

Permit No. MICA (P) 124/12/2009

DAILY *manna*

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2010

GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow. *Daily Manna* first began as a ministry to our church and now it is read by Christians in Malaysia, Australia, Canada; it is also being translated into Mandarin and Thai. We praise God for His blessings upon this work, and the people whom He sends to help in this ministry. *Daily Manna* would not be possible without the hard work of the contributors and editorial team. We thank God also for your faithfulness in reading God's Word.

This quarter's *Daily Manna* readings mark the end of four blessed years and the end of its second cycle. In this issue, you will cover Daniel and Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets. In the messages of the prophets, you will read about warnings of which Christians must carefully consider, but there are assurances that will encourage our hearts as well. May the Holy Spirit illumine our minds and warm our hearts as we meditate upon God's Word daily.

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

1 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 1

LESSON

**Displaying the Lord's
glory**

VERSE 28

*As the appearance of the
bow that is in the cloud
in the day of rain, so was
the appearance of the
brightness round about.
This was the appearance of
the likeness of the glory of
the LORD. And when I saw
it, I fell upon my face, and
I heard a voice of one that
spake.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL I
HEBREWS I**

THOUGHT

God is gracious now and forever more. He could have, with one swipe, destroyed not only those who disobeyed Him, but also demolished the whole earth and universe. However, God is gracious to show His glory (Ezekiel did not see God but the glory of God). He gave the warnings through a vision to Ezekiel.

However, it was difficult for Ezekiel to sound the warning bells. Who would listen to him? But the prophet did as he was told because “the Spirit entered into (him)” [Ezekiel 2:2]. God had given Ezekiel the power to do the job that was assigned. When God calls us to do any job, He will give us the power to perform for His glory. Moses would never be able to lead the exodus of two million people out of Egypt to the Promised Land without the Spirit of God.

The four faces that Ezekiel saw was representative of the four Gospels, and the four perspectives in which Christ was presented. In Matthew, He reveals His kingship (face of a lion); in Mark, He reveals His servanthood (face of an ox); in Luke, His perfect humanity (face of a man); and in John, His deity (face of an eagle). The creature that Ezekiel saw resembled the cherubim that Adam and Eve saw in the Garden of Eden.

Before God commissioned Ezekiel, He revealed His glory. A glimpse of the brightness of the glory of God is enough to show us the great and tremendous light that we will see when we meet our Maker and Saviour one day.

For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. – Romans 9:15

2 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 2–3

LESSON

**Being God's watchman
and servant**

EZEKIEL 3:22

*And the hand of the LORD
was there upon me; and
he said unto me, Arise, go
forth into the plain, and I
will there talk with thee.*

When God gives us an assignment, He will also empower us to complete the task. God asked Ezekiel to send a message to the rebellious Israelites to warn them that they had disobeyed God's laws and that they needed to repent. Otherwise, they would be destroyed. It is natural for us to fear being the harbinger of unpleasant news like this. God knew it and so He instructed Ezekiel not to be afraid—because he was declaring God's Word.

Our hearts pound heavily when it comes to spreading the Gospel. We find it hard to tell people the Good News. Difficult and challenging it may be, spreading the Gospel is something we have to do.

Ezekiel was a watchman for God and he strongly warned his countrymen to repent. He did this for seven days until the Lord told him to stop. How often we are discouraged because our witnessing does not bear fruit and our diligence in service invites unkind criticisms. We soon forget the fact that we are serving the Almighty God and that He will never allow His work to be trampled upon by the wicked. He showed Ezekiel His glory and power. Surely He will also encourage us. "Behold, the glory of the LORD stood there" [Ezekiel 3:23b].

Glory stimulates all our five senses. The glory of God is seen in the wonderful universe that we live in. God reveals His glory to remind us weak humans that He is with us. Knowing this, we can live on God's promises.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 2–3

THOUGHT

We labour, and it is God Who gives the increase.

3 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 4–5

LESSON

The consequences of disobedience

EZEKIEL 5:17

So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

We often hear people say that they have to see to believe. If this statement is true, then everyone should be a Christian. God has given us ample warnings about heaven and hell. We can see and feel the presence of God everywhere—from the working of the heavenly bodies to the function of a human cell. Yet people deny this clear evidence.

God used Ezekiel to show the people that judgement would come upon them in Jerusalem. God gave the Israelites time to think and repent after “seeing” and listening to Ezekiel’s warnings. Ezekiel showed that Jerusalem would be under siege and there would be suffering, massive destruction and death.

Ezekiel sent his message in an unusual way: through shaving his head and beard. This practice was unheard of. He then divided his hair into three parts. Ezekiel burnt one third of the hair, signifying that a third of the population would die due to pestilence during the siege. Another third of his hair was cut, signifying that another third would die by the sword. The final third of his hair was to be blown away by the wind, meaning that the last part of the population would be scattered to faraway lands. Finally Ezekiel tied a small portion of the hair to his skirt—a remnant of the people will be saved. (Ezekiel was to later burn these few hairs that were tied to his skirt.)

Here is the consequence of unbelief and disobedience. God has spoken with overpowering clarity. Will you listen?

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

THOUGHT

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. – 2 Corinthians 6:2b

4 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 6

LESSON

**Ample warnings before
God's judgement of sin**

VERSE 10

*And they shall know that
I am the LORD, and that I
have not said in vain that
I would do this evil unto
them.*

Every word that God has written is true. The Israelites soon realised that whatever Ezekiel had said came to pass because they were God's very words. Why did they reject the message? Did they want destruction?

Today, we still hear the same warning. Judgement will come upon this earth and upon every soul. Everyone will be judged upon death. Only those who trust the Lord Jesus as their Saviour will get to heaven because though they are judged, their sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Those who trust in Jesus as their Saviour will have their names in the Book of Life.

God gives ample opportunities for everyone to hear this simple message. You do not need to be highly educated to understand the Gospel. Sadly, many choose not to believe. Many even argue that God does not exist. Most people are careless of the fact that there is a God. They are blinded by their own limited human intelligence. Like the population in Ezekiel's days, people worship man-made ideas and idols.

God does not want anyone to perish in eternal damnation. Hell is a terrible place, created for those who rebel against God. He desires that all will get to heaven. However, God also does not force His will upon us. After a person dies, there is judgement. It would be too late then to regret. It may be very difficult but we are to continue to tell the good news of salvation and warn our fellow men of God's judgement.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 6
HEBREWS 2

THOUGHT

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. – 2 Peter 3:9

5 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 7

LESSON

**God is love but He is also
a just God**

VERSE 4

*And mine eye shall not
spare thee, neither will
I have pity: but I will
recompense thy ways
upon thee, and thine
abominations shall be in
the midst of thee: and ye
shall know that I am the
LORD.*

Many churches preach and emphasise only God's love. They love to expound 1 John 4 (especially verses 8 and 16). Yes, God is love; but God is also just. He cannot tolerate sin and has to deal with it because He is holy.

Here God pronounces His judgement through Ezekiel. Compared to what is written in the book of Revelation (Chapters 18–19), what is found in Ezekiel is relatively mild. God told the Israelites that He would use the heathen to destroy Jerusalem. In Revelation, God uses the elements that man has not experienced before to destroy the earth. The heathen are also His creation too and they can be used for His glory. God can use any means to bring us to our knees. He allows pain and suffering to humble us to look upwards.

We need to ask ourselves these questions: How serious are we in obeying God's Word? You may profess to be a Christian but are you really saved? Be forewarned of the judgement. Our salvation is free because the price has been paid by our Lord Jesus. He died on our behalf. Without Him, all of us will end up in hell because we have all sinned. The penalty for sin is death.

Jesus volunteered (lovingly and willingly) to be punished for our sins. He paid a heavy price through His death. Only the blood of the sinless God can be used to substitute the punishment meted.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 7
HEBREWS 3

THOUGHT

Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him. – Deuteronomy 13:4

BIBLE LESSON*Ezekiel 8–9***LESSON****Those who are the Lord's****EZEKIEL 9:4**

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

These two chapters recount the visions that Ezekiel was given of the temple in Jerusalem. The Israelites were not only guilty of false worship and apostasies but also of innumerable crimes against one another [Ezekiel 8:17]. Their spiritual apostasy led to a culture of violence and injustice. The emphasis thus fell on the justice of this punishment. Israel was getting nothing more and nothing less than she deserved [Ezekiel 9:10].

In the midst of this narrative of the inevitability of God's wrath, there is a striking interruption in thought. A man dressed in linen was instructed to go around the city to take note of those who were mourning and grieving over Israel's sins. He was to put on them a mark that would tell the avenging angels not to destroy them with the rest of the population.

God's judgement makes a separation between those who obey and those who do not; those who mourn sin and those who make peace with it; and those who are so committed to God's way that they will follow it in defiance of the multitudes going the other direction. The righteous suffered great losses on account of the wicked but in that judgement, they were actually spared. God's judgement is perfectly just, and it makes individual distinctions.

There are many reasons why we should be faithful to the Lord but this is one among them: those who are His children will escape His wrath. And the Lord knows those who are His.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 8–9

THOUGHT

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. – 2 Timothy 2:19

7 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 10–11

LESSON

False security

EZEKIEL 11:3

Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.

Ezekiel was given a vision of the glory of God in which a throne was dominant. The presence of God is a sign of His favour and His absence, a sign of His rejection. The population of Jerusalem were counting on their being the people of God, their living in the Promised Land and their possession of the sanctuary of God. They were utterly unaware that, in His judgement of their faithlessness and disobedience, He had left the sanctuary, city and land.

What we have here is the blasting of the false security [Ezekiel 11:3] that people so often find in religious associations, irrespective of their living faith in God and obedience to His Word. The exiles, who thought themselves as castaways, were in fact at the very centre of God's will [Ezekiel 11:16] for the future of Israel whereas the leaders in Jerusalem, congratulating themselves on their good fortune [Ezekiel 11:15], were actually in reality the castaways. For their sins against God and His covenant, their days were numbered and catastrophe was, unknown to them, hastening its way to Jerusalem [Ezekiel 11:9].

No Christian should read such a passage of God's Word without considering if he or she is deceiving himself or herself as these Israelites had done. Divine judgement is never stayed by considerations of outward association.

Being a member of the church does not guarantee you anything. What counts is a working faith in the Redeemer alone.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 10–11

THOUGHT

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. – Psalm 20:7

8 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Ezekiel 12–13

LESSON
Israel's unbelief

EZEKIEL 12:25

For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel was told that he lived among rebels who had eyes but refused to see and who had ears but refused to hear [Ezekiel 12:2]. These people would suffer punishment for their sins. They had heard Ezekiel's oracles of impending judgement but as time elapsed and nothing happened, they grew increasingly unconcerned, and even optimistic [Ezekiel 12:22].

Lest we forget, the first sin—the cause of the fall of mankind—was disbelief in the threat of divine judgement. God had said to Adam, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” [Genesis 2:17], and the Devil flatly challenged that in his conversation with Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” [Genesis 3:4]. From the time of the Fall to the present day, the Devil's primary argument for sin has been the same one that he had used on Eve—the false belief that you can sin and not suffer the consequences.

So what is the antidote to that? Ezekiel says, “Thus saith the LORD GOD.” This is Ezekiel's point. Israel must believe the Word of God because when the disaster was upon her, it would be too late.

We are a people whose lives are to be lived by the Word of God, not by our interpretation of the meaning of events or our understanding about how geopolitical affairs will unfold. Our Saviour made a great point of this. If they did not believe Moses and the prophets, they will not believe even if a man rose from the dead.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 12–13

THOUGHT

And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? – John 11:26

9 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 14–15

LESSON

The idols in our hearts

EZEKIEL 14:4

Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

Ezekiel addressed the elders of Israel. They came to make some inquiries of the Lord through him. But God revealed to him that these men were not sincere. They had set up idols in their hearts. They were commanded to turn away from idols. For those who rejected the call, He would turn against them and make terrible examples of them. Judgement would befall them; they would be destroyed through a series of calamities.

The people who came to inquire of Ezekiel were elders. These were supposed to be men leading the community in all things religious. Yet they were the ones being accused of idolatry. Outwardly, they were well-to-do and respected but inwardly their hearts were not right with God. Yet they pretended that things were all right. But, of course, God saw their hearts. They never thought that what they were doing was an insult to God, a contempt for His redemption and love, a betrayal of His covenant, and an ingratitude for His goodness to His people.

The idols that Ezekiel speaks of are those that we establish in our hearts. Such idols of the heart may include comfort, pleasure and money. While these are legitimate pursuits in and of themselves, they become idols in our heart when we spend more time seeking after them than after the things of God.

Let us examine our hearts lest we fall into the same sin.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 14–15**

THOUGHT

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. – Psalm 26:2

10 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 16

LESSON

**That thou mayest
remember**

VERSE 63

*That thou mayest
remember, and be
confounded, and never
open thy mouth any more
because of thy shame, when
I am pacified toward thee
for all that thou hast done,
saith the Lord GOD.*

This chapter employs the metaphor of prostitution in describing Israel's spiritual infidelity and that of nakedness in disclosing her fate. The innocent young woman whom God had plucked from the gutter and turned into a beautiful queen had become a whore. She was nothing but a whore, had for hundreds of years acted like a whore, and had trampled under foot every kindness that her kind and generous husband had shown her.

What went wrong? The explanation is found in her forgetfulness. Israel forgot her miserable situation when God first found her. She forgot the heights to which the Lord had raised her. She forgot the promises that He had made to her. The result was she thought and lived as if she had never been a sinner, never been redeemed, never been brought into covenant with the living God, and never been made His bride. The pollution of her heart and life came naturally from the pagan culture around her because she had forgotten everything that made her different from those people.

The lesson for us is that we must make a deliberate recollection of God and His works, especially His grace to us. In fact, this is why we come to church every Lord's Day, to be reminded of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ. Much of Christian worship, including the Lord's Supper itself, is designed to refresh a believer's memory of the grace of God.

That means you and I are to open our minds to recollect and to remember whenever we come to church.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 16
HEBREWS 4

THOUGHT

And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. – Luke 22:19

11 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 17

LESSON

The Lord of the covenant

VERSE 24

And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 17
HEBREWS 5**

PRAYER

This chapter is a solemn reminder that God is the Lord of the Covenant. He is merciful and He gives grace and blessings to His people, as He has promised. Likewise, He will punish rebellious sinners, as He has declared. The Lord is faithful and keeps His covenant.

Judah, due to her persistent rebellions and disobedience against God, was punished by God. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, represented by the first eagle in verse 3, invaded Judah and took their King, Jehoiachin, to Babylon [2 Kings 23–24]. Judah, in turn, was made a vassal tributary. Nebuchadnezzar then made Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king instead and treated him well. Nebuchadnezzar made him swear by God that he would be his ally [2 Chronicles 36:13]. However, King Zedekiah, against the warning of God's prophets, rebelled and sought an alliance with Egypt (the second eagle in verse 7). He had neither the sincerity nor intention to keep his covenant made in the name of God. He falsely swore, took it lightly, and had despised and broken his covenant.

God takes a serious view on those who despise covenants made in His name [v. 19]. King Nebuchadnezzar personally led his army, destroyed Judah and captured Zedekiah, who later died in Babylon.

The Israelites seem to have lost all hope. There are seemingly no more Davidic princes to sit on the throne. However, God, in accordance to His covenant, will raise a Messiah. Jesus Christ, from the Davidic line, will sit on the throne forever [v. 22–24]. He keeps His promise.

Lord, I praise Thee for You are Lord of the covenant. I can trust Thee. Make me honour and keep the covenants and promises made to You.

BIBLE LESSON*Ezekiel 18–19***LESSON****Our sovereign and just God****EZEKIEL 18:30**

*Therefore I will judge you,
O house of Israel, every
one according to his ways,
saith the Lord GOD. Repent,
and turn yourselves from
all your transgressions; so
iniquity shall not be your
ruin.*

The theme in these two chapters is that we are responsible for our choices in life, both as an individual accountable for our own deeds [Ezekiel 18] and as a leader towards the people under our leadership [Ezekiel 19].

