likeness of the glory of the LORD"
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/ezekiel-1-33/>

By the end of the book in **Ezekiel 40-48**, he would have a vision of a new temple that the glory of the LORD would not only fill but from out of it would come a river that brought life to the desert region all around (43:1-5, 47:1-12). In the prophecies in between, God showed how He planned to accomplish this massive change.

Digging Deeper: How did the Apostle Paul in **II Corinthians 3** and the Hebrews writer in **Hebrews 8-10** see God fulfilling these promises?

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Personally seeking His lost sheep and setting up David to shepherd them was not all God was going to do. Read **Ezekiel 36:16-38**.

- Even though sending Israel into exile was just, why was God going to act?

- How was God going to vindicate His holiness?

In that passage and all throughout the book, God addressed Ezekiel as “**son of man**” – a poetic way of saying “human”, as David also used it in **Psalm 8:4**. He'd say it again when the Spirit of the LORD set him down in a valley and showed him a startling vision. Read **Ezekiel 37:1-14**.

- Why would there be a valley of dry bones, and what did that represent?

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The Son of Man

Focus Statement: Jesus referred to Himself as "Son of Man" more than any other title, but it really just meant "human"...didn't it? One of Daniel's visions while in Babylonian exile powerfully shines a light on just who Jesus really is.

Out of all the ways Jesus described Himself, He used **"Son of Man"** more than any other.

- **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"** (Matthew 8:20).
- **"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Mark 10:45).
- **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"** (Luke 19:10).
- **"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man"** (John 5:26-27).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the phrase "son of man" just meant "human", as in **Psalm 8:4: "what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"** The phrase was used over 90 times in Ezekiel as God addressed the prophet. It was a basic – though poetic – descriptor. Isn't it interesting that Jesus associated it with some of His especially mighty works?

- **"For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath"** (Matthew 12:8).
- **"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic— "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home"** (Mark 2:10).
- **"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised"** (Luke 9:22).
- **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"** (John 1:51).

Throughout the gospel accounts, "Son of Man" would be used to describe Jesus over 80 times – most often by Jesus Himself.

- **What does calling Himself "Son of Man" tell us about Jesus?**

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The title "Son of Man" did not have any particular prophetic significance to the people. In fact, when Jesus asked, "**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**" the disciples summarized popular opinion by replying John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (Matthew 16:13-14). Peter used the title for Jesus that is most familiar for us when he confessed, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Matthew 16:16). When Jesus later foretold how He would be "lifted up" to die on a cross, the crowd responded, "**We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?**" (John 12:34). Contrasted with frequent prophetic references to a coming Messiah, there was nothing about the "Son of Man" – except for one critical prophecy.

Of all the Major Prophets in our English Bibles, odds are you know **Daniel** the best. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were youths from Judah's nobility that Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile in 605 B.C. You may have heard about their refusal to defile themselves with the king's food, an act of faith that ultimately resulted in them not only being the healthiest but also the wisest of all those who stood before the king (**Daniel 1**). Daniel would stay there over a 70-year period – even after the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medo-Persian Empire – living out his faith in the one true God even as an exile.

That faith was put to the test when Nebuchadnezzar ordered anyone who did not worship his golden image be thrown in a fiery furnace and later when Darius the Mede ordered anyone who did not pray to him be cast into a den of lions (**Daniel 3, 6**). That wisdom was on display when Daniel alone could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image with a gold head, silver chest and arms, bronze middle and thighs, iron legs, and iron mixed with clay feet being smashed by a stone and the later king Belshazzar's vision of writing on the wall (**Daniel 2, 5**).

Yet, you would be forgiven for thinking Daniel only has six chapters, because most of our focus in Bible study and sermons tends to end there. In Daniel chapters 7-12, we see much more in the way of dramatic and even troubling visions. Read **Daniel 7:1-28**.

- How does Daniel help us understand his vision?

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- What is significant about “a son of man” being given dominion by the Ancient of Days?

The full significance of this was made plain during the Jewish Council's trial of Jesus. They wanted Jesus to say He was “the Anointed One” so they could bring Him to Pilate as a rebel to be executed. By replying as the “Son of Man”, He said something even more outrageous to them. Read **Matthew 26:57-68**.

