MB013 Old Testament Survey

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GENESIS: THE METHOD OF FAITH

Genesis begins briefly with the connection of God to the universe and nature. It quickly focuses on what is still the foundation of society: the family. Indeed, the nations of the world are simply great family groups. “These chapters also reveal the failure of man in this basic relationship, because man tried to be man without God.”-lecturer Chapters 6-50 focus on relationship with God. Millennia passes quickly in the first five chapters, best summarized as the sons of God vs the sons of man, often devolving into intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of man and the accompanying loss of relationship between humans and God. Much like happened during the history of Israel previously studied.

Man seeks righteousness (or the *sense of being right*), peace and joy (or pleasure). In Genesis we read about Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. We see how in not fully believing and obeying God, we seek what we need in vain. The story of Jacob especially illustrates this frustration. These stories also show us that when living in harmony with God we can live in joyful peace. “The story of Abraham closes with the Canaanite tribes coming to him and saying. ‘Thou art a prince among us’ {cf, Gen 23:6 KJV}”

We learn the New Testment, new covenant principle of justification by faith as opposed to absolute obedience to the law in Genesis 16:6

And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and ***he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.***

This is reaffirmed in the New Testament by both Paul and James.

Romans 4:9

Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. [And Abraham predated the Law at Sinai. He is from Ur, not yet Hebrew.]

James 2:23

And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God.

Jacob was the rascal, intent on living by his own wits and his own efforts. He won what he desired by deceit and ended up being deceived. But he wrestled with an angel, persevered, exemplifying sanctification and by God’s grace reconciled in peace with his aggrieved brother.

Joseph experienced persecution at the hands of his brothers and his capturers. Yet he witnesses faithfully and forgave completely.

EXODUS: DESIGN FOR DELIVERANCE

Exodus is about God’s redemption of mankind out of despair and desperation. The Deuteronomy version of the fourth commandment tells us that the Sabbath not only celebrates God’s creation but also His redemption of humanity in need of him.

Exodus gives us a significant glimpse of God’s power to redeem. The New Testament story gives a fuller picture, the promise to Eve fulfilled. The power of sin defeated, bringing life. We yet await the final vindication and retrieval to the complete experience of redemption living in heaven with Jesus after the end of time.

Exodus begins with the birth of baby Moses, much like the gospel story begins with the birth of baby Jesus. Only Moses isn’t the redeemer although the people may have confused him so. He was favored by his foster father and educated to become Pharoah, a leader. He knew he was to lead but confused the means to leadership, fleeing afterwards from leadership.

Exodus divides into four events: (1) Passover, (2) miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, (3) giving of the law at Sinai, and (4) the construction of the tabernacle in the midst of the camp.

After forty years retirement from leadership training in Egypt God called Moses to speak to Pharoah. Moses understandably shrank. He’d been with sheep, not people. Moses said “no, I can’t talk with people”. And God said OK, I’ll do the talking through your mouth. Moses still answered, “I don’t think ‘we’ can do it. I’m afraid to talk with my relatives on the throne, even if you say the words.” God reprimanded him and Moses reluctantly returned to Egypt. God understands our fears but he expects us to trust him.

God threw ten plagues at Egypt, each showcasing the impotence of Egypt’s gods.

Ten Plagues and the Corresponding Egyptian God

Water Turned to Blood (Hapi)

Frogs Coming From the Nile (Heket)

Lice From the Earth's Dust (Geb)

Swarms of Flies (Khepri)

Death of Cattle and Livestock (Hathor)

Ashes Turned to Boils and Sores (Isis)

Hail in the Form of Fire (Nut)

Locus Sent From the Sky (Seth)

Three Days of Complete Darkness (Ra)

Death of the Firstborn (Pharaoh)

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Ten-Plagues-For-Ten-Gods>

It took the death of his son for Pharoah to follow through with actualized concent to leave Egypt.

It is very important to notice that when Moses went down to Egypt, the people of Israel were not a nation. They became a nation when they passed through the Red Sea. That is the meaning of those words from First Corinthians, "All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (I Cor. 10:2) They were made a body in the sea. They were a disorganized mob before. They came out a unit, a unit in Christ, when they passed through the Red Sea. -Lecturer

Note, the Hebrews didn’t get wet in this baptism. The Egyptians got so wet they drowned. The Hebrews became a body, a nation while crossing on dry ground between the walls of water. Rahab herself in Joshua 2:9-10 confirms this.

And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt;

Most of us attend relatively small churches. We shrink from confidence when we meet in small groups of 50-300. In my denomination we have the occasional mega-church, usually near an Adventist university. But most of our churches are much smaller. I live in Michigan where we have perhaps more members than any state other than California. But the congregation of 350 that I attend is still considered a large church. And only 130-180 attend each Sabbath. The infrequent times I’ve been in a different Christian church I’ve also seen small attendances although I don’t know the memberships.

We feel insignificant as did Israel when the spies returned. Yet in the city of Jericho where the spies escaped over the wall, in that city the people “fainted from fear” facing the prospect of war with Israel against their God who opened the Red Sea, led Israel to safety, and destroyed an Egyptian army by drowning.

We need not fear! But often we do.

At Sinai we have the giving of the law. The law is “a picture of the holiness of God, that is, the character of God… the unchangeability of God, the unrelenting character of God.” We appreciate his unchangeableness when we dwell on his love and grace. We, however, fear his holiness, his anger, and his wrath.

The law is the absolute, irrevocable standard of God's character, … he is absolutely unchangeable. He will never lower his demands in our life.

Sabbath observers are sometimes asked to go to our pastor and obtain a temporary exemption to permit us to work during what our managers think of as emergencies. But our pastors tell us that God hasn’t given them the authority to make exceptions. Note that SDAs at least, probably others, work to save lives in health services and care for patients in need. For profit, secular industries don’t qualify for exceptions although cows must be milked.

God’s law enables us to better approach His holiness, although *the law is inadequate to make us holy.* It serves as a guide.

God then gave plans for his dwelling place, the tabernacle to be placed at the center of the camp. He desires to be with his people in the center of our lives. In his presence they can sense hope and possibility to become more like him.

God’s immediate presence was shielded from the people in the tabernacle. A curtain separated the holy from the holy of holy. The ark where God could be present was shielded by the curtain. Only the high priest, one man, could enter the holy of holies. He could enter only once a year following certain specific procedures.

God had told Moses to remove his sandals the day of his calling because he stood on holy ground in the presence of God. God could never be common. He can’t become ordinary. He remains always Awesome.

There was no imperfection in the law. The law reflects God’s perfect character. Imperfection lay in the inadequacy of the tabernacle and animal sacrifices. This inadequacy would be erased at the cross. The curtain covering the holy of Holies was ripped open supernaturally at Christ’s death. The bread and wine/juice of the grape became the symbol of the sacrifice of all sacrifices. No more death in worship! Death is a facade for the believer because of the promise of the resurrection at Jesus’ second coming!

LEVITICUS: THE WAY TO WHOLENESS

Confusing, mystifying as Leviticus may be, everything points to this single purpose:

You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Lev. 20:26)

This remains true for us who live in New Testament times. Our purpose is to belong to the holy Lord whom we know as Jesus.

But most of us react initially to this word as did the little girl who happened to see a mule looking over the fence at her. She had never seen a mule before, and she said to it, "I don't know what you are, but you must be a Christian -- you look just like Grandpa." Others associate it with strangeness, apartness, as though holy people are weird, peculiar individuals who live out in the desert somewhere, remote from the rest of us. They are "different."

