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DAILY *manna*

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Welcome again to the third quarter of *Daily Manna* readings for 2010. After leaving the books of wisdom – Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – we start our journey through the prophetic books beginning with Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah show the interactions between a faithful God and an unfaithful people. The prophecies are mostly sermons warning the people of God's judgement and calling them to repentance. This, I believe, is the message that we need today. May the Lord give us a tender heart as we study His Word.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you'll find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the OT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 1

LESSON

Taking God's warning seriously

VERSE 18

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 means “the Lord saves”. Isaiah ministered during the reigns of several Judean kings, including Uzziah and Hezekiah. He ministered during a time when Judah was wrapped in wickedness. In the opening chapter of Isaiah, God tells us how Israel would be punished because they had forgotten about God though He had blessed them. Preoccupied with pursuing material wealth on this earth, they had forgotten the true source of their blessings.

Our earthly sojourn is only temporal. Soon, we will have to leave here and the real blessing comes only after that. Do not live as though you will be on this earth forever. Going to heaven with an assured eternal life is the ultimate blessing that we should look forward to.

The Israelites had forgotten and forsaken God. They would be punished for this. However, God would not totally destroy them. He would save a remnant. He has not and will never give up on His people. As He remembers Israel, He will also remember us. God shows His love by patiently calling His people to come and reason with Him. We were once lost in our sins. It is by God's grace and love that our sins are washed away with the blood of Jesus.

The reasoning is simple. We deserve to go to hell as punishment for our sins. There is no escape. Since God is holy, there is no sin in heaven. For this reason, our sins have to be purged in order for us to be in heaven with Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH I

THOUGHT

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day. – Deuteronomy 8:18

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 2

LESSON

**Blessing rather than
punishment**

VERSE 5

*O house of Jacob, come ye,
and let us walk in the light
of the LORD.*

No one lives on this earth forever—neither should we behave as if we are staying here for good. Time flies. You may be fit and able today but in the blink of an eye, you are ready to leave this transitional dwelling. Psalm 90:10 reminds us that the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

This chapter warns us that God will judge. The day of the Lord will come [v. 12] and there would be great calamities. This earth that we are so familiar with will be totally destroyed. There will be no hiding place safe enough for anyone to escape the punishment that God pronounces.

God wrote these warnings so that no one can plead ignorance. We cannot blame God if we are destroyed because He has given us many warnings in the Scriptures. God has also graciously provided a way that leads us to safety. We are to repent and abide by God's commandment. God has provided a safe path so that we will not be judged together with the rest of the world. Jesus is the way that leads to our final destination in heaven. We shall find continual fellowship with God in eternity there.

The true and living God is the source of all blessings. However, He has left a choice for us to make. Have you made your choice?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 2

THOUGHT

**Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then
understood I their end. – Psalm 73:17**

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 3

LESSON

A very grave judgement

VERSE 13

*The LORD standeth up
to plead, and standeth to
judge the people.*

Despite warnings, the people of Israel did not repent. Defiantly, they depended on their own strength, living according to their own desires rather than choosing to follow God's laws. Their leaders exploited the poor, crushing them like grain in the mills.

God punished the Israelites severely for their disobedience. The prosperity of the nation made the leaders proud and covetous. God would not allow His people to be conceited and sinful. He would humble them and cut them down like trees in the forest. God would soon take away everything that the people trusted in. The entire support system of the nation would disintegrate. God would also dismantle the male-dominated society by having women and children rule the country.

After denouncing the men in leadership, Isaiah warned that God would also punish the women who profited from their husbands' crimes and corrupt practices. Everything would be different when judgement comes. Nobody would notice the women's expensive clothing, perfumes and jewellery. Their gold chains would be replaced by iron chains and ropes. They would become prisoners of war.

We can see this ignorance towards God's command everywhere today. Will God judge? Yes, He will, and there is only one safe route to take—through repentance and calling on the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. As God always remembers the righteous remnant, He too will remember us if we are faithful. Those who faithfully trust in Jesus are made righteous by His blood. In whom do you trust?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 3

THOUGHT

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. – Romans 1:17

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 4–5***LESSON****Blessings or judgement—
your choice****ISAIAH 4:2**

*In that day shall the branch
of the LORD be beautiful
and glorious, and the
fruit of the earth shall be
excellent and comely for
them that are escaped of
Israel.*

Israel's predicament was so bad that there would not be enough men to become husbands. The ratio of men to women would be greatly out of proportion. God withheld His blessings so that the people could see the result of their own vanities. Their crops had very low yield and there was not enough food.

Yet the people continued to defile God and disobey His Word. Though there was not enough food, the rich continued with their feasting and drinking. Worse still, they spoke of the Lord and His warnings but still carried on living according to their fancies, refusing to repent. Instead of listening to God, their leaders consulted with one another and made decisions based on their own wisdom. Proverbs 3:7 reads, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." God would eventually use the Assyrian army to chasten His people.

God does not delight in judging His people [Ezekiel 33:11]. Rather, He desires to bless them, if they would only repent. Isaiah looked beyond the Day of the Lord to the time when the kingdom would be established on earth [Isaiah 4:2–6]. The "Branch of the Lord" is a Messianic title for Jesus Christ, Who came as a "shoot" from the seemingly dead stump of David's line. God will eventually cleanse His people, restore the fruitfulness of the land and dwell with them.

God today is still waiting to bless those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you rather be judged than be blessed?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 4-5

THOUGHT

**They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
with flattering lips and with a double heart do
they speak. – Psalm 12:2**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 6–7***LESSON****Here am I, send me****ISAIAH 6:8**

Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Isaiah saw the Holy One of Israel, and he could not keep silent. Though he confessed to be a sinner, he was probably one of the most righteous people. Yet he rightly acknowledged that he had sinned. Indeed, “there is none righteous, no, not one” [Romans 3:10]. Yet when God called for someone to be His messenger, Isaiah responded, “Here am I, send me.” If God were to ask you the same question today, what would your answer be? There is still a great need for messengers of the Gospel. Would your answer be the same as Isaiah’s?

For young Isaiah, the outlook was bleak. The good king of Israel (Jotham) had died—Israel was in grave peril. The new king Ahaz faced great pressure from the mighty army of the Assyrians. Based on his own wisdom, he entered into a secret treaty with the Assyrians instead of turning to God for help. Even as the king, he could not find inner peace. Ironically, the very alliance that he depended on eventually invaded Israel.

Take heed: Though the outlook may be bleak, the “uplook” is glorious. God is still on the throne and He reigns as the Sovereign of the whole universe.

Instead of speaking to the nervous king, Isaiah spoke to the people—with a prophecy that brought great encouragement. He told them that a virgin would give birth to Emmanuel, Who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who will deliver the world from sin. Born sinless, Jesus died for sinners so that He may redeem those who trust in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 6–7

THOUGHT

Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 8***LESSON****Let Him be your fear****VERSE 13**

Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Something was going to happen to the people of Judah: the Assyrians were going to invade them. But this invasion was part of God's plan. He planned it because the people of Judah had rejected His tender care and needed to be disciplined.

To ensure that the people of Judah knew it was He Who planned the invasion, Isaiah was told to name his unborn child Mahershalalhashbaz, which means "Swift to plunder and quick to spoil". Within a few years, the King of Assyria would invade both Damascus and Samaria and carry away their riches.

These prophecies were meant to strike fear in the hearts of the people of Judah. The impact on them, however, depended on whom they fear: God or the Assyrian army. If they feared God, they needed fear more than anything else [v. 13]. If they feared the Assyrian army, they would stumble, fall and be captured [v. 15]. The discipline was inevitable but having the right fear would keep them safe.

Fear is a part of us. Believers are to fear God. A biblical fear of God includes understanding how much God hates sin and fearing His judgement on sin. As children, the fear of discipline from our parents prevented some evil actions. The same should be true in our relationship with God. We should let Him be our fear and seek to live our lives in such a way that pleases Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 8

THOUGHT

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. – Proverbs 1:7

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 9***LESSON**

**For unto us a child is
born**

VERSE 6

*For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given: and
the government shall be
upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The
everlasting Father, The
Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah has been called the “Messianic Prophet”. Here, he tells us how the Messiah would come, His names, His ministry and the place where His ministry would be concentrated. He was going to be born as a child. He would have five beautiful names. He would bring light to a people in darkness. And Galilee is going to be the place where his ministry would be concentrated.

In case there is any doubt to the identity of this Child, Matthew tells us that Jesus is the One [Matthew 1:16]. Besides, the names given in verse 6 also point to Him: “Wonderful Counselor” is one with exceptional wisdom; “Mighty God” tells us that he is far more than a mere human being; “Everlasting Father” implies that he is an eternal being; and “Prince of Peace” points to one who will bring peace in His kingdom. Who other than Jesus can claim those titles?

Most of our Lord’s ministry was in Galilee, where He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, healed the lame, cast out demons and raised the dead. Some of His greatest messages were preached there too: the Sermon on the Mount, the message on the bread of life and His great parables (parable of the sower, the parable of the prodigal son).

How can anyone still have any doubt that the Bible is the Word of God when these prophecies point clearly to Jesus Who has fulfilled them all?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 9**

THOUGHT

**And beginning at Moses and all the prophets,
He expounded to them in all the scriptures the
things concerning Himself. – Luke 24:27**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 10***LESSON****Rod of anger****VERSE 5**

*O Assyrian, the rod of mine
anger, and the staff in their
hand is mine indignation.*

God would send the Assyrians against the nation of Judah. This was going to happen because the people of Judah had become hypocritical, godless, profane and idolatrous, and God was angry. So He planned to use the Assyrian to discipline them. However, because of the way in which they carried out that judgement, they would likewise be judged themselves.

The rod and staff are tools that a shepherd uses to guide and discipline the flock. Here, God called the pagan idol-worshipping nation of Assyria His rod and staff. The lesson is that God sometimes uses the pagan world to discipline His people. The Assyrians were being used by God, even though they did not have a clue they were being used. Such use of a pagan nation is nothing new for God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God called the ruthless king Nebuchadnezzar “my servant” [Jeremiah 27:6] because he would be used by God to bring judgement on the nation of Judah.

In the same manner, God may discipline us using our pagan employer or authority. But as we endure discipline from such people, take comfort that God is the One behind it all. He does so because He treats us as His own children.

Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? If God does not discipline us as He does all His children, it means that we are illegitimate and are not really His children after all [Hebrews 12:7–8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 10

THOUGHT

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. – Psalm 23:4

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 11–12***LESSON****The root of Jesse****ISAIAH 11:1**

*And there shall come forth
a rod out of the stem of
Jesse, and a Branch shall
grow out of his roots.*

It is not difficult for us to see yet another clear reference to the coming of the Messiah here. The opening verse gives us a hint that the Messiah would appear in history in a very obscure way. We see a bare, withered tree stem robbed of its trunk and top. It looks as though the stem would never bear any fruit any more but a small shoot is then seen sprouting from the root. This shoot, as the prophet went on to say, was a man who would be filled with the Spirit of God to do great work in the land.

The Lord wanted the people of Judah to know that even though the Assyrians and others would come and bring judgement, God would still use them and bring forth life from them.

The picture used here is that of a long-dead stem. Even if they looked like one, God could still bring forth life. The stem is not named after David but after his father Jesse. This is a clear reference to Jesus' humble beginning. His birth took place neither in an inn nor a hospital but in a manger [Luke 2:7].

Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about his birth, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of the world for more than two thousands years. It is from His humble birth that most of the human race dates its calendars. It is by His name that millions curse, and in His name that millions pray.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 11–12**

THOUGHT

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. – Philippians 2:8

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 13***LESSON****The fall of Babylon****VERSE 17**

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

This chapter presents a prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon. Its fulfilment, which occurred in the year 538 BC, was recorded in the book of Daniel, where we have the account of the conquering of Babylon under its king, Belshazzar, in Daniel 5. During a great feast which the king gave in the palace, a supernatural hand appeared and wrote on the wall “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”, meaning “Your kingdom has been numbered and divided among the Medes and Persians”. That very night Darius the Mede, just as Isaiah had predicted, took the city [v. 17].

Scripture uses Babylon as the symbol of a spiritual evil that pervades our whole race. Babylon gets its name from the Tower of Babel, which means confusion. That tower was built by people who said, “Come, let us make a name for ourselves. We will build a tower that reaches unto heaven” [Genesis 11:4]. Thus, all through the Scriptures, Babylon becomes a symbol of wickedness and unwholesome, hostile pride. It represents man’s delusions of being powerful and self-sufficient.

We may be tempted to think we no longer need to depend on God. We may believe that our learning, sophistication and technology are all we need to be self-sufficient and guarantee our security.

Self-sufficiency is a delusion. History has shown that many nations and their leaders have fallen into the trap of arrogance and self-sufficiency. Like Babylon, these nations have eventually ended up in ruins.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 13

THOUGHT

The self-sufficient attitude is “I can do everything”. The Christ-sufficient attitude adds “through Him Who gives me strength”.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 14***LESSON****Lucifer****VERSE 12**

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Beginning in verse 12, Isaiah writes of the “son of the morning”, a term ascribed to Lucifer. Lucifer is Satan, the once-beautiful angel who wanted to exalt himself above God. The problem began in Satan’s heart. He said in his heart [v. 13] that he would exalt himself above the throne of God. His five “I will” statements in this chapter outlined his sinister plan. Ezekiel 28:17 reveals that pride entered Satan’s heart because of his great beauty. But God did not tolerate Satan’s rebellion: “Your heart became proud ... So I threw you to the earth.”

In the Garden of Eden, the former “son of the morning” tempted Eve with the same sin [Genesis 3:15]. He tempted her with the same proud desire for God’s power that had led to his own downfall. The interaction between Satan and Eve centred around pride. It planted in human hearts the fierce rebellion of spirit that says, “I will be my own god.”

If pride is that insidious and persistent, then we need to learn to deal with it on a daily basis. The primary manifestation of pride is the “I will” syndrome. We need to change wills. A great place to start is James 4:13–17, where we see James’ concern with “boasting about tomorrow”. We would do well to follow James 4:15.

Bowing to God’s sovereignty in our lives is a daily antidote to pride.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 14

THOUGHT

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. – Proverbs 16:18

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 15–16*

LESSON

Heeding God's warning

ISAIAH 16:13

*This is the word that
the LORD hath spoken
concerning Moab since that
time.*

These two chapters tell of the prophecy concerning Moab, a relative and close neighbour of Israel. What God said about Moab has important lessons for us today.

In Chapter 15, Isaiah warned the Moabites that there would be swift and widespread destruction of their nation. All their main cities would be taken over by their enemies, Assyria. Their abundant wealth would be gone and their land would go to waste. The nation would mourn greatly. Yet they would not return to the Lord. They would go onto their rooftops and into their streets to howl and weep in great sorrow [Isaiah 15:3]. In Chapter 16, Isaiah advised them to live a righteous life and be gracious to those who needed help [Isaiah 15:3–4]. But they chose their idols instead of God, and their idols made them weary [Isaiah 16:12].

What were their sins? They were proud and boastful. They thought highly of themselves and stood against God's judgement. They did not seek God. In fact, their confidence in their own sufficiency and their trust in idols made them think that they did not need God. They were wrathful and unkind. They scorned and had no regard for God.