In Ezekiel 18, the Israelites accused God of being unjust. They were suffering pain, hardships, misfortune and death because of God's punishment, because of the sins of their ancestors. But God declares that He is sovereign and just, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" [v. 4].

God then makes it clear that if a person loves the Lord, lives a righteous, godly life and keeps His commandments, he shall live [v. 5–20]. On the other hand, if one chooses to sin, be wicked and rebellious against the Lord, he shall die. In verses 21–29, we find an invitation and encouragement to sinners. When we repent, turn from our sins and return to God, He will give us a new life and spirit, and we shall live.

Ezekiel 19 gives us the account of the last few kings of Judah, namely Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. They were wicked and rebellious leaders. They were cruel and oppressive, and acted against God's commandments. Their wickedness brought God's judgement. Not only were they captured and suffered, the whole nation suffered with them because of their poor choices as kings.

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

PRAYER

Lord, let me be mindful of my choice, and always strive to live a righteous life for Thy glory. Help me, Lord.

13 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 20

LESSON

**Our gracious and
merciful Lord**

VERSE 44

*And ye shall know that I
am the LORD, when I have
wrought with you for my
name's sake, not according
to your wicked ways, nor
according to your corrupt
doings, O ye house of Israel,
saith the Lord GOD.*

Does it surprise you that God refused to give an answer to certain elders of Israel [v. 3]? He did not because these elders came with no sincerity, and they had no intention to obey and follow God's will. They were already determined to follow pagan worship instead of abiding by the commandments of God [v. 32]. God will not reveal Himself to us if we are hypocritical and insincere.

God had demonstrated His mercy, grace and loving kindness in the history of Israel, as told by Ezekiel. God had brought His chosen people out of Egypt by His mighty arm and led them into the Promised Land. For His own name's sake, God did not destroy them though time and again they had wilfully and persistently rebelled against Him, worshipped idols, committed abominations and transgressed against God.

When they were blessed with abundant material wealth in the Promised Land, they forsook God and joined the worldly idolatrous worship. One of the main rebellious sins they had committed was that they had despised and had not observed the Sabbath [v. 13, 16, 21, 24].

Observing the Sabbath and attending worship on the Lord's Day is a sign to the world that we are God's chosen people. The Lord's Day is hallowed by God. We must set it apart as holy and gather to worship God in His church. Do not despise the Lord's Day and take it lightly as the Israelites did. They incurred the wrath of God. God has blessed the Sabbath. Why do we want to miss out the blessings of our Lord?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 20
HEBREWS 6

PRAYER

Lord, I praise You for You are merciful and gracious to me. I want to go to church every Lord's Day to praise and worship You. So help me, Lord.

14 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 21

LESSON

**Consider and repent; and
ye shall live**

VERSE 7

*And it shall be, when they
say unto thee, Wherefore
sighest thou? that thou
shalt answer, For the
tidings; because it cometh:
and every heart shall melt,
and all hands shall be
feeble, and every spirit shall
faint, and all knees shall
be weak as water: behold,
it cometh, and shall be
brought to pass, saith the
Lord GOD.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 21
HEBREWS 7**

PRAYER

Ezekiel prophesied that God would send a fire to destroy Judah [Ezekiel 20:45–49]. However, they did not believe him. “How could this happen to us? We are His chosen people, His children!” When Ezekiel told them that God would use King Nebuchadnezzar as His sword to judge and chastise them, and he was coming to Jerusalem, they thought it was a joke, a false prophecy.

While we receive God’s love in His grace and bountiful mercies, we must also be prepared to receive His judgement and chastisement when we sin. Jerusalem, the holy places and the land of Israel are the places appointed and treasured by God. Yet when His people persistently rejected Him for idols, became disobedient and did not keep His commandments, God did not spare them.

The coming judgement was also against the leaders [v. 12] and great men [v. 14]. They had sinned and led the nation to sin. They caused even the righteous to suffer. Daniel and Ezekiel were captured and brought to Babylon. They were eventually slain. Ezekiel had repeatedly warned Judah and her leaders that the judgement of God would come to them. Their judgement would surely come as God had declared and willed [v. 7, 17]. Ezekiel prophesied this in 591 BC and King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, in 586 BC.

God tries, judges and chastises His people [v. 13]. We bless God, as He has promised that the Messiah—the Righteous One—shall sit on the throne of David forever [v. 27].

Lord, let me learn from the history of Judah that I should strive to love and obey You for, in doing so, there are joys and blessings in You.

15 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 22

LESSON

Making the difference

VERSE 30

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

The list of sins and crimes indicted against the people of Judah by God Himself was astonishing [v.1–16]. The people had broken every commandment. They did not live holy lives. They had murdered and shed blood. They had built idols, worshipped them and had despised the Sabbath. They had coveted, abused their power for personal gains, bullied the weak, dishonoured their parents, slandered, and even became adulterous. They had carried out unlawful and dishonest businesses, extortion and profiteering.

They thought they could stand against God's judgement but God firmly dismissed their notion [v. 14–16]. They had changed so much and became dross, heavy and worthless [v. 17–22]. Their neighbours mocked them and they were an embarrassment, unwelcomed and despised upon [v. 4–5].

Verses 24–30 give us the reasons for this. The prophets had misled the people, for they were more interested in accumulating fame and wealth than preaching the truth. The priests, who were supposed to lead people to God, had become unholy, profaning the name of God and even ceasing their worship. The leaders had ruled with cruelty. They were unjust and had abused and robbed, obsessed only with getting rich. The influential and powerful people exploited the helpless and needy, ignoring law and order. Those in position and authority were only interested in their personal gain and had no regard for God and the people under their care.

God is looking for someone who dares to be different [v. 30]. Stand up for Him! Will you be the one?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 22
HEBREWS 8

PRAYER

Lord, here am I, ready to serve You.

16 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 23

LESSON

Wholehearted devotion

VERSE 49

*And they shall recompense
your lewdness upon you,
and ye shall bear the sins
of your idols: and ye shall
know that I am the Lord
GOD.*

The two harlot sisters, elder Aholah and younger Aholibah, are symbolic of Israel and Judah. The two nations were deeply entrenched in idolatry and whoredom, which are abominations to God. They had completely forgotten all about God [Ezekiel 22:12] and continually provoked Him in committing harlotry. God would judge them one day and punish them for their sins. He would use the Assyrians and Babylonians to execute His wrath as a warning to all.

The prophet Ezekiel denounced the gravity of their sins—their worldly spirit and worldly alliances for safety and national security. The Israelites were guilty of idolatry in their worship of the golden calf [Exodus 32:8]. Our God is a jealous God [Exodus 34:14] Who does not tolerate spiritual adultery. He is the only God Who is to be worshipped, not idols.

Joshua gave the same warning, “Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD” [Joshua 24:14]. However, it fell on deaf ears and history repeated itself.

The apostle James rightly proclaimed that friendship with the world is enmity with God. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” [James 4:4]. There can only be one master—God, not mammon.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 23
HEBREWS 9

MEDITATION

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1 John 2:15

17 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 24–25

LESSON

The consequences of evil

EZEKIEL 24:6

*Wherefore thus saith the
Lord GOD; Woe to the
bloody city, to the pot whose
scum is therein, and whose
scum is not gone out of it!
bring it out piece by piece;
let no lot fall upon it.*

God used the object lesson of a boiling pot to pronounce impending doom on Jerusalem. This devastating destruction was brought upon by the rebellious people themselves because of their depraved doings. “I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD” [Ezekiel 24:14].

God took away Ezekiel’s wife and forbade him to mourn or grieve for her [Ezekiel 24:16]. This was another lesson for the Israelites that God would take away all that they had, even those that were most dear to them. The overwhelming desolation of beloved Jerusalem and her people would be seen in the absence of the outward signs of grief, signifying great heart-breaking sorrow.

In Ezekiel 25, it is heartening to note that God always looks out for His own and will not cast them off. He would plead the cause of Israel, the apple of His eye, and bring severe judgement on the Gentile nations for their barbarous and insolent conduct towards Israel. “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” [Zechariah 2:8].

This is to show the heathen that the God of Israel is the living God and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [Hebrews 10:31].

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

THOUGHT

**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for
whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**
– Galatians 6:7

18 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 26–27

LESSON

The destruction of God's enemies

EZEKIEL 26:3

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.

When the children of God are suffering, it is best for non-Christians not to rejoice at their plight. Otherwise, God, Who is jealous for His people, will bring justice quickly upon those who rejoice at the predicament facing God's people.

The city of Tyre was known the world over as a centre of trade. The prophecy regarding Tyre took place during the year Jerusalem was taken. The people of Tyre looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem with great pleasure. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what the people of Tyre said against Jerusalem, "The city that was the gateway for the nations is destroyed, and its doors are swung open to me. I'll get rich now that it's ruined."

The people of Tyre did not have such hatred and enmity towards Jerusalem as the Ammonites and Edomites had. Rather, they were a trading nation more concerned with their estates and enlarging their trade. They looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy but as a competitor. In fact, Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend of David and Solomon, and there was no record of any quarrel between the two nations.

Tyre thought to herself that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade and commerce. She would now have Jerusalem's customers and the rich and powerful would come to Tyre. Thus the prosperity of Tyre would rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem.

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

REMINDER

Love thy neighbour as thyself.

19 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON
Ezekiel 28–29

LESSON
Know that I am the Lord

EZEKIEL 28:9

*Wilt thou yet say before
him that slayeth thee, I am
God? but thou shalt be a
man, and no God, in the
hand of him that slayeth
thee.*

The clause, “and x shall know that I am the Lord”, with “x” being the people whom God wants to let know His attributes, occurs 41 times in the Bible, with slight variations. Of these 41 times, 35 of them were recorded in the Book of Ezekiel, with the highest frequency seen in Chapters 28–30, each having four occurrences. In other words, if the theme of this book is about God showing His power and might to man, then Chapters 28–30 can be seen as the climax.

Chapters 28–29 are records of prophecies spoken against the prince of Tyrus, and the kings of Tyrus, Zidon and Egypt, and they all follow a similar thread. Be they wise or good-looking, rich or powerful, these men and nations had become proud and sinful. The prince of Tyrus had claimed that he was God and thus would eventually be slain. The king of Tyrus had allowed Satan to lead him into great iniquity and he would be brought down. Zidon would be stricken by pestilence and Egypt would be invaded by Babylon.

On the other hand, the house of Israel, who obeyed His commandment but was persecuted, would be restored. This is stated conclusively at the end of both chapters, “And they shall know that I am the LORD (their God)”.

Indeed, the Lord has the same message for His people as well as His enemies—He is the one and only Almighty God. “I will praise Thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works” [Psalm 9:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 28–29

THOUGHT

**O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow’r thru-out the universe displayed!**

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 30–31

LESSON

**Pride leading to
destruction**

EZEKIEL 31:2

*Son of man, speak unto
Pharaoh king of Egypt, and
to his multitude; Whom art
thou like in thy greatness?*

Chapter 30 records Ezekiel's prophecy against Egypt and her allies, before narrowing down to her ruler, the Pharaoh, in Chapter 31. Egypt and the men in her league would fall by the sword of Babylon [Ezekiel 30:5, 10], their rivers would be made dry and their idols destroyed [Ezekiel 30:12–13]. The Egyptians would be in great fear, pain and distress. With wars and disasters, there would also be a great fire [Ezekiel 30:13,16] and the Egyptians would be slain, captured [Ezekiel 30:17–18] and scattered [Ezekiel 30:23].

Pharaoh's arms would be broken and his sword would fall out of his hand [Ezekiel 30:22]. The passing of a sword by an Egyptian god into the hands of Pharaoh is a common symbol in Egyptian literature. It symbolises the empowerment of Pharaoh. By breaking his arms, the Lord had shown that He is the only God Almighty.

Chapter 31 likens the Pharaoh to Assyria, the cedar of Lebanon, which was once great, exalted, home to multitudes [Ezekiel 31:3–6] and envied by all [Ezekiel 31:9]. However, because of pride, God brought her down. The chapter concludes with the sad plight of Pharaoh and all his multitudes descending to Sheol [Ezekiel 31:10–18]. We read in Ezekiel 31:2 a very thoughtful question that the Lord commanded Ezekiel to ask the Egyptians: "Whom art thou like in thy greatness?"

What are you like when you are blessed with power and riches, fame and friends? Are you a good steward? Have you let the Lord use you as a channel of blessing to others?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 30–31**

THOUGHT

**We cannot be channels of blessing
If our lives are not free from known sin;
We will barriers be and a hindrance
To those we are trying to win.**

BIBLE LESSON*Ezekiel 32***LESSON****Lamentation for the
sinful****VERSE 16**

*This is the lamentation
wherewith they shall
lament her: the daughters
of the nations shall lament
her: they shall lament for
her, even for Egypt, and for
all her multitude, saith the
Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel 32 continues with the prophecy against Egypt and her allies, with the first part calling for a funeral dirge for them and the second, the listing of all the Egyptian allies that went before her to Sheol.

Whether she was a great dragon that lay in the midst of his river [Ezekiel 29:3] or a young lion of the nations and a whale in the seas, God would bring her down from her pedestal of glory and might, the manner of which Ezekiel proceeded to describe allegorically. The day of destruction would be dark and people would be awe-stricken. They would suffer under the invasion by Babylon [v. 2–15].

Great destruction was imminent and the Lord called for a lamentation for Egypt and her allies—Asshur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal and all her multitudes, Edom and the Zidonians. Notice that Babylon is not listed here as one of the nations that God would eventually destroy. This is not because she was God-chosen. The Lord merely made use of Babylon to destroy Egypt and her allies so that His children could learn from this historical episode what would happen to those who turned to sin and refused to repent.

The temporal triumph of Babylon reminds us of the prevalence of evil we see today. Evil exists so that we can understand and grow through the trials brought about by it. God can even use evil to destroy evil. In this particular chapter, the dirge for Babylon was to come but was not revealed yet.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 32
HEBREWS 10**

THOUGHT

**Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to
understand;
But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who
holds my hand.**

22 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 33

LESSON

Professors of religion

VERSE 31

*And they come unto thee
as the people cometh, and
they sit before thee as my
people, and they hear thy
words, but they will not do
them: for with their mouth
they shew much love, but
their heart goeth after their
covetousness.*

This chapter begins with an explanation of the duty of a spiritual watchman. He is to warn the wicked man of his wickedness and the consequences that follow if he does not repent. The prophet was also bidden to acquaint them for a truth—that a self-righteous man trusting in his own righteousness should not live—and that a sinner repenting of his sins should not die. The people objected and charged God for His seeming inequality in His ways.

A prophecy was delivered. Those who remained confident of the safety in the land and persisted in their sins would face imminent doom. The chapter closes with a discovery and a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry but were not sincere in their professions of devotion.

The people's interest in the prophet and his ministry was superficial. They showed an outward fondness for the Word but the state of their hearts did not follow. With all their loud professions of love for God and His ordinances, the love in their heart was a love of self, fame, pleasure and gain. Deeply seated in their hearts was the sin of covetousness.

Such may be the case of many present-day hearers in the Church. Let us take heed how we hear. To merely hear without doing makes all preaching unprofitable. In fact, it is self-deception in many instances. Unless and until the sanctifying grace and transforming power of the Word is evident in our lives, we remain in the bond of iniquity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 33
HEBREWS 11

PRAYER

O God, awaken us to the state of our own soul so that we may not sleep the sleep of death; quicken us by Thy divine grace so that we may walk in newness of life.

23 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 34

LESSON

The One Shepherd

VERSE 23

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

The prophet here prophesied against the shepherds of Israel—the leaders—both in church and in the state. He was bidden to expose their cruelty to the flock, and their negligence and unfaithfulness. They would soon be deprived of their office and held responsible for their evil deeds.

The Lord has promised to take the care of the flock upon Himself and seek out His own sheep, feeding them and providing for them. Those who oppress the weak will be punished. The promise of the Messiah, as the Shepherd of the flock, is made. The sheep under His care shall expect prosperity and happiness.