But the Bible itself suggests none of these ideas concerning holiness. -Lecturer

Holy has a similar derivation to the words *wholeness, complete*. I find Colossians 4:12 saying this using the word complete.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and ***complete*** in all the will of God.

We want to be whole. We read media stories so often about brokenness in modern society. It’s a heavy burden to be broken. We do not want to be broken.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We become whole when yoked with Jesus our Lord because he is bigger, stronger, naturally Holy because he has always been holy and always will be holy. He does the heavy work for us. We need not be broken.

NIV Leviticus 20:26

You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

The lecturer paraphrases this as

You shall be whole, because I am whole.

And alternately as

You shall be whole; for I am whole. That is my purpose.

“That is what the book of Leviticus is all about. In fact, so is the whole Bible.” - lecturer It is not just our purpose to become whole like God. It is first of all *His purpose to lead us to become whole*.

How does God make us whole? He says, “I have separated you from the peoples." (Lev. 20:24) I might see this as Jesus becoming our good Shepherd. He knows each of us individually and we recognize his voice. He searches for us when we wander and become lost. He leads us to green pastures and still waters. But more so, he feeds us at his table in the presence of his enemies. He fears not so we need fear not. I will dwell with him forever.

“Leviticus, then, is full of Christ. All the sacrifices, the rituals, and the ceremonies pictorially describe Jesus Christ and his work, and how he was available to men and women then.” -lecturer Leviticus paints a picture of Jesus before Jesus was born. *Leviticus shows a shadow picture of Jesus to people who only knew of him by way of a promise.* The promise of Jesus is the only promise we humans know as fully fulfilled. And this promise had not yet been fulfilled to the people of the time of Leviticus.

Leviticus splits into part 1 and part 2. The first part speaks to man’s need and God’s answer to that need. The last part speaks to what God expects from us in response.

Part 1 outlines five offerings: the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. God sees that people need to be loved and we need to love in return. We must have self respect and a sense of worth and also responsibility. We want to live lives of worth and accomplishment in an interactive community.

These chapters also provide a priesthood to minister to our sometimes troubled lives, our intellectual, spiritual, and emotional challenges. The priesthood came from the family of Levi, from where we get the chapter name. In our time Jesus has become the high priest (1 Timothy 2:5) and in 1 Peter 2:5 we read

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

We have Jesus today as high priest and we serve as priests to mediate in prayer and ministry for others and to be prayed for and ministered unto by other believers.

In this section God sets the standard for holy living. On our own we could never agree. But we have his standard.

The opportunity for people to respond came on the day of atonement, known today as Yom Kippur.

The second part describes our expected performance. There are four elements: blood, love in the family and among friends and in community, pleasure in the presence and power of God and in worship, and finally an awareness that in the end ***we choose*** either wholeness or brokenness. God never coerces! It is our choice to discover a new kind of life, to give up the old before we can have the new! **We can't have both!**

“In closing, we should return to our key verse: ‘You shall be whole because I am whole, and therefore I am separating you from the peoples in order that you should be mine.’” -lecturer We can become holy, we can become whole, no longer broken, if and when we *choose to become His*.

Leviticus paints a picture designed to lead us to let the Lord straighten out the tangled relationships of our lives.

NUMBERS:

THE INCOMPLETE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Numbers teaches us to trust God instead of our own ways. As Proverbs says so graphically, "There is a way which seems right to a man, and its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12) In Numbers Israel has come out of Egypt but not yet reached Cannan.

The camp is organized along the four sides of the tabernacle, the men numbered for defense against enemies. There’s the cloud by day and the fire by night, a visible reminder of God’s presence and leading. They have everything they need.

But we’re not easily satisfied with what we need. The seeds of rebellion germinate via murmurings of discontent. They complained about so much sweet manna, desiring meat. They doubted their water supply. They found the wilderness discomforting. God then gave them so much meat that they became sick of meat. God judged them with fire, plague, and dangerous snakes. For a time. And they complained more.

They then spied on Cannan and discovered the blessings of the land GOD HAD PROMISED. But they feared the giants. So God said, "Not one of you older than twenty years who went back at Kadesh-barnea will ever enter this land, except two men." (Num. 14:29, 30)

So they now began burying an average of 82 people a day, over 2500 a month. They did this 40 years until the 603,000 men and their wives died according to God’s pronouncement.

During these years they also rebelled against authority. Korah and Abiram, priests as the sons of Aaron openly defied Moses and their dad. “The ground opened up beneath Korah and Abiram and all their families, and they went down alive into the pit. Thus God established his authority through Moses by this remarkable judgment.” - lecturer

Following this rebellion,

All the leaders of the twelve tribes took rods and put them before the Lord. Aaron's rod was included among them, and when they came back in the morning, they found that Aaron's rod had grown branches, the branches had blossomed and the blossoms had grown fruit and there were almonds hanging on the branches, all taking place overnight. Of the twelve rods, only Aaron's blossomed. -lecturer

In this visual demonstration, God declared

Matthew 7:20

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Philippians 1:11

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Revelation 14.12

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus

We are to judge leaders by the fruits of obedience to scripture and the faith of Jesus. We are to choose and follow leaders by the same standard.

Numbers ends by telling of God protecting his people despite troubling murmurings and open rebellion. He gives victory in wars and protects from Balaam’s attempted curses.

DEUTERONOMY:

THE LAW THAT DELIVERS

Deuteronomy splits into three divisions. First, Moses remembers and recounts the marvelous miracle of Israel’s survival over 40 years in a wilderness devoid of substantial sources of food or water. Yet the Lord provided for probably 2 million of them in concentrated places. He kept them safe. There remained only those who were children at the start of the journey or born along the way. They needed this history of God’s continual presence with them over this time period in this inhospitable land.

“The second division is a great resume of the law. The Ten Commandments appear in the Bible for the second time here, beginning with chapter five, verse 27. Here are the laws on divorce, on faithlessness and the penalty that was extracted if any were caught in some suspicious situation. Here are the penalties for idolatry, and for sorcery and the warnings of God against falling into the terrible, terrible deeds practiced by the tribes that then inhabited the land.… God expected his people to keep themselves completely from these things and to be a holy people in the midst of sex-mad nations.” -lecturer There is also a review of the sanitary laws, previously expounded on in Leviticus.

The final division of the chapter considers the blessings in the future that will accompany obedience and oppositely the curses that can result from disobedience. There’s the warning of dispersion should they turn to other gods. God remained patient with them 800 years before finally dispersing them in the Babylonian captivity. He brought them back under Cyrus’ decree for about 600 years before again dispersing them in AD 70 after they had gone into the opposite extreme of teaching man made laws in superiority to God’s simple laws of righteous, loving living under the awesomeness of God’s mercy.

Deuteronomy gives us the Ten Commandments a second time. It repeats many of the other laws as well. Why? To make us perfect?

Do we even as Christians under the new covenant live perfect, sinless lives? Does the law make us perfect? Does the law keep us from doing wrong?

On the contrary. The law reveals to us the sinfulness in our lives. The law applies to everyone. I’m not always kind. I often feel pretty good about myself, certainly better than thou… Pride like the Pharisee? “The law says "No! All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) I have sinned…

There is another purpose of the Law. Paul says,

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. (Rom. 7:7)

God led them out of Egypt, not because they were good people, saying

Know therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. {Deut. 9:4, 9:6RSV}

And they weren’t a good people after receiving God’ law. But being gifted with his law they could recognize their lack and aspire to be more like him. Interestingly, being apprised of the blessings and curses for their aspirations or not to be like God, he appealed to them through human motivations.