God's judgement is sure and certain. The lands and possessions of the Moabites would go into desolation, and their joys shall cease. Their treasured life would become contemptible. Heed God's warning: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" [Matthew 23:12].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 15–16

PRAYER

Lord, let me heed Thy warning, repent and learn to live a righteous life.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 17–18***LESSON****Being mindful of our God****ISAIAH 17:7**

*At that day shall a man
look to his Maker, and his
eyes shall have respect to
the Holy One of Israel.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 17–18

Chapter 17 is a prophecy made mainly against Syria. Israel is also mentioned because of its alliance with Syria. There are many lessons we can learn from this chapter. Israel, the northern kingdom, was condemned because it joined hands with Syria, a pagan nation, to intimidate Judah, the southern kingdom. God is displeased when Christians collaborate with pagans against their fellow brethren. When God's judgement came, the glory of Jacob would be made thin and its strength, fame, possession, assets and wealth would be gone [Isaiah 17:4–6, 9].

It is futile and even fatal to put our confidence in man. Syria, Israel's ally, would become a ruinous heap. Israel had forgotten their God of salvation. They were ungrateful for the redemptive and providential works of God. Instead, they focused on gathering material securities. Judgement would come and there would be great sorrow [Isaiah 17:10–11]. Syria, on whom the Israelites relied, would be as chaff of the mountains and cast away before a great wind [Isaiah 17:12–14], despite its great numbers,.

There is encouragement that, in the midst of tribulation, God by His grace will always preserve His elect. We need to repent and look to our Maker in submission. Honour, fear and worship Him. Thank Him for doing great things for us. Give all glory to Him [Isaiah 17:7–8].

The third point is echoed in Chapter 18. God assures us that He will protect and shelter us though we may face the menace of foes and the heat of circumstances [Isaiah 18:4].

PRAYER

Lord, let me not forget You, for You are the God of my salvation and my portion is in You.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 19–20***LESSON****Work, while it is day****ISAIAH 19:20**

*And it shall be for a sign
and for a witness unto the
LORD of hosts in the land
of Egypt: for they shall cry
unto the LORD because of
the oppressors, and he shall
send them a saviour, and
a great one, and he shall
deliver them.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 19–20**

Chapter 19 is a prophecy against Egypt—predicting their downfall. Israel had suffered under the bondage of Egypt in the past, though Judah wanted to return to Egypt for protection and shelter. These two chapters tell us it is indeed unwise to put our confidence on creature, for the consequences will be disappointment and shame.

Egypt, with its strong army, prosperous industries and valuable trade links, would be greatly weakened by God’s visit. Their hearts will melt in awe and fear. God is able to destroy the mightiest of all nations, the wisest of all sovereigns, and make them desolate and waste. Nothing is able to stand before God [Isaiah 19:1–17].

True enough, the nations that Judah trusted—Egyptians and Ethiopians—were later captured by Assyria. Judah’s hope would be shattered and they would cry in despair, “Whither we flee for help, and how shall we escape?” [Isaiah 20:4–6]. Judah’s folly lies in misplacing her trust. We should always look upon God, be it in times of comfort or times of distress.

C. H. Spurgeon says that Isaiah 19:18–25 presents the fruits of grace. Egypt was one of the worst enemies of God’s people, yet when they cried to God, He sent to them a great Saviour. “Let us have hope for the worst of men and let the worst of men have hope for themselves under the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Even in cities bound for destruction, there will be salvation to some. “The infinite compassion of God can reach them, and the eternal power of God can lift them up.”

RESOLUTION

I will live a witnessing life to preach this great Saviour of mine to my unsaved friends.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 21***LESSON****Preaching truthfully****VERSE 6**

*For thus hath the LORD
said unto me, Go, set a
watchman, let him declare
what he seeth.*

This prophecy made against Babylon is, firstly, a relief and good news to Israel, as it meant that their oppressor would soon be gone [v. 9]. God would protect and save His people, as He has promised. As His people, we can always rely on Him. He is faithful and He never fails us. The sighs and cries of God's people shall all cease one day.

Secondly, we learn from Isaiah's account that all things are at God's disposal. He could even use the ruthless Medes and the treacherous Persians to destroy Babylon [v. 2]. The wisdom and workings of God are far beyond our imagination. Thirdly, Isaiah's message is also a warning to the oppressors. When God judges, His judgement will come in the most unexpected way. For example, Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, was slain on the night of his feasting.

The Word of the Lord is sure. The prophet confidently challenged the people to go and set a watchman. The role of a watchman is to station himself at a strategic position and keep watch, staying alert day and night, and hearkening diligently with much heed [vv. 6–8]. He is to declare what he sees clearly, precisely and loudly.

Isaiah himself was a watchman. It was a grievous vision to have to foretell the fall of the mighty Babylonians, yet Isaiah declared it without fear [v. 2]. As Christians, we must do the same. We must always be watchful and be courageous in sharing the truth of the Gospel, rather than sweet-coating it. Witness the truth of God's Word bravely.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 21**

RESOLUTION

I will fulfil the role of God's watchman and always preach the Gospel faithfully.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 22***LESSON****Perishing because of no vision****VERSE 11**

*Ye made also a ditch
between the two walls for
the water of the old pool:
but ye have not looked unto
the maker thereof, neither
had respect unto him that
fashioned it long ago.*

The pronouncement of coming doom and destruction was made so that the people of God would repent of their sins [v. 12], yet they did otherwise. They were told that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, would be coming to seize Jerusalem with his army. Facing such a predicament, they relied instead on their own wisdom, resources and armouries. They spent their time in building up their defences, accumulating water and repairing their walls [v. 8–11].

They did not look to their Maker Who had provided everything for them, totally disregarding Him. They thought God was no longer relevant in their lives. “And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die” [v. 13]. In response, the Lord proclaimed through the prophet Isaiah, “Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die” [v. 14].

This prophecy speaks to us as well. The Valley of Vision refers to Jerusalem and Judah. They were chosen by God to provide His vision to the world. When they fail, God pronounces their impending doom.

In a similar way, we are chosen as testimonies and vessels of His love, witnesses and channels of His blessings, images and tools for His glory. When we fail to be fruitful, God reminds, and even chastises us. We need to be sensitive to God’s call for correction, and go to Him in all repentance and humility, seeking to attune ourselves to His sovereign will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 22

RESOLUTION

I will take heed of Your warnings with all lowliness of mind, seeking always to do Your will.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 23***LESSON****God will judge****VERSE 9**

The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

Tyre was at the height of her glory and majesty, a mart of nations [v. 3] and the strength of the sea [v. 4]. She was overtaken by pride and ignored the warnings of the evangelical prophet Isaiah, who prophesied impending doom and destruction. The people of Tyre were too deeply entrenched in idolatry and self-sufficiency, forgetting all about the grace of God.

God would judge this city of pride [v. 8–9] because its people were unrepentant and rejoiced in revelry instead. God would use the Chaldeans [v. 13] to bring magnificent Tyre to ruins because her people were lewd, licentious and full of vice. They abused the gifts of God for self-interest and personal gain.

Do not be led astray by prosperity as there is no security in this temporal status, which can easily be wiped away by economic downturn or ill health. The Lord is our only genuine security. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” [1 Corinthians 10:12]. We should rather use our wealth to propagate the Gospel in the service of God. Remember, we are mere stewards to dispense His blessings.

Be warned that the love of worldly wealth and covetousness is spiritual idolatry. When we face a dilemma we try to solve it our way instead of seeking divine solution. However, to deal with sin, there is only one solution, and that is confession and repentance [1 John 1:9].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 23

THOUGHT

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. – Proverbs 16:18

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 24–25***LESSON****Our wonderful God****ISAIAH 25:1**

*O LORD, thou art my God;
I will exalt thee, I will
praise thy name; for thou
hast done wonderful things;
thy counsels of old are
faithfulness and truth.*

Chapter 24 describes the complete desolation of Jerusalem and ends with a prophecy of restoration of the city of David [Isaiah 24:23]. The prophet Isaiah broke out into this beautiful song of praise in the next chapter in view of this future deliverance. He praised God for the anticipated deliverance of His people from bondage in Babylon. He acknowledged the fact that God is a covenant-keeping God and faithful to His promise of deliverance.

Isaiah recalled many wonderful works wrought by God according to the counsel of His will. God humbled the proud and brought down the powerful [Isaiah 25:2], and sustained and upheld the poor and needy [Isaiah 25:4]. And there was a time when “many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” [Esther 8:17]. The prophet could not help but exclaim in awe at Who God is and what He had done for Israel.

“And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” [Isaiah 25:9]. Such deliverance and redeeming mercy could only be bestowed by God, the source of all benefits. The remnant of the Jews who had been waiting patiently in faith would experience His saving grace.

Are you looking forward to the day when Christ returns?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 24–25**

MEDITATION**Thou art a wonderful God!**

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 26–27

LESSON

**Fixing your mind on
Christ**

ISAIAH 26:3

*Thou wilt keep him in
perfect peace, whose mind
is stayed on thee: because
he trusteth in thee.*

This is a song of praise for the safety and prosperity of the Church, and the destruction of her enemies. The Church is represented as a strong city, and its walls and bulwarks symbolise salvation [Isaiah 26:1]. The people of God looked forward to that glorious day to sing this song of redemption on the restoration to their land.

“How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?” [Psalm 137:4]. True faith in God brings assurance and peace to the soul in all circumstances, be it prosperity or adversity. The Lord promises peace to those who rely on Him with full confidence and trust. This peace is derived from the presence of divine sufficiency in the midst of problems [Isaiah 26:4; Philippians 4:13] and the possession of adequate resources from the Lord [Philippians 4:19].

The prophet Isaiah further exhorts the people to trust God forever—to the end for He is our everlasting strength [Isaiah 26:4]. God is firm and unchangeable, like an eternal rock. He is our protection and defence. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” [Deuteronomy 33:27].

What a comfort to know that Jesus, the Rock of Ages, is our safety and refuge. To have God for our refuge is the best security from fear, and the safest protection from danger.

O safe to the Rock that is higher than I
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary—Thine, Thine would I be:
Thou blest “Rock of Ages”, I’m hiding in Thee.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 26–27

THOUGHT

**Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me
from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with
songs of deliverance. – Psalm 32:7**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 28***LESSON****Thirsting for the Word****VERSE 9**

*Whom shall he teach
knowledge? and whom shall
he make to understand
doctrine? them that are
weaned from the milk, and
drawn from the breasts.*

The religious leaders mocked God and scoffed at the warnings of Isaiah. They scornfully complained that He used baby language to speak to them. But the fact is they were in a stupor, as far as spiritual understanding was concerned. The proud and insolent nation of Ephraim would be judged by God for subverting truth and righteousness.

Crimes and abuses of every kind follow in the train of drunkenness. “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgement” [v. 7].

Take heed of the words of wise Solomon: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” [Proverbs 20:1]. The moral breakdown of Ephraim’s drunken leadership had produced a vacuum of vision and direction. Look at their reactions to Isaiah’s warnings in verse 9. They felt insulted, claiming that they were not children to be taught the doctrines of God. They were out of the path of righteousness and void of spiritual discernment. God would teach them with another tongue—a foreign language in a distant land (Assyria)—to bring them to the true knowledge of Him.

Every Christian should desire to know the pure spiritual truths of the Gospel, that is, to grow through the spiritual nourishment of the Truth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 28

PRAYER

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby. 1 Peter 2:2

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 29***LESSON****Hypocritical worship****VERSE 13**

*Wherefore the LORD said,
Forasmuch as this people
draw near me with their
mouth, and with their lips
do honour me, but have
removed their heart far
from me, and their fear
toward me is taught by the
precept of men.*

The people of Ariel, the city of David (Jerusalem), were the same as those of the northern kingdom, Ephraim (Israel). They had strayed far from God and only paid Him lip service. They appeared to worship God but were only going through the motions, as their hearts were not with Him. They were not God-honouring, neither were they God-fearing.

Jerusalem's worship had become a meaningless and heartless formality. The Jews had removed their heart far from God [v. 13]—and without a heart, all outward worship is nothing but a mere mockery of God. Their religion was purely external and their only fear of God was a few memorised creeds.

God is never impressed by mere intellectual worship but demands a surrender of one's total being to Him. "God alone has the right to prescribe the way in which He is to be worshipped. All systems of religion that rest on human authority and tradition are empty and formal; they lead to hypocrisy and wickedness, and bring upon men God's displeasure instead of His favour" [Family Bible Notes].

Many of us can recite the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed but do we believe what we are saying? We need to have a personal relationship with Christ our Saviour. Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah when He condemned hypocrisy, the very epitome of Pharisaism [Matthew 15:7–8; Mark 7:6]. He also gave this warning: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" [Luke 12:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 29

THOUGHT

God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. – John 4:24

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 30***LESSON****Adding sin to sin****VERSE 1**

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

The prophet here warned the people against their confidence in Egypt and their contempt of God's Word, which would lead to their destruction. We see here a gracious promise to those who trust in God, that they should not only see through the trouble but should also see happy days after them as well—times of reformation and rejoicing with abundant means of grace. He concludes with a prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which should be an occasion of great joy.

The Jewish people sinned when they forsook the counsel of God and when they trusted the help of Egypt. Sin rarely stands alone. It has a fearfully attractive and accumulative power. Consider a youth who wanders away from the house of God, conscience stifled and heart hardened. Amusement and pleasures are sought; loose companions are cultivated; and restraint is gradually thrown off. Falsehood creeps in. One falsehood requires another, and as a result, sin is added to sin. Soon as sin is committed, it drops the seed of another and so onward in terrible progression until it piles up to heaven.

Sin is cumulative and growing. Sins rush to one another with mutual attraction. If we can foresee the growth of our own sins, surely we would have refrained. But how can we, being sinners?

Unless we constantly look to the Lamb of God which taketh away our sins, they are added in God's Book. Count the sins of our own life and it will add fear to our fear. Stand in awe, and sin not!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 30

THOUGHT

To commit a sin is to build the foundation of continuance. – John Bunyan

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 31–32***LESSON****A call to the careless****ISAIAH 32:11**

Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.

Chapter 31 is an abridgement of the foregoing chapter. The themes of both chapters are much the same—the punishment for their folly in trusting Egypt, the assurance given that God would take care of Jerusalem in times of danger and distress, a call to repentance, and a prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army.

Chapter 32 prophesied of the Messiah and the blessings that come. Careless women shall be troubled; and the land laid waste until a restoration. With a fearful expectation of divine wrath and judgement, the prophet sought to awake the careless ones, who were then confidently living seemingly secured lives, trusting in their riches and wealth; exhorting them to repent from their sins.

Who are the careless ones in our own days? He who neglects the Bible and shuns divine revelation is such a one. He who neglects prayer—a solemn duty towards God—is a careless one. He who neglects the Sabbath—a gracious call for rest—is also a careless one. He who neglects the institutions of the sanctuary, who subjects his attendance on the things and services to God to his own convenience, is another careless one.