God will provide a Shepherd for us. Christ is that One Shepherd, the Shepherd-King, the Good Shepherd and the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The One Shepherd will be beyond the reach of corruption and intimidation. He will rule in equity. He is infinitely loving and caring towards His flock. He will gently lead and defend His people. He will sacrifice His life for the sheep. He will save His sheep. Under the gracious regimen of the Good Shepherd, the government is not only legal and social but intensely and supremely spiritual. It is the rule of God, for God, and leading to God.

Such rule may be slow and gradual in its coming about but it is ever bringing us nearer to God, revealing His character and purpose. “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 34
HEBREWS 12

THOUGHT

The Lord is my Shepherd. He maketh me to lie down; He leadeth me; He restoreth my soul; He comforteth me; He prepareth for me; He anointeth my head. O what a Shepherd Divine!

24 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 35–36

LESSON

**Total depravity and
renewing grace**

EZEKIEL 36:27

*And I will put my spirit
within you, and cause you
to walk in my statutes,
and ye shall keep my
judgements, and do them.*

Ezekiel 35 prophesies of the destruction of Edom. There are three main causes: their hatred and slaughter of the Israelites; their claim of the lands of Israel and Judah; and their blasphemies against the people of God and against the Lord Himself.

Ezekiel 36 continues with the desolations of Israel. There are also three causes: bloodshed, idolatry and profanity of the name of God. These are indeed great sins. Nevertheless, the Lord promised to have mercy on them and returned them to their own land, not for their sakes but for the sake of His own Name. What follows are the promises of spiritual blessings and fruitfulness bestowed upon them in the latter days.

Sin is the universal polluted heritage of man. Its taint permeates every power and faculty of him. Sin is not only a degradation to man but also an injustice and injury towards an infinitely holy and just God. That God would give them a “new heart” [v. 26]—a disposition of mind excellent in itself and vastly different from what it was before—is only by His wondrous grace. God will work an inward transformation. In order to do this, He will “put his Spirit within them” as a Teacher, a Guide and a Sanctifier. God does not force men to walk in His statutes. He causes them to walk in His statutes by His indwelling Spirit.

Let sin be your deepest sorrow, your heaviest grief, the spring of many tears, the burden of many sighs and the occasion of daily visits to the cross of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 35–36

THOUGHT

**Sin is defiling; it renders sinners odious to God
and burdensome to themselves.**

25 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 37–38

LESSON

Revive Thy work, O Lord

EZEKIEL 37:10

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Ezekiel 37 prophesies of the Jews' return from captivity to their own land, the union of Israel and Judah, and of the glorious kingdom of Christ among them. Their restoration is represented by a vision of dry bones made alive.

Ezekiel 38 gives an account of the Jews' enemies, under the name of Gog, who would invade their land and disturb their peace after they have settled in it. However, the Lord would cause them to fail. The chapter concludes with a denunciation of divine wrath, terrible to all the inhabitants of the earth, and to all creatures in heaven, earth, and sea when Gog and his forces shall be destroyed by the sword, by pestilence, and by dreadful storms and tempest.

Israel's departing from God is like death, depicted as a valley with multitudes of dry bones. The skeletons were dislocated and scattered, dry and crumbling into dust. The nation was lifeless and hopeless. The Jews in exile considered themselves as dead men. By the command of God, Ezekiel prophesied to the bones and there was a noise and a general shaking, before the bones became arranged and united. Flesh and skin came upon them and God's Spirit came into them. They finally stood up on their feet and became an exceeding great army.

God still uses these same appointed means—preachers and preaching—to revive His dying Church and to save a lost humanity that is dead in trespasses and sins. Let us attend to them prayerfully and faithfully.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 37–38

HYMN

**O Breath of Life, come sweeping thro' us, Revive
Thy church with life and pow'r, O Breath of Life,
come, cleanse, renew us, And fit Thy church to
meet this hour.**

26 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 39

LESSON

Outpouring of the Spirit

VERSE 29

*Neither will I hide my face
any more from them: for I
have poured out my spirit
upon the house of Israel,
saith the Lord GOD.*

This chapter continues in more specific descriptions the prophecy on the destruction of Gog. The vastness of that destruction is portrayed graphically as the burning of the slain and their weapons, and the feasting of the fowls on unburied dead bodies. Through this, the glory of the Lord would be seen and acknowledged by all. It concludes with a promise of Israel's return from captivity and the outpouring of His Spirit upon them, under whose influence they shall ever continue to strive.

The outpouring of the Spirit is an extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit that produces extraordinary results. It is when God displays His glory and fills the Church with His presence and power. On the day of Pentecost, God met those praying in the Upper Room and transformed their feeble efforts into a mighty movement that eventually spread through the whole world. In one day, 3,000 souls were added to the Church through the preaching of the Word.

The great sixteenth-century reformation is yet another extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit. No human reasoning can explain the remarkable advances and splendid success of the Gospel under the preaching of Luther, Calvin and a host of others.

There can be nothing better on earth than the outpouring of the Spirit from above. It is the most wonderful thing that can happen to any Church, far exceeding the very best that we can think of. Let us make this an object of our daily prayers and plead for God to revive His work.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 39
HEBREWS 13

PRAYER

**Revive Thy work, O Lord, Thy mighty arm make
bare; Speak with the voice that wakes the dead,
And make Thy people hear!**

27 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 40

LESSON

Temple of glory

VERSE 4

*And the man said unto me,
Son of man, behold with
thine eyes, and hear with
thine ears, and set thine
heart upon all that I shall
shew thee; for to the intent
that I might shew them
unto thee art thou brought
hither: declare all that thou
seest to the house of Israel.*

The last section of the book of Ezekiel, comprising Chapters 40 to 48, is a fitting end. It describes Ezekiel's vision of a millennial temple, the apportioning of the different tribes and the return of God's glory to Israel. In Ezekiel 40, we read of the man with the measuring rod who would guide Ezekiel round the temple. The prophet was instructed to observe everything closely so that he could convey what he had seen to the exiles in Babylon [v. 1–4]. The glory of the temple area was described in detail. Every section—the wall, gate, lodges, outer and inner courts, the chambers for the priests and the porch—was designed beautifully [v. 5–49].

What Ezekiel saw in his vision was a picture of the future glory of the Temple. This precise description of the millennial temple reveals that our God is the best Architect. He looks into every minute detail. How comforting it is to know that nothing escapes God's watchful eye.

The work of the priests in the temple is important and necessary for Israel. However, thank God that for every believer, Christ is our Altar as well as our Sacrifice. With Christ as our mediating great High Priest, we can approach the throne of grace boldly by faith in times of need.

The key verse for today is a good reminder to all of us to always give our full attention to God when He speaks. We must be faithful in our evangelism so as to prepare others to partake of the heavenly glory in the Millennium.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 40
JAMES 1

PRAYER

Lord, use me to lead others to Your kingdom.

28 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 41–42

LESSON

The robe of righteousness

EZEKIEL 42:14

When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

The prophet Ezekiel was brought to the temple from the outer courts in Chapter 41. Note that only the angelic guide entered the most holy place. Other details described in this narrative include the wall, side chambers, galleries and altar of incense. Chapter 42 describes the use of the priests' chambers and the measurement of the holy mount where the temple stood.

The priests performed their duties according to Jewish law. Chambers were prepared for their ministries to God on behalf of the people. These numerous chambers remind us of the many mansions Jesus mentioned in John 14:2–3 and, as promised, there is still room for those who do not know Him. These heavenly mansions await all who trust in the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

On entering the chambers of the temple, the priests must put on special, priestly linen garments to minister to God. However, they need to change back into their ordinary, secular clothing upon leaving the holy place. Believers in Christ are already accepted in the Beloved. We have Christ's robe of righteousness when we appear before God. This privilege enables us to approach God any time. Notice that there is no mention of a high priest. This is because Jesus Christ Himself, our King-Priest, is reigning from His throne in the millennial temple.

Have you adorned Christ's robe of righteousness? If you have done so, as God's children, you have been declared righteous. Hence, live righteously so as to glorify your Lord Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 41–42

PRAYER

Thank You for making us righteous in Christ.

29 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 43–44

LESSON

Prostrate at His feet

EZEKIEL 44:4

Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.

In verses 1–12 of Chapter 43, we read of Ezekiel's vision of God's glory. He had seen the glory of God depart from the temple, but now he saw His glory return. The measurement of the size of the altar is recorded in verses 13–17. Different types of offerings for different purposes were offered to the Lord, as described in detail in verses 18–27.

Ezekiel 44 lists out the duties of the office of the priests who serve in the temple. Verses 1–3 refer to the rightful place of the prince. The next section (verses 4 to 16) gives the reasons for forbidding the entry of strangers and ungodly priests into the temple. However, faithful godly priests will be permitted to enter the temple to minister to the Lord. Verses 17–31 concern the privileges and proper garments adorned by the priests.

Ezekiel had the privilege of witnessing the return of God's glory to Israel. This rendered him prostrate at the feet of Jesus. As His children, you and I must have the same response. A sense of the glory of God should reduce us to an attitude of humility and adoration. This loving attitude and reverence for God must begin inwardly in our hearts. It must then be reflected in outward deeds pleasing to our Lord Jesus.

How do you show your love for God in His house? During worship service, are you easily distracted? The worship of believers in God's sanctuary is a foretaste of all the saints of God united in reverential worship during the Millennial Age.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 43–44

MEDITATION

Read Revelation 4:11.

BIBLE LESSON*Ezekiel 45–46***LESSON****Direct access to God****EZEKIEL 46:13**

*Thou shalt daily prepare
a burnt offering unto the
LORD of a lamb of the
first year without blemish:
thou shalt prepare it every
morning.*

The division of the land in this chapter was made according to the tribes of Israel. The portion for the priests was on the east and west, with the prince's portion outside the priests' section and the Levites' share on the north [Ezekiel 45:1–8]. The princes of Israel were exhorted to righteousness [Ezekiel 45:9–12]. Sacrifices for public worship were provided by the prince who would rule justly [Ezekiel 45:13–17]. For the cleansing of the sanctuary, the priest would offer a sin offering [Ezekiel 45:18–20]. The Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles were celebrated in remembrance of their deliverance [Ezekiel 45:21–25].

Ezekiel 46 lists the different sacrifices and regulations stipulated for worship required of the prince and of the people. The prince set the example of offering sacrifices voluntarily, as well as that of bestowing gifts on his sons and servants.

The prophet Ezekiel had to offer a burnt offering to the Lord daily. Similarly, every believer has to come before the Lord Jesus for personal cleansing of sins. Just as God's compassions are new every morning, therefore His children must daily renew their thankfulness to Him [Lamentations 3:22–23].

The lamb offered by Ezekiel points to a type of Christ—the Lamb of God [John 1:29]. Burnt offerings are not required of believers today. Thank God that Christ is our Passover Lamb at Calvary's cross. Christ, as our Mediator, provides immediate and direct access to God. We do not need a human priest to act as a go-between on our behalf.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 45–46**

THOUGHT**God is only a prayer away.**

31 OCTOBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ezekiel 47–48

LESSON

God's abiding presence

EZEKIEL 48:35

It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.

Ezekiel 47:1–12 is also known as the vision of the living waters. Beginning from the house of God, the water kept rising with trees flourishing on both sides of the river bank. The next section (verses 13 to 23) describes the division of the land according to its borders. Land acquisition was also granted to foreigners who chose to live there.

Ezekiel's prophecy ends in Chapter 48, with the distribution of the Promised Land for the Millennium. Verses 1 to 7 describe the land division of seven tribes from the north to the centre. A certain portion was set aside for the sanctuary, the priests, the Levites and the prince [Ezekiel 48:8–22]. The remaining five tribes were apportioned their lands in the south [Ezekiel 48:23–29]. Ezekiel saw God's glory depart in Chapter 11. However, the glory of the Lord returned to Israel in Chapter 43 and Ezekiel finally witnessed His abiding presence in this last chapter.

The river with its life-giving waters originates from the millennial temple where God dwells. Its healing touch brought new life to the Dead Sea. This miraculous change will be realised in the age of the future kingdom. All who believe in Christ are citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom of God. At the point of salvation, God the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, that is, the Lord is there in his heart.

There is fullness of joy in God's abiding presence always, as promised in Psalm 16:11. Such joy can be yours when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 47–48

THOUGHT

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

1 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 1

LESSON

**No compromise with the
secular world**

VERSE 8

*But Daniel purposed in
his heart that he would
not defile himself with the
portion of the king's meat,
nor with the wine which
he drank: therefore he
requested of the prince of
the eunuchs that he might
not defile himself.*

The prophet Daniel is the writer of this book that bears his name [Daniel 12:4] and from Chapter 7 onwards he writes in the first person pronoun. Our Lord mentioned Daniel by name in His predictions concerning the last days [Matthew 24:15]. He was well-educated and a highly trained person, assisting in the affairs of the palace in Babylon.

Daniel was well-liked by the prince of the eunuchs [v. 9]. The Lord greatly loved him too [Daniel 9:23]. This is not surprising as he was well-known then for his ingenuity and evenness of temper, demonstrated in the way he resolved dilemmas that he faced. Daniel could, together with his three friends, choose to go to the extreme of a hunger strike but had instead requested for an experiment where they ate only vegetables and drank water for 10 days [v. 11–13].

Although the Chaldeans changed Daniel's name and had given him special treatment, they could not change his nature. He still retained the spirit of an Israelite. The king's food would have probably caused him to compromise on the strict dietary laws an Israelite had to observe. At a tender age, Daniel was educated in the doctrines of the true religion. The four young men put their beliefs first at the expense of their promising future in the royal court.

By not compromising with the secular authorities of his time, Daniel gained God's favour and had at the same time won the respect of men, though many hated him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 1
JAMES 2

THOUGHT

As Esau sold his birthright for bread and a pottage of lentils, many in high positions have exchanged salvation for their career and ambitions.

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 2

LESSON

**The kingdom of the
sovereign God**

VERSE 47

*The king answered unto
Daniel, and said, Of a truth
it is, that your God is a God
of gods, and a Lord of kings,
and a revealer of secrets,
seeing thou couldst reveal
this secret.*

King Nebuchadnezzar had a strange dream. Very much disturbed by it, he demanded his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers to interpret it for him. They would be richly rewarded if they could interpret the dream accurately but here is the catch. If they failed, they would be killed and their homes “made a dunghill”. The king ordered the “wise men” to be killed on hearing from them that it was a very unreasonable request and an impossible task [v. 10–11]. When the king’s guard came to kill Daniel, he requested from them time to interpret the dream.

Daniel interpreted the dream. The statue represented the four world empires, which were typified by the church fathers and scholars to be the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires. However, during their reign, God would establish a kingdom that will last forever [John 18:36], a kingdom not to “be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” [v. 44]. Since the kingdom is not left to people but God to be in charge, it will last forever.

The key to understanding the symbolic representation is that a stone was cut out but not by humans [v. 34–45]. The stone, which started small, crushed all the kingdoms [v. 35, 44] and later became a great mountain and filled the earth.

More importantly, the stone is none other than Christ the Rock, whose Gospel has now reached the ends of the earth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 2
JAMES 3

THOUGHT

**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached
in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and
then shall the end come. – Matthew 24:14**

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 3

LESSON

We are not alone

VERSE 17

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

Since Daniel was able to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and also chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Not forgetting his friends in good times, Daniel asked a favour from the king for Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to be appointed as officers in charge of the affairs of the province of Babylon while he oversaw matters in the palace. He soon became the greatest confidant and counsellor of the king.

However, the strength of the nation had made Nebuchadnezzar proud. He built himself an image and commanded his people to bow down and worship it at the sound of an instrument. Failure to do so would result in being cast into the furnace.

Some astrologers (the Chaldeans) reported to the king that Daniel's three friends did not worship the image. The three men willingly entered the furnace for they have faith in God. They told Nebuchadnezzar that God would "deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand". In the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth person accompanying them throughout the trial and the three of them came out of the fiery furnace unscathed. As a result, the king praised their God and promoted them to a higher office.