We must however be careful to avoid taking God’s blessings for granted, feeling free to act sinfully under the presumption that we’ll just afterwards say “Sorry”.

lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself In his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. The Lord would not pardon him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy would smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book would settle upon him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven." {Deut. 29:18b-20 RSV}

Deuteronomy teaches sanctification, the law in our hearts, infused within us.

**But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. {Deut 30:14 RSV}**

This following is my favorite quote on sanctification and is my pinned tweet on twitter.

“And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.” — Desire of Ages

And the picture that goes with this pinned tweet shows how I can be seen by God if I allow him to blend my heart and mind into conformity with His will.



JOB: THE HARDEST QUESTION

The book of Job tries to answer the question “Why does apparently senseless tragedy strike men?" It a question that destroys some peoples’ faith. It challenges everyone’s faith.

The first chapter provides one possible answer: “The answer given is that senseless suffering arises out of Satan's continual challenge to the government of God.” -lecturer

Job gets telegrams, the next immediately following the previous.

* All oxen stolen.
* His donkeys were killed.
* His sheep were killed in a storm.
* His camel herd wiped out.
* His 7 sons and 3 daughters celebrating a birthday die from a tornado.

Job takes it all in stride. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gives, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." {Job 1:21 RSV}

Satan abtains greater permission to hurt still faithful Job and inflicts boils upon his body. Satan now seems to use Jobs' wife to torment him. Most versions of the Bible translate her words “curse God and die”. The ASV says “renounce”. However two versions say “Bless God and die.” The Douay-Rheims and Young’s Literal Translation. I’ve come to prefer the bless version. I’ve read that the same word can equally mean curse or bless and in different instances the texts are translated differently.

I realize that Satan would have been happy to use Job’s wife’s words to skewer him. But I recall that she shared in the same loss of wealth as her husband. She shared in the same grief as her husband. But she may have respected her husband’s steady faith. She may have told him, “I don’t know how you do it, but I admire your steady, unflinching faith. You don’t need to surrender your faith. I’ve shared our loses with you with perhaps greater struggle. But I don’t physically hurt like you hurt. I don’t know how to ease the pain. There is no medical treatment. Bless God one last time and let life go. You deserve to be pain free.”

In the NIV we read in the first verse of Job that he was “blameless and upright”. The KJV says he “eschewed evil”. I doubt the boils lasted more than a year. I don’t see any indication his wife died. I doubt he waited 30 years for his second family of children. I see God honoring the faith of both husband and wife with his younger children. Job did remonstrate with his wife in 2:10 but I can see him saying “foolish woman, with God there can always be a cure. I can endure what God allows to put upon me.”

God sent Job three friends during his suffering and grief. I know they were sent by God because for seven days they did exactly what friends should do. They sat with him quietly, empathizing with his pain. Job 2:13

Then Satan used these friends to misconstrue the tragedy into one where Job was at fault. As humans we seem to need to find a reason and if we need to, we invent a reason. They knew of no wrong in Job’s life deserving of these punishments. If anything they came closer to deserving punishment. And they seemed to be spared. Job endures their accusations for days I believe. In time though he says with exasperation,

“I am sure you alone are the people and wisdom is going to die with you." (Job 12:2)

He does complain, it seems, that God isn’t listening to him, or at least God isn’t responding.

The glorious thing about this dear man is that throughout the whole book he is utterly and completely honest. Confused and bewildered and puzzled by what is happening, he simply blurts out his thoughts. He refuses to admit things that he cannot accept: "All these pat answers don't help at all!" In his desolation he expresses in various ways the ultimate cry of the human spirit. -lecturer

Job wants to debate God. He wants a two way conversation. He wants a trial or mediation. Job 9:32

Then along comes a young man Elihu who says to Jobs friends, “Job isn’t guilty! And oh by the way Job, you shouldn’t try to exonerate yourself by blaming God.” But Elihu offers no beneficial answers.

Finally, God speaks! He berates Job for wanting to debate with the omniscient one and then asks Job scientific questions from nature. Job responds in repentance for complaining. God then explains that as created human beings “we are God's instruments for the working out of *his* purposes, some of which are so vastly complicated they are quite beyond our ability to understand.”

God then inquires about the extent of Job’s losses, as if he doesn’t know but giving Job an opportunity to speak and perhaps affirm his honesty. For each material loss, God doubles it in return. He was a rich man before, now… God promises him a new family of children. At the time a man’s wealth didn’t consist only in material things, it consisted especially in sons and also daughters. Job returns to greater wealth than status quo.

God returned to Job what he’d lost ***after*** he prayed for his friends. Job 42:10 How many blessings and answers to prayer do we lose because we naively or intentionally fail to pray for our friends?

PSALMS:

THE WORSHIP OF AN HONEST HEART

Psalms is a book about human emotion.

* Fearful: 56, 91, 23.
* Lonely: 71, 62.
* Overwhelmed with sin: 51.
* Seeking repentance: 32.
* Worried/anxious: 37, 73.
* Angry: 58, 13.
* Joyful: 92, 66.
* Forsaken: 88.
* Grateful: 40.
* Doubting: 119.

More than half the Psalms were written by David but a number of obscure authors wrote others. They are meant to be sung. They parallel the Pentateuch sharing God’s interaction with us as his people and the world he created.

Psalms 1 through 41 as a section is equivalent to the book of Genesis, the message of human need and man’s fumbling, sometimes disastrously so. Psalm 42 through Psalm 72, corresponds to the book of Exodus, the discovery of the grace of God and his power to deliver.

Psalm 73 through Psalm 89, corresponds to the book of Leviticus. We discover the depth of our sin and what God’s unbending love can do to cut away and free us from this burdensome sin. Psalms 90 through 106 parallel the book of Numbers, showing us we must resist the plague of self doubt during the cycle of spiritual highs and devastating lows we experience in our journey of faith.

The fifth book, Psalm 107 through Psalm 150, corresponds to the book of Deuteronomy. These psalms picture the person who surrenders self, picture the person who has come to the end of himself, and is ready to claim the fullness of God.

When we read the psalms decrying enemies we can think of temptations. “They have no right to live in a Christian's heart, in a Christian's life. They have no right to be honored.” -lecturer We must deal with temptation ruthlessly, without sympathy or longing.

In Psalm 43 we read,

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people;

from deceitful and unjust men deliver me!

For thou art the God in whom I take refuge;

why hast thou cast me off?

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? {Psa 43:1-2 RSV}

We must think of people as our enemy. We must look within to discover our fiercest enemy. We must welcome God’s deliverance from envy and selfish ambition. Why should we mourn the so called good times of our old degenerate life?

Oh send out thy light and thy truth;

let them lead me,

let them bring me to thy holy hill

and to thy dwelling!

Then I will go to the altar of God,

to God my exceeding joy;

and I will praise thee with the lyre,

O God, my God. {Psalm 43:3,4 RSV}

We must seek to dwell near God’s holiness, experiencing joy in worship to him. “All the psalms are designed to teach us to do one thing -- to worship.” -lecturer The psalms exemplify emotion. Worship seeks a relationship. Relationships die without expressions of emotion. Music generates feelings. In the psalms we need not hide our feelings. Whatever we feel, God can envelop us in his wonderful, powerful love.