In short, careless people are those who harden their hearts against the counsel of God. Those who are so absorbed in the pursuits of this life that they have no time and energy to attend to the King's business are indeed the careless ones. Be still and reflect.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 31–32

THOUGHT

Be troubled when you reflect on what it is that you are careless about.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 33***LESSON****The Beauty of Christ the King****VERSE 17**

*Thine eyes shall see the king
in his beauty: they shall
behold the land that is very
far off.*

This chapter relates the distress of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, caused by Sennacherib's invasion and their deliverance out of this distress with the destruction of the Assyrian army. It concludes with a famous prophecy of the peace, prosperity and safety of the Church, and of the blessings given to God's people under the protection of Christ, Who is their King and Lawgiver.

In the immediate context, the people saw King Hezekiah in his royal robes, and with a cheerful countenance, having put off his sackcloth and sadness after the deliverance from the Assyrian army. Going beyond this, we see a King much greater than Hezekiah, even King Jesus, in the glory of His person and office. The Apostles saw Him in His glory in the days of His flesh, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Jews saw Him in His humiliation. In Him they saw neither form nor comeliness. There was no beauty that they should desire Him. But believers now see Him by faith, crowned with glory and honour, as well as His beauty and fullness, as a Saviour revealed in the Scriptures. Hereafter, all His people shall see Him in all His regal splendour and magnificence. They shall see Him clearly, fully and eternally in His own, and His Father's glory.

If we would see the King, we must make Him the object of our belief, affection and meditation, as revealed in the Scriptures.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 33

THOUGHT

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. – 1 Peter 1:8

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 34–35***LESSON****A call to study****ISAIAH 34:16**

Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

In Chapter 34, we read of the doom of all the nations that are enemies of God's church and His people. It is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God, with desolating judgements against all those who fight against the interests of His kingdom. After a dark and dreadful episode of confusion, Chapter 35 contrasts it with a bright and pleasant picture. It predicts the coming of a glorious and flourishing estate, allegorised by the eventual fruitfulness of the desert, which is made like to Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon.

The prophet gave the assurance of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the minutest detail. He called upon God's people to seek out of the Book of the Lord and read, to compare the events that had unfolded with his prediction.

The book of the prophets is the Book of the Lord, and we ought to consult it, converse with it, as of divine origin and authority. Without the Book of the Lord, we have no certainty and hope, for the book sheds clear light on both. We must not only read it but meditate upon it as well, turning first to one text and then to another and comparing them to get a better understanding.

Thus, wisdom is acquired not by a superficial reading, but through a diligent search of the Scriptures. Let us read it daily and thoughtfully, for ourselves and for others; in our youth, our prime and our old age.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 34–35

THOUGHT

Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures and the Scriptures wholly to thyself.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 36***LESSON****Modern Rab-shakehs****VERSE 4**

*And Rabshakeh said
unto them, Say ye now
to Hezekiah, Thus saith
the great king, the king of
Assyria, What confidence is
this wherein thou trustest?*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 36**

In this chapter, we read an account of Assyria's invasion of Judea, and of the railing blasphemous speech of Rab-shakeh, his general. His intention was to discourage the ministers and subjects of King Hezekiah, seeking to frighten them into submission and persuading them to surrender. He appealed to the people, attempting to convince them to desert Hezekiah and so force him to relent.

The proud king of Assyria had another end beyond that of conquest. His aim was to show that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was on the same level with the gods of the nations [v. 18], an act of spiritual warfare. Every country he conquered was another god he overcame, and the conquest of Jerusalem would make his triumph complete.

The situation described here depicts a picture of the Christian faith assailed by modern unbelief. Modern Rab-shakehs are hurling the same taunting question to us: "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" Unbelief is marshalling her forces against the citadel of revealed truth. She has on her side several prominent leaders of modern thought and employs both press and lecture theatres to accomplish her destructive designs. The Bible becomes subjected to the hostile criticism of men who would rejoice to see it overthrown and rejected.

We believe God's Word and have taken shelter in Christ. Trust Him Who is on His exalted throne, directing His Church in His sovereignty, restraining her enemies, and giving success to her enterprises. God's presence and faithfulness are the bulwarks that we may safely trust.

THOUGHT

With such a God to trust in, let us trust Him with all our might. It is an insult to Him to doubt Him.
– C. H. Spurgeon

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 37***LESSON****Powerless before God****VERSE 35**

*For I will defend this city to
save it for mine own sake,
and for my servant David's
sake.*

The reaction of Hezekiah to Rab-shakeh's blasphemy showed his faith in God. Through the prophet Isaiah, God comforted the king with the assurance and promise of deliverance [v. 1–7]. The Assyrian king Sennacherib's arrogant boast of his conquest of many territories caused King Hezekiah to appeal to God for help [vv. 8–20] and the ignominious downfall of Sennacherib was prophesied. God sent an angel to destroy the entire Assyrian army. The enemy king died at the hands of his own sons [vv. 21–38].

King Sennacherib's successful conquests of many enemy territories had made him proud and arrogant. However, Hezekiah was not influenced by his coercion and false counsel away from God. He placed his trust in God alone. Let us remember this important response of Hezekiah. Just like Hezekiah, we must be deeply concerned when others mock at our God.

Not only did God defend His own honour, He also did it for His servant, David. This is a reminder to all of us that a good testimony goes a long way. Israel had been unfaithful time and time again but God still remembered His promise to David. Our present testimonies before the world will affect the lives of our children.

Throughout Bible history, many have tried to outwit God but their attempts have always been in vain. No one is a match for our omnipotent and sovereign God. Puny men are powerless before God Almighty. Instead of challenging God, let us come in humility and acknowledge our helplessness before Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 37**

THOUGHT

**Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art!**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 38***LESSON****The Giver of life****VERSE 19**

*The living, the living, he
shall praise thee, as I do
this day: the father to the
children shall make known
thy truth.*

In 2 Kings 20:1–11, we read of King Hezekiah’s illness and impending death. But God mercifully extended Hezekiah’s life by 15 years. The sundial turning 10 degrees backwards described in this chapter was the sign given to Hezekiah [v. 8]. The chapter ends with the king acknowledging that his illness was meant for his own good. He then promised to praise God as long as he had breath in him [vv. 9–22].

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” We must remember that we should glorify God in our lives, especially so when additional years have been given, as in Hezekiah’s case.

King Hezekiah showed his appreciation and thanksgiving to God by praising and serving Him. How about you? Do we have to wait until we have a terminal illness before we start to praise our Lord Jesus? How actively involved are you in your church missions outreach, both local and foreign?

In Deuteronomy 6:7, we read of the responsibility of Jewish parents in teaching the Word of God to their children. In every activity and at all times, God’s truth is always made known to their posterity. Are we doing the same for our children? Our key verse for today is a good reminder for us to have a thankful heart full of praise for God. Only when we live and have breath is there an opportunity to testify of God’s goodness. Our lives are in His hands. Let us not waste any time but seize every opportunity to reach out to the lost.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 38

MEDITATION

With God, all things are possible.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 39–40***LESSON****The magnificence of
God's love****ISAIAH 40:17**

*All nations before him are
as nothing; and they are
counted to him less than
nothing, and vanity.*

We read of the king of Babylon sending gifts to Hezekiah after his recovery from illness in Chapter 39. King Hezekiah foolishly showed the pagan ambassadors all the Temple treasures and the prophet Isaiah reproved Hezekiah for his folly and boastful pride. He prophesied that all the treasures and even the people would be taken to Babylon. Chapter 40, looking ahead to the Babylonian captivity, describes prophesies of comfort as Israel awaited divine deliverance. Verses 1–11 prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah through the preaching of the Gospel. God's almighty power is a great comfort to the Israelites who will surely be restored to their own land one day [Isaiah 40:12–17]. The people were, however, reproved for their sins of idolatry and unbelief later [Isaiah 40:18–31].

The sheer magnificence of God's love for mankind can never be fully comprehended. All created beings are nothing in comparison to our Creator. This fact should reduce us to an attitude of praise and adoration for our omnipotent God. There is absolutely nothing in you and me to warrant His redemption.

Considering God's greatness in creation and sustenance, there is nothing too difficult for Him to handle. Babylon, though great at that point in time, is insignificant and no match for our omnipotent God.

Thank God that His chosen people, the Jews, are special to Him. Likewise, as God's children by redemption, we are special to Him. No one can harm us without God's permission.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 39–40**

THOUGHT

**What is man, that thou art mindful of him? –
Psalm 8:4**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 41***LESSON****Safe in God's hands****VERSE 13**

*For I the LORD thy God will
hold thy right hand, saying
unto thee, Fear not; I will
help thee.*

Biblical Jewish history is replete with the affirmation of God's unique relationship with Israel. In this chapter of Isaiah, it is again reiterated. Gentile nations were warned about their animosity towards Israel. Even King Cyrus overpowering the Babylonian Empire was part of God's permissive will [v. 1–9]. The Jews were reminded of God's protection from the days of Abraham. Enemy nations who opposed Israel would be defeated—this is looking ahead to the millennial kingdom where all other nations would be subservient to Israel [v. 10–20]. The inability of pagan gods to predict the future exposes the vanity, folly and worthlessness of idolatry [v. 21–29].

True to God's nature as the good and loving Shepherd, He always loves and cares for His own. Despite Israel's faithlessness and disobedience, God never forsakes His people.

How comforting it is to hear words of solace during times of trial. It is even more encouraging to have someone hold your hands, offering help at the same time. Let us be helpful encouragers to a needy person. With God's strength, let us be a ready help to anyone in need.

Remember that God's promise to help Israel still holds true for His children today. Whenever you are facing any trials, do not despair. Take comfort in the words of Psalm 46:1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Notice the word "present". It means that help is always near at hand. The question is: "Are you willing to be helped?"

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 41**

REMINDER

In times when you feel discouraged, reach out to Jesus for help.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 42***LESSON****Glory due to God only****VERSE 8**

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Depending on the context, the word “servant” may refer to the Messiah, the godly remnant or the nation of Israel. The first four verses in this chapter clearly refer to our Lord Jesus as the Servant King. Isaiah’s prophecy here was fulfilled in Christ [Matthew 12:18–21]. The time for the establishment of the future kingdom of Christ is known only to Him. During that time, believers will enjoy the blessings of freedom from the bondage of sin [v. 5–12]. The truth will be revealed with the coming of the Messiah. Those who reject Christ will be judged then [v. 13–17]. Again, we read of God’s anger at the rebellious attitude of Israel. The nation failed to shine as God’s light to unbelievers. Their sin of disobedience resulted in the Babylonian captivity of Israel [v. 18–25].

God, as King of kings and Lord of lords, deserves all the glory and honour due to His name. He will not share His glory with anyone because it rightly belongs to Him. Exodus 20:5a reads: “I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.” The sin of idolatry is abomination to Him. Yet Israel is constantly guilty of this recurring sin.

Israel, as a theocratic nation, is under the sovereign rule of God. However, the people disobeyed Him and opted to be led by a human king, like the other nations around them.

Let us be wary of sin’s allure in “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” [1 John 2:16].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 42

PRAYER**Help me to give glory due only to You.**

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 43

LESSON

God's divine love

VERSE 2

*When thou passest through
the waters, I will be with
thee; and through the rivers,
they shall not overflow thee:
when thou walkest through
the fire, thou shalt not be
burned; neither shall the
flame kindle upon thee.*

Here we read of God's encouragement to His people not to fear what man or nature can do to them. Fear not, because you know that you belong to the Lord, Who created you, formed you, redeemed you and named you as His. Knowing that we belong to the Lord is a wonderful answer to fear.

Fear not, because you know the Lord is with you. He has promised to be with us through every crisis of life. We are told not to be afraid even when we go through the fire, as He watches over us even then. When we are about to drown in the waters, He rescues us.

We are called to be witnesses to the work of the Lord. God calls the blind and deaf to see the case of the false gods against the omnipotent Yahweh [v. 8]. The idol worshippers have nothing to say as witnesses because their gods can do nothing. But the people of God are witnesses of His greatness and power. They have seen it and experienced it. Do you believe in Yahweh the Creator, or idols that people have created?

"I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Saviour" [v. 11]. The Lord God is the only Saviour. Only He has declared and saved, and He is our help and support. Sadly, we often turn to our Saviour only as our last resort, instead of relying on Him as our first resource.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 43

THOUGHT

We know that God holds us, protects us, guards us and cares for us. How can we be afraid when we know that God is for us and is always looking out for our interests?

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 44***LESSON****The blessedness of God's elect****VERSE 23**

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

The closing verses of Chapter 43 depict the people of God in a very sad state. They are described as a people who had lost the love of God's worship and service. They had neglected His altar. They had fallen into such a horrible state of sin and indifference that they wearied the Lord with their iniquities.

Are you like one of them? Though you are God's child, have you ceased to run with diligence in the path of obedience? You still follow the Lord, but with halting steps. You are in a state of lukewarmness. You weary him with your sins! You have forsaken your God, and you fear that He has forsaken you.

"Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen" [v. 1]. Notice that the prophet uses "yet". What a ray of hope! Though you have fallen, do not despair. God is merciful still! Though you have transgressed, do not think for a moment that God will cast away His children. Though you have chosen the way of folly, God has not forgotten you. Though He hides His face and afflicts you for your sins, He has not forgotten to be gracious. He has not forsaken you. His mercy is not gone forever.

God's children are blessed because we are His covenant people. God always looks upon his covenant people in Christ, through the blood of Christ, robed in the righteousness of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 44

THOUGHT

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name! Bless Him for His grace. Bless Him for His excellent greatness.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 45***LESSON****Our God, our Saviour****VERSE 22**

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.

The messenger here is Isaiah, but the message is God's. God declares the wondrous mystery of providence [v. 1–4]. Cyrus is presented to us here as a type of Christ. He was God's anointed, strengthened by God for His work, raised to deliver God's elect from bondage and God gave everything into Cyrus' hands for the accomplishment of His purpose. Israel was brought into bondage because of their sin, but God overruled their evil to do them good.

God asserts His singularity as God and His glorious sovereignty over all things [v. 5–10]. He alone is God Who is totally sovereign. God's sovereignty extends to all things, good and evil. Because He is God and sovereign over all things, salvation can be expected from no one else but Him.

God assures His people of His purpose and the certainty of their deliverance [v. 11–19]. Israel was in bondage in Babylon for 70 long years. Many rebelled against God in those years of captivity and turned from Him. But there was an elect remnant who bowed to God's providence, believed His Word and waited for His salvation. It was to them that this word of assurance was given. And it is given to you today, too, so trust our great God.

This great God, Who has been speaking throughout this chapter, is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is our God and Saviour. He calls for sinners everywhere to trust Him and be saved [v. 20–25].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 45

THOUGHT

Nothing can keep Christ from redeeming His people. And nothing can keep Him from saving them, keeping them and glorifying them.

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 46–47

LESSON

**The work and judgement
of God**

ISAIAH 46:9

*Remember the former
things of old: for I am God,
and there is none else; I am
God, and there is none like
me.*

The prophet Isaiah never hesitated to expose false gods and religions that held his generation in bondage and darkness. He repeatedly challenged the gods of the ancient world to foretell what would come to pass [Isaiah 41:21–23; 45:20–21]. They could not even speak, much less prophesy. In Chapter 46, God says, “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” [Isaiah 46:11b].