- In light of Daniel 7, what was Jesus claiming, and why were the leaders outraged?

- What are ways we struggle today with the dominion of Jesus Christ?

While not “messianic prophecies” as we usually think of them, the rest of Daniel's visions showed God moving through earthly kingdoms to establish His everlasting kingdom. **Daniel 8-12** included astonishing detail about the Persians and the Greeks in the coming centuries, including:

- Amazing facts in **Daniel 8** about Alexander the Great's reign 300 years before Jesus' birth;
- Details in **Daniel 9** about a coming “abomination of desolation” seen in: 1.) the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews desecrated the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem over 160 years before the birth of Jesus; and, 2.) the coming destruction of the Temple by the Romans as Jesus foresaw it in **Matthew 24:15-28**;
- Predictions in **Daniel 9** that after the seventy years of exile Jeremiah foretold, it would be another “seventy weeks” (“seventy sevens”= 70 X 7= 490) before iniquity was atoned.

When just over 500 years later the rulers of this age crucified the Lord of glory, God gave dominion and glory and a kingdom to our King, Jesus (cf. I Cor. 2:8)!

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Your King is Coming

Focus Statement: The Jewish exiles returning to Jerusalem soon grew discouraged when everyday life did not live up to their hopes. Yet, their King was coming – and as we grow in our understanding of Jesus, we will have reason for hope, too.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem at the start of Passover week, there was a definite buzz in the air. Read **Matthew 21:1-11**.

- **What were the Jews expecting and why?**

The prophet that Matthew quoted is one you might not be very familiar with: **Zechariah**. While Judah spent 70 years in exile after falling to the Babylonians, the Babylonians themselves fell to the Medo-Persians. During the reign of Cyrus, Persia achieved such dominance that in 538 B.C. he proclaimed, **"The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth"** (II Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-2). Cyrus took a different approach to maintaining dominance than the Babylonians had: he allowed exiled peoples to return to their homelands and restore their worship practices. **"Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel – he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem"** (Ezra 1:3-4). Incredibly, this fulfilled a prophecy by **Isaiah** from over 200 years earlier, when God said Cyrus by name **"shall fulfill all my purpose; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid' ...I name you, though you do not know me"** (Isaiah 44:28, 45:4).

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

Class Objective: Build students' faith in Jesus by revealing Christ's supreme role in the Bible's overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

While exile officially ended in 538 B.C., restoring the nation – including rebuilding the Temple, rebuilding the city wall, and reinstating observance of the Torah – would be a long time coming. Many exiles – like **Esther** who by God's providence for the preservation of Israel became Queen of Persia in Susa in 478 B.C. – never returned to the Promised Land. Those who did return – the first wave coming in 538 B.C., the second in 458 B.C. under Ezra, and the third in 445 B.C. under Nehemiah – had a tough time.

The book of **Ezra** records the efforts of Jeshua the Priest and Zerubbabel the Governor of Judah (and descendant of David) in leading the returned exiles and rebuilding the Temple. Local opposition soon arose, though, accusing the Jews to the king of planning to rebel. If the people of Judah had not already been made "**afraid to build**", the order from the king did the trick, stopping construction until 520 B.C. (Ezra 4:4-6, 24).

It was at this time that **Haggai** and **Zechariah** prophesied. God's messages through them acknowledged that the people's present situation was a far cry from the hope they heard from the prophets, but God's promises for their restoration would be realized if they remained faithful. Chief among these promises was the coming of the Messiah. Read **Zechariah 9:9-13**.

- How was the coming King different from other leaders?

Despite the people's hopes for the coming Messiah, God revealed a harsh reality: when He did raise up His shepherd for the people, they would reject Him. Read **Zechariah 11:4-17**.

- Why would anyone reject a good shepherd and follow a foolish shepherd?

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The Stone the Builders Rejected

Focus Statement: The Jewish leaders' harsh rejection of Jesus led to His crucifixion. Yet, this rejection was part of God's plan and foretold in the Scriptures. Now, we have a choice to make.

While many in the crowds joyously welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem and eagerly listened to Him teaching in the Temple, His final week before His crucifixion involved a great deal of conflict with the Jewish leaders. Read **Matthew 21:23-46**.