PROVERBS:

THAT MEN MAY KNOW WISDOM

Proverbs brings to us the will of mankind, the choices we face in life. Part one is about advice of a father to his son. Part two is a collection of practical proverbs from Solomon, I assume written by Solomon. Part three are additional proverbs of Solomon aggregregated by the men of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, long after Solomon's death. The last two chapters of Proverbs come from the otherwise unknown men Agur, son of Jakah, and Lemuel, king of Massa. Jewish legend has Lemuel as an alias for Solomon but he is also thought to have perhaps have been Hezekiah. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemuel_(biblical_king)#:~:text=Lemuel%20>(Hebrew%3A%20%D7%9C%D6%B0%D7%9E%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%9C%20L%C9%99m%C5%AB',him%20with%20Hezekiah%20or%20Solomon.

A key verse in proverbs is this…

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [or wisdom];

fools despise wisdom and instruction. {Prov 1:7 RSV}

Solomon wrote this either in his youth or in old age. “This whole book approaches life from the position that God has all the answers -- God is all-wise; God knows everything.” -lecturer

Fear today means primarily terror. In an age when you bowed before a king it carried a dual meaning of respect. Some ministers preach an eternally burning hell to promote the motivation of the first and common kind of fear. But when Jesus walked the earth he inspired people to come close to him to learn of him in respect of his eternal truth and love. He commended Mary who sat listening at his feet instead of fishing about to please him. We can fear the Lord in respectful worship and obedience, following in his ways.

We can learn the principle of respecting God at any stage in our lives but we will have fewer regrets the sooner we learn it and put God first in our lives. There would be much less divorce if we let our Christian faith lead us in choosing a spouse and perhaps a career.

Chapter 10 begins the traditional proverbs. An example:

Like a gold ring in a swine's snout

is a beautiful woman without discretion. {Prov 11:22 RSV}

Indiscretions smears everyone’s reputation, not just but including that of the beautiful woman. “The prudent man ignores an insult.” {Prov 12:16 RSV} is a challenging proverb, especially for the young. But the old might shoulder with unexpressed anger. Dwelling on the insult does not really ignore it.

“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.” {Prov 12:22 RSV} In the last days, Revelations 21:8, we read a collection of vile sins and punishment:

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Included is lying. Lying seems a small thing sometimes. We deceive ourselves.

“He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,

but he who is kind to the needy honors him. {Prov 14:31 RSV}”

Reminds us of the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. I’ve often heard the managers at the home office where I worked berate the factory employees for being lazy and late. The policy even was that factory hourly workers lost holiday pay if they clocked in one minute late the next day. The policy did not apply to white collar staff, only to blue collar staff.

He who finds a wife finds a good thing,

and obtains favor from the Lord. {Prov 18:22 RSV}

“This from a man who had a thousand of them.” -lecturer Of course, I’ve always thought “What a hypocrite!” He even says this without an apology. Good advice but…

“It is better to live in a corner of the housetop

than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” {Prov 21:9 RSV} Of course I think a woman could rightly say the same about a contentious man! I think Solomon’s primary relationship with his wives was to schedule bedroom appointments with them. I think no other king of Judah or Israel had so many wives. Even Ahab may have only had one wife, contentious and idolatrous though she may have been.

“Train up a child in the way he should go,

and when he is old he will not depart from it.” {Prov 22:6 RSV} The Catholic Church, Seventh-day Adventists church, Amish, and to a lesser extent the Lutheran and Baptist churches have taken this text to heart in creating our extensive private Christian/parochial school systems.

“Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause,

and do not deceive with your lips.

Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me;

I will pay the man back for what he has done." {Prov 24:28-29}

We have the New Testament inversion of this proverb in the golden rule of Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12, “do to others what you would have them do to you”.

Chapter 31 describes a virtuous woman. A young woman may model herself after this passage. A young man may form in his mind the kind of woman he wants to marry from the model in this chapter.

Chapter 31 seems relatively modern for contemporary young women.

16 She considereth a field, and ***buyeth it***: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. (She’s a successful business woman. Owns her own company.)

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; (She’s educated?)

She multitasks all this with traditional homemaking. She raises children. She boosts her husbands standing in the community. ***She is superwoman!***

ECCLESIASTES:

THE INSPIRED BOOK OF ERROR

“Ecclesiastes very accurately summarizes what man thinks.” -lecturer It is favorite book for athiests and Bible critics. Ecclesiastes is a statement of man’s view that deprecates the need for God. It focuses on man in man’s strength.

Martin Luther translates 1:1 as “The words of the Preacher” but the lecturer might prefer the following translations of the verse.

GNT

These are the words of the Philosopher

GW, NOG

The words of the spokesman

MSG

These are the words of the Quester

CJB

The words of Kohelet (speaker to the assembly)

Even as found in a number of translations - The words of the teacher

Or in WYC

The words of Ecclesiastes

These are not, apparently, the words of God but written from a humanistic point of view. Read carefully.Verse two tells us how to think of man’s philosophy that focuses on ourselves.

Vanity of vanities, says the Debater, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. {cf, Eccl 1:2 RSV}

Our vanity is to imagine our wonders in intelligence and virtue. It’s like facial makeup, unreal and easily smeared. “Round and round goes the wind,” (Ecccl 1:6 RSV), “life goes on and we are lost in the meaninglessness of the universe. Nothing is to be heard but the clanking of gears. You may recognize this philosophy to be very common today. and the end of it is emptiness. What is man in the midst of a universe like that? Just a tiny speck with no meaning or significance at all.” -lecturer

Chapter 2 examines the life in pursuit of pleasure. “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; {Eccl 2:9-10a RSV}” This too turned to vanity. 2:1

He then chases things and accumulates wealth. This he again finds “vanity and a striving after wind.” {Eccl 2:17 RSV} Earlier in the verse he says,”I hated life.” The toys men dreamt of not only fail to please him, even having them he hates life.

We find inadequate meaning in possessions or experiences. We wish a permanence in life, an eternal meaning. But “he [God] has put eternity into man's mind, {Eccl 3:11a RSV} And without God eternity is not in sight.

In chapter 4 he turns to capitalism.But in time the titan of industry gets replaced by some young person the titan hired. His innovative initiatives get swept away by newer initiatives, for better or worse.

In chapter 5 he tries religion. God is in religion and he tries to do good and to be good. But ritual doesn’t change hearts. It doesn’t make us warm to peoples’ needs. It doesn't motivate us to correct inequities. We remain the same tired person who now listlessly goes to church and reluctantly contributes money.

In chapter 7 he turns to moderation.

Be not righteous overmuch, and do not make yourself over wise; why should you destroy yourself? Be not wicked overmuch, neither be a fool; why should you die before your time? {Eccl 7:16-17 RSV}

Do a little, but not too much. Aim for a happy medium. I suppose that applies to generosity and morality. Perhaps to alcoholic partying as well.

Eventually he says,

Then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. {Eccl 8:17 RSV}

He becomes fatalistic:

In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good. {Eccl 11:6 RSV}

For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity. {Eccl 11:8 RSV}

Now in his fatalism, the philosopher Solomon finally is open to seeing the light. His viewpoint changes, lifting away from himself.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. {Eccl 11:9 RSV}

His youth is gone though.

What I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God has given him, for this is his lot. {Eccl 5:18 RSV}

We don’t have eternity in this earthly life yet. Enjoy what God gives us.

But Solomon still doesn’t recognize the joy God intends for him. He settles for toil and simple happiness with a limited sense of God.

In the last chapter Solomon says a bit more.

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, {Eccl 12:1a RSV}

Before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, {Eccl 12:6a RSV}

Don’t wait for a deathbed conversion. You may die suddenly or you may become so comfortable in your self assurance that you don’t want your intended deathbed conversion.

Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man. {cf, Eccl 12:13}

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

and do not rely on your own insight.

In all your ways acknowledge him,

and he will make straight your paths. {Prov 3:5- 6 RSV}

If Solomon had said this in the beginning, would it have made sense? Even at the end it comes so sudden. To be a “whole man”, a whole person we must respect and obey God. He knows what it takes to be whole. “Remember also your Creator”. He created us needing what he provides. Trust in him with our heart even when our thoughts would lead us away. Acknowledge him in our private and our public lives. As the song goes, Dare to Be a Daniel!

SONG OF SOLOMON: A LOVE SONG AND A HYMN

The Song of Solomon is an eastern love song. “it is a revelation of all that was intended in the divinely given function that we call sex.… For sex permeates our lives; Freud was right about that… It also touches us emotionally, and even spiritually; God made us that way.” -lecturer

My roommate in my freshman year of college was there because his parents selected Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University). He smoked against the rules but showered five times a day. He bragged of his sexual activity yet spent six hours on a date at a park needing to go to the restroom but embarrassed to say so. He and I were so different. He didn’t smoke around me. I was religious and shy around girls. I read the Bible. He read, and enjoyed reading, Song of Solomon. It’s all the Bible he would read. I didn’t quite understand how Song of Solomon belonged in the Bible. And yet I didn’t see it as prurient so I didn’t understand his interest. I will note that we were friends. We only went together in college one year since I transferred to Newbold College in England and later to Andrews University in Michigan. The point is, although he had no interest in the Bible otherwise, he enjoyed reading Song of Solomon.

There’s nothing pornographic or obscene in Song of Solomon. The young king of Israel, disguised as a shepherd meets and falls in love with a beautiful country girl. They fall in love. He of course must in time leave. She waits for him.

The king visits the village and asks to see her. OK she thinks but her mind is on the shepherd boy she’s in love with. When seeing the king she recognizes the one she loves. They marry in the palace. She is known as the Shulammite girl which is the feminine form of the name Solomon.

The Song of Solomon is highly poetical and figurative. Solomon speaks when the verse quotes the speaker saying “my love” and the Shulammite speaks when the verse says “my beloved”. They speak poetically in a language of love. “The book describes married love as God intended it to be… [in] full abandonment to one another in mutual satisfaction which is described in this book is possible only because it is experienced within that total oneness which only marriage permits.” -lecturer

God ordains the delights of love with its passions within the context of marriage to each other.

The deepest measure of this story goes beyond human love.

Someone has well said, "If you love Jesus Christ, you will love this song because here are words that fully express the rapture of the heart that has fallen in love with Christ. " When you read the book of Ecclesiastes, you read of man's search throughout the world for something to satisfy his heart, -lecturer

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” {Eph 5:25 RSV}

“This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church.” {Eph 5:32 RSV}

God loves us, he loves the church to which we are a part of, not passively. God loves with passion. He loves fiercely. This is the dual message in the love story in Song of Solomon.

ISAIAH: THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

The name "Isaiah" means "The salvation of Jehovah." In chapter 6 Isaiah has a vision.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory." {Isa 6:1-3 RSV}

The throne of Judah is temporarily vacant. Northern Israel has been scattered. And still God reigns with them.

A voice says, "Cry!" {Isa 40:6a RSV}

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. {Isa 40:6 RSV}

The grass withers, the flower fades,

but the word of our God will stand for ever. {Isa. 40: 8 RSV}

And then a shift in weeping to something else.

... despised and rejected by men;

a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;

and as one from whom men hide their faces... {Isa 53:3a RSV}

But he was wounded for our transgressions,

he was bruised for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,

and with his stripes we are healed... {Isa 53:5 RSV}

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he opened not his mouth: ... {Isa 53:7a RSV}

“And Isaiah saw how God's love would break the back of man's rebelliousness and meet his helpless need.” -lecturer

... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,

and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,

so he opened not his mouth. {Isa 53:7b RSV}

Israel, Judah, God’s people, all mankind are bent to a propensity to rebel. And God does punish. But he can’t help embracing, meeting rebellion with arms offering love. Love that suffers! He will hurt with them.

As humans our natural instinct is rebellion. Even though we are the little guy compared to God and weak to the point of helplessness.

All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned every one to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all. {Isa 53:6 RSV}

Yet…

"Ho, every one who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price." {Isa 55:1 RSV}

He restores us in our helplessness.

JEREMIAH: A PROFILE OF COURAGE

Jeremiah preached 40 years from midway in Josiah’s reign into the last king Zedekiah’s reign. His was a message of doom calling for reform. He begged them to take God seriously but they did their best to ignore him. That had lost contact with the word of God, even lost for awhile a portion of the law. They had adopted the values of the world around them.

Jeremiah proclaimed judgment and national ruin. A cruel, Godless people would destroy them. This idolatrous nation world tear down the glorious temple and haul them into captivity. But Jeremiah also preached hope. Through Jeremiah God told his rebellious people their captivity would last only seventy years, exactly 70 years. Through Isaiah God named the king by name before he was born who would restore Israel.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, stated that the Jews in Babylonian captivity showed Cyrus the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures which contain his name and described his role in the scheme of God. The historian says that it was this circumstance that motivated the ruler “to fulfill what was written” (Antiquities of the Jews 11.1.2), <https://christiancourier.com/articles/cyrus-the-great-in-biblical-prophecy>

Daniel discovered God’s appointed time for the restoration from his study of the words of Jeremiah. Daniel prayed for the completion of this prophecy.

Jeremiah spoke not of just the restoration concluding the 70 years. He look to the restoration of the new covenant at the cross. In Jeremiah 31 we read,

31 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;

34 … I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

38 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord … shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

In the object lesson of the potter, Jeremiah tells us the Potter “has power over the clay to shape it as he wishes… This applies not only to the nation but to the individual as well.” -lecturer

Jeremiah himself fights a battle with discouragement. He experiences no grand, uplifting altar call highs. He cries,

Why is my pain unceasing,

my wound incurable,

refusing to be healed? {Jer 15:18a RSV}

In thy forbearance take me not away;

know that for thy sake I bear reproach. {Jer 15:15b RSV}

This discouragement isn’t from lack of Bible study:

Thy words were found, and I ate them,

and thy words became to me a joy

and the delight of my heart;

for I am called by thy name,

O Lord, God of hosts. {Jer 15:16 RSV}

Jeremiah delights in the Lord and study of scripture. God answers him that in dwelling on his persecution and rejection that he has forgotten his calling, his urgent mission.

Therefore thus says the Lord:

"If you return, I will restore you," ... {Jer 15:19a RSV}

I will make you to this people

a fortified wall of bronze;

they will fight against you,

but they shall not prevail over you,

for I am with you

to save you and deliver you, says the Lord.

I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,

and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless." {Jer 15:20-21 RSV}

Jeremiah “continues with his ministry, through all the discouraging circumstances, to at last be taken as a prisoner to Egypt, where he died.” -lecturer

LAMENTATIONS:

THE THERAPY OF TROUBLE

Lamentations is a poetic study of sorrow, of heartbreak. It begin with Jeremiah the prophet and priest and writer of Lamentations sitting on a hillside weeping for Jerusalem and its people who have just been marched off into captivity in Babylon. Daniel probably trudges with them having no idea how the Lord will use him in the ensuing years.

How lonely sits the city that was full of people!

How like a widow has she become, {Lam 1:1a RSV}

"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?