It is the same when we face afflictions and problems in life. God not only provides us with comforting words from the Bible but He has also given us the Holy Spirit Who lives inside us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 3
JAMES 4

THOUGHT

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. – 1 Thessalonians 1:5a

BIBLE LESSON*Daniel 4***LESSON****Boast not lest God strikes you down****VERSE 31**

While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

It is good for king Nebuchadnezzar to praise God, “How great are His signs! And how mighty are His wonders! His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation” [v. 3]. However, these words were not from that of a true believer but from one who had witnessed at close hand the miraculous acts of God. (Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel “Beltshazzar”, after the name of his god).

Daniel explained to the king the latter’s second dream. In it, Nebuchadnezzar grew and became strong and mighty until his kingdom and power reached the most distant part of the world. However, one day, his influence on the kingdom would be reduced. Nebuchadnezzar would then be forced away from people and live with wild animals. He would eat grass like cattle. And after seven years, God would restore his sanity and make him realise that the Most High has power over all human kingdoms and that He can give them to whosoever He wishes.

Although the coming event is described as God’s decree [v. 24], its passing could be deferred or even avoided (as in Nineveh) by actions such as repentance and acts of mercy [v. 27].

God gave Nebuchadnezzar 12 months to repent but he did not. Everything that was foretold in the dream came true [v. 33–37].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 4
JAMES 5

THOUGHT

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel. – Ezekiel 33:11

5 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 5

LESSON

Partying gone extreme

VERSE 22

*And thou his son, O
Belshazzar, hast not
humbled thine heart,
though thou knewest all
this;*

King Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, threw a big party for a thousand nobles and they drank wine. The Bible is very specific in its commands about the drinking of alcoholic drinks. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgement of any of the afflicted” [Proverbs 31:4–5].

That was what happened to Belshazzar. In his drunken stupor, he boasted to his guests how great a king he was and how he could provoke the Lord of Heaven without fear. The king knew what he was doing. “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this,” [v. 22] said Daniel to the king.

By commanding the vessels of gold from the temple to be brought to the banquet and the guests to drink from them, the king had profaned against the Lord and committed sacrilege of the highest order. The nobles and their wanton women drank from the vessels and praised their dumb gods of silver and gold. On that very night, Belshazzar was killed.

The lifestyle of the man today, which has abandoned truth for relativism, has much in common with those of Belshazzar and his nobles. Honest hard work is no longer a virtue for it impedes gaining wealth. Rather, one is told to wheel and deal to get to the top quickly. What were once deemed as vices now receive official sanction. Sin itself is being redefined. Christians beware!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 5
I PETER 1

THOUGHT

... If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. – John 8:31–32

6 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 6

LESSON

Love over life

VERSE 10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

A new law had been issued. No one was permitted to pray for the next 30 days and anyone caught doing so would be fed to the lions. Daniel had to decide. He chose love over life. Daniel's first allegiance was to God. His decision was to be true to his God.

In the setting of this text, Daniel was nearly 80 years old. They had changed his name. They had changed his language. They had changed his homeland. However, they could not change his heart. Daniel honoured God. Because he honoured God, God exalted him; even in the midst of captivity.

Is your love for Christ more important than your ambitions? Is God more important to you than the acceptance of your peers? Is Christ more worthy than the pursuit of power or possessions? What does it cost you to be a follower of Christ? Are you guilty of making Christianity a religion of convenience? Have you replaced self-denial with self-service? Daniel was determined to serve God regardless of the consequences.

We are not isolated from painful experiences. There will be times when we cannot escape the tribulations of life. But if we continue to trust in the Lord, He will bring us through our trials unharmed. If you bow before God, you can stand before any man. Anything God brings you to, He is able to bring you through all the way. You never have to doubt in the dark what God has promised to you in the light.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 6
1 PETER 2

THOUGHT

If you trust and never doubt, the Lord will surely bring you out.



7 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 7

LESSON

Jesus never fails

VERSE 13

*I saw in the night visions,
and, behold, one like the
Son of man came with the
clouds of heaven, and came
to the Ancient of days, and
they brought him near
before him.*

Daniel lived through uncertain times as an exile in Babylon—death threats, idol worship, slandering officials and perplexing dreams. Under King Belshazzar, Daniel faced the greatest number of uncertainties.

We are also living through a time of uncertainty. Everything has changed. We face uncertainty on a daily basis. Much of life is unpredictable. Where will you turn for answers? What will you hold on to? The world is changing so fast we need to hold on to something. God gave Daniel a dream. His vision was a hopeful one. All God-given prophecy is hopeful for those who trust in Him. Our God is a God of confidence and hope, not one of doom and despair. In the dream, God gave Daniel a confident hope for the future.

Daniel was given a clear picture of the person of Christ. That is what we all need when we are going through a time of uncertainty in our life. When Christ appears to us in the midst of uncertainties and chaos, it makes all the difference. If you would but catch a glimpse of Jesus like Daniel did, you can face anything the world throws in your way. You can count on Jesus. You can trust Him. He is the God you can have confidence in. Capture a fresh glimpse of Him and it will make all the difference.

In a world of uncertainty, anything can happen. But take heart today, Christ has secured the victory and He is going to share it with you. His victory is yours when you put your trust in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 7
1 PETER 3

THOUGHT

A clear picture of Jesus never fades.



8 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 8

LESSON

Making a difference in the lives of others

VERSE 27

*And I Daniel fainted, and
was sick certain days;
afterward I rose up, and
did the king's business; and
I was astonished at the
vision, but none understood
it.*

Daniel was troubled by what he saw in his dream concerning the end times and the rise of the antichrist. It troubled Daniel to see people destroyed by this individual who will rise to world dominance and power. He was distraught and depressed but he did not stay that way. He braced himself for action and chose to make a difference in his days.

We can also make a difference in our days. God wants us to lead people through trouble and point them to Jesus, Who Himself had gone through great crises on our behalf. We could never have compassion on those who are troubled unless we have gone through trouble ourselves.

As followers of Christ, we will face much trouble. We know that trouble will come our way but as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, He will bring us through and perfect our faith in the process. Our Lord Jesus desires to use us in His service.

We are on a mission. Our mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to minister as Jesus did and touch people at their point of need. If it is not possible for you to make a difference, God will not leave us here with a mission. Get busy about God's business. Push through the suffering, push through the pain, push through any indifference and offer those around you the hope and the love of Christ in the midst of their trouble.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 8
1 PETER 4

THOUGHT

You must be different to make a difference.

9 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 9–10

LESSON

Serving God

DANIEL 10:11

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

Daniel prayed and fasted. He had been praying for an understanding of God's Word. He laboured to receive and understand God's Word. As a result of his labour, hunger and self-denial, he received blessings from above. Daniel was a man of and for God. He was a true servant of God.

A servant of God does not live to please self. He seeks to please only God. God is glorified by the good works done for His glory. The greatest challenge for any believer is to become a servant, like what Jesus did. He was the perfect servant, the model for us to follow. When a servant's attitude reflects the character of Christ, there are remarkable results. Not only are the needs of others met, the servant providing the help receives a tremendous blessing from the Lord.

God blesses His servants who labour to receive and understand His Word, as well as those of upright character and walk in humility and integrity, and those who pray until an answer comes. God blesses them. The choices you make today will determine the events in your life. What is keeping you from serving God? What principles do you need to apply in your life so that you might have freedom to serve Him? On what are you placing more value than Jesus?

The greatest freedom a person can have is to be a servant of God. Be—and continue to be—a servant of God and be blessed!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 9–10

THOUGHT

Are you a servant of God as defined by God's Word? Will you become one?

10 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Daniel 11–12

LESSON

Faithful till the end

DANIEL 12:13

*But go thou thy way till the
end be: for thou shalt rest,
and stand in thy lot at the
end of the days.*

The Lord's final word to Daniel contains four important messages: Go your way; you have been faithful; stay the course; and be faithful until God calls you home. In other words, press on. Be about your business. Do not be so preoccupied with the unseen future that you neglect your present responsibilities.

How will we survive the continuous onslaught of the world today? The same way Daniel did—by putting our hearts in the right place. For us, that means that even though our bodies are on earth, our hearts must point toward heaven. If our hearts are in heaven, it does not matter where we are on earth because the world can never disturb the condition of our heart.

Daniel's God is our God too—and He is still on the throne. He is in charge of nations, families and individuals, the past, the present and the future. We will be wise to maintain a biblical balance between looking forward to the future and living in the present. The more time we spend with God, the more teachable we become concerning the things of God. Interestingly, the more truth we discover about God, the greater and more profound He becomes to us.

You can cling to that same promise offered to Daniel. Lead a life filled with wisdom and help lead others to righteousness. Study God's Word. Follow it up with praise and prayer for God. Be faithful in the position God has placed you. Daniel did not possess anything that you lack, so trust God to use you in the same way.

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

THOUGHT

Jesus is coming. Are you ready?

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 1***LESSON****The covenant love of God****VERSE 10**

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 1
1 PETER 5**

THOUGHT

With the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Hosea was a citizen of Israel (comprising 10 tribes) and he prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. Outwardly, Israel was enjoying a period of material prosperity and growth. But inwardly, moral corruption and spiritual adultery permeated the people. Hosea repeatedly echoed his threefold message: God abhorred the sins of His people; judgement was certain; but God's loyal love stood firm.

God commanded Hosea to marry a woman called Gomer, who had an inclination towards harlotry. His relationship with Gomer was an accurate and tragic dramatisation of the unfaithfulness of God's people. Gomer bore him three children. The first male child was named Jezreel ("God scatters"), predicting judgement. God was going to scatter Israel throughout the world for her unfaithfulness. The name of the second daughter Lo-ruhamah means "not pitied". God, who had been merciful to Israel, would have no pity on her. The youngest male child was named Lo-ammi, meaning "not my people". God would reject Israel for her sin of breaking the covenant.

However, God declared that the effects of judgement would be reversed at her restoration. God promised that Israel would be restored and the people would be called sons of the living God. God's earthly people will be as the sand of the sea, which can neither be measured nor numbered.

Like Israel, we too may have sinned and have been unfaithful to God. He is calling and waiting for us to repent. Read 1 John 1:9.

God's love still stands firm when all else has fallen.

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 2–3***LESSON****Restoration and renewal****HOSEA 2:23**

*And I will sow her unto me
in the earth; and I will have
mercy upon her that had
not obtained mercy; and I
will say to them which were
not my people, Thou art my
people; and they shall say,
Thou art my God.*

Gomer left Hosea for pleasure and the material things she imagined her lovers could provide. Hosea exhorted his children to plead with their mother to give up her harlotry and return to him. Just like Gomer who had turned away from Hosea, Israel had turned away from God, deliberately choosing to go after false gods.

God intended to draw Israel back and restore the broken covenantal relationship. He would take Israel into hard times, so that she would crave for the better times she once had with God and return to Him. As part of the chastisement leading to the eventual restoration, He would take away the fertility of the land and isolate Israel from her illicit lovers by building a hedge around her. She would be deprived of necessities like grain, wine, oil, silver and gold, which they used in Baal worship.

According to Hebrews 12, believers today should accept the discipline of the Lord when they find themselves straying from His will. He may chasten us severely but His intention is to bring us to repentance. Just as Gomer finally returned to Hosea, Israel would return to God. He would redeem, restore and bless her again. He would remove the names of Baalim from her lips. He would betroth her in righteousness, judgement, loving kindness, mercies and faithfulness.

When the mercy of God reaches His people, God will call them His people and they would respond by saying, “Thou art my God.” The same principle applies to any sinner who turns to God.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 2–3**

THOUGHT

God’s mercy is the source of our lives.

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 4***LESSON****God's controversy with His people****VERSE 1**

Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 4
2 PETER 1**

This chapter contains the Lord's charge against Israel. "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" [v. 1]. Their ungodliness led to sinful acts like swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery and bloodshed. Hosea warned that moral decay had covered the entire land with a pollution that would sweep away all lives [v. 3].

The fault lay with the priests and false prophets. They had not imparted the life-giving Word of God to the people because they had forgotten His Law. Their livelihood was derived through the sin offering brought by the people, yet the priests were guilty of leading the people into sin. Their hearts were set on iniquity [v. 6–8].

The popular saying, "like people, like priest" [v. 9], best describes the vicious cycle in which the priests and the people encouraged one another to descend deeper and deeper into sin. Both priest and the people would experience the effect of the covenantal curses. The scope of accusation included pagan worship practices such as divination (turning to wooden idols for counsel). They had forsaken God and taken heed to whoredom and drunkenness. Seeing this, Hosea pleaded with Judah not to follow the terrible example of Israel.

Like Gomer, we too, may chase after other loves—love for food and pleasure, wealth and even religion. If pursued apart from holiness, the result will be frustration rather than satisfaction. Are we loyal and faithful to God or have other loves taken His rightful place?

THOUGHT**Read and meditate on Romans 1:18–32.**

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 5***LESSON****Sins of the Northern Kingdom****VERSE 15**

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

With the imperative watchword “Hear ye this”, the prophet Hosea had hoped to alert the priests, the people and the politicians about God’s judgement because of Israel’s harlotry [v. 1–7]. The spirit of whoredom incited Ephraim’s harlotry, her lack of the knowledge of God, her evil deeds, her misplaced pride and all her iniquities. The priests were guilty of ensnaring the people into sin. The Israelites had produced a generation of illegitimate children who did not know God.

Hosea showed the people a glimpse of the doom that would soon befall them in the hands of Assyria [v. 8–14]. God would pour His wrath on the princes of Judah for their oppression and dishonesty. To Ephraim, the Lord would be like a moth. In like imagery, the Lord would be “like rotteness” to Judah [v. 12].

However, instead of going to the Creator, both Israel and Judah sought relief from the king of Assyria in their distress. Both countries turned to a false saviour. Like them, we are warned against looking for help in the wrong places. We are prone to trust in our own efforts and fallible man. Repentance to God is our only solution.

God withdrew Himself and His blessings until punishment had been fully meted out to the nation. Hosea later promised that God would return to His people if they acknowledge their offence and earnestly seek His face [v. 15].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 5
2 PETER 2

PRAYER

**Lord, I admit my guilt and accept Your grace.
Transform my life and help me grow until I see
You face to face.**

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 6–7***LESSON****An exhortation to
repentance****HOSEA 6:6**

*For I desired mercy, and not
sacrifice; and the knowledge
of God more than burnt
offerings.*

Hosea pleaded with the people to return to the Lord by exalting His divine mercy, assuring them that God would restore. Some Israelites repented but the majority continued to be obstinate. The coming of the Lord to Israel would be “like rain” but He wanted repentance from sin first.

Ephraim and Judah’s loyalty towards God was like the early morning dew, which disappeared quickly. The Lord lamented that Israel’s sacrifices were meaningless if they were offered without loyalty [Hosea 6:6]. He desired covenantal faithfulness. One aspect of this faithfulness was mercy to be given and received. Judah was warned that her day of reckoning was not far away.

We need to ask God for a heart of mercy and compassion—the kind of heart God has for each of us. When we receive a heart of such, we will see people through His eyes of mercy.

The first seven verses of Hosea 7 added a second reason for the impossibility of immediate restoration. It was the continual revelation of secret sins, very much related to Israel’s dependence upon Assyria and Egypt for security [Hosea 7:8–16]. Ephraim’s misplaced trust marked the nation as useless to God. The Lord, through the voice of Hosea, charged the Israelites for pretending to worship Him, when all the while their hearts belonged to their idols. Though they wailed, they did not turn from their evil ways. God wanted them to repent from sin and seek Him. God’s intervention would one day effect a full redemption for the nation [Hosea 13:14].

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

THOUGHT**Read and ponder on Isaiah 55:7.**

16 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Hosea 8

LESSON

**Remember now thy
Creator**

VERSE 14

*For Israel hath forgotten
his Maker, and buildeth
temples; and Judah hath
multiplied fenced cities: but
I will send a fire upon his
cities, and it shall devour
the palaces thereof.*

Just prior to their entry to the Promised Land, Moses repeatedly warned the children of Israel that they must not forget God and His mighty acts in freeing them from Egyptian bondage. “And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish” [Deuteronomy 8:19]. Sadly, we see that the Israelites were found guilty and had to face the dire consequences [v. 14].