- **What motivated the chief priests and elders in Jerusalem, and how can you tell?**

Living almost 600 years after the exile officially ended, these leaders in Jerusalem had inherited a much different situation than the people had known before. As recorded in **Ezra**, the Temple had been rebuilt in 516 B.C., though the Temple itself and the ceremony dedicating it were a fraction of what they had been under Solomon (Ezra 6:16-18, II Chronicles 7:4-10). In the next century, God put it on the heart of **Nehemiah** to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, a project which was completed around 445 B.C. By the time **I and II Chronicles** were written, a Jewish community and regular Temple services had been restored in Jerusalem (I Chronicles 9:1-33).

Since **I and II Chronicles** were written after the return from exile, they are among the last Old Testament books to be written. Instead of giving a more comprehensive history of Israel like **I Samuel through II Kings**, I and II Chronicles focused on the house of David and the Temple. They uniquely emphasized examples of repentance from unfaithfulness, appropriate for a community trying to faithfully rebuild (I Chronicles 21; II Chronicles 12, 33). In the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures as "**the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms**" in Jesus' day, they were the final books. We can lose this with our English Bible's arrangement, making them seem redundant.

In the 400 years between that time and Jesus' day, a lot changed. The Persians gave way to the Greeks who gave way to the Romans. After a dark period of persecution two centuries prior followed by a period of independence (chronicled in the apocryphal books of *I and II Maccabees*), the Jewish people eventually enjoyed several privileges as a client kingdom of the Roman Empire. Herod the Great initiated a massive expansion of the Jerusalem Temple that lasted for decades and built a magnificent – and well-funded – structure (cf. John 2:20; Matthew 17:24, 24:1). Having built such a life for the nation, the Jewish leaders had every incentive to keep the peace with Rome. Prophetic in ways he did not realize, this priority was shown when –

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Barabbas is an Aramaic name meaning “_____ of the _____.” So, Pilate presented the Jewish leaders with a choice between the “Son of David”, “Son of Man”, and “Son of God”, who had humbly proclaimed peace and offered freedom to all in a different sort of kingdom; and, Barabbas, a rebel guilty of murder. Whom did they choose?

Jesus had warned His disciples earlier that week of signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in **Matthew 23**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**. This came about when war broke out between the Jews and Rome from AD 66 to 70. The Jewish historian Josephus describes some of the absolute atrocities that took place during the siege and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem:



Roman "Aquila", the symbolic eagle of Roman legions

It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food...for what was otherwise worthy of reverence, was in this case despised. Insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths: and, what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants. And when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives. And while they eat after this manner, yet were they not concealed in so doing. But the seditious every where came upon them immediately, and snatched away from them what they had gotten from others. For when they saw any house shut up, this was to them a signal that the people within had gotten some food. Whereupon they brake open the doors, and ran in, and took pieces of what they were eating almost up out of their very throats, and this by force. The old men, who held their food fast, were beaten: and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing. Nor was there any commiseration shewn either to the aged, or to the infants: but they lifted up children from the ground, as they hung upon the morsels they had gotten, and shook them down upon the floor." (Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews* 5.10.3)

Josephus graphically described a mother who had fled to Jerusalem when the war began and became so desperate in the famine that she killed, roasted, and ate her nursing son (*The Wars of the Jews* 6.3.4, cf. Matthew 24:19-20). Even the Romans were rattled by the report of this:

"But for Cæsar he excused himself before God, as to this matter, and said, that 'He had proposed peace and liberty to the Jews, as well as an oblivion of all their former insolent practices: but that they, instead of concord, had chosen sedition; instead of peace, war; and before satiety and abundance, a famine. That they had begun with their own hands to burn down that temple; which we have preserved hitherto: and that therefore they deserved to eat such food as this was. That however, this horrid action of eating an own child ought to be covered with the overthrow of their very country itself; and men ought not to leave such a city upon the habitable earth, to be seen by the sun, wherein mothers are thus fed, although such food be fitter for the fathers, than for the mothers to eat of; since it is they that continue still in a state of war against us, after they have undergone such miseries as these.'" (Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews* 6.3.5).

This horror fulfilled Moses' warning over 1400 years before. Read **Deuteronomy 28:45-57**.

- How does the choice to accept or reject Jesus – nationally for Israel and for us as individuals – bring the entire story of the Bible to a head?