Look and see

if there is any sorrow like my sorrow ..." {Lam 1:12a RSV}

All who pass along the way

clap their hands at you;

they hiss and wag their heads

at the daughter of Jerusalem; {Lam 2:15a RSV}

Remember my affliction and my bitterness,

the wormwood and the gall! {Lam 3:19 RSV}

Let him give his cheek to the smiter, {Lam 3:30a RSV}

This recalls Isaiah's prophecy, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard." (Is. 50:6) This was fulfilled by the smiting of the Lord by the soldiers when Jesus was brought before Pilate for judgment. So this little book captures the agony and sorrow that was so much a part of our Lord's ministry at the cross that it earned him the title, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Is. 53:3) -lecturer

Chapters 1-4 follow formal rules of Hebrew poetry. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 are written as acrostics, each chapter composed of 22 verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse beginning with the following letter in order. Chapter 3 forgoes the acrostic structure but contains 66 verses, a multiple of 22. There are 22 triads, groups of three verses, each triad headed in sequential alphabetical order. There then follows a concluding chapter.

Each chapter considers a different kind of sorrow. Chapter one expounds on a sense of abandonment and loneliness. Chapter two describes the devastation of the city after Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction. But it attributes the devastation to God, not their human enemy.

Chapter three, the long chapter, focuses on Jeremiah’s reaction to this devastation, his pain. He had prophesized of the devastation but he hadn’t wanted it to come.

He has made my flesh and my skin waste away,

and broken my bones;

he has besieged and enveloped me

with bitterness and tribulation;

he has made me dwell in darkness

like the dead of long ago. {Lam 3:4-6 RSV}

Or as the KJV says, “My flesh and my skin hath he made old.” I have prophesied of this my who life and become old, wasted away…

Chapter four expresses a sense of incredulity at the immensity of judgment. Until now God has always pulled back. But now in essence nothing remains.

The hands of compassionate women

have boiled their own children;

they became their food

in the destruction of the daughter of my people. {Lam 4:10 RSV}

In chapter five Jeremiah discusses the humiliation he shares with the rest of his people.

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,

our homes to aliens.

We have become orphans, fatherless;

our mothers are like widows.

We must pay for the water we drink,

the wood we get must be bought.

With a yoke on our necks we are hard driven;

we are weary, we are given no rest. {Lam 5:1-5 RSV}

The joy of our hearts has ceased; ... {Lam 5:15a RSV}

The crown has fallen from our head;

woe to us, for we have sinned! {Lam 5:16 RSV}

In all his lamentations of grief, Jeremiah acknowledges God’s right judgment.

“The Lord is in the right,

for I have rebelled against his word;" {Lam **1**:18a RSV}

The Lord has done what he purposed,

has carried out his threat;

as he ordained long ago,

he has demolished without pity;

he has made the enemy rejoice over you,

and exalted the might of your foes. {Lam **2**:17 RSV}

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,

his mercies never come to an end;

they are new every morning;

great is thy faithfulness.

…

For the Lord will not

cast off for ever,

but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion

according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men. {Lam **3**:22-33 RSV}

The punishment of your iniquity,

O daughter of Zion, is accomplished,

he will keep you in exile no longer;

but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish,

he will uncover your sins. {Lam **4**:22 RSV}

But thou, O Lord, dost reign for ever;

thy throne endures to all generations. {Lam **5**:19 RSV}

The lecturer discusses the parables in Luke 14 about first counting the cost. (1) A man goes out to battle a king approaching with an army. Will he fight without first calculating whether he is equipped to win? And if not I assume try to appease his enemy. (2) If a man sets out to build a tower, will he not count the cost to be sure he can finish it?

The lecturer reminds us that Jesus is not telling us to count the cost of whether it will be worth it to become a Christian. No, the lecturer tells us it is God who counts the cost; God who is determined to win. I have to train you to be dependable in the endeavor against my enemy.

I think God determined to shake up complacency in Judah. They repented less than they sinned in idolatry. The lecturer suggests, although I couldn’t find it, that the people of Judah followed God during Josiah’s reign not because they loved the Lord but because they loved Josiah. They had 9 good kings and 11 bad kings. And one of the 9 they followed in worship to God because they liked the king.

In 9th grade our church school students attended the evangelistic revival held at church. I sat with friends in school. They told me, “George, don’t pray for us. We’re only getting baptized because we like the evangelist.” They commitment was faked because they liked the preacher.

But God in the devastating captivity also saw that down the road, after 70 years, the temple and city would be rebuilt and his people would no longer worship impotent carved images. Yes, they in time developed a new kind of rebellion. But they had learned the lesson of obedience. They just hadn’t yet learned to embed the law in their hearts. They put it into their heads and hands, thinking obedience wins salvation. When what God wants is obedience because of our Joy in Him.

EZEKIEL: WHEELS, BONES, AND RESTORATION

Ezekiel, while much older than Daniel, was also taken captive from Judah to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The book begins with a vision of God. “If your heart needs to be set on fire by the revelation of the character and glory of God, read Ezekiel.” -lecturer

As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. {Ezek 1:4 RSV}

In Revelations 1:15 NIV we read “His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace.” And we read about the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3 “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” And in John 8:12 we read,

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

This Old Testament picture of God closely matches the New Testament description of God. God is unchangeable. Hebrews 7:24

We also see the four living creatures of Ezekiel in Revelations. Ezekiel’s prophecies tell of God’s glory leaving the temple through the Mount of Olives and out of Jerusalem. Of course centuries later Jesus would be arrested on the mount of Olives and later ascend into heaven from there, promising to leave the Holy Spirit in his place.

Ezekiel tells how God destined man to have fellowship with God and how man in rejecting this fellowship became degraded and weakened. Ezekiel portrays God’s messages in dramatic symbolism. He lays on his side 390 days and then on his right side another 40 days. Thus he demonstrates the years God patiently waited on Israel/Judah to awaken to the reality of God’s power and favor to them. The 40 days represented rapidly coming judgment because of their inattentive rebellion against him.

Chapter 28 fortells the fall of the king of Tyre. Scholars see this chapter symbolically telling of the final fall of Satan.

"Your heart was proud because of your beauty;

you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground;

I exposed you before kings,

to feast their eyes on you.

By the multitude of your iniquities,

in the unrighteousness of your trade

you profaned your sanctuaries; ..." {Ezek 28:17-18a RSV})

Pride exalts self in the place of God.

Ezekiel then turns to the restoring grace of God. In chapter 37, God breathes life into dry bones. God will resurrect Israel. Beginning with chapter 40, Ezekiel tells of the restoration of the millennial temple in the far future where “underneath the throne [in heaven] comes the river of God, sweeping through the temple. out into the eastern side, down across the land. and into the Dead Sea to heal its waters. It is a marvelous picture of the Spirit of God in the day of the millennial kingdom.”

Interestingly, in Kathie Gifford’s book The Rock, The Road, and The Rabbi, published in 2018 referencing Ezekiel 47:8-9, Kathie tells fresh water pools found with fish on the edges of the Dead Sea and a fissure at the bottom of the Dead Sea where shallow pools of fresh water with fish can be found. It's still largely the same salty Dead Sea it’s been but something is happening.

<https://twitter.com/GeorgeEWade/status/1663364291985113089>

<https://twitter.com/GeorgeEWade/status/1663364428731932672>

God can also restore the temple in the body and mind of man. He can restore from physical weakness to strength. He can restore from spiritual degradation to righteousness that we can experience through His strength.

In John 4:14 John quotes Jesus describing himself as the water of life. Ezekiel in chapter 47:5 swims in this life giving water.