Of course, the Israelites did not forget God intellectually. In fact, they thought they were worshipping Him. But they had actually neglected Him and allowed their earthly matters to take priority in their lives. They had sown the seed of neglect, and would shortly reap the whirlwind [v. 7]. Specifically, they had committed five sins. They had transgressed God’s covenant [v. 1–3], chosen kings and other national leaders without God’s consent [v. 4], practised idolatry [v. 4–6], formed alliances with the ungodly nation of Assyria [v. 8–10], and constructed false altars [v. 11–13].

It is sad but true that many Christians today are similarly guilty of forgetting God. Oftentimes, we come to church on Sunday and sing beautiful hymns professing our love and adoration for God. But outside the church, we let other priorities push God aside. We have no time to serve Him. Some of us even go to the extreme of outright disobedience, committing the very sins that the Bible condemns as abominations.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 8
2 PETER 3

PRAYER

**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His
benefits.**

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 9***LESSON****Scoffers walking after
their own lusts****VERSE 7**

*The days of visitation
are come, the days of
recompence are come; Israel
shall know it: the prophet
is a fool, the spiritual man
is mad, for the multitude of
thine iniquity, and the great
hatred.*

Although it was the time for harvest, Hosea demanded that the Israelites cease their celebrations. “Do not rejoice, O Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations; for you have been unfaithful to your God; ascribing like them, your plenty to the idols.” He told them that because they had forsaken God, God would also forsake them. The blessings symbolised by the harvest would soon come to an end. He warned them of the coming invasion in clear and passionate terms. He wanted them to repent of their sin and return to God.

However, instead of hearkening to the words of the prophet, the people mocked him, calling him a mad man and a fool. This is not surprising. The other prophets that God sent, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, had also received exactly the same treatment. Their “multitude of iniquity” had caused them to become hostile towards God [v. 7]. Sin separates people from God [Isaiah 59:2].

God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians can easily relate to Hosea’s experience. As we see the signs of the Lord’s imminent return all around us and try to warn others to repent and turn to Christ, do we receive words of gratitude from them? No. In fact, we are often scoffed at. But do not despair or be discouraged, for this reaction is to be expected in the light of God’s Word [2 Peter 3:3].

As long as we have the Bible, and as long as God’s Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts, there is hope.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 9
1 JOHN 1

THOUGHT

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. – Matthew 5:11

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 10***LESSON****An empty vine****VERSE 13**

*Ye have plowed wickedness,
ye have reaped iniquity; ye
have eaten the fruit of lies:
because thou didst trust in
thy way, in the multitude of
thy mighty men.*

In the Old Testament, Israel is often portrayed as God's choice vine or vineyard. But tragically, it is often used to illustrate her degeneration rather than her fruitfulness. In Hosea 10, we see that once again, in spite of frequent chastisements and subsequent restorations, Israel had not learnt her lesson. In fact, she had increased the number of altars and made images [v. 1].

They seemed to regard themselves as the most holy worshippers of God, displaying outward zeal. But their hearts were actually deceitful. They had been unfaithful. Since they could not perceive the Lord's wrath as long as they stayed in this condition, He would inflict such dreadful punishment as would convince them. They would now be condemned. The Lord would "break down their altars".

Hosea points out the root cause of Israel's sins [v. 13]. They trusted in their own counsels and gave no ear to the Word of God. When pride possesses a man's mind so that he thinks himself wise, nothing will then prevail with him—neither counsel nor instruction. This sin of pride is something Christians of every age must be wary of. The solution is to "sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" [v. 12].

Indeed, like what Jesus has promised in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 10
1 JOHN 2

WARNING

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. – Matthew 7:19

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 11–12***LESSON****Our loving heavenly
Father****HOSEA 11:9**

*I will not execute the
fierceness of mine anger, I
will not return to destroy
Ephraim: for I am God, and
not man; the Holy One in
the midst of thee: and I will
not enter into the city.*

In our prayers, we often address God as “our loving heavenly Father”. In Chapter 11, Hosea paints a picture of God as such a loving heavenly father to His people Israel, something rarely done in the Old Testament. Verses 1–4 describe in tender detail how God has called and cared for His children. Without this care, Israel would surely have died. Yet Israel turned away from God when she grew older. Like the prodigal son, and similar to Hosea’s wife, she was ungrateful and unfaithful.

Israel repeatedly turned away from God and refused to repent [Hosea 11:5–7]. Hosea 11:12 and 12:1 further describe the severity of Israel’s guilt that brought her to the brink of irrevocable judgement. But despite His hurt and anguish, God refused to pour out His wrath on His people, because He is God and not man [Hosea 11:9].

However, some may question: As “the Holy One”, does not God have a responsibility to judge and condemn such sin? The answer is known as the Gospel. God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus paid the price of Israel’s transgression and that of ours. Jesus is the justifier of one who believes in Him [Romans 3:26].

If you have been a prodigal son to your loving heavenly Father, now is the time to hearken to His call and come back to Him.

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

THOUGHT

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. – Luke 15:20

BIBLE LESSON*Hosea 13–14***LESSON****Israel restored at last****HOSEA 14:2**

*Take with you words, and
turn to the LORD: say unto
him, Take away all iniquity,
and receive us graciously:
so will we render the calves
of our lips.*

Using Ephraim as an example, Hosea describes in Chapter 13 how a nation could die spiritually. It began when they forget God and His benefits and turned instead to idolatry. Soon, they began to sin more and more [v. 2]. As a result, there would be death. They would become like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappeared, like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, and like smoke escaping through a window [v. 3]. But there is always hope for the nation that repents.

So what must Israel do to be saved? Hosea outlines the recipe in Chapter 14. All they need to do is to acknowledge their sins before God. Like the young godly king Josiah [2 Chronicles 34], they must humble themselves, confess their sins before God and plead for forgiveness [v. 2]. Like the wicked citizens of Nineveh, they must turn from their evil ways.

After calling upon the people to repent of their sins genuinely, God now promised to restore Israel fully. Firstly, He would heal their spiritual waywardness so that they would not wander from Him again [v. 4]. Secondly, God said that He would love them just as Hosea had loved his wife, Gomer, even after her fall into slavery. Thirdly, God said that He would cause His people to prosper again [v. 5–7].

That which applies to a nation applies to the individual as well. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God [John 3:3b].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 13–14

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul. Thank you, Lord, for making me whole.

21 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Joel 1

LESSON

Destruction by locusts

VERSE 4

*That which the
palmerworm hath left
hath the locust eaten; and
that which the locust hath
left hath the cankerworm
eaten; and that which the
cankerworm hath left hath
the caterpillar eaten.*

Joel means “Jehovah is God”. Joel lived in Judah and prophesied in Jerusalem. Judah had been devastated by a vast horde of locusts. This invasion of locusts destroyed everything—the fields of grain, the vineyards, the gardens and the trees. Joel called for recognition that the calamity was the result of God’s warning to Judah. Unless the people repented quickly and completely, enemy armies would devour the land, as did the locusts. Joel appealed to the elders, drunkards, farmers and priests of the land to fast and humble themselves as they sought God’s forgiveness.

In verse 15 Joel said, “The day of the LORD is at hand.” This day of the Lord will bring total devastation so that all creation will cry to the Lord. Food, gladness, joy and grain were cut off, animals suffer, prophets and animals cry in the wake of destructive fires. Joel pointed out that the destruction by the locusts was only a shadow of what is to come in the Day of Judgement.

We live in a sin-sick and evil world. God, being righteous and just, will discipline and punish His people through natural disasters and sufferings. We tend to treat disaster lightly, especially when it does not happen to us. Have you ever asked, “Why haven’t these disasters come unto us? Why haven’t they destroyed us?” Remember, we are sinful creatures. Do not wait until God sends catastrophic events to wake us from sin’s lethargy.

Repent and return to the Lord with all your heart.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 1
1 JOHN 3

PRAYER

Dear Lord, cleanse me from every secret sin and restore me to Your favour. Grant me peace through Jesus Christ my Lord.

BIBLE LESSON*Joel 2***LESSON****Call for repentance****VERSE 13**

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Joel announced the coming Day of the Lord and described its dark destruction. He called on the people to repent, fast and return to the Lord.

True repentance is to be genuinely “heartbroken” over sin. It is not merely an outward expression. We are to turn to God with all our hearts, rending our hearts instead of our garments [v. 12–13]. True repentance is the open confession of specific sins committed. Until we confess our sins specifically, we have not really repented. True repentance is genuine sorrow over sins. When we experience poverty of spirit, we are on the right road to divine grace. Finally, true repentance is a conversion of the soul and a return to the Lord with all your heart.

God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. When we truly repent, He relents from sending calamities [v. 13]. When we are genuinely sorry for our sins, we open ourselves for God to bless us, as the Lord pities His people [v. 18]. He will give us provisions and protection [v. 19–20]. Let us constantly remind ourselves: “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things” [v. 21]

Is your life destroyed by the locusts of sin? Has sin stripped your life of every green thing, turning it into a spiritual desert? You need to return to the One Who alone can make life fruitful again. Only God can restore the years that have been eaten away.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 2
I JOHN 4

THOUGHT

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. – Psalm 51:17

23 NOVEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Joel 3

LESSON

Final warning

VERSE 12

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

God charged the heathen nations for attacking His people and dividing His land. They had cast lots for the people and sold them into slavery. They had ridiculed them, their faith, their manner of life and their God. Their evil filled up a winepress and was beginning to overflow [v. 3–6, 13].

God announced that He had reached a decision, “Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision” [v. 14a]. God would enter the valley of decision and the multitudes of the nations would be gathered before Him to be judged. The sun, moon and stars growing dark symbolised the hopelessness of those who had lived wickedly [v. 15]. In that day of wrath, the wicked shall be cut off from all comfort and joy. To the wicked, it will be a terrible day.

But to the righteous, it would be a joyful day! “The mountains shall drop down new wine ... all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters” [v. 18]. After God’s final victory, there would be lasting abundance; the days of drought would be just a distant memory. Instead, Egypt would be desolation, along with the other enemies of the Lord and His people.

The prophecy of Joel, which begins with the desperate plague of locusts, ends with a promise of restoration and redemption. It helps us understand the principles of living by which God sets for His people—the demand for faithfulness, the call for repentance and the need to trust in God’s grace, and to put our hope in His blessing.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 3
I JOHN 5

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to yield our hands, hearts and lives to You Who loves us, Who has given Himself for us, and Who is preparing a wonderful place for us.

BIBLE LESSON*Amos 1–2***LESSON****Take caution when we are strong****AMOS 2:14**

*Therefore the flight shall
perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not
strengthen his force, neither
shall the mighty deliver
himself.*

The Book of Amos starts with eight declarations of judgement on the eight kingdoms. They were judged for their heinous sins, which were committed when the kingdoms were mighty and strong.

The eight kingdoms mentioned can be divided into four pairs, with their sins escalating in degree of atrocity. Damascus [Amos 1:3–5] and Gaza [Amos 1:6–8] had committed sins of unnecessary cruelty. Tyrus [Amos 1:9–10] and Edom [Amos 1:11–12] had committed similar sins but against their brothers. Ammon [Amos 1:13–15] and Moab [Amos 2:1–3] had been cruel to the weak and defeated. Judah [Amos 2:4–5] and Israel [Amos 2:6–16] were no less evil. Their sins included selling the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes [Amos 2:6]. However, the difference between the last pair with the former three is that Judah and Israel were given God’s commandment whereas the first six pagan nations were not. The people of Judah and Israel “have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept His commandments” [Amos 2:4].

As Christians, we are called to be different and peculiar. God will judge the world for its immoral ways, and we must also constantly check ourselves. Does your life bear good Christian testimonies? Having done all, can you stand against temptations, especially in times when you are influential, popular and powerful? Have you neglected things that the Lord has entrusted to you?

If the Lord comes now, will He say unto you, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant?”

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
AMOS 1–2**

THOUGHT

**Remember Thee, and all Thy pains, And all Thy
love to me; Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.**

BIBLE LESSON*Amos 3–4***LESSON****Two legs, or a piece of an ear****AMOS 4:12**

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

The Book of Amos is written mainly for Israel. Although he started with the proclamation of judgement against her neighbours, the prophet narrowed down to the sins of God's children [Amos 2:4].

In Chapter 3, the prophet used a series of animal metaphors to urgently forewarn Israel of the forthcoming disaster. The lion had roared and judgement was near [Amos 3:4]. He declared, "The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" His position is like that of Paul: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" [1 Corinthians 9:16].

The rest of Amos 3–4 is about the plight of the Israelites who refused to repent. They had oppressed the poor and crushed the needy [Amos 4:1], and God chastised them by smiting them with natural disasters and pestilences, yet they did not return to Him [Amos 4:6–10]. But the Lord will come and, on that day, everyone shall be accountable for his acts [Amos 4:12–13].

Thank God for our salvation. As we see others travail in this world, what should we do? Our Lord has spoken, who can but spread the Gospel? In Amos 3:12, the prophet describes the saving of souls as a shepherd taking out of the mouth of the lion, "two legs, or a piece of an ear". A remnant of sinful people will be saved. Are you among them? What about your loved ones and friends?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
AMOS 3–4

THOUGHT

Out in the desert hear their cry, Out on the mountains wild and high; Hark! 'tis the Master speaks to thee, "Go find my sheep where'er they be."

BIBLE LESSON*Amos 5***LESSON****Seek the Lord, and ye shall live****VERSE 18***Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.*

The whole of Amos 5 is a call to repentance for those who were wicked and those who thought they were righteous. Many Christians look forward to the Day of Judgement when they can see their enemies punished for their wickedness. But human nature is such that we are often self-righteous, seeing things from our own perspective and regarding those who infringe on our interest as our adversaries. We may even consider ourselves good Christians and secretly hope for the day when others who are “not as good” will be held accountable for their actions.

Verse 18 strikes right at the core of this self-righteous thinking. Our Lord has told us, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” [Matthew 7:21]. In the same light, Amos sent his warnings to those who proclaimed that they loved the Lord but still continued in their sins.

Indeed, the day of the Lord is a terrible one for the wicked. It is dark and hopeless [v. 18–24]. The evil ones will be cut off from the grace and mercy of the Lord forever. Put yourself in the shoes of Amos and it is not difficult to understand why “Seek the LORD, and ye shall live” is written thrice in this chapter [v. 4, 6 and 14, with slight variation].

Are you truly repentant of your sins? Having received salvation, how do you see others who are not saved? Do you love even your enemies?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
AMOS 5
2 JOHN

THOUGHT

**I would be friend of all—the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift. I would be
humble, for I know my weakness; I would look
up, and laugh, and love, and lift.**

BIBLE LESSON*Amos 6–7***LESSON****Considering the plumb line****AMOS 7:8**

*And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou?
And I said, A plumbline.
Then said the Lord, Behold,
I will set a plumbline in the
midst of my people Israel: I
will not again pass by them
any more.*

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

THOUGHT

The reason for the Israelites' stubbornness was their misplaced reliance on themselves. Both the northern kingdom of Israel under King Jeroboam II and the southern kingdom of Judah under King Uzziah were enjoying a period of unparalleled prosperity. The Israelites falsely believed that they could hold on to their riches forever. They were "at ease in Zion" and they "trust in the mountain of Samaria" [Amos 6: 1]. The capitals of the two kingdoms, Jerusalem on Mount Zion and the high city of Samaria, provided strategic military positions against potential enemies.

The Israelites grew complacent and presumptuous. They had forgotten the "evil day" and had "caused the seat of violence to come near" [Amos 6:3]. They indulged in worldly pleasures [Amos 6:4–6] that the Lord abhorred [Amos 6:8]. They "turned judgement into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock" [Amos 6:12]. Thus, the prophet Amos spoke of his visions—locust plagues [Amos 7:1–3] and great fires [Amos 7:4–6] shall befall them.