The one true and living God of the Bible is your only Saviour. He is your Creator, your Provider and your Deliverer. God did wonders for His people in the past—the Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, water from the rock, manna from heaven, the conquest of Canaan, and many more. And it is this same God Who has saved us in His redemptive plan! Nothing is more comforting to the believer than the knowledge of God’s absolute power to carry out His work in His time.

Throughout Scripture, Babylon represents false religions. Isaiah 47 is a prophecy of God’s judgement upon the religions of this world by which the souls of men have been, and are still being, deceived.

The judgement of God shall be thorough and just. But the God of judgement is also the God of mercy. He is the Redeemer of all who trust Him [Isaiah 47:1–4] and His judgement is always just [Isaiah 47:6–15].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 46–47

THOUGHT

The Only One who can save you from the judgement of God is Christ, the Son of God, Who bore the judgement of God for sinners!

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 48

LESSON

**Blessed, free and
sovereign grace**

VERSE 9

*For my name's sake will I
defer mine anger, and for
my praise will I refrain for
thee, that I cut thee not off.*

The Lord God described the people whom He had chosen to save as lying hypocrites [v. 1–2], obstinate rebels [v. 3–4], foolish idolaters [v. 5–7] and treacherous transgressors [v. 8], fully deserving His wrath. Yet, he did not withdraw His grace from them. The only difference between those who are saved and those who are lost is that for the former, grace is given [1 Corinthians 4:7; 15:10].

There are two reasons for His grace towards us. Long before we were born, God made a covenant on our behalf and attached the honour of His name to the fulfilment of that covenant to save us—to the praise, honour and glory of His name [v. 9,11]. He has chosen us to be refined, and has chosen to refine us in the furnace of affliction, but the most important truth is that He has chosen us. And the choice is immutable [v. 10]. Therefore He is gracious to us.

We are assured of the success of His work because the saving operations of grace can be traced to all three Persons in the Holy Trinity. God the Father is set before us as the “Fountain of All Grace” [Ephesians 1:3–6]; God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the “Channel of All Grace” to sinners through Him as the Mediator [Ephesians 1:7, 12]; and God the Holy Spirit is the “Administrator of All Grace”, Who effectually applies the blood of Christ to God’s elect, with irresistible grace and power [Ephesians 1:13–14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 48

THOUGHT

**How I thank God for His unconditional,
immutable and indestructible grace!**

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 49***LESSON****You are important****VERSE 16**

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

The one thing that all humans need more than anything else is to know we are loved. Humans also need to feel useful and worthwhile. That is why we tend to compare ourselves with other people. We base our level of importance on our appearance, our achievements, approval from others or our wealth or power

The problem with these four standards is that none of them is enduring. They change according to moment-by-moment circumstances. The trouble with letting things like these dictate your self-worth is that your self-worth is always changing and you never know from one moment to the next where you stand.

If you want to build your self-image, you should build it on something that lasts. Build it on what God thinks of you, not on what the world thinks of you. When we understand what God thinks of us, it changes the way we see ourselves, and that starts changing our hearts to be Christ-like.

We have a hard time comprehending God paying so much attention to us because we do not pay that much attention to God. We may not be looking towards God every second of every day but He is looking at us all the time. “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” [Psalm 121:3–4].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 49

THOUGHT

You matter so much to Him that He let His Son die for you.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 50–51***LESSON****Facing the challenges of
life****ISAIAH 50:4**

*The LORD God hath
given me the tongue of the
learned, that I should know
how to speak a word in
season to him that is weary:
he wakeneth morning by
morning, he wakeneth mine
ear to hear as the learned.*

When things are not going well for you, don't you want someone to have the "right words" to encourage you? Don't you also want to be able to help yourself turn a situation around as quickly as possible? While we cannot always do this immediately, there are times when we can do a lot to help ourselves survive difficult times. What can we get out of today's reading?

The prophet Isaiah knew the Scriptures and how to apply them to his own life as well as to offer a word of encouragement to those people he came into contact with. Many of the people he met every day were people who were very discouraged. He knew words of comfort and encouragement to give them.

Do you know the Word of God and how to use it skilfully by applying it to your own life? Do you know who you are in Christ when situations in your life threaten to devastate you? Can you stand with confidence on the Word of God when the stresses of life threaten to knock you down and crush you under the load? You might say that you don't have this knowledge of Scripture.

Go to the Bible. Put God's Word into your heart. Pray that the Holy Spirit help you to use it effectively when it is needed. Begin to study and learn, and you will be surprised at how much the Holy Spirit can help you remember God's Word when you need it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 50-51**

THOUGHT

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. – 1 Peter 2:2

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 52–53

LESSON

Only Jesus, always Jesus

ISAIAH 53:2

*For he shall grow up before
him as a tender plant,
and as a root out of a dry
ground: he hath no form
nor comeliness; and when
we shall see him, there is
no beauty that we should
desire him.*

A “tender plant” attempting to survive in “dry ground” seems like an unlikely situation. In reality, however, such was by divine design! The text is intended to emphasise that what appears impossible with men is not so with God. The spread and success of Christianity was orchestrated by God. Christianity is not of human origin.

Jesus stepped fully into our nature, receiving the same human infirmities that we have. Because He overcame in our nature, condemning sin in the flesh, He is able to offer us a life sacrificed in our place, an example of overcoming that gives us hope. He has condemned sin in the flesh so that we too may condemn sin in the flesh. He has led the way. He will not deny us His power to overcome adversity. He has left us an example. We only have to follow Jesus, the Root. We should let Him shoot up out of our stony hearts and sprout.

God has brought about the good news from all the bad news. Out of the worst, God can bring about the best. So no matter how bad the bad news seems, remember that God always has a plan to do good for His people, including you.

When we need forgiveness and assurance, even hope, let us turn to Jesus, Who knows what is in man, and has no need for anyone to tell Him. He has been there and done that. Let us overcome the evil that has been ours with the goodness that is His.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 52–53

THOUGHT

Let the Root spring up out of your dry ground.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 54–55***LESSON****Enlarging your capacity
for God****ISAIAH 54:2**

*Enlarge the place of thy
tent, and let them stretch
forth the curtains of thine
habitations: spare not,
lengthen thy cords, and
strengthen thy stakes;*

Is your life the same as it was a year ago? Many people feel like every day is like the day before. If you do what you have always done, you get what you have always got; for some that means spiritual barrenness. When we fall into those routines, our lives no longer bear the same kind of fruitfulness for God's purpose. God wants to expand your influence for His purpose.

Take the analogy of a water bottle and a balloon. The capacity of the water bottle is fixed and limited. Though the water bottle is bigger, it cannot expand. It is not elastic. The balloon, on the other hand, is able to stretch and expand.

It is not just about size; it is also about the ability to stretch. Your labour for God is not based on your ability. It is your expandability and your willingness to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit so that God can use you in areas that you do not think possible before.

God wants us to enlarge our tents. To do so requires hard work and sacrifice. It is like physical exercise. You have to stretch your muscles. You have to use a certain set of muscles that you do not even know existed. It is going to require some pain. So stretch your commitment. Expand your ministry.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 54–55

THOUGHT

Pray that God will give you a holy yearning to serve Him more and more.

BIBLE LESSON

Isaiah 56–57

LESSON

God’s house for everyone

ISAIAH 56:7

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

God uses us to extend His love to others. He uses us to proclaim His message of love and salvation. He uses us to show compassion and kindness. He uses us to bring people into His house and His kingdom.

We, like the Jews, sometimes act as if we are better than others, especially those who are not as religious as we are. Because we think more highly of ourselves than we ought, we often treat others poorly. We sometimes ostracise others because they do not believe in Jesus. We also look down on others because they are not one of us or “in our clique”.

As forgiven sinners, we should not look at ourselves as better than others. We should not look at people as to how they can help us or what they can do for us. Instead, we should see them for what God wants to do for them and what we can do for them. We need to reflect the love that God has for all people and reach out to those whom the world pushes aside. We should proclaim to the ostracised people around us the wonderful promises of Jesus and show them love by listening to their problems, helping them with their needs and being sensitive to their feelings. We share with them that God loves them.

God has opened His house for everyone in this world. God wants His church to be a house of prayer for all people. He invites them to be a part of the family and therefore so should we.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 56–57

THOUGHT

God will make His house a house of prayer for all people with or without you. Won’t you join Him in His mission?

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 58–59***LESSON****Beware the sins of the
mind****ISAIAH 59:2***But your iniquities have
separated between you and
your God, and your sins
have hid his face from you,
that he will not hear.*

God's Word never fails. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" [2 Corinthians 1:20]. When it seems like God fails to deliver, it is because of the sins of the people, whose evil deeds have created a separation between them and God.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" [Psalm 66:18]. God knows our every thought, and He will disregard our prayers and petitions if we have allowed sin to destroy our fellowship with Him.

God wants us to talk to Him, praise Him and petition Him with our requests. But we cannot assume that He hears us just because we pray. We must first live in a way that honours Him and follows His standards. It is not from a lack of power or willingness on the part of God that He has not rescued His people from the consequences of their sins. The fault lies in the refusal of God's people to turn from their own sins.

Whatever else the world may offer us, it can never offer us peace. Peace comes from a life dedicated to righteousness and lived in quietness and confidence. If you seek the peace of God today, come and fall before His altar and surrender yourself to walk in His way of peace. Do it now; delay will only make it harder.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 58–59

THOUGHT

Peace is something God establishes through submission, obedience and faithfulness. It is not something humans achieve.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 60***LESSON****The blessing of God's
glory****VERSE 1**

*Arise, shine; for thy light is
come, and the glory of the
LORD is risen upon thee.*

Having just declared that God would be coming as Redeemer [Isaiah 59:20], the prophet summons Israel to “arise, shine; for thy light is come”. “The glory of the Lord” shines brighter than the sun, showering as a great light upon Israel. God is the source of their renewed vitality. “Your light” evokes Israel’s revived splendour. As God’s glory transforms Israel, it also transforms the whole world.

All the Israelites from foreign lands would return to Israel. Gentiles will flock there for the blessings of salvation from spiritual darkness. The redeemed people from the nations will praise God and bring in their wealth. Foreign nations will assist in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem [v. 10]. Kingdoms and nations that oppose Israel will be destroyed [v. 12]. Jerusalem will be called “the city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” [v. 14]. Righteousness and peace will prevail. Violence, wasting and destruction will be banished. Israel will also feed on the wealth of the nations [v. 16].

The people will enjoy physical peace and spiritual righteousness [v. 17]. The Lord Himself will be their everlasting light [v. 19]. God will hasten it and bring it to pass [v. 22].

The glory of the Lord has arisen upon us. As children of light, we should shine as lights in the world. We should glorify and honour God not only with our lips but also with our lives.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 60**

THOUGHT

God's people must reflect God's glory.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 61–62***LESSON****The LORD delights in you****ISAIAH 62:4**

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 61–62**

Israel has been “forsaken”. It has been desolate since the crucifixion of Christ. Israel has experienced separation from God because of her sin [Isaiah 50:1]. The prophet Isaiah reminded the nation that God could redeem her [Isaiah 59:1].

The Israelites were demoralised and impatient because God’s promises were not immediately fulfilled. So, on behalf of the people, the prophet Isaiah prayed fervently and confessed their sinfulness before God. God responded to Isaiah’s prayer of intercession by saying that He, too, would not be at peace until His promises were fulfilled [Isaiah 62:1].

The prophet Isaiah prophesied that Israel would be restored one day—when the Lord Jesus returns and establishes His kingdom. Instead of being “forsaken”, she will be named “Hephzibah”, which means “The Lord delights in you”. Instead of “desolate”, she will be named “Beulah”, which means “Your land shall be married”. God will delight in Israel as a bridegroom delights in his bride [Isaiah 62:5].

God was so desirous of restoration that He placed “watchmen” (spiritual prayer warriors) around Jerusalem’s walls [Isaiah 62:6]. When Jerusalem is restored, it will never again fall to its enemies [Isaiah 62:8–9]. Isaiah was confident that salvation would come to Jerusalem [Isaiah 62:11]. As God’s children, we must be worthy of His love by honouring Him in our lifestyle. Let us be zealous in our Christian walk by witnessing to others consistently. There is no greater joy than the experience of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for Israel will be restored to glory and Your purposes for Jerusalem will be fulfilled.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 63–64***LESSON****Request for forgiveness****ISAIAH 64:6**

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

“**R**end the heaven and come down,” pleaded the prophet Isaiah. He appealed to God to shake the mountain and make the nations tremble at His presence [Isaiah 64:1–3]. He wanted God to demonstrate His power and His presence as in the past. But God had already declared that there was something new [Isaiah 42:9]. The “something new” was Jesus! And we know that God did appear with Christ’s coming, but the Israelites rejected Him and crucified Him on the cross.

The people recognised that they had sinned and wanted to be saved [Isaiah 64:5], but their problem was that they were rotten, unclean and powerless. The Bible teaches us that our righteousness falls short of divine standard. It is as filthy rags in the sight of a thrice-holy God, Who is our Righteousness. Even the best of us is impure in God’s sight. A sinner is absolutely helpless when it comes to justifying righteousness for himself. Righteousness can never be attained—only obtained by faith in Jesus Christ [Romans 3:22, 5:18; Philippians 3:9].

On the basis of their relationship as Potter and clay, the remnant of God’s people urged Him to mould and transform them according to His discretion. They pleaded with Him to withhold His anger and forgive them.

An unsaved person’s life may be the best according to the world’s standards. But God says, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” [Isaiah 64:6]. The only solution is to believe that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” [1 John 1:7].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 63–64**

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I accept You as my personal Saviour and Lord. Take control of my life. Amen.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 65***LESSON****Peace and tranquillity on earth****VERSE 17**

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

This chapter records the LORD's response to the prayer of His elect. God had constantly been extending His hand of mercy to Israel. Their sins and unfaithfulness made judgement necessary [v. 1–7]. However, in that judgement, a remnant will be preserved [vv. 8–12]. The Lord will establish a glorious kingdom in which peace and righteousness flourish [vv. 17–25].

The prophet Isaiah pleaded with the people to place their trust in the Lord their covenant-keeping God and to live righteously. But they rejected Him and abused His mercy and grace through perverted sacrifices and rebellion in their hearts. Nevertheless, God has promised not to destroy them all. He will bless and preserve His faithful servants [v. 8], and punish the apostates [vv. 11–12].

Beginning in verse 17, Isaiah talks about life during the period we know as the Millennium. God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Jerusalem will become a city of joy. There will be no sickness or suffering, and weeping and crying will also vanish [vv. 18–19]. Though death will still be present, life will be extended [v. 20]. The people will enjoy safety and the produce of their vineyards [vv. 21–23]. Prayers will be answered instantly [v. 24]. Communion will be sweet. The animal kingdom will be at peace [v. 25].

Isaiah's idealistic vision of God's glorious kingdom does not stand alone. Every quality of life prophesied by the prophet is repeated and reaffirmed in the Book of Revelation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 65

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the promise of a glorious future.