In the last verse of Ezekiel he tells of living in the city containing the millennial temple which is called *the Lord is There*. The believers in Antioch didn’t call themselves Christians. The people not yet believing called them “Christ-one" -- one who belongs to Christ.

The text in Ezekiel that I find most formidable and am most familiar with is 8:16

And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

These were priests themselves worshipping the sun, an abomination. And worse, in verse 17 we read that with the influence of church leaders worshipping the sun, “they must also fill the land with violence and continually provoke Me to anger?” False worship, perhaps especially worship of the sun (a rhyme, pun of *Son*) leads to common, abominable sin such as the gun violence in America.

DANIEL: ON THE WAY TO THE FUTURE

The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation pair to prophetically tell of the future. We can see enough completed prophecies in both books of prophecy to have confidence that God is sharing with us what is yet to come. The rock cut out by unseen hands striking and destroying the image that in a microcosm tells of 2500+ years of earth’s history in the symbolism of the changing materials in the image told of and explained in brevity - this history we can recognize if predisposed to believe God. (Maybe in large part if we’re simply a student of history) We can know this Rock, Jesus himself will end world history as we know it and usher in a better place.

Daniel’s “image” prophecy of omniscient prophecy is followed by a Beast prophecy, mostly mirrored in Revelation.

God introduces Daniel’s prophecies by sharing stories of Daniel’s and his three friends good character and loyalty to God. They remain faithful to the principles they had learned prior to the devastating captivity by the terrifying Babylonian armies. They had seen or at least heard of the demolition of the temple to their God who in times past had destroyed entire hostile armies besieging Jerusalem. They had been driven by this brutal, conquering enemy out of their probably plush homes into a culture foreign to them.

This foreign themed, idolic, brutal society had been available to them at home but they had been sheltered by still faithful parents and families. WHAT A SHOCK. Now this foreign king surprisingly offered them the luxuries they had heretofore shunned. They feared to offend this king who led such a brutal army.

But they also feared the loving, protective God they’d grown up to faithfully worship. This God they had learned to trust, while plunging their idolatrous neighbors into fearsome destruction had protected them through the journey. How could they desert him now? They tentatively asked their foreign overseer for a trial period to live according to the ways of Jehovah, were reluctantly granted this trial period. God surprised their overseer who a little less reluctantly indefinitely allowed them to live as they had previously learned at home. Notably we never learn in the Bible whether their faithful parents likewise survived and thrived.

Daniel’s three faithful companions faced an additional test of their faith and obedience when the king obstinately built a statue to represent his eternal reign. Daniel isn’t mentioned in the story, perhaps sent away to avoid the ugly, unwanted scene feared by the king. Perhaps if Daniel had been in the city the king would have recalled the memory of Daniel’s friends and hidden all four men. As it is, the three friends were bound and ordered executed by fire. The king in the end remembered their connection to his trusted counselor and friend Daniel, remembered the Rock in the dream interpreted by God through Daniel, and recognized that same God walking about with the three faithful men in the midst of the flames. They were unhurt, their clothing not even damaged. The king ordered them out, declaring a feeble faith in this Hebrew God that he wouldn’t fully acknowledge until years later. I expect to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven someday. Because of the faithful witness of just four men.

There is no way to understand what the prophetic program means unless you first grasp the moral lessons of the first part of the book. -lecturer

Jesus used the story of the destruction and desolation of even the temple roughly 600 years prior to warn of a repeat destruction because of unbelief.

“So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place then...let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..." (Matt. 24:15, 16) "Get out of the city of Jerusalem, because things will happen there that will tremendously affect the people living in that area. Then is the time to flee the city, for the great tribulation will be upon you."

To remain steadfast in the Lord in the last days, or in any time, we must realize Joshua’s instruction and today choose whom we will serve. The evil priests and self serving merchants and employers in Judah prior to the captivity? The ease and luxury in the king’s palace in Judah or Babylon. The easy bow of the head in the throng before the king’s image? Or will we quietly stand tall, respectful but noticed as strangely different and thus unintentionally offensive to the world because we cannot choose for a moment to disappoint and offend our reliable God?

By chapters 5 and six we read of a new world order. Babylon’s few years in history. A new empire replaces Babylon, one that in Ezra and Nehemiah we see lifting God’s people of Judah to a place of greater respect. This is where the imeragery changes from an image to beasts and provides a few additional details in prophetic history.

In chapter 9, Daniel repents personally for his nation’s sins, their unfaithfulness. He does this much like Moses did when God “repented” for the mistake of gathering bickering Israel as his people. Moses told God that if he discarded the promises to Israel he should include Moses among Israel in their destruction. God’s leaders identify with the faltering flocks they lead, faithful to God and their God given responsibilities.

Daniel in chapters 10 and 11 continues in prophecies mostly seen fulfilled in the years since. Daniel 12 speaks of end time trouble but also of the resurrection. Verse 10 speaks of people who “purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined” while also contrasting them with other people who “shall do wickedly”. The first group will understand (I assume either God or last day troubling events) and the second group will not understand. [I believe each group will think to understand but the wicked will in time be dismayed to find they misunderstood.] Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and tares. Only at the final judgment will the distinction become clear to all. “The rich of this world are in the process of going but the kingdom of God is in the process of coming.” -Helmut Thielicke, the professor director of Hamburg University in Germany,

HOSEA: THE PROPHET AND THE PROSTITUTE

Interestingly, Hosea would be Joseph in English. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Hosea prophesied that God would punish his people by sending the Assyrian nation against them. This caused his people to jeer that he’s describing a vengeful God, not a loving God, much as rebellious Christians and non-Christians think of God today. His preaching was largely ignored.

Hosea prayed to God and God unexpectedly told him to marry a beautiful woman. That excited Hosea. Sadly, HOSEA also learned that when he married this woman she would not only be unfaithful to him, she would turn to doing tricks on the street as a common prostitute. He also learned she would bear him two sons and a daughter. God would provide their names as he had also provided Isaiah’s sons with prophetic names (Shearjashub, a remnant shall return; Mahershalalhashbaz, haste to the prey or haste to the spoil).

Gomer, this beautiful woman, and Hosea fell in love, married, and had their first son. Hosea asked and God told Hosea to name this son Jezreel with the meaning “cast-away”, a shameful name, to warn his people to turn away from their adopted idols and abominable practices.

A daughter was then born to be named Loruhamah, “not pitied”. God would not pity his people if they continued in their shameless idolatry. Gomer then birthed a second boy to be named Loammi, “not my people”. “Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.” Hosea 1:9

Yet God promised a day of restoration (a day of coming grace):

"And I will have pity on Not-Pitied,

and I will say to Not-My-People,

'You are my people;'

and he shall say, 'Thou art my God.'" {Hos 2:23 RSV}

After these years, Gomer strayed from her marriage vows and left Hosea a Dear John (or Joseph) letter.

Hosea’s preaching changed. He no longer thundered his warnings of God’s coming punishment; Hosea wept when preaching God’s warnings. He still warned, but he also reminded his hearer that God had promised to in time accept his people back. He would in time again say, “You are my people.”

But poor Gomer passed from man to man, until at last she fell into the hands of a man who was unable to pay for her food and her clothing. Her first lover had given her a mink stole, but this one made her clothe herself from the Goodwill store. -lecturer

Hosea searched out this low life lover and paid him to better feed and clothe her. But it got worse. He learned she was to be sold. God told Hosea, I’d say God encouraged and gave permission to Hosea to rescue his debased wife.