Amos also had a vision of the Lord standing "upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand". A wall that is made by a plumb line is one that stands upright. In this vision, the wall represents Israel. The nation had started out upright, but had fallen into decadence, and the Lord is going to judge its uprightness.

How is your spiritual condition? Are you standing upright and living a victorious Christian life? Or are you at ease in your comfort zone, even indulging in hidden sins that you find pleasurable but God abhors?

**To him that o'ercometh God giveth a crown,
Thru faith we will conquer Tho often cast down;
He Who is our Saviour Our strength will renew,
Look ever to Jesus—He'll carry you through.**

BIBLE LESSON*Amos 8–9***LESSON****Hope at last!****AMOS 9:14**

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

Readers of the Book of Amos often notice its solemn and pessimistic tone. However, the truth is that the consequences of sin are so grave that even the most serious words cannot convey it. After writing about his three visions [Amos 7], he continued with two more.

The fourth vision is that of a basket of summer fruit, which the Lord showed Amos [Amos 8:2]. The Lord then proclaimed that the time was ripe for judgement and continued to reveal to Amos the terrible things that would happen [Amos 8:3–14].

In Amos' fifth vision, he saw the Lord standing by the altar and declaring judgement on sinners. The altar was a place where sacrifice was offered to the Lord for reconciliation with Him. That He was at the altar and saying, "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword" [Amos 9:10a], was indeed bad tidings. No one can escape from this judgement [Amos 9:2–4]. His eyes were upon the sinful kingdom and the Creator would sift through His creations and destroy the wicked ones.

However, after all these terrible visions, the last five verses of this book offer us great consolation. The Lord will restore Israel in the future [Amos 9:11]. His people will inherit all the waste lands and build a new nation—one that is full of vineyards and gardens [Amos 9:14], and one that truly belongs to them [Amos 9:15]. The Lord is just and will punish the wicked sinners. Yet the Lord is also gracious and will restore to His children what is truly theirs.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
AMOS 8–9

THOUGHT

We're a pilgrim band now headed for the glory land of light. We are trav'ling thro' the wilderness of night. We've a home that's far away beyond the heaven and the stars—in the New Jerusalem!

BIBLE LESSON*Obadiah***LESSON****One in Christ****VERSE 4**

*Though thou exalt thyself
as the eagle, and though
thou set thy nest among the
stars, thence will I bring
thee down, saith the LORD.*

The theme of the Book of Obadiah, the shortest book in the Minor Prophets, centres around the downfall of Edom, a proud nation with strategic geographical and military position—along the important trade routes between Syria and Egypt, with its centre situated more than 5,000 feet above sea level. Edom was fortified by the help of strong allies [v. 7] and the advice of wise men [v. 8]. Powerful as the nation might be, her trust was misplaced and her pride led her into sin.

Edom's sin lay in her lack of brotherly love. The people of Edom were actually descendants of Esau and were thus brothers of Judah, who were descendants of Jacob. But in the day when Judah was invaded by strangers, Edom had stood on the other side [v. 11]. In times when foreigners were destroying Judah, Edom had not only looked on her brother's misfortune but she also rejoiced over it [v. 12]. She had "spoken proudly" in the days of her brother's distress. Her pride was to become her stumbling block and eventually lead to her ultimate downfall [v. 15].

Pride is a great sin. It is a breeding ground for other grievous sins like envy and selfishness. Are you harbouring grudges on a fellow brother in Christ? Do you despise a weaker sister? When a brother in Christ is suffering, have you lent a helping hand or shared a word of encouragement? Or do you simply fold your arms across your chest or even rejoice in his troubles?

We are one in Christ, so let us show charity to one another.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
OBADIAH
3 JOHN

THOUGHT

Let me be a little meeker, to a brother who is weaker; let me think more of my neighbour, and a little less of me.

BIBLE LESSON*Jonah 1***LESSON****The sovereignty of God****VERSE 9**

*And he said unto them,
I am an Hebrew; and I
fear the LORD, the God of
heaven, which hath made
the sea and the dry land.*

Most of us have heard of the story of Jonah, God's prophet, who did not heed God's command to go and preach to the wicked men of Nineveh but turned towards Tarshish instead. His encounter is an exemplary story of someone who went one full circle before finally submitting to God's will. The theme is thus a story of God's sovereignty. We may try to run away from God but His will eventually will be done.

Even our running away is within His sovereign knowledge—if we see the story from the mariners' perspective. Travelling with Jonah on the ship to Tarshish, the sailors met with a terrible storm. In their fear, they cried to their gods [v. 5] and cast lots in a bid to see what caused the storm [v. 7]. The lot fell on Jonah and they asked him who he was. Jonah, God's prophet at heart, professed his faith [v. 9]. In awe and fear, they prayed to God. After throwing Jonah overboard, as instructed by the prophet himself [v. 12], the storm ceased [v. 15]. And it was written that "the men feared the LORD exceedingly" and offered sacrifices and made vows to Him [v. 16].

God makes use of every event in our lives to fulfil His plan. He knows our faithlessness in our time of infirmity and is able to also make use of it for His use. One important thing we can learn from the salvation story of these mariners is Jonah's timely profession of his faith.

Continue to trust in the Lord in times of weakness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 1
JUDE 1

THOUGHT

Simply trusting ev'ry day, Trusting thru a stormy way; Even when my faith is small, Trusting Jesus—that is all.

BIBLE LESSON

Jonah 2

LESSON

**Found beneath the mercy
seat**

VERSE 9

*But I will sacrifice unto
thee with the voice of
thanksgiving; I will pay
that that I have vowed.
Salvation is of the LORD.*

This is perhaps one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. People often speculate on what actually happened. Are we to take the story literally? What kind of fish actually swallowed Jonah? However, Jonah's external predicament is less important than what actually changed inside him.

The whole of Chapter 2 is dedicated to Jonah's prayer when he was in the belly of the big fish. Even in the abyss of his afflictions, he knew that the Lord was in control and could hear him when he prayed [v. 2]. In fact, he was aware that he was suffering because of his straying away from God [v. 3]. He thanked God for his trials because it was when his soul fainted within him that he remembered the Lord [v. 7]. He was perfectly honest in his prayers, concluding that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" [v. 8]. Realising that, he gave thanks and repented of his previous stubbornness, committing himself again to the Lord [v. 9]. It was only after this that the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land [v. 10].

We are like Jonah. Oftentimes in our pride and self-reliance, we forget about God, and it is only when we run into trouble that we remember Him. We thank God for trials in life because they bring us nearer to Him.

We rest in the assurance that whenever we come to Him with a humble and contrite heart, He will deliver us from the troubled waters unto the secured lands.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 2
REVELATION 1

THOUGHT

**From ev'ry stormy wind that blows, From ev'ry
swelling tide of woes, There is a calm, a sure
retreat—'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.**

2 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Jonah 3

LESSON

Second chance

VERSE 1

*And the word of the LORD
came unto Jonah the second
time, saying,*

Our God is a God of mercy and love. He knows we need second chances. In fact, most of us need more than a second chance. We sin and we repent, and because of the old man in us, no sooner do we do that and sin again. If not for God's grace, we would not have been who we are now. The Bible contains many accounts of how man had sinned again and again, only to be forgiven again and again.

Jonah is one such example. More importantly, he had come back to the Lord in true repentance and the Lord had honoured him with a second commission. He was told to "arise" and "preach" [v. 2]. This command is akin to our Lord's Great Commission to Christians to "go" and "teach" [Matthew 28:19], and Jonah followed obediently. The effectiveness of his ministry can be seen from the multitudes who repented upon hearing his simple message that in "forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" [v. 4]. What followed his preaching was one of the greatest revivals in history, as every man and beast in the city—from the greatest to the least—put on sackcloth [v. 5, 8]. As a result, the impending destruction of Nineveh was averted.

God had given Jonah a second chance and Jonah was definitely grateful for His grace and mercy. He allowed himself to be used by God.

Are we not given this second chance? What are we doing in response?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 3
REVELATION 2

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, ev'ry moment of ev'ry day.

BIBLE LESSON*Jonah 4***LESSON****Only a sinner saved by
grace****VERSE 4***Then said the LORD, Doest
thou well to be angry?*

As the Book of Jonah comes to a close, we read of an interesting response from the prophet. Having been used as a vessel by God to save Nineveh from impending doom, Jonah was ironically unhappy.

Perhaps after having done great things for the Lord, he had grown proud of his achievement and had judged the people of Nineveh in his self-righteousness. He had forgotten how miserable he was when he called out to God in repentance from the belly of the fish. He was angry that Nineveh was saved from destruction and even asked God to take his life away than to let him live and see Nineveh delivered [v. 3]. In defiance, he moved out of the city, built himself a shelter and watched from afar what would happen to the city [v. 5].

But the Lord had a ready lesson for Jonah. He allowed a vine to grow over Jonah's head, sheltering him from the hot sun, making Jonah "exceedingly glad" [v. 6]. Jonah probably thought the Lord approved of his self-righteous defiance. But no sooner, God prepared a worm to smite the plant [v. 7], allowing a strong wind to blow over him and the hot sun to beat upon his head [v. 8], causing him to faint and desire death. In response, God questioned Jonah twice: "Why are you angry?" [v. 4, 9]

Have you forgotten how sinful you once were? We all deserve God's wrath and it is only by God's grace that we are saved. Let God's love flow through us and to others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 4
REVELATION 3

THOUGHT

Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows, Loving His Saviour, to tell what he knows; Once more to tell it would I embrace—I'm only a sinner saved by grace!

BIBLE LESSON*Micah 1***LESSON****The wrath of God against
Israel and Judah****VERSE 4**

*And the mountains shall
be molten under him, and
the valleys shall be cleft, as
wax before the fire, and as
the waters that are poured
down a steep place.*

Micah invited people to repentance both by revealed judgements and promised mercies. He declared God's judgement on Israel and Judah because the people had sinned. The perversion of worship or idolatry was singled out. The capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, would be judged severely because they were the centres of these evil activities.

Micah described the Lord's coming in dramatic terms to emphasise God's anger against sin. When the Lord comes, "the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft" [v. 4]. If the mountains and valleys could not stand before God, what hope do sinful, rebellious men have? This dramatic and powerful descent of the Lord would be brought about by "the transgression of Jacob" and "for the sins of the house of Israel" [v. 5].

"Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is" [v. 2]. The prophet began with calling the attention of all people to the awesome descent of the Lord, coming to execute His judgements against the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Micah called upon all the people of the earth to observe what God was about to do to His people.

If sin is found in God's people, He will not spare them. Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC and Judah taken into exile by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Let the fates of Israel and Judah be a warning to us. Each of us has a choice: we can submit to God in joy now or in mourning later.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH I
REVELATION 4**

THOUGHT

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? – Revelation 6:17

BIBLE LESSON*Micah 2–3***LESSON****False prophets leading
people astray****MICAH 2:11**

*If a man walking in the
spirit and falsehood do lie,
saying, I will prophesy unto
thee of wine and of strong
drink; he shall even be the
prophet of this people.*

In Micah's time, as in ours, with judgement looming at the horizon, false prophets were making promises of prosperity (as represented by "wine and strong drink" in Micah 2:11), giving false hope and comfort to the people. They told Micah "Prophesy ye not" about judgement and punishment as these things were of shame and disgrace [Micah 2:6]. The false prophets did not believe that God would bring judgement against His own people.

Micah exposed the lies of the false prophets. They had promised the people rest and peace, when they could never deliver rest and peace. Their words were polluted and would bring about destruction [Micah 2:10]. The fate awaiting false prophets was "night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine ... the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded" [Micah 3:6–7]. They would be carried into captivity along with the Israelites.

False preachers work for people who love prosperity more than God. People who have heard the truth of God should not fall into the traps of these liars. These preachers shout about God's blessings but keep silent when it comes to His commands. They tell people what they want to hear, not what God wants to say.

In the old days, a true prophet was filled with the power of God to proclaim His promises and judgement. Today, a faithful preacher is filled with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the justice of the Lord and the necessity of repentance and forsaking sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 2–3

THOUGHT

Men cannot expect to do ill yet fare well.

BIBLE LESSON*Micah 4–5***LESSON****Triumph of the remnant
of Jacob****MICAH 5:7**

*And the remnant of Jacob
shall be in the midst of
many people as a dew from
the LORD, as the showers
upon the grass, that
tarieth not for man, nor
waiteth for the sons of men.*

In 700 years between Micah's prophecy and the birth of Christ, the Israelites suffered from the chastisement of God because of their sins. However, a "remnant" would be preserved for the last days. This remnant will form a restored Israel that will become the strong nation of the Messianic Kingdom [Revelation 20–21].

When God delivers Israel, He will strengthen her so that she will triumph over her enemies like a lion over sheep. "Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off" [Micah 5:9]. Under the rule of the Messiah, the remnant of Jacob will achieve final victory over the forces of evil.

In the last days, the Lord will "cut off" the things that people have wrongly relied on for a long time—their own strength and false beliefs. He will cut off their horses and destroy their chariots, cut off their cities and tear down their strongholds, cut off their witchcrafts, soothsayers and graven images [their own strength and false beliefs [Micah 5:10–13]. The remnant must rely on God alone.

Through these verses, Micah also speaks to Christians today. We, too, are the remnant for "even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" [Romans 11:5]. We must not depend on our own strength but on God alone. We are preserved for a purpose—to hold forth the Word of Life so that we may rejoice in the day of Christ.

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

THOUGHT

**The remnant shall return, even the remnant of
Jacob, unto the mighty God. – Isaiah 10:21**

BIBLE LESSON*Micah 6***LESSON****Israel on trial before the Lord****VERSE 7**

*Will the LORD be pleased
with thousands of rams,
or with ten thousands
of rivers of oil? shall I
give my firstborn for my
transgression, the fruit of
my body for the sin of my
soul?*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 6
REVELATION 5**

Micah pictured a courtroom where God, the Judge, summoned Israel to answer accusations. He reminded them of what God had done for His children—from their delivery from Egypt to their entry into the Promised Land. God had been exceedingly faithful and patient with His people but He was repaid with ingratitude and rebellion. It was inconsistent with God's justice to allow them to get away scot-free without punishment.

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD ...?” [v. 6]. Israel asked this question out of bitterness and resentment. It questioned God, “Just what do You want from me?” In order to appease God, Israel offered to bring immense gifts and sacrifices to the Lord [v. 7] and asked if they were enough to make up for her sins.

Micah answered Israel: “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” [v. 8b]. This is another way of expressing the two great commandments—love God and love your neighbours. God does not desire gifts and sacrifices. He desires a sincere and repentant heart, and obedience.

People are not saved by doing good works (“to do justly”) or by showing mercy to others; they are saved by God's grace through faith. Micah's words were addressed to God's chosen people. They were already saved. But once saved, believers are expected to do good works. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” [Ephesians 2:10a]. As Christians who have experienced God's grace, let us therefore show forth the fruit of the Spirit [Galatians 5:22–23].

THOUGHT

**God has proven His case before the court—
Israel's sins bring afflictions upon herself.**

BIBLE LESSON*Micah 7***LESSON****God's people humbly
confess their sins****VERSE 9**

*I will bear the indignation
of the LORD, because I have
sinned against him, until
he plead my cause, and
execute judgement for me:
he will bring me forth to the
light, and I shall behold his
righteousness.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 7
REVELATION 6**

THOUGHT

Micah began his last chapter on a gloomy note. The northern kingdom of Israel was about to fall to the Assyrians; the southern kingdom of Judah was ungodly and corrupt. Yet Micah expressed hope in God and he ended the book with one of the greatest statements of faith and hope in the Old Testament. He knew that God would always be faithful to His covenant and to the “remnant of Jacob”.

Micah understood that if Israel would be patient and obedient while they were being punished, God would forgive them and show them His goodness again. God's punishment is not equal to God's rejection. Israel was punished so that God's children could be brought back to Him.