BIBLE LESSON*Isaiah 66***LESSON****The Lord's comfort****VERSE 13**

*As one whom his mother
comforteth, so will I comfort
you; and ye shall be comforted
in Jerusalem.*

Our God is the “God of all comfort” [2 Corinthians 1:3]. His comfort is upon all who truly believe in Him. He will rebuke and take vengeance on those who reject Him. In verses 11–12, Jerusalem is compared to a mother, though whatever Jerusalem can give actually comes from God. God is also compared to a mother who comforts her child [v. 13]. God promises His disconsolate people that He would be their powerful comforter—with the tender affection and compassion of a loving mother.

According to Isaiah, a mother’s love for Jerusalem will give the long-suffering city rebirth. As quickly as a woman giving birth, even before labour pains, Jerusalem will be restored [v. 7]. Like a mother nourishing her infant, so Jerusalem will be prosperous, nourishing its people [v. 11]. During the Millennial Kingdom, Jerusalem will be exalted above all nations as the supreme city of the world. She will enjoy permanent peace. The Gentile nations will come to Jerusalem for spiritual nourishment. The remnant of believing Israelites will travel as missionaries to proclaim God’s glory among the Gentiles [v. 19].

When the Lord comes to bless Jerusalem, He will also judge those who have transgressed against Him and refused to repent. Isaiah ends his book by emphasising the need for unrepentant people to turn to the Lord—the only God and the Holy One of Israel.

How about you? We can only experience true peace and joy in God. Come to Jesus Christ now and find comfort in Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ISAIAH 66**

THOUGHT

Distance from God is distance from comfort.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 1***LESSON****Called before birth****VERSE 5**

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Jeremiah's Judaeen ministry spanned over a period of over 40 years. He had seen the high points of spiritual revival under Josiah as well as witnessed the depth of spiritual apostasy under his sons, and the eventual collapse of Judah under Zedekiah. Throughout these troubled times, God gave Jeremiah one message—Repent! Repent! Repent!

This message was not popular in Jeremiah's days, and it is certainly not popular in our day. Jeremiah was given a tough assignment. But he had no choice, because "the word of the LORD came" to him [v. 4]. He was not ready for the assignment. When God called him, the first word out of Jeremiah's mouth was, "Ah ..." [v. 6]. The "ah's" of hesitation and the excuses of inexperience and ineloquence melted under the Lord's decretive will for Jeremiah.

God's calling of Jeremiah was not a haphazard decision. God had prepared for Himself a messenger. God had formed Jeremiah, God knew him, God had sanctified him and God had ordained him. God had a mission for Jeremiah—to be a prophet to the nations [v. 5].

Where God sends, He accompanies and preserves, "I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD" [v. 8]. And when God calls, He will also equip—"Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" [v. 9]. God is not looking for people who are able, He is looking for those who are humble and available. So when God calls you, get going. We all have to start from where we are. The important thing is to start.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH I

THOUGHT

When God calls, what will your response be? Will it be "Ah ..." or "Here am I; send me" [Isaiah 6:8]?

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 2***LESSON****Broken cisterns****VERSE 13**

*For my people have
committed two evils; they
have forsaken me the
fountain of living waters,
and hewed them out
cisterns, broken cisterns,
that can hold no water.*

This chapter is a sermon. Jeremiah was God’s mouthpiece. Judah was reminded of her covenant. In the beginning, Judah was all that God expected her to be. God remembered her kindness and love [v. 2]. “Israel was holiness unto the LORD” [v. 3]. Israel was set apart as a testimony to the nations, to be a light shining for God so that the rest of humanity could see God.

Sadly, as the years passed, the people’s love for God waned. They became vain [v. 5], defiled the land [v. 7], and the priests and pastors departed from the truth [v. 8]. The Lord laid two great indictments for the children of Israel. “My people have committed two evils” [v. 13]. They had forsaken the Lord—the fountain of living waters. The Psalmist says, “For with thee is the fountain of life” [Psalm 36:9a]. God is the source of our life and living. He is the living water [John 4:14].

The people had forsaken the Fountain of Life. Instead, they resorted to digging little crevices into the rocks on the mountainside to collect the droplets of stale and dirty water. The people would rather drink from this dirty water than the refreshing water from Mount Hermon.

This is a picture of the sinner. Many people are busy digging cisterns and collecting droplets of dirty water. We pile up possessions. We seek pleasure to amuse ourselves. We try to find satisfaction in life when God is the fountain of life. In His presence is the fullness of joy; “at [His] right hand there are pleasures for evermore” [Psalm 16:11].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 2

THOUGHT

Do not trade the peace of God for the pittance of this world, and the joys of heaven for the empty laughter of this world.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 3***LESSON****Come home, backsliders****VERSE 13**

Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

Every nation, organisation or church begins to decline when it has reached its peak. The decline is not immediately noticeable because the laurels of success are still sweet and fresh. Thus we see that the sermon on backsliding came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah [v. 6], when Judah was still experiencing the effects of spiritual revival. However, Judah had seen God's judgement upon Israel, "treacherous ... Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also" [v. 8]. Judah had backslidden. What are the signs of backsliding?

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" [Proverbs 14:14a]. The key sign of backsliding is a preoccupation with self. A backslider's life was once guided by God, but gradually allows his own ways to creep back in until he is full of himself again. The sin of backsliding is the sin of crowding God out by filling one's life with self.

God would be perfectly justified if He had allowed Judah to remain in her sin. Instead, in His mercy, God raised up Jeremiah to call them to return. "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel" [vv. 12, 14, 22].

To return means to turn around. The backslider is to turn back to where God is. God never changes in His love for us. The desire of God is that every backslidden Christian returns to Him, and declares, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God" [v. 22b].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 3

THOUGHT

God never departs from us. It is we who move away from Him. But God's heart is always open to welcome us home.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 4***LESSON****Putting away
abominations****VERSE 1**

*If thou wilt return, O Israel,
saith the LORD, return unto
me: and if thou wilt put
away thine abominations
out of my sight, then shalt
thou not remove.*

The people of Judah did not backslide because of a dearth of religious activities. Under Josiah, Judah had experienced spiritual revival. Temple worship had been restored. The Passover was observed. However, underneath the façade of revived spiritual interest, there was a deep-seated malaise—a spiritual disease that was eating at the core of God’s people.

From the outside, Judah was in the pink of spiritual health. But God could discern the deepest thoughts of their hearts, and He was not at all pleased with this outward show of religion. God wanted the people to return from backsliding without any guise and in good faith. God’s desire is, “If thou wilt return ... and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove” [v. 1].

To return to God means to put away the abominations, the sins and the idols—everything that is offensive to God. This calls for a realignment of our allegiance, a reassessment of our priorities and a restoration of our divided hearts to God. It also means to declare who God is, “the LORD liveth, in truth, in judgement, and in righteousness” [v. 2a]. Truth is the integrity of our words. Justice and righteousness are the integrity of our deeds.

As God’s people, we have to order our lives according to God’s precepts. Live your life truthfully, justly and righteously so that “the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory” [v. 2b].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 4

THOUGHT

Let your life speak so loudly for God that you do not need to declare Him with your lips.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 5***LESSON****Wanted****VERSE 1**

*Run ye to and fro through
the streets of Jerusalem, and
see now, and know, and
seek in the broad places
thereof, if ye can find a
man, if there be any that
executeth judgement, that
seeketh the truth; and I will
pardon it.*

God expects His people to be like Him. “The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgement, and in righteousness” [Jeremiah 4:2a], and He looks for a man who “executeth judgement ... that seeketh the truth” [v. 1]. Can He find such a man in Jerusalem, the city of God? This incident reminds us of Abraham’s pleading with God to spare Sodom. God said that if Abraham could find 50 righteous people in Sodom, He would spare the city. After several sessions of bargaining, the number was reduced to 10. And even then, it was impossible. It was like trying to find a needle in the proverbial haystack, only that the needle was not there.

In Jeremiah 5, God was looking for only one man—in a city of religious people. If there were one, He would stay His judgement. The problem in Judah is that there was none. “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God ... there is none that doeth good, no, not one” [Romans 3:10–12]. That is the problem with humanity, not just Jerusalem.

We thank God that there is a righteous One Who walked the earth and was perfect—our Lord Jesus Christ. He was made “sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” [2 Corinthians 5:21].

Today, God is still looking for sinners who have been made righteous in Christ Jesus. Will you be the person whom God is looking for?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 5

THOUGHT

I wonder what God sees when He looks at our country. I wonder what God sees when He looks into our home. And I wonder what He sees when He looks into our hearts. Will He find a person who is just, truthful and faithful?

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 6***LESSON****Declaring war on His
own nation****VERSE 4**

*Prepare ye war against
her; arise, and let us go up
at noon. Woe unto us! for
the day goeth away, for the
shadows of the evening are
stretched out.*

This chapter contains a sad prophecy: God would declare war on Jerusalem. In fact, He would make use of her enemies to punish her. A people from the north—the Babylonians—would defeat Jerusalem and conquer the entire Judah [v. 22]. “They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion” [v. 23].

We also read in this chapter the consequences of the Babylonian siege and conquest. The people of Judah shall gird themselves in sackcloth and wallow in ashes. They would mourn greatly in immense grief [v. 26]. God allowed this to happen because the Jews would not heed His prophets [v. 10]. They were a stiff-necked people who indulged in self-gratification defiantly [vv. 13, 15, 28]. Jeremiah described their end convincingly. The people would be rejected like dross in a furnace [v. 30].

Jeremiah warned his people that judgement was coming. The prophet told us how he was full of the fury of the Lord, and how he was weary of holding it in [v. 11]. This is a warning to God’s people. A holy God would not allow His Name and character to be maligned by the disobedience and sinfulness of people who claim that they are God’s people. “For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God” [1 Peter 4:17a].

God will sooner destroy His church than to have to do the works of the devil.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 6**

REFLECTION

How is your walk with God? Are you deviating from the old paths and the good way?

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 7***LESSON****Denouncement by God****VERSE 16**

*Therefore pray not thou
for this people, neither lift
up cry nor prayer for them,
neither make intercession to
me: for I will not hear thee.*

The narration of the impending doom of Judah continues, this time focused on false worship and its consequences. We also read again Jeremiah's calls for repentance. The Jews thought that they would be protected by God, since they lived in God's Holy City and prayed in His Temple. They thought they could worship false gods and indulge in sinful ways. They were wrong [vv. 9–11]. Because of their stubbornness, God's wrath would be thoroughly manifested [v. 20].

The hearts of the people were for Baal. They practised child sacrifice in Tophet [v. 31]. For that, the Lord pronounced to them that the valley where they conducted the sacrifice would become a valley of slaughter for them [v. 32]. Their bodies would be fed to the fowls and beasts [v. 33]. To make it worse, Jeremiah was instructed not to pray for the Jews. This signifies only one thing—total condemnation.

God rarely instructs His prophets against interceding for His people. God allowed Abraham to pray for Sodom [Genesis 18:23–33] and He listened when Moses interceded for Israel [Exodus 32–33; Numbers 14], but Jeremiah was not allowed to do so—the door to pleading for God's mercy was closed.

Would there be a time when the sins of this world turn so great that God will destroy all of us? Yes, the Bible says so. We also read that there will be much suffering and tribulation before that happens. When that time comes, where would you be found, in God's house or in the devil's company?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 7

PRAYER

Dear Lord, I pray that You will forgive me of my sins and remind me daily against sinning.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 8

LESSON

Refusal to repent

VERSE 22

*Is there no balm in Gilead;
is there no physician there?
why then is not the health
of the daughter of my
people recovered?*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 8

In this chapter, Jeremiah exposed the false prophets who opposed God's ministry and led His people astray. Even then, the Jews did not repent and return to God. Why is that so?

Firstly, the people were lost in their sins. Several questions were asked from verses 4 to 7. Jeremiah did not understand why they would choose to stay in their sins despite his warnings. Not only were the people unashamed of committing abomination, they could not even blush [v. 12]. Their souls were in a desperately sinful state. Secondly, despite Jeremiah's pleas, they were still deceived. As we have read in the previous chapter, they believed that they were saved since they possessed the Temple.

Finally, they probably feared being judged for their past wrongdoings. If what Jeremiah told them was correct, then they must come humbly before God in deep contrition in order to survive God's wrath. A sensible student who fails a test tells himself that he needs to put in extra effort in that particular subject or topic. This enables him to re-learn concepts that he did not understand initially. In doing so, he admits that he lacks knowledge, and is humble enough to relearn everything. However, a bad student blames his teacher or the fairness of the test. He knows he is the problem but refuses to admit it because of pride.

Likewise, if you discover that you have any sin in your life, which type of student will you emulate? The answer is clear. The proud student brings one to certain failure and damnation. Do the right thing—let us be good students.

PRAYER

Lord, I repent of my sins. I pray that You, in Your mercy, will forgive me.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 9***LESSON****False confidence and disobedience****VERSE 25**

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised;

It was God Who entered into a covenant relationship with the Jews, a covenant sealed by the mark of circumcision. Circumcision was a result of the covenant and not the reason for it. The Jews had the false impression that as long as they were circumcised, they need not repent or believe. They thought that the ritual of circumcision guaranteed them the acceptance of the Lord. They were wrong.

The Jews thought they were free to sin because of their covenant relationship. Jeremiah chided them by reminding them that being a part of God's covenant entailed a greater responsibility instead to carry out God's will. He pointed out that being God's covenant people offers no escape from judgement.

The Jews in those days placed their trust in their covenant relationship as a safety net, thinking that their sins were forever forgiven by a kind and merciful God. Today, we can also see this false assurance in Christians. They think that just because Jesus has died for all their sins, they can continue sinning—their sins will be forgiven anyway.

Don't forget that God hates sin and will certainly punish the sinner even if He forgives. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord [Romans 6:23]. We must constantly avert sin. Although Christians are a special people to God, and so precious He is willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son for our sins, we must also understand God's commandments for our obedience. Obedience to His commands is not optional.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 9**

REFLECTION

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? – Romans 6:1–2

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 10***LESSON****False teachers and the flock****VERSE 21**

For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

The inclination to worship idols is deeply entrenched in our nature. Human imagination has a tendency to wonder, and conjures and builds images to bow down to, and even serve. Jeremiah ridiculed these idols by pointing out that these molten images are “falsehood, and there is no breath in them” [v. 14]—they could not even walk or talk, and even had to be carried around. “They are vanity, and the work of errors” [v. 15a] and the people who worship them are “altogether brutish and foolish” [v. 8].

Once again, He warned his people of the oncoming invasion from Babylon and urged them to flee. And since God forbade him to pray for the nation, Jeremiah prayed for himself as a representative of the nation. So much was his love for his people!

Today, our idols are not as tangible as those before, though they are no less lethal, or even more so. Like in the past, though there are still many who worship other gods, and there are people who choose mammon over God, the modern man has more options and temptations especially given the availability of technology. Instead of focusing our time and energy on these idols, we should be devoting our time to God.

Also, there are false teachers in the kingdom of God today. They knowingly or unknowingly deceive their flock into following their doctrines rather than God’s. These people lead the flock astray and away from God. It is our duty to be like the Berean Christians, who studied God’s Word daily and were spiritually discerned enough to distinguish the sheep from the wolves.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 10

PRAYER

Lord, give me wisdom to know Your truth and follow Your doctrines.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 11–12***LESSON****Remembering God's
covenant****JEREMIAH 11:3**

*And say thou unto them,
Thus saith the LORD God of
Israel; Cursed be the man
that obeyeth not the words
of this covenant,*

The Jews are a privileged people. Out of all the nations of the earth, God chose them to be a special people unto Himself and established His covenant with them, promising to be their God and to bless them richly, if they obeyed His commands. Furthermore, “unto them were committed the oracles of God” [Romans 3:2].