When we face trials because of our sins, we should not be angry with God. Neither should we fear that God has rejected us. Instead, we should turn back to God for forgiveness. God is glad when we repent. “He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy” [v. 18b]. Why does God show such great mercy to His people? The reason lies with Him, not with His people. It is simply “because He delighteth in mercy.” Charles Spurgeon asked: “If God is this merciful to those who sin against Him, do we have any justification for not showing mercy to those who sin against us?”

In closing his book, Micah rightly exclaimed: “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? [v. 18a]

We should be grateful that there is only one unpardonable sin—the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is the wilful rejection of God's mercy.

BIBLE LESSON*Nahum 1–2***LESSON****Punishing a country overflowing with sin****NAHUM 2:13**

Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NAHUM 1–2**

In Chapter 1, we see a God Who is jealous, avenging and wrathful. Yet, He is also slow to anger and great in power. God has decreed the certainty of Nineveh's doom. He has addressed this to the Assyrians and has prophesied the fall of the one who has plotted against Him.

In Chapter 2, the demise of the Assyrians is described in greater detail. God reveals to the prophet the siege of Nineveh by the Babylonians and the Medes. Her queen will be led away captive. The people shall flee. The city shall be plundered. Silver and gold shall be taken away. The Assyrians had likened themselves to lions, whereas in actual fact, mighty as they thought they might be, they were but beasts that would eventually fall at the hands of their enemies.

Similar accounts of destruction recorded in the Bible are those of Sodom and Gomorrah. God destroyed these two cities because they were overflowing with sin and lewdness. The same was going to happen to Nineveh. Are you living in a "Nineveh" today?

Consider yourself blessed if you are living in a country where there is abundance and peace. Recall the material blessings that God has given you. No matter where we are, in good times or in bad, we must always give thanks for the blessings God has given us. Draw near to Him, walk in His path of righteousness, and ask for forgiveness of our sins, lest we become complacent and become a nation like Nineveh, bringing destruction to ourselves in our self-conceit.

THOUGHT

Pray for our leaders whom God has set to rule over us that they may be God-fearing.



10 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Nahum 3

LESSON

Punishing a whole city

VERSE 5

*Behold, I am against thee,
saith the LORD of hosts;
and I will discover thy
skirts upon thy face, and
I will shew the nations
thy nakedness, and the
kingdoms thy shame.*

The chapter begins with the underlying reasons for Nineveh's fall. It was a bloody city, full of lies and robbery. It had plundered many others. As a result, God had sent the Babylonians and the Medes to destroy the city.

Nineveh was also judged for her harlotry and sorcery. God would expose her and cover her with shame, a befitting punishment. Although Nineveh had taken measures to strengthen her city, she would still fall to her enemies, as this was God's plan. There would be no healing of her bruise and her wound would be grievous; the city would be reduced to ruins. And people from afar would rejoice, as Nineveh had been a wicked city to many.

Look around you. Can we identify such cities or countries like Nineveh today? Yet our judgement is but presumptuous. Although we do hear of some injustices done to people or to others in some countries, we should not be quick in judging them. Vengeance is of the Lord.

Perhaps more importantly, we can apply the lesson learnt today to ourselves. Looking inward, are we behaving like the people in Nineveh? If God could destroy an entire city because of her lewdness, what more a single person? Let us not be complacent in our faith. Let us seek God for forgiveness and pray for Him to cleanse us of our sins. Lead a godly life and abide by His commandments. In doing so, we are opening channels of grace and blessings.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NAHUM 3
REVELATION 7

Prayer

O heavenly Father, cleanse me and teach me Thy ways.





11 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Habakkuk 1-2

LESSON

Reprieve for the just amidst persecution

HABAKKUK 2:4

*Behold, his soul which is
lifted up is not upright in
him: but the just shall live
by his faith.*

Habakkuk saw the iniquities in Judah and felt it as a personal burden. He complained to God. Because of the incessant sinning of the Israelites, God had decreed that the Babylonians conquer Judah. Habakkuk was taken aback by God's choice. He wondered why God would choose Babylon—a nation much worse than Judah—to punish the latter.

God used the Babylonians to punish Judah simply because the Israelites needed to be punished. It is of His own pleasure to use whoever He wishes to use. More importantly, Babylon would also be punished after the Israelites. The subsequent punishment of the Babylonians and their king were prophesied by the five woes [Habakkuk 2:6, 9, 12, 15 and 19] declared unto them. The proud city of Babylon would later fall to Cyrus the Great in 539 BC.

However, God always supplies a reprieve for those who are faithful [Habakkuk 2:4]. We see in Chapter 2 that although God was wroth with His children, He was still merciful and remembered the just. Just like the time when He wanted to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He remembered Lot and made provision for Lot and his family to escape [Genesis 19]. He preserved a remnant of Judah.

Likewise for us, it is most heartening to know that God remembers the faithful. Even if we may be living in this sinful world, we can take heart that God is merciful and that in His mercy, He will make provision for the just to escape punishment. However, this only comes with our faithful following of His ordinances.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 1-2

QUESTION

What can you do to remain faithful to God in a sinful world?





12 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Habakkuk 3

LESSON

Trusting in God

VERSE 19

The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Habakkuk had heard of the Lord's dealings in the past with His enemies, so he began praying for God to revive His work by punishing His foes and saving His people. He began his prayer by equating God's glory and brightness to the heavens and the earth. He then recalled the previous enemies of God who were eventually crushed, before finally remembering the power of God as manifested in the seas, rivers and mountains.

From verse 16, Habakkuk wrote of his wait for the Babylonian attack. He knew of the beautiful end that God had promised him but he also knew that he had to endure the Babylonian invasion first before he could eventually rejoice in the Lord, the God of his salvation.

God does not speak to us today the way He spoke to Habakkuk and the prophets. Today, we have His complete Word in the form of the Bible to rely on. Imagine yourself in Habakkuk's shoes in the days of old. How would you feel if God spoke directly to you and told you the terrible things that would come?

Surely, you would have felt fear (for the impending invasion and destruction) and relief (because of the subsequent salvation and deliverance). Today, we have the Bible to refer to and the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us. When we are going through difficulty, always remember that we are never alone. We can look into His Word amid adversity, persecution and trials, and trust Him to lead us through the ordeals and challenges in life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 3
REVELATION 8

PRAYER

Trust and obey, for there's no other way.



BIBLE LESSON
Zephaniah 1–2

LESSON
**Mercy in the midst of
wrath**

ZEPHANIAH 2:3
*Seek ye the LORD, all
ye meek of the earth,
which have wrought
his judgement; seek
righteousness, seek
meekness: it may be ye shall
be hid in the day of the
LORD's anger.*

Zephaniah ministered during the reign of the godly king Josiah (640–609 BC). His message was a familiar one. Like other prophets before him, he denounced sin and pronounced judgement fearlessly. In Chapter 1, he warned of the coming destruction of the land of Judah and Jerusalem in the hands of the Babylonians. God would make the whole land utterly desolate. The inhabitants would be punished for their idolatry. In Chapter 2, he foretold the judgement on the surrounding nations. God would punish them for their mistreatment of His people, for their pride and their worship of false gods.

Zephaniah uses the expression “the Day of the Lord” seven times in this book. It echoes the language used by Joel and Amos. It speaks prophetically of a future day of wrath in the end times. It would be “a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness (devastation) and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” [Zephaniah 1:15].

But as always, in the midst of wrath, God shows mercy. If the wicked would seek God in humble repentance, surely “God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger” [Jonah 3:9]. No matter how much you have sinned against God, no matter how much you feel that you are unworthy of His forgiveness, remember that our God is longsuffering and not willing for any to perish.

Go to Him in the name of His beloved Son and confess your sins, and He will abundantly pardon.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 1-2**

CHORUS

**Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a
crimson stain—He washed it white as snow.**

BIBLE LESSON*Zephaniah 3***LESSON****Joy in God's faithfulness****VERSE 9**

For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

What a joy and comfort it is to read the closing chapter of this book. This is especially so after the depressing and harsh language used earlier. As with most of the other prophetic books, the Book of Zephaniah ends with God's promises of His blessings on His people. They were told to sing, shout and rejoice [v. 14] because their disciplinary punishment had ended and the enemy had been defeated; and the Lord is King over Israel. Notice the numerous "I will" in the last few verses, as God listed all the blessings that He would pour out to His redeemed people. In fact, He would also sing with them [v. 17]. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Although these prophecies apply historically to the nation of Israel at the end of their Babylonian captivity, they also serve as practical applications to all believers today. The vital question is this: "Will you have a part in that great gathering of God's church when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again?"

To answer this question, we have to examine ourselves. For a start, have you called on the name of the Lord "with a pure language" [v. 9], that is, with lips that are undefiled by idolatry and with words that are pure with praises for Jehovah? Have you confessed your sins and believed in your heart that God raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead? [Romans 10:9–10]

If you have, then rejoice! But please also resolve to serve Him "with one consent" [v. 9].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 3
REVELATION 9**

CHORUS

**Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving
ev'ry day; Just one glimpse of Him in glory Will
the toils of life repay.**



15 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Haggai 1

LESSON

Considering your ways

VERSE 7

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

In 586 BC, the Babylonian army destroyed the temple of Jerusalem. Half a century later, in 538 BC, King Cyrus of Persia allowed some Israelites to return to their city to rebuild the temple. About 50,000 people travelled back to Jerusalem and began to work. But soon they forgot their purpose and lost their priorities. The temple construction came to a halt. The people became more concerned with their own needs than doing God's will.

Haggai repeated God's message to them: "Consider your ways" [v. 5, 7], that is, give careful thoughts to your priorities. Haggai asked God's people to consider what direction their life was heading. If they were to continue their own ways, the consequences would be as described in verse 6: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." If they were to follow God's ways, He has promised: "I will take pleasure in it (temple), and I will be glorified" [v. 8b].

Haggai's message motivated the Israelites to pick up their tools again and complete building the temple. Then Haggai brought a message from God to the people: "I am with you, saith the LORD." How comforting these words were to those who laboured for Him!

Although Haggai is a small book with only two chapters, it is filled with challenges and promises. We are reminded of God's claim on our priorities in life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HAGGAI I
REVELATION 10

THOUGHT

**Haggai's messages are like alarm clocks—
unwelcomed but necessary in waking us up.**





16 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Haggai 2

LESSON

Promised glory of the new temple

VERSE 3

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Some 60 years after the old temple was destroyed and a few more years before the building of the new one was completed, some elderly Israelites who survived the exile were disappointed that the new temple was not as magnificent as Solomon's. The people became disheartened: "Since we cannot build like Solomon, let us therefore stop building it."

Haggai encouraged them with God's message: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" [v. 8]. The Israelites need not be discouraged if they did not have the resources for the building project. They just had to trust the God Who owns every resource. But willing hands must do the work. The people were given further assurance: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" [v. 9a]. Let us not forget that our Lord Jesus would personally worship there during His earthly ministry.

Any comparisons between "the good old days" and the present time are rarely beneficial. It did not do the people of Haggai's days any good to think of how glorious Solomon's temple was, compared to their own work. Likewise, it does us no good when we keep comparing ourselves with others, even in God's work.

Instead, we should compare ourselves with God. We are so weak and so insignificant as compared with our Almighty God and His great cause. We just need to trust Him more.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HAGGAI 2
REVELATION 11

THOUGHT

Those who are joyful in the Lord's service shall receive encouragement to proceed.



BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 1***LESSON****Jealous for Jerusalem****VERSE 14**

*So the angel that
 communed with me said
 unto me, Cry thou, saying,
 Thus saith the LORD of
 hosts; I am jealous for
 Jerusalem and for Zion
 with a great jealousy.*

Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi are the post-exilic prophets. Their ministry came after the end of the exile. The Jews' return was a mixture of joy and sorrow—joy because they were home, sorrow because home was in a state of disrepair. It was a difficult time for the people as they began to rebuild their city and their lives. In these trying times, God sent Zechariah to encourage the people with God's hope—the hope of the Messiah. Besides Isaiah, Zechariah has more to say about the Messiah than any other Old Testament book.

God gave Zechariah eight visions in one night. In his first vision [v. 7–17], Zechariah saw a man riding a red horse, with other horses following his instructions. The horses brought back a reconnaissance report that the world was at peace. This rest, however, was an unholy rest because injustice against and oppression of His people abounded still.

The hope is seen in two declarations and four statements. First, God declared that He was “jealous for Jerusalem” [v. 14]. Second, He was “sore displeased with the heathen” [v. 15], meaning to say that God would judge them.

The declarations are followed by four “good and comforting words” [v. 13]: “I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies” [v. 16a]; “My house shall be built in” Jerusalem [v. 16b]; “A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” [v. 16c], meaning to say that Jerusalem would regain her prominence; and Jerusalem will again be God's chosen city [v. 17].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
 ZECHARIAH 1
 REVELATION 12**

THOUGHT

Beware of the peace that the world offers. It is better to be resting in Christ with little than to be at rest in the world with much.

BIBLE LESSON
Zechariah 2–3

LESSON
God dwelling among His people

ZECHARIAH 2:10

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.

God never rescinded the covenant that He had made with Israel. “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David” [Psalm 89:34–35].

At His appointed time, God would restore Israel. God called out to them, “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north” [v. 6a]. From every direction, God called Israel home. Jerusalem would be rebuilt. But more than just the physical relocation of the people to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the city was the spiritual restoration of the people back to God.

The Lord would be “a wall of fire round about,” the “glory in the midst of her” [v. 5] and “dwell in the midst of thee” [v. 10, 11]. He would “choose Jerusalem again” [v. 12]. The Lord would “take away the filthy garments ... (cause) thine iniquity to pass from thee ... clothe thee with change of raiment” [Zechariah 3:4]. The filthy garments represented the people’s sins. When God clothed them in a new garment, it is a picture of God’s forgiveness.

The new Jerusalem will be blessed with God’s protection, peace and prosperity. Above all, the people will be blessed with God’s divine presence. Likewise, the new man will also be blessed with God’s peace that “passeth all understanding” [Philippians 4:7]. He will be blessed with God’s protection, for He has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” [Hebrews 13:5c].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 2–3

THOUGHT

Have you committed yourself wholly unto Jesus Christ? If you have, you are in Christ, and He dwells in you! What a blessed promise that the Son of God would dwell in the hearts of the sons of man.

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 4***LESSON****A well-oiled Christian****VERSE 6**

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

This is the fifth vision that God gave Zechariah one night. Zechariah saw a gold candlestick with seven branches. At the end of each branch was a bowl. Beside the bowl were two olive trees. The olives from the olive trees ripened and became the oil that acted as fuel for the lamps. All this conveyed the idea of unlimited resource. The oil kept flowing and the lamps kept burning.

The angel explained to Zechariah the meaning of the picture. The light from the candlestick represented the testimony of God's people. The whole picture spoke of perpetual bountiful supply. However, the focus was not on the gold candlestick. The proper focus was on the oil that provided the fuel for the light. Oil is consistently used throughout Holy Scripture to refer to the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through us.

Without the oil in the bowls, the gold candlestick is of no use. A gold candlestick without oil is like a well-tuned sports car without gas. Similarly, a person may be blessed with talents but if he is not energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is of no use to God. The ministry of the Gospel must be fuelled by the Holy Spirit. Paul asked in 2 Corinthians 2:16c: "Who is sufficient for these things?" Later, Paul provided his own answer, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" [2 Corinthians 3:5].

A Spirit-filled Christian is a well-oiled Christian. What a beautiful picture of the ministry of the Spirit of God in our life!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 4
REVELATION 13

THOUGHT**Are you a well-oiled Christian?**

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 5***LESSON****A scroll of curse and an ephah of iniquity****VERSE 3**

Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

In the sixth vision, God sent Zechariah a flying scroll—God’s Word. But it was also a “curse”, reminding us of the Law’s blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience [Deuteronomy 27–28]. The scroll was huge, for all to see, meaning that God’s commands were not mysteries. Two specific sins are condemned: stealing [a violation of the eighth commandment] and swearing falsely [a violation of the third commandment].

The flying scroll was followed by an ephah, a measure of weight used in Israel. The sin represented by the ephah was the sin of worshipping mammon. Lawlessness had infected the children of Israel and so had crass materialism. The people loved money more than God. If a Christian embraces the value system of the world, his values will be twisted and priorities changed, no longer giving God the pre-eminence in his life.

This vision was given to Israel at a time when they were rebuilding Jerusalem. This warning is given to Christians who are actively serving God and those who are blessed with affluence. Our service to God does not exempt us from our pursuit of holiness and obedience of His commands. Likewise, the external trappings of God’s blessings also do not exempt Christians from “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” [2 Corinthians 7:1b].

Our testimony for God is neither measured in dollars and cents nor in our energy given to the ministry. It is measured in our obedience to His Word.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 5
REVELATION 14**

THOUGHT

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

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 6***LESSON****The Branch****VERSE 12**

*And speak unto him,
saying, Thus speaketh
the LORD of hosts, saying,
Behold the man whose
name is The BRANCH; and
he shall grow up out of his
place, and he shall build
the temple of the LORD.*

In this eighth and final vision, Zechariah saw four chariots pulled by different coloured horses, “the four spirits of the heavens” [v. 5], executing God’s judgements. Commentators are divided and have speculated concerning the significance of the horses’ different colours [Revelation 6:1–8]. The focus is not on the exact nature of God’s judgements. Rather, it is God Who is the judge; He is “the Lord of all the earth” [v. 5].

After that, God instructed Zechariah to collect gold and silver, fashion a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua [v. 11]. Then the introduction was made, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD” [v. 12].

The Branch is the Messiah—our Lord Jesus Christ. His crown and the building of the temple signify the fulfilment of the offices as King and Priest.

F. B. Meyer writes: “As Priest, Jesus pleads the merit of His blood; as King, He exerts power on our behalf. As Priest, He pacifies the guilty conscience; as King, He sends thrills of His own victorious life into our spirits. As Priest, He brings us nigh to God; as King, He treads our enemies under His feet ... On the one hand, we get all the benefits of His Cross and Passion; on the other, all the benefits of His resurrection and session at the right hand of God.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 6
REVELATION 15

THOUGHT

Blessed are you if you have Christ as your Priest and King.

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 7***LESSON****What's the real reason?****VERSE 9**

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgement, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother.

There is a two-year gap between the first six chapters and Chapter 7. Two years after Zechariah had told the people the eight visions that he saw, they came to him with a question: "Should they fast and mourn in the fifth month?"

It was during the fifth month that the Temple had been burnt. Throughout the years of the Exile, the Jews remembered that disaster by fasting and grieving [2 Kings 25:8–10; Psalm 74]. But the exile was over. The temple had been rebuilt. Did they still need to mourn?

God's reply through Zechariah was that He was not interested in outward display of piety, and He exposed the people for their hypocrisy. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" [v. 5–6]. The implication was that their mourning and fasting were insincere.

In the Gospels, our Lord Jesus reserved His strongest condemnations for the Pharisees, who performed religious acts just to be admired by others. Our Lord called them "hypocrites and whited sepulchres" [Matthew 23:27]. The reason our Lord Jesus was unrelenting in His rebuke was that they had focused acts of worship on themselves and not on God. God alone must be the centre of true worship.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 7
REVELATION 16

THOUGHT

Why do you pray? Why do you go to church? Is it for show? Or do the deeds flow out of a loving relationship with your Lord Jesus and a desire for growing intimacy with Him? What's the real reason?

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 8***LESSON****God restores the faithful****VERSE 8**

*And I will bring them,
and they shall dwell in the
midst of Jerusalem: and
they shall be my people,
and I will be their God, in
truth and in righteousness.*

Zechariah prophesied of the day when God would restore Jerusalem, and return and dwell in the city. The old and the young would also dwell peacefully there. The Lord had shown Zechariah how, in those days, He would cause His people from the countries in the east and the west to dwell also in the holy city. To these remnants, the Lord would bless bountifully. There would be peace and the land would bear much fruit for them.

The Israelites had been a curse to their unbelieving neighbours but, ironically, they were now a blessing to them. The Lord commanded the Israelites to speak truthfully to their neighbours and execute judgement and truth in all their dealings in the city. He also forbade them to have an evil heart towards their fellowmen. They were to hate falsehood, because He hated it. The Israelites would once again find joy in the worship of God. People from many other nations would also come together with the Israelites to seek God.

A Christian's life has its ups and downs. We are sorely tempted, and we sometimes fail. Here, the Bible comforts us that God is jealous for His people, and only wants them to turn to Him. Whatever circumstances we are in, we must deal with people peaceably and truthfully.

We are also encouraged to be strong, knowing that He is always with us when we seek to do His will. And through our testimonies, more will come to know Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 8
REVELATION 17**

PRAYER

God, help me to be faithful and true to You as I go through the trials and tribulations in this life.

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 9***LESSON****Turning to Christ, our
hope****VERSE 12**

*Turn you to the strong hold,
ye prisoners of hope: even to
day do I declare that I will
render double unto thee;*

The Lord pronounced judgement on the neighbouring nations around Israel: Hadrach (Syria), Damascus, Hamath, Tyrus, Zidon and the cities of the Philistines. After the destruction of these neighbouring nations, the rest would turn to the Lord [v. 7]. This is an indication that, even among the non-believing nations, some people will eventually come to believe in Him.

Zechariah prophesied the coming of the Messiah [v. 9] and he urged the daughters of Jerusalem to rejoice in this good news. Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy when He entered Jerusalem, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass [Matthew 21:5]. He is called the King, and described as just and having salvation. Christ is the Just and Righteous Ruler, and He has obtained salvation for all who believe in Him when He gave His own life willingly to die for our sins. Have you believed and put your trust in Him?

When the Messiah comes again, He will break the instruments of war and bring peace. He brings with Him the gospel of peace, and His dominion will be on all the earth. His blood, which He shed on the Cross, is effective in breaking the bondage of sin, to which we were once prisoners.

We are encouraged also to turn to Christ, our stronghold, while we are still prisoners in our sinful earthly bodies. He is our Hope, and if we look to Him, He will render us double the joy and blessings, in contrast to the pain and suffering that we face in this world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 9
REVELATION 18

THOUGHT

If you from sin are longing to be free, Look to the Lamb of God; He, to redeem you, died on Calvary, Look to the Lamb of God.

BIBLE LESSON
Zechariah 10

LESSON
God answers prayers

VERSE 1

*Ask ye of the LORD rain in
the time of the latter rain;
so the LORD shall make
bright clouds, and give
them showers of rain, to
every one grass in the field.*

Zechariah encouraged God's people to seek His blessings at proper times. When farmers ask for rain at the time when the latter rain shall fall, God will bless them with showers for every grass in the field. They should not look to other idols. Those who do so are like flocks without shepherds, finding comfort and security in false dreams and lies. God's anger is directed towards these shepherds and the goats that follow them. But to the flock that is faithful to Him, God treats them like how the kings treat their battle horses. They will be as mighty men and triumph over their enemies in battle because He is with them.

God will also strengthen and restore His people. It will be as though they have not been cast off in the first place. Why? God has promised that whosoever calls upon Him will be saved [Romans 10:13] and He will be their God. He will cause them to rejoice because He will hiss (or call) for His flock to gather them and redeem them from the bondage of sin. Those whom God has scattered to the far countries will turn to Him again. God causes them to return, though only after much hardship and affliction. They shall once again walk on the land in His name.

Christians should rejoice because God has not only called us but has also redeemed us. Let us wait patiently and ask for rain in the time of the latter rain. In His time, our prayers will be answered.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 10
REVELATION 19

THOUGHT

... for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. – Matthew 5:45

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 11***LESSON****Feeding the flock****VERSE 17**

*Woe to the idol shepherd
that leaveth the flock! the
sword shall be upon his
arm, and upon his right
eye: his arm shall be clean
dried up, and his right eye
shall be utterly darkened.*

In this chapter, the destruction of Israel is prophesied. The temple was made of the cedars of Lebanon, and fire would consume this wooden structure. If the mighty cedar can be burnt, surely the rest of the trees will howl in fear. The shepherds whom God had instituted for the Israelites had lost their glory, and would also howl in despair. Because the shepherds had not looked after the flock, but had instead caused them to be slaughtered, God would not pity them. There would not be peace as every man turned against his neighbour.

God Himself is the Shepherd of Israel, and there was fellowship between God and Israel. There was also the unity of brotherhood or “bands” [v. 14] among the people. But when the Israelites turned from God, the fellowship and the brotherhood were cut asunder. The betrayal of our Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver was also prophesied [v. 13]. When Judas tried to return the money to the Jewish leaders, they used it to purchase the potter’s field— a burial ground for strangers.

The foolish shepherd is judged for he has forsaken the flock and has gone after idols instead. As we serve the Lord in our church today, let us be reminded not to forsake our responsibilities. Leaders are the pillars of the church. If they fall, the flock will also be in danger of destruction.

Today, let us remember the purpose of Christ’s first coming—to purchase for us a place in heaven with the price of His own blood.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 11
REVELATION 20

THOUGHT

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. – Revelation 7:17

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 12–13***LESSON****Christ, our Shepherd****ZECHARIAH 13:7**

*Awake, O sword, against
my shepherd, and against
the man that is my fellow,
saith the LORD of hosts:
smite the shepherd, and the
sheep shall be scattered:
and I will turn mine hand
upon the little ones.*

Herein is the prophecy of the great and terrible day when our Lord shall return again. He shall come as a thief in the night [1 Thessalonians 5:2] and no man shall be able to withstand Him. Zechariah speaks of the mighty works that He will do for Jerusalem: she will not fall even though all the earth shall gather against her; all instruments of war will be destroyed together with those that besiege her [Zechariah 12:2–4]; He shall defend Jerusalem, and cause the people to be strong and mighty against their neighbours [Zechariah 12:5–8].

Furthermore, the Lord shall open the eyes of the Israelites to the truth [Zechariah 12:10], for He knows they will reject Christ in His first coming. There shall be great mourning after this fact [Zechariah 12:11–14], but the Lord will show them His grace and mercy through forgiveness of sin and uncleanness [Zechariah 13:1]. When the Lord returns to rule the earth for a thousand years, He will destroy all idols and there will be no need for prophets [Zechariah 13:2–6] because God will dwell among His people.

All these are possible because the Lord has awakened His sword against His shepherd, our Lord Jesus, Who died for our sins. While the majority of the people may be lost, there shall remain remnants of those whom the LORD will purify unto Himself.

This is the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus came to be the sacrificial Lamb, Who satisfied the wrath of God against all our sins.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 12–13

THOUGHT

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? – Romans 8:31

BIBLE LESSON*Zechariah 14***LESSON****Jehovah, our King****VERSE 9**

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Further prophecies concerning the Day of the Lord are presented in this final chapter of Zechariah. The Lord will first purge Jerusalem by calling all nations to battle against her. They shall prevail and half of the people will be taken captive. He will refine the remnants like how silver and gold are refined.

The Lord, in that day, shall stand on the Mount of Olives, and cause a great plain to be formed. The people shall flee to that plain. It is significant that the mount where Jesus visited often to pray to the Father is now made into a valley, where all can come and have fellowship with Him. Also on that day, God's Spirit shall flow from Jerusalem, and the Lord shall rule over all the earth. The people of the earth shall worship only one God.

In contrast, those who fought against Jerusalem would be judged. God will cause a plague to destroy the people as well as all who are in the land. Even this shall be a form of purging, so that those among the Gentiles that are left will also turn to the Lord and worship Him.

Every believer will experience ups and downs of life on earth. The Lord knows best, and He allows us to go through these trials to purge us of our sinful habits. Indeed, we should "in every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" [1 Thessalonians 5:18].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 14
REVELATION 21**

THOUGHT

Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. – Deuteronomy 8:5

BIBLE LESSON*Malachi 1***LESSON****I have loved you****VERSE 2**

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Malachi, which means “My messenger”, is the last book of the Old Testament. It was written at a time when the Israelites had returned from exile to their homeland where the temple was rebuilt and the walls of the city had been restored.

Despite Israel's sin, God declared His unconditional and unchanging love for them. But the people questioned, “How have You loved us?” God affirmed His love for His people by reminding them of His choice of Jacob over Esau in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham [v. 2–5]. This is in stark contrast to the lack of love His people had for Him, as manifested in the lives of the priests when they gave defiled sacrifices to the Lord, and when they whined over the trouble of being a priest [v. 7–13].

Israel had enjoyed many privileges. They had the protection of God from their enemies, and had experienced abundant personal blessings. God had restored their land to them, re-established the temple and reinstated the temple worship. God had given them rest from their enemies. Yet they had shown complete indifference, apathy and ingratitude to God.

Maybe there are times when you feel that God has neglected you and forgotten you in illness, in trouble and in turmoil. God has failed you or He has let you down. Whatever your circumstances, never doubt God's love for you, for that is the beginning of unbelief and disobedience. Do not argue with God, defend your sinful ways or even accuse God for not loving you! Remember, “I have loved you,” saith the Lord.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI I
REVELATION 22**

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for the greatness of Your love for us. Forgive us for our paltry love for You. Teach us to love You more and more.

BIBLE LESSON*Malachi 2***LESSON****Unfaithful priests and dishonouring marriages****VERSE 2**

If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 2

Israel's priests had dishonoured God through their shameful and disdainful service. The prophet warned that if they did not change their ways and honour Him, God would curse them and have them taken away together with the trash from their feasts [v. 3]. As priests, God expected them to fear Him, provide true instruction to His people, speak righteously, walk with Him in peace and uprightness, turn many away from iniquity and serve as messengers for Him. As Christians, God expects these of us, too.

Instead of showing unity and harmony among themselves as well as a love for their common Father and Creator, the Israelites were unfaithful and treacherous towards one another, displeasing God greatly. He also charged them for being unfaithful to Him by marrying “the daughter of a strange god” [v. 11] and covering the altar of the Lord with tears [v.13]. Consequently, God would cut off their fellowship with Him.

The Israelites were aware of God's displeasure and His rejection of their offerings, yet they feigned ignorance and caused His anger [v. 12–14]. They even accused God of not only allowing evil people to prosper but also approving their conduct [v. 17]. In light of this, the prophet warned, “Ye have wearied the LORD with your words.”

Let us be mindful of our words. “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” [Matthew 12:36–37].

THOUGHT

Whatever comes out of one's mouth indicates the content of one's heart. Search your heart before you speak.

BIBLE LESSON*Malachi 3–4***LESSON****The day of His coming****MALACHI 4:1**

*For, behold, the day cometh,
that shall burn as an oven;
and all the proud, yea, and
all that do wickedly, shall
be stubble: and the day that
cometh shall burn them
up, saith the LORD of hosts,
that it shall leave them
neither root nor branch.*

The Israelites had accused God of rewarding the wicked and not exercising His justice. God responded by telling them that He would cleanse and purify the people. Only after this gracious work would the judgement come.

While declaring God's mercy, the prophet asked the Israelites to repent and not rob God by withholding tithes and offerings meant for supporting the priests who ministered to the Lord and for helping the poor. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" [Malachi 3:10a]. It was not that they did not give anything to God. Rather, they did not bring *all* their tithes to Him, falling short of the amount that was due to God.

As Christians, God expects us to give generously and cheerfully, as He has provided, to meet the needs of others [Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:6–7]. God will abundantly bless those who freely give. God indicted those who claimed that it was useless to serve God [Malachi 3:14]. These people had seen the proud and wicked seemingly blessed, and had doubted the justice of God. However, they were wrong. We read in verse 16 that those who fear the Lord—those whom God call His "jewels"—He will remember eventually. Their names will be written in the Book of Remembrance.

God is unchanging in His righteousness and faithfulness, judgements and promises. He judges the unrighteous with the consuming fire of His wrath. Conversely, those who fear Him would experience the healing warmth of His love and would prosper and overcome the wicked [Malachi 4:1–3].

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 3–4**

THOUGHT

**We should be thankful for God's grace indeed.
After His gracious work comes the judgement.
Are you ready for His second coming?**