Yet time and again they rebelled against Him and worshipped false gods. But God was longsuffering towards them and repeatedly sent His prophets to remind them of the blessings and curses written in the covenant. Jeremiah recorded the sins of the nation and pleaded with them to return to the Lord while there was yet time. But the people were not interested. In fact, they conspired to kill him.

So again, Jehovah declared that He would bring great trouble on these people. They would try to escape, but would not be able to do so. They would at last turn to God and ask for mercy. By then, it would be too late. They would pray to their false gods, which would never be able to help them.

Like the Jews, we Christians are also a privileged people. God has given us the Gospel, the Bible and His Holy Spirit. Let us learn a lesson from Jeremiah 11 and 12 and hearken to the Lord's instructions to “obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be My people, and I will be your God” [Jeremiah 11:4b].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 11–12**

THOUGHT

In the light of the above lesson, we should ask ourselves, “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” [2 Peter 3:11b]

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 13***LESSON****Good for nothing****VERSE 10**

*This evil people, which
refuse to hear my words,
which walk in the
imagination of their heart,
and walk after other gods,
to serve them, and to
worship them, shall even be
as this girdle, which is good
for nothing.*

Jeremiah had been speaking very plainly and boldly to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, but without any success. In this chapter, we read that the Lord told him to use two object lessons to warn them of what He was going to do. The first object was a marred linen waistband that had been soaked in the muddy river and had become useless. God was using this picture to try to teach His people that He was going to destroy the pride of Judah and Jerusalem. The people had refused to heed His Word through His prophet. They were of no use to God. He would one day take them to Babylon, and there He would humble them and cure them of their idolatry.

The second object was one of wine pots being broken by knocking against one another. The leaders and the people of Jerusalem were filling their jars with wine, preparing for a party, but God would fill them with a drunkenness that would lead to shameful defeat and painful destruction. God would break them like clay pots, without pity. This was a strong warning.

Our Lord wants Christians to lead godly lives so that the world may see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father. But if our lives are no different from those of the world, then we are like salt that has lost its savour. "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" [Matthew 5:13b].

Don't be a "good for nothing" Christian.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 13

PRAYER

O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, we beseech Thee, let Thy anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy people.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 14***LESSON****False prophets****VERSE 14**

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 14**

God judged Judah by sending no rain for many months, which made life very difficult for the people. Jeremiah prayed on behalf of the people to God. He confessed that their sins were well-known, they had gone backwards by turning away from God, and they had sinned against Jehovah. Still, he asked God to send rain for the sake of His own name.

God responded to Jeremiah's prayer, not by sending rain but by announcing His judgement [v. 10]. Yet again, He told His servant not to pray for the people. His longsuffering had run out and He was determined to punish them for their sins. The nation was destined for the sword, famine and pestilence [v. 12].

Jeremiah blamed the false prophets who preached lies to the people, promising deliverance and peace. God agreed that these pretenders were leading the people astray but they themselves were also responsible for their actions because they should have known that the Lord did not send them. The Lord Jesus taught that the Pharisees were like blind men trying to lead the people who were also blind. Neither knew the truth of God, and both will fall into the ditch [Matthew 15:14].

Both our Lord and the Apostle Paul warned that many false prophets would arise in the last days. And many people will be deceived because they have "itching ears", preferring to turn from the truth and towards fables [2 Timothy 4:3-4]. We have to be vigilant and arm ourselves with the knowledge of God's Word.

THOUGHT

Search the Scriptures daily.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 15–16***LESSON****A lesson for God's
servants****JEREMIAH 15:20**

*And I will make thee unto
this people a fenced brasen
wall: and they shall fight
against thee, but they shall
not prevail against thee: for
I am with thee to save thee
and to deliver thee, saith
the LORD.*

God's mind was made up. He was determined to punish His people for their sin and rebellion. They were going to face four possible judgements: death from disease, war, starvation and exile in Babylon [Jeremiah 15:1–9]. The Jews, instead of humbling and condemning themselves, questioned why the Lord decreed such a terrible judgement.

Jeremiah's explanation was simple. They had repeated the sins of their fathers instead of turning away from sin. Furthermore, they had not learnt from past judgements that God had sent. This made them more guilty than their fathers [Jeremiah 16:10–13]. They had also mistreated His servant Jeremiah, hating him and regarding him as an enemy and a traitor.

Jeremiah was deeply disheartened and began to lament about the difficulty of his work. The Lord told him to cease from his distrust and return to his work. He promised to deliver him from his enemies and restore him [Jeremiah 15:19–21]. God further instructed him to conduct himself as one who expects to see his country ruined very shortly. In the prospect of sad times, he was to abstain from marriage, mourning for the dead, and pleasure [Jeremiah 16:1–9].

God's servants are human and they have their failings, and are bound to feel discouraged in times of testing. But they must learn to walk by faith, which means obeying God's Word no matter how they feel, or what others may do to them. God never promises us an easy job but He did promise to provide all that we need to serve Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 15–16**

THOUGHT

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Unless we abide in Him, we cannot bear fruit in our service for Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 17***LESSON****A warning for modern Christians****VERSE 27**

But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 17**

If there is one commandment that modern Christians tend to break, it is the fourth commandment—to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. Pressured by the trials of modern-day living, juggling work with family, coping with projects and exams in school and even service in the church, and trying to experience the many pleasures the world has to offer, we are often tempted to treat the Sabbath like any other day. Even when we come to church, our hearts are often far away—most likely planning what to do after service.

The Lord was angry with His people for their disobedience. In this chapter, He listed their many sins, such as idolatry [vv. 1–4], unbelief [vv. 5–10], greed [v. 11], forsaking the Lord [vv. 12–13] and rejecting God’s servant [vv. 14–18]. But He devoted the largest portion [vv. 19–27] to rebuking them for profaning the Sabbath.

God had given the Israelites the Sabbath as a special token of their relationship with Him. The people, however, repeatedly disregarded the Law. Their sin was evident. Their hearts were devoted to material gain and not to the Lord. Before long, they would have to face the consequences of their disobedience.

For many of us who are caught up in a pressure-cooker lifestyle, we may console ourselves by saying that we are not driven by greed—it is just a way of life. But God, Who knows our hearts even better than we ourselves, says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

PRAYER

Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. – Psalm 51: 9–10

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 18–19***LESSON****To be clay in the Potter's hand****JEREMIAH 18:6**

O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

We read here the allegory of the potter and the clay. God guided Jeremiah to the potter's house, where he saw how a potter worked—how clay was marred in the hands of the potter and how he disregarded it and made it again [Jeremiah 18:3]. Then God said to Jeremiah, “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? ... Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, ...” [Jeremiah 18: 6].

This is followed by a call for repentance of God's people. If they repented from their sinful ways, God would bless them. But if they stayed in their wicked paths, they would have to face God's chastisement [Jeremiah 18:7–10].

Sadly, just like the clay that resisted the moulding of the potter, the people chose to defy God [Jeremiah 18:12]. Despite Jeremiah's warning to them, they even plotted to silence the prophet [Jeremiah 18:18]. As a result, they had to face the consequences [Jeremiah 19:4–9]. The voiding of God's counsel to Judah and Jerusalem [Jeremiah 19:7] is symbolised by Jeremiah's breaking of a potter's earthen bottle in front of God's people [Jeremiah 19:10].

We should surrender ourselves to God and allow Him to shape us. Many people dread the idea of giving up personal control of their lives. But what we need to understand—and be assured of—is that God's sovereign control is always consistent to His attributes. He will always give us the best if we yield ourselves to Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 18–19**

THOUGHT

Just to be clay in the Potter's hands, ready to do what His Word commands; only to be what He wants me to be, every moment of every day. – Norman Clayton, *Every Moment of Every Day*.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 20–21

LESSON

Trusting in the Lord always

JEREMIAH 20:13

*Sing unto the LORD, praise
ye the LORD: for he hath
delivered the soul of the
poor from the hand of
evildoers.*

Jeremiah was facing great distress. His people had smitten him and put him in the stocks [Jeremiah 20:2]. He wavered between two states of mind. On the one hand, he asked why God had “deceived” him into these sufferings [Jeremiah 20:7]. Like Job, he even cursed the day that he was born [Jeremiah 20:14; Job 3:3]. On the other, he recalled the goodness of the Lord and placed his trust in Him to deliver his soul from his persecutors [Jeremiah 20:11–13].

And it is in this context that the eventual capture of the kingdom of Judah by Babylon was foretold [Jeremiah 20:4]. The proud and foolish King Zedekiah had refused to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar [2 Chronicles 36:13] and led the people into disaster. He had asked Jeremiah to intercede for him, hoping for the Lord to help Judah prevail. But the Lord denounced Jerusalem and told the people of their impending destruction [Jeremiah 21:11–14].

One cannot enjoy God’s blessings while continuing in one’s wicked ways. Do not be mistaken that God will always forgive since He is all-loving. We must also remember that He is all-just and does not condone sins.

And this very truth should also be our comfort if we are suffering from persecution for Christ’s sake. Perhaps it is human nature to doubt and lament when we are going through tribulations but we should always lean on our Lord, Who has suffered and died for us on the Cross, and trust in Him always.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 20–21

THOUGHT

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.
– Helen Lemmel, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 22***LESSON****Counting the cost****VERSE 4**

For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

When he was pleading with the children of God to repent, the prophet Jeremiah often provided them with a choice. From thereon, he would tell them of the consequences of making one and not the other [Jeremiah 19:7–10; 27:12–13; 38:2–3]. We see this in Chapter 22, too.

The Lord commanded the king of Judah and his people to be righteous and deliver the oppressed, to do no wrong and violence to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and to shed no innocent blood [v. 3]. If they complied, they would go to heaven. If they defied, they would face destruction [v. 5–9] and be cast away [v. 10].

Indeed, “woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong” [v. 13a]. A covetous heart looks after its selfish interest, and often at the expense of others. Enticed by worldly temptations, the heart not only sinks into a never-ending pursuit of possessions but it also encloses itself in a world of its own, seeking to safeguard its own treasures. Little does this miserable heart realise that, by doing so, it misses out on the greatest gem in life—the peace of mind of a righteous man.

We should always reflect and consider our ways. Have I lived this day right? In our interactions with others in the day, have I considered their interests? As God’s children, we are to live righteously, with integrity in character and generosity in spirit. It is not because we are fearful of punishment, but simply because we should all live worthily for Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 22

THOUGHT

Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost, tho’ you gain the whole world for your own? Even now it may be that the line you have crossed, have you counted, have you counted the cost? – A. J. Hodge, “Have You Counted the Cost?”

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 23***LESSON****With fear and trembling****VERSE 23**

*Am I a God at hand, saith
the LORD, and not a God
afar off?*

Chapter 23 starts on a solemn note: “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD” [v. 1]. Indeed, this chapter is about the false prophets and priests during the time of Jeremiah. Some were adulterers [v. 10], some prophesied in false gods [v. 13], and some walked in lies and collaborated with evildoers [v. 14].

They spoke for themselves but not for the Lord [v. 16] and condoned evil imagination [v. 17]. For all these, the Lord said that no one could hide his sins from Him [v. 23–24] and His judgement of fury would fall grievously upon their heads [v. 19]. He would forsake them [v. 39] and bring them eternal humiliation [v. 40].

We can see this chapter in two different lights. On the one hand, it cautions us to always practise discernment when we come across questionable doctrines. On the other, it serves as a reminder for us to always make sure we are not teaching erroneously. We should always practise what we preach. We may not all be pastors or preachers but there are definitely people in our lives who are in our charge or under our influence. More often than not, people are more affected by seeing what we do than hearing what we say, especially the younger, more impressionable ones.

How are we conducting ourselves as mentors? Are we showing good Christian testimonies, especially to children and unbelievers? Are we stumbling blocks to people who are weaker than we in faith?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 23

THOUGHT

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. – Psalm 2:11

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 24–25***LESSON****On the Lord's side****JEREMIAH 24:7**

And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 24–25**

In the Bible, we often see the division of people into two groups—one who obey God's command and one who defies. We see this in Chapter 24 in the form of an allegory of good figs and bad figs. God showed Jeremiah two baskets of figs, one "very good" and another "very naughty" [Jeremiah 24:2] and He revealed to him the different consequences they are to face for their attitude and behaviour [Jeremiah 24:5–10].

Both groups would suffer, albeit for different reasons. The people of Judah would be captured to Babylon but the Lord acknowledged and promised to look after the good figs. Their sufferings were for their own good, so that they would grow spiritually. But the bad figs would suffer great punishment.

Even as the people of Judah suffered, they would be judged for only 70 years [Jeremiah 25:1–11]. God never forgets His own people. Their sufferings are but a chastisement for them to repent. This is in contrast to the judgement that was going to befall Babylon [Jeremiah 25:12–14] and the other 18 nations [Jeremiah 25:13–38]. The Lord might have made use of Babylon to chastise Jerusalem but the cruel ways of Babylon would eventually be judged.

Indeed, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [Hebrews 10:31]. Are we walking worthily for our Lord? Or are we living in some hidden sins? Have we hearkened to God's call for us to repent? It is not too late. God may chasten us but He will never forsake us. How blessed it is to be God's children!

THOUGHT

Reflect on the lyrics of the hymn, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 26***LESSON****Repent and obey God****VERSE 13**

Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 26**

Here is a portion of the sermon that Jeremiah preached to Judah, which offended them so much that he was nearly killed for it. It was recorded that Jeremiah was willing to die for delivering—without flinching—such a message from God as he was commanded to.

Compare this with the gospel preached from “prosperity churches” in current times. The “health and wealth” messages that these churches preach are a diluted form of God’s Word—pleasant to the ears and easy to accept. How many preachers today preach the Word of God without compromise? The probable consequences of preaching an uncompromising gospel are unpopularity and reduction in church attendance. The consequence of an unrepentant sinful spirit is death. Ignoring the obvious—the lure of earthly success—is so strong that many preachers choose to preach sermons to entertain and delight their audiences. Jeremiah was not such a preacher. He delivered God’s Word as commanded in the place and time designated by God.

More importantly, in Jeremiah’s admonishment of the people to repent, we find the evidence of God’s grace. This is the prevailing theme throughout the Bible. God repeatedly withholds His wrath to punish sinners and gives sinners time and opportunity to repent so that we can escape the eternal fire, to the honour of His justice and holiness.

The only reason for this grace is His love for us. Therefore, we should amend our sinful ways now, obey God’s Word and God will be merciful to our wretched souls.

PRAYER

Thank you for the mercy shown as we repent of our sinful ways.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 27–28

LESSON

God is sovereign

JEREMIAH 27:5

I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

God declares His awesome power. Here, He reminds us that He created the earth, including the creatures in it and man. God is sovereign and He will decide how He wishes to deal with situations or matters as He sees fit. God asserts His own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as He pleases. Judah fell to the Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar, an evil king, was used to fulfil God's promise of judgement on sin.

God may use unexpected people or circumstances to correct us. We have to be ready to accept these corrections, even if it comes from an unexpected source. Those who refuse to serve the Creator shall justly be made to serve their enemies. Jeremiah urged Judah to prevent their destruction by submitting to God.

A meek spirit, by quiet submission to the hardest turns of providence, makes the best of what seems bad. The poor in spirit, the meek and humble, enjoy comfort and avoid many miseries to which the high-spirited are exposed. It is, in all cases, to the best of our interest to obey God's will.

Whatever anyone has of the good things of this world, they are what God sees fit to give. We ourselves should therefore be contented and not envy others who may have more than we.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 27–28

CHALLENGE

Trust God and be contented, whatever your situation is.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 29

LESSON

**Searching for God with
all your heart**

VERSE 13

*And ye shall seek me, and
find me, when ye shall
search for me with all your
heart.*

Here, we witness God's long-suffering, love, mercy and grace. The people of Judah had been taken captive by the Babylonians not because the enemy was mightier but because God had decreed it as a punishment for the sins of Judah. Even in the midst of this punishment, God remained in control and sent Jeremiah to encourage, guide and warn them.

More importantly, we learn that God never forsakes His children. He promised deliverance after 70 years of captivity and His prophet implored the people to search for Him with all their hearts. What an assurance for the captives. Though the exiles were in a difficult place and time, they should not despair for they had the privilege of prayer, of God's presence and His grace. God can be sought and found when we seek Him urgently and whole-heartedly. Neither strange lands nor emotional distress can break this communion. You, too, can enjoy such communion with God.

Are you going through any difficulties in life lately? Pray and consider if it is a trial to mould you or a divine punishment due to some sin that you have. If it is due to sin, humble yourself and take in the punishment meted out. The people of Judah were similarly told to accept reality and adapt to the situation.

Remember, pride must first be eradicated before repentance can follow. Thereafter, seek God with all your heart. God has promised that if we search for Him with all our hearts, He will be found.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 29

PRAYER

Dear God, please forgive us of our sins and help us to seek You wholeheartedly every day.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 30

LESSON

God's covenant

VERSE 22

*And ye shall be my people,
and I will be your God.*

The sermon recorded for us in Jeremiah 30 and 31 is one of a very different context compared to the ones in the preceding chapters. Most of what Jeremiah had said hitherto takes form in reproof and admonishments but in these two chapters we find only precious promises of a return from captivity and the glorious things reserved for the Church in the days of the Messiah. The prophet was told not only to preach this but also to write it because it was intended for the comfort of the generations to come.

It is here promised that, after their joyful restoration, the captives would have a happy settlement. Their city would be rebuilt, their numbers increased, their government established, God's covenant with them was renewed and their enemies destroyed and cut off. Hearing God speak of the covenant again reminded the Israelites that they were God's people and He was their God. This was a great comfort to them during their captivity.

Likewise, God is also the God of the Gentiles. We have the assurance that we are His children and He is our God. God would continue to show us His mercy, though the wrath of God against the wicked would still be as terrible as a whirlwind. His wrath, as well as His love, will all be manifested.

God will comfort all who turn to Him but those who approach Him must have their hearts engaged in doing His work with reverence, devotion and faith.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 30

PRAYER

Dear God, help us to obey and glorify You as Your children.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 31

LESSON

**God's wonderful plan for
Jews and Gentiles**

VERSE 36

*If those ordinances depart
from before me, saith the
LORD, then the seed of
Israel also shall cease from
being a nation before me
for ever.*

This chapter continues with the comforting words that we had read in the previous one. It encouraged the captives, assuring them that God would in due time restore them and their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again. He would send them the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace many of His promises would be fully realised.

As sure as the heavenly bodies would continue their settled course, according to the will of their Creator to the end of time, so surely the Jews would stay a separate people until the appointed time for its restoration.

Words can scarcely set forth more strongly the coming of God's kingdom. The rebuilding of Jerusalem shall be one of the greatest things God would do for the Church. The personal happiness of every true believer, as well as the future restoration of Israel, is secured by God's covenant. This divine love surpasses knowledge. To those who receive it, every present mercy brings about earnest gratitude.

As Gentiles, we need not be jealous of the covenant that the Jews have with God. God has not left us out. God's love is universal and we all have the gift of eternal life, if only we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. God loves us and has sent His only begotten Son to die in propitiation for our sins. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 31

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for sending Your son Jesus Christ to die on the Cross. I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour and look forward to the day we can meet in heaven.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 32

LESSON

Jeremiah and the worthless field

VERSE 15

*For thus saith the LORD
of hosts, the God of Israel;
Houses and fields and
vineyards shall be possessed
again in this land.*

Jerusalem was about to fall into the hands of the King of Babylon. Jeremiah was instructed by God to buy a piece of land occupied by enemy soldiers. This certainly looked like a bad investment. But Jeremiah obeyed and showed his faith in God’s promise to bring His people back from their captivity in Babylon one day to rebuild Jerusalem.

To the people around him, Jeremiah was a fool to have bought a piece of land that was already captured by the enemy. Even he himself doubted at first whether it was a wise decision. He sought assurance in prayer: “Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase ... I prayed unto the LORD” [v. 16]. In his prayer, Jeremiah became aware that God was “great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” [v. 19]. Jeremiah trusted the Lord.

Trust does not come easily, even to Christians. It is sometimes hard for us to believe that God can fulfil promises that seem “impossible” in our eyes. But we must trust Him. God loves us and knows our doubting minds. Whenever we wonder if it is “practical” to obey Him, we should pray and study His Word. It helps clear our doubts.

God directs everything in our lives for the best. We must not dispute His will but should always seek to know it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 32

THOUGHT

We have no reasons to doubt God’s faithfulness.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 33***LESSON****Promise of restoration****VERSE 7**

*And I will cause the
captivity of Judah and the
captivity of Israel to return,
and will build them, as at
the first.*

Jeremiah predicted a restoration of Israel to the favour of God. He would rebuild Jerusalem, not because the Israelites cried out in pain but because He kept His promise. However, the Babylonian punishment was not a change in God's purpose for His chosen people. His justice is always tempered with His mercy. Although Jerusalem would soon be destroyed, it would be restored 70 years later.

The Israelites were taken captives to the most powerful empire on earth at that time. It seemed impossible for them to gain freedom. But nothing is impossible with God. In 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon. He not only freed the Israelites but also allowed them to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. God thus used Cyrus to deliver the Israelites out of their physical captivity.

The Israelites had long been worshipping pagan gods despite repeated warnings and punishments from God. Finally, after the Babylon exile, the Israelites were broken from their sin of idolatry. And God restored them from the slavery of sin.

God's restoration was not confined to the life of the remaining Israelites captured by Babylon. It was through them that the Saviour would be born to restore mankind from the slavery of sin as well. God restored the Israelites to live in His promises. If they turn away from Him and back to idolatry, they would be punished again. Likewise, those who believe in Christ are fully restored to God and His Kingdom. Take heed not to fall back into sin and eternal damnation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 33

THOUGHT

Experience the joy of restoration that Christ brings to us, through the power of His Word.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 34–35

LESSON

Broken promises

JEREMIAH 34:18

And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

The Israelites were ordered by King Zedekiah to free their slaves to appease God. However, when the Chaldean attacks were temporarily halted, they forced their freed slaves to return. This angered God and He vowed to punish them with the sword, pestilence and famine [Jeremiah 34:17]. True enough, Jerusalem was soon destroyed and the people captured.

The Israelites always had a hard time keeping their promises to God. Since their exodus from Egypt, they had promised again and again to obey God, only to go back on their words. When the going was tough, they pleaded for forgiveness; when good times returned, they went back to their sinful ways.

God wants us to keep our vows and promises. The cutting of a calf into two halves and passing between the parts was a customary way for the Israelites to ratify a covenant [Jeremiah 34:18]. The same act was carried out between God and Abraham [Genesis 15:8–10]. The calf symbolised judgement on anyone who breaks a promise.

If we want to please God, we have to honour our vows and promises. We are often willing to observe customs for the sake of traditions. How much more should we obey the Word of God, which carries the promise of eternal life. We cannot win God's favour by doing a kind act at our convenience. God wants to see a change of heart. Let us be sure that our repentance is real and let us allow the Word of God to guide our conduct.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 34–35

THOUGHT

Those who think to cheat God by dissembled repentance and partial reformation, put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. – Matthew Henry

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 36***LESSON****Different responses to
God's words****VERSE 10**

Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people.

God commanded Jeremiah to write the prophecies of doom against Judah in a scroll. His purpose was not to enrage the people but to save them [v. 3]. The prophet got Baruch to record the words and read them publicly in the temple. The scroll was later brought to the palace to be read first to the princes and later to the king. Two very different responses followed.

The princes listened attentively to the Word of God and became fearful. They feared for the security of their nation and the safety of Jeremiah and Baruch [v. 16]. They wanted the king to hear the same words of God. And they made sure Jeremiah and Baruch went into hiding.

It was the king's turn to listen to what was written in the scroll. Not only did he reject God's Word, he also tried to destroy it. He cut the scroll into pieces and cast them into the fire to show his contempt of God's messages. He also ordered Jeremiah and Baruch to be arrested.

King Jehoiakim and his court had no fear of God as His Word was read. It cost them their lives and also Judah as a nation. Jehoiakim's knife did nothing but cut a scroll. It did not change the truth. Believers need to be diligent in receiving God's Word. We should never cut it up in our minds or actions. God's Word is true no matter what we or the world thinks. And we will be judged by it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 36**

THOUGHT

God always has the last word.

BIBLE LESSON

Jeremiah 37

LESSON

King Zedekiah's vain hope

VERSE 3

And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

King Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of God. He refused to heed Jeremiah's messages, which were from God. However, when his enemies were approaching, he was frightened. He summoned the prophet to his palace, hoping to hear some good news from God. Instead, Jeremiah told him about the impending return of the Chaldean army that would capture the city of Jerusalem.

King Zedekiah saw no necessity of crying out to the Lord for deliverance as persecuted Israelites did so many times in the past. Every message of Jeremiah was intended to help him avoid catastrophe but he did not heed them. He only wanted God's blessings through the prophet's prayers. He wanted a religion that could bring him something but cost him nothing.

God is not pleased with people who come to Him for other motives besides seeking to establish or deepen a relationship with Him. We ourselves will not accept those who come to us with selfish agenda. So we should not expect our Almighty God to do so either.

King Zedekiah was not an overt opponent of God but he simply refused to obey God. He wanted intercessions but not instructions. His "evil" lies in his refusal to heed God's commands. When he forsook God's commands, he forsook his nation's security. King Zedekiah wanted God's Word to say what he wanted. No one can expect blessings if he does not follow God's Word. God stands with us only if we stand with Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 37

THOUGHT

It does not take a direct rejection of God's Word to be wicked. All it takes is not doing what God commands.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 38–39***LESSON****God punishing sin****JEREMIAH 39:16**

Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

The capture of Jerusalem was a significant event—it was recorded four times in the Old Testament [2 Kings 25:1–21, 2 Chronicles 36:17–21, Jeremiah 39:1–10, Jeremiah 52:4–30]. When God mentions something once, it is important and we ought to take heed. The fact that God mentions the capture of Jerusalem four times clearly shows an important lesson that we must not overlook. God must punish sin.

Jerusalem was so strong that the people thought their enemies could never conquer it. But God withdrew His protection of His people to punish them for their repeated disobedience. It became as weak as the other cities. Israel's fate was eventually sealed with the conquest of Jerusalem by a cruel and powerful Gentile king, Nebuchadnezzar. Surely God was sad that He had to punish His disobedient people this way.

Today, our world is no different from that of Jeremiah's time. God has warned us about the impending end times. As in the days of Noah, the people today are rebellious and disobedient. Few are interested in God but are preoccupied with pleasing themselves [Matthew 24:37–38]. Even believers can be distracted by the world and become lukewarm towards God.

Is God pleased with how you are living your life today? Is there anything we ought to change and make right with God now? It could be our attitude in our spiritual lives, our deeds, or even our thoughts. Take heed and repent today.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 38–39

THOUGHT

God's peace is with us when we live in obedience to Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 40–41***LESSON****Esteeming others wisely****JEREMIAH 40:16**

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We learn of two characters in Jeremiah 40–41. Gedaliah the governor was a good and faithful man. He urged the people to do what Jeremiah had been telling them for a long time—serve the Babylonians and dwell safely in the land. This same instruction was given to the remnants in Judah [Jeremiah 29:4–14].

However, Gedaliah was very naive when it comes to understanding the schemes of man. He disregarded Johanan’s warning of Ishmael’s plot to kill him. His ignorance cost him his life. Proverbs 11:14 reads, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety.”

The second character in this incident is Ishmael, a descendant of David through Elishama [Jeremiah 41:1; 2 Samuel 5:16]. Ishmael did not want to see the Jewish nation submit to Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps he was a misguided patriot who had committed murder to justify his selfish ambitions. In any case, here is a person filled with pride and hypocrisy. His jealousy had translated into murder because he felt that he should have been named as ruler of the nation instead of Gedaliah. Since he was of royal blood, he thought he should have been given priority.

What is your Christian ambition today? While God expects the best from us, we must also show love and humility towards our Christian brethren who co-labour with us. Philippians 2:3 says, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” In fact, this is one way we can glorify God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 40–41

THOUGHT

It is not what men think of you but what God knows of you that counts in the judgement.

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 42–43***LESSON****Seeking God's will****JEREMIAH 42:2**

And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us.)

Johanan and the others had made up their minds about going to Egypt. They were fearful of staying in Judah. After seeing Ishmael murder so many people, they feared for their lives under the Babylonians. Seeking assurance, they sought God's advice through Jeremiah, hoping for a favourable answer. But their hearts were insincere.

After 10 days, God gave His answer. He promised the people that if they stayed in the land, He would protect and provide for them, for it was God Who was ultimately in charge, not the Babylonians [Jeremiah 42:10–12]. However, He warned the people against returning to Egypt, where everything seemed ideal, for they would be killed in the end [Jeremiah 42:13–18].

Jeremiah rebuked the people for their insincerity in seeking God's will when they had already made up their minds. Are we sincere in seeking God's will when making our choices in life? It could be a relationship that we want so badly or a coveted new job that would hurt our Christian testimony. It is easy to pray and seek God's will but the challenge comes when God's will is not what we want. Are we ready to obey God above all else? Johanan was in such a situation. He was not sincere about obeying God's will. His mind was already made up, and that led to his doom.

Let us seek to please God with all our hearts. Meditate on His Word and pray earnestly, then the Holy Spirit will help us make choices that will please Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 42–43**

THOUGHT

Holy Spirit, think through me till Your ideas are my ideas. – Amy Carmichael, missionary to India, on Philippians 4:8

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 44–45***LESSON****Lessons from Baruch****JEREMIAH 45:1**

The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

After about 46 years in the ministry, Jeremiah's last recorded message is mentioned in Jeremiah 45. He was indeed a true and faithful servant of God. With much perseverance, he endured many difficulties and hardships. Jeremiah is a model for us to follow and we can learn much from him.

Once again, God's rebellious people had turned their backs on worshipping the true God. Soon after arriving in Egypt, they worshipped idols. They justified their worship of these false gods by the way things were going so well for them. In times of plenty and comfort, the people found no need to seek God. They had made wealth their gods and that was all they lived for.

Then we read of a person named Baruch. He had a brother who was the king's official staff. Instead of pursuing a good job, he chose to follow Jeremiah and assist him. The Bible records many helpers who supported God's servants. Moses had 70 elders; our Lord had His disciples; and Paul had his helpers in Timothy, Titus and Silas. Baruch was a "layman", people who usually work in the background but are important to the pastors and the church.

How are you serving our Lord today? God does not require you to be highly educated or talented. What He wants is a willing and sincere heart, serving joyfully. Let us also remember not to seek great things for ourselves, for all these are for God's glory. "He must increase, but I must decrease" [John 3:30].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 44-45

THOUGHT

What you love and what you hate reveal what you are. – Bob Jones, Sr

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 46–47***LESSON****God controlling all events****JEREMIAH 46:10**

*For this is the day of the
LORD God of hosts, a
day of vengeance, that
he may avenge him of
his adversaries: and the
sword shall devour, and it
shall be satiate and made
drunk with their blood:
for the LORD God of hosts
hath a sacrifice in the
north country by the river
Euphrates.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 46–47**

Despite Jeremiah's faithfulness in preaching God's Word and warning the people about God's judgement, no one really listened. God had called him to be "a prophet unto the nations" [Jeremiah 1:5] and to "hand the cup" to the nations [Jeremiah 25:15–17]. Jeremiah was faithful in His service but God's rebellious people always returned to their old ways and disobeyed the Lord.

Because of this, God dictated certain events to judge them. He had the power to make nations rise and fall. Judgement was pronounced decisively. The events that occurred included Egypt's embarrassing defeat at the Battle of Carchemish [Jeremiah 46:3–12], Babylon's triumphant invasion of Egypt [Jeremiah 46:13–26], and the collapse of Philistia and Moab. There was no escape for the wicked and rebellious people, as they were surrounded on all sides.

Even today, God has a hand in all of the world's events. He determines the course of history. Psalm 75:6–7 says, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." Even the smallest incidents in our lives happen according to God's sovereign plan. Everyone—regardless of his wealth, power or social status—has to stand before God some day. It is a frightful thought for those who will face God's wrath at the final judgement [Revelation 20:11–15].

By God's grace, believers are spared from this terrible day. Instead, we can enjoy peace and refuge in Christ our Saviour as we seek to please Him each day.

THOUGHT

Let us keep to Christ, and cling to Him, and hang on Him, so that no power can remove us. – Martin Luther

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 48***LESSON****God's judgement on Moab****VERSE 42**

And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.

Jeremiah spoke against Moab, the descendants of the son of Lot. He listed the wrongdoings of Moab: they trusted in their works and in their treasures [v. 7], they did the work of the Lord deceitfully and kept their sword from the blood [v. 10], and they magnified themselves against the Lord [v. 26, 42]. Furthermore, there were widespread complacency [v. 11], pride, arrogance, loftiness and haughtiness of heart [v. 29].

The judgements of God against Moab would be severe: the nation would be destroyed altogether, even their lives would be forfeited, and the sword would pursue them. Jeremiah described many places that would be destroyed by foreign invaders. Even Chemosh, their pagan god whom they trusted, would be carried off into captivity, together with their priests and princes.

Let us reflect upon God's Word here and search our hearts to see if they apply to our lives, too. Have we been so "blessed" that we have trusted in our own works and material wealth? Are we doing God's work deceitfully? Have we kept our swords from the blood (avoided doing the difficult but right thing)? Above all, have we magnified ourselves against the Lord?

Nevertheless, God is merciful. Jeremiah's last words to Moab were that God would turn back the captivity of Moab. We too, in these last days, have been shown more clearly what it means to have access to the mercy and grace of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 48

THOUGHT

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. – Proverbs 16:18

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 49***LESSON****Nations in perilous times****VERSE 16**

Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah continued with God's judgements against six smaller nations: Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor and Elam. Jeremiah described God's wrath in terms of war, and the terrors and destructions that came with it.

To those who trusted in their own might, they would find their strength gone and their bows broken on that day. To those who trusted in the security of their environment, both those who dwell in the security of their fortified places and those who have created a secure culture such that there is no need for gates and fences, they would find that security would no longer exist.

How great would the destruction be? God would cause the people to flee, and the land to be desolate. No man would be able to stay on that land anymore. The destruction would be as if the harvester had left nothing behind for the poor to glean and as if the thief had come and left the house completely empty. All the men would be cut off and the children would be left fatherless.

We live in perilous times. All around us, we see nations and kingdoms plagued by all kinds of trouble—some natural but mostly man-made. People who live in wealthy nations used to have no need for gates and bars. But take heart, because we have put our trust in the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has promised that He will neither forsake us nor leave us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 49

MEDITATION**Read Psalm 91.**

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 50***LESSON****Christ our Redeemer****VERSE 34**

*Their Redeemer is strong;
the LORD of hosts is his
name: he shall thoroughly
plead their cause, that
he may give rest to the
land, and disquiet the
inhabitants of Babylon.*

This chapter records Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans. He described how the northern armies would overthrow Babylon and their gods would be confounded and broken into pieces. The prophecies also described how Judah would later return to the Lord. The people of Judah were like lost sheep, their leaders having led them astray. The Lord called them out of Babylon because He would cause the northern nation to destroy Babylon.

For their cruel oppression of the children of Judah, God would punish Babylon by utterly destroying them. He would redeem His people and bring them back to worship Him in Zion. He would forgive them in the last days. He would pardon them whom He had reserved for His purposes.

God has also called us out of our "Babylon". Before Christ called us, we were also lost in this world and very much pre-occupied with worldly and carnal pursuits. Thank God that He has reserved some from this world and from a fiery end after this world. How is Christ able to justify us when we have sinned so terribly? How can He plead our cause? Only the sinless Lamb of God can do that by offering Himself as the Sacrifice that cleanses us from all our sins.

What, then, does Jesus require from us? He just wants us to put our trust and faith in His redeeming work. Will you turn your back on this world and confess today that Christ is your Lord and your God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 50

THOUGHT

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 51***LESSON****Declaring God's Word to
the world****VERSE 10**

*The LORD hath brought
forth our righteousness:
come, and let us declare in
Zion the work of the LORD
our God.*

Further details of the prophecies against Babylon are described in this chapter. During this time of the Lord's vengeance, He would send a destroying wind and armies of archers against it. God called on the Israelites to flee from the midst of Babylon's destruction. Yet, all that Babylon had done was not outside of God's will. God used Babylon like a golden cup that caused the whole world to be drunk. Babylon was also described as a battle-axe and a weapon of war, which God used to break into pieces other nations and kingdoms. In His judgement, God will punish Babylon not just for the cruelty and violence that they had committed but, most of all, for their worship of idols and graven images.

Jeremiah wrote all the prophecies against Babylon that the Lord showed him and he then instructed Seraiah to read the prophecies to the Babylonians. Furthermore, he instructed Seraiah to tie the book of his prophecies at the end of his reading and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates.

Babylon is an image of the modern world today. The world has grown in strength and knowledge, and its people are intoxicated with the various thoughts and teachings that man has imagined in his mind. Knowledge has also enabled man to devise powerful weapons of mass destruction. Man today is able to destroy the earth if he wants to.

Let us make haste now and do the work that the Lord has commanded us, even as the world is heading towards destruction.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 51**

CHALLENGE

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. – 2 Timothy 4:2

BIBLE LESSON*Jeremiah 52***LESSON****Faithful and just****VERSE 31**

And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

Jeremiah records in this chapter the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon and how Nebuchadnezzar dealt with his captives. Both King Zedekiah and King Jehoiachin did evil. They were captured by Nebuchadnezzar. But why did Zedekiah receive a harsher statement than Jehoiachin?

Zedekiah promised to obey but rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. After he was captured, he faced Nebuchadnezzar as his judge, and he could not expect any mercy. He was blinded, after watching his sons killed by the Babylonian soldiers, and put into the prison until his death.

Jehoiachin did not retaliate when he was captured. He submitted to God's will through Jeremiah's ministry, and surrendered. After Nebuchadnezzar died and Evil-merodach became king, Jehoiachin was brought out of prison and given a throne above the thrones of other kings in Babylon. He came out of prison. God showed His grace and mercy towards Jehoiachin at the end of his life. This example gave hope to the Jews in Babylon that God could fulfil His promise that He would bring them out of captivity again.

The prophecies of Jeremiah tell us that God is sovereign. Our responsibility is to humbly submit and lovingly obey. Christians who profess to know God must also do His will. It is hypocritical to say with our lips that which is not true in our hearts and lives. Elijah asked the people: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" [1 Kings 18:21]. Christians, too, must decide.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JEREMIAH 52**

THOUGHT

**Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
– 1 Thessalonians 5:24**

BIBLE LESSON*Lamentations 1***LESSON****Downfall of a once great
and mighty nation****VERSE 1**

*How doth the city sit
solitary, that was full of
people! how is she become
as a widow! she that was
great among the nations,
and princess among the
provinces, how is she
become tributary!*

Traditionally, the prophet Jeremiah is accepted as the author of Lamentations although no author is named in this book. A few reasons support this view. Jeremiah was a composer of laments, “Jeremiah lamented for Josiah ...” [2 Chronicles 35:25]. Jeremiah was also the prophet who mourned [Jeremiah 9:1]. Moreover, the author seems to identify himself with Jeremiah [Lamentations 3:1].

The main thrust of Lamentations lies in the fact that it is the disclosure of the love and sorrow of God for the very people whom He was chastening. It was a sorrow wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart of Jeremiah. “But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride ... because the LORD’s flock is carried away captive” [Jeremiah 13:17].

Jerusalem is portrayed as a person as she lies in waste from invasion and conquest. The chapter speaks of her reversal, emptiness, uncleanness, groaning, her acute sorrow and, finally, a prayer of relief [vv. 18-22]. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both, a princess among nations. But now the tables were turned. She had not only lost her friends and sat in solitude but had lost her freedom too, and paid tribute to other nations.

Sin brings a people not only into solitude but also into slavery. A city that used to be full of glee has now become sad and full of grief.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS I**

THOUGHT**It is better to go
to the house of**

mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. – Ecclesiastes 7:2

BIBLE LESSON
Lamentations 2

LESSON

When God leaves a false church

VERSE 7

The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast.

It is said that the ways, sacrifices, prayers and thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. For some churches, there was a time when God was delighted with the church and He appeared to her—and appeared for her—as a friend. But then His displeasure is against her. He is angry with her and appears and acts against her as an enemy. This had frequently happened to churches in the history of Christianity. It is in God’s wrath and fierce anger that He throws down and cuts off churches.

God’s displeasure against His people was not without reason. His judgements against the wicked and evil were not without warning. In this instance, Jeremiah warned them, “Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.” [v. 14].

The prophet said that the Israelites had indeed been deceived by false prophets. However, this happened through their own fault because they did not obey God. They rejected sound doctrine and have become rebellious against all His counsels. When the false prophets had promised them security, they immediately triumphed in an insolent manner over Jeremiah, as though they were victorious.

Jeremiah reproved them for such wantonness, because they wilfully sought to be deceived, and with eagerness cast themselves into snares, by seeking for themselves flatterers as teachers.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 2

THOUGHT

Those who are justly punished are blinded by God so as to believe a lie, because they receive not the truth.

BIBLE LESSON
Lamentations 3

LESSON
The merciful God

VERSE 33
*For he doth not afflict
willingly nor grieve the
children of men.*

Verse 33 is to be read with verses 31 and 32 as a triplet, “For the LORD will not cast off forever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.” The thought can be summed up as God does not take pleasure in afflicting His children. He takes no delight in our pain and misery: yet, like a tender and intelligent parent, He uses the rod; not to gratify Himself, but to profit and save us.

Here the clouds began to disperse and the sky to clear up; the complaint was very sad in the earlier part of the chapter, and yet here the tune was altered and the mourners in Zion began to look a little pleasant. Without hope, the heart would be broken.

When we are in distress we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what works for us, as well as what works against us. Things are bad, but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope that they may be better.

And this is the doctrine taught here—that the faithful bear the yoke with meek and submissive hearts, because God will at length be kind and merciful to them, hence patience is built up. The faithful are persuaded that all adversities are temporary, and that there will be a happy end, because God will at length be reconciled to them, though He gives them new evidences of His wrath.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 3

THOUGHT

For a moment I afflicted thee, in the time of mine indignation, but with perpetual mercies will I follow thee. I will visit their iniquities with a rod, yet my mercy I will not take away from them. (adapted from Isaiah, Psalms)

BIBLE LESSON
Lamentations 4

LESSON
**Being spirituality
bankrupt in prosperity**

VERSE 8

*Their visage is blacker than
a coal; they are not known
in the streets: their skin
cleaveth to their bones; it is
withered, it is become like
a stick.*

The chapter begins with a mournful song of the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. There was a total desolation. The contrast before and after the Babylonian invasion was like day and night. The city that was formerly as gold—as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty and the joy of the whole earth—had become dim, and was changed, its lustre and value lost.

People of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty [v. 5]. Those who were well-born and accustomed to the best now had no roofs over their heads, no beds to lie on and no clothes to cover them. They were glad to lie to get a little rest and perhaps raked the rubbish heaps for something to eat, as the prodigal son who filled his stomach with husks.

Not even the Nazarites (supposedly to be godly) were spared. They became withered and their skins clung to their bones. They were so deformed that they could not be recognised. Mothers, who by instinct would care and nurture their children, were reduced to cannibalism in order to survive [v. 10].

These are the consequences of disobedience—utter hopelessness, the same hopelessness that will be the end of the unrepentant sinner. He who lives without God lives without hope.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 4

THOUGHT

If we don't heed the warnings of God, this is what will happen. "The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof" [Lamentations 4:11].

BIBLE LESSON
Lamentations 5

LESSON
Prayer of restoration

VERSE 21

*Turn thou us unto thee,
O LORD, and we shall be
turned; renew our days as
of old.*

The Israelites complained that God had forsaken and forgotten them, and their prayer was not, “Turn thou to us” but “Turn us to thee”, which implied an acknowledgement that the cause of the distance was themselves. God never leaves anyone unless that person first leaves Him, nor stands afar from anyone longer than that individual stands afar from Him.

It is in our nature to backslide from God, with no disposition to return to Him until His grace works in us both “to will and to do”. So necessary is this grace that we may truly say, “Turn us or we shall not be turned,” but shall wander endlessly; for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God’s people are made a willing people when we are restored.

The call by the prophet to “renew our days as of old” was a plea to God to restore them to their former state. They had taken God for granted—the God Who had been for many ages their Deliverer and Supplier of their needs, as well as the One Who gave them the good things in life. However, they are now in such a poor state that they have to pay for the water to drink and even the firewood is expensive. This was unheard of in ancient times.

Though all is lost, there is still hope. They comfort themselves with the doctrine of God’s eternity and the perpetuity of his government [v. 19].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LAMENTATIONS 5

THOUGHT

The downfall of Jerusalem is due to the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.