“Start all over: Love your wife again,

your wife who’s in bed with her latest boyfriend, your cheating wife.

***Love her the way I, God, love the Israelite people,***

even as they flirt and party with every god that takes their fancy.”

I did it. I paid good money to get her back.

It cost me the price of a slave.

Then I told her, “From now on you’re living with me.

No more whoring, no more sleeping around.

You’re living with me and I’m living with you.”

-Message, chapter 3:1-3

Hosea bid what he had to, in some versions fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel of barley. I wonder if he paid all the silver he had and topped it with the barley…

He clothed his naked wife, took her home, and “he pledged his love to her anew.” -lecturer re: Hosea 3:3 She then truly became his devoted wife as God so desired his people to be his devoted people.

“Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days. {Hos 3:5 RSV}”

I believe this refers to the children of God, adopted by the Father, all the truly believing saints in all the churches. As a Seventh-Day Adventist I don’t believe Israel as a nation of Jews will be restored. All people of all nations can be believers in the symbolic imagery of Israel ruled by Jesus the Lion of David. I know other Christian saints who use the imagery of saints in Israel more strongly than do Adventists. Israel became desolate in AD 34 after letting pass the final 3 ½ years of the 70 week prophecy, a grace period or last chance, to acknowledge Jesus as the promised Messiah. Jew and Greek, Indian and American… will all “seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.”

JOEL: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S HAND

“While the prophecy of Hosea reveals the heart of God, the prophecy of Joel reveals the hand of God, the hand that controls destiny, the hand that moves history.” -lecturer

Joel prophesied to Judah and was a contemporary of Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. Joel prophesied of judgment in the form of an invasion of locusts.

Joel 1:4 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 caterpiller eaten.

15 the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

Yet again, as in Hosea, the Lord promises through Joel to restore in chapter 2:25-26.

"I will restore to you the years

which the swarming locust has eaten,

the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,

my great army, which I sent among you.

"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,

and praise the name of the Lord ygour God..." {Joel 2:25-26a RSV}

In Acts 2:16-21, the apostle Peter quotes in his sermon at Pentecost the words of Joel in chapter 2

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God gave Joel insight not only into short time history but into last day history. He sent words of encouragement in verses 25 and 26 to Judah. And God sent words of encouragement to “all flesh” and to “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord” in the last days.

I might mention that while most Christians seem to want to limit prophecy and visions to biblical writers, Seventh-day Adventists quote these words of Joel and Peter saying that in the last days God again speaks like he did in days of old. Yet Ellen White never claimed to speak new truth, just to have explanations and visual illustrations making vivid the truths of scripture.

Joel 3 tells of war between the nations. God foresees the actions of ambitious men and probably their decline. In all war there are those who lose and suffer. Suffering in our world never ends. Joel also tells of God’s judgment.

And the Lord roars from Zion,

and utters his voice from Jerusalem,

and the heavens and the earth shake.

But the Lord is a refuge to his people,

a stronghold to the people of Israel. {Joel 3:16 RSV}

God’s judgment in these verses of Joel also mirror his merciful separation of his people, his remnant found in Matthew 25 and the two very different suppers in Revelation 19. Verse 14 speaks of the momentous decision each of us must make.

Verse 18 seems to speak of heaven. God in Joel knows and controls the future. It is our part to decide where in history and where in the judgment we will stand.

AMOS: GOD DOESN'T PLAY FAVORITES

The message of Amos declares the impartiality of God. “He makes no allowances for one person that he will not make for others as well.” -lecturer We expect favors from friends. We misunderstand God when we expect special favors from him. In Jesus’ parable he hires laborers in the early morning, at mid-day, and towards evening. He pays all the same. Jesus faulted the Pharisees as hypocrites when they flaunted their self assumed righteousness.

Amos was another contemporary of the prophet Hosea and also of Isaiah in the southern kingdom. He was a shepherd or cattleman, a cowboy preacher. In southern Arizona where we live during winters to escape the snow, ice, and and also to see our daughter in Phoenix, we have a Cowboy Gospel church in walking distance and another in the somewhat larger city nearby where we shop.

Amos’ message wasn’t well received.

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,

and Israel must go into exile

away from his land.'" {Amos 7:10-11 RSV}

And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there." {Amos 7:12 RSV}

Amos then gave God’s words to the nations surrounding Israel, beginning with Damascus. God judges Damascus for the people’s cruelty. God judged Philistia for its active slave trade, he judges Tyre for breaking contracts, and judges Edom and it’s descendents of Esau because of the people's unforgiving spirit and their implacable hatred of Israel.

God points judgingly at Ammon for its cupidity, its greed, its hunger for the land of others.God faults Moab for its hatred against Israel. Amos even speaks of God judgment reproving Israel’s southern neighbor nation of Judah. They have despised God’s law that had been given to them. The ark of the covenant housed the original table of the commandments plus samples of manna and Arron’s budded staff but Judah arrogantly ignored God’s leading and laws.

Amos concludes his listings of God’s judgment against the nations with an announcement that God will soon judge the nation of Israel itself for corruption and for injustice in their hearts. They are not off the hook despite being surrounded by contemptible and evil nations.

The people cheered as each nation surrounding them was denounced or reproved. But people of Israel nonchalantly or dismissively derided Amos when he spoke against them. God reminds them they’ve been specially privileged before him.

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

"You only have I known

of all the families of the earth; .

... therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." {Amos 3:1,2 RSV}

“Light creates responsibility. Privilege exposes us to the keenest of judgment. And as these people had been called into such a relationship, they were also, therefore, subject to the severest and sternest forms of judgment.” -lecturer We read in the New Testament the same warning, might I say. “The time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17).

God reminds his people that because of their protected, privileged connection historically with him as his special people that he gives them advanced notice of judgment against them:

"Surely the Lord God does nothing,

without ***revealing his secret***

***to his servants the prophets.***" {Amos 3:7 RSV}

When the northern kingdom of Israel split from Judah, their king had setup in Dan and Bethel two golden calves to discourage yearly travel to worship at the temple in Jerusalem in Judah. (1 Kings 12:28) These golden calves turned the people’s eyes to “the fertility gods of the nations round about them who worshiped the bull as a sign of fertility or sexual potency.” -lecturer These calves represented materialism and sex. Our society today seems to still worship materialism and sex. Non-Christians in third world nations mock the West’s preoccupation with materialism and sexuality. We may have earned their ridicule (and envy I dare say).

God warns that Assyria will rise up and carry the people of Israel away captive. That captivity remained 200 years away but God warned in sufficient time to turn from their idolatrous ways and come in repentance to him.

In Amos 4 we read of five previous times God had called Israel to repentance. We read in chapter 4, verses 6-11 about warnings in the past in the form of famine from lack of rain, from blight and mildew in their gardens, pestilence and swords (war), “I carried away your horses; ... {Amos 4:10a RSV}”, volcanic action. Yet Israel didn’t choose to turn to the Lord. Judah sometimes had good kings but I don’t recall good kings in Israel.

Then in Amos 5:11-13a RSV God says through Amos,

Because you trample upon the poor …

I knew how many are your transgressions,

and how great are your sins --

you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,

and turn aside the needy in the gate.

God finds unrighteousness in their transactions against the poor and needy. It was so much more than idolatry God faulted in his people. Unscriptural forms of worship may offend God, but he finds it especially offensive when his people, of all peoples, offend the least among us.

Matthew 25:40

And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.

Matthew 25:45

Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it *not* to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.

“Amos is called the prophet of social justice.” -lecturer God has described moral righteousness in Isaiah 1.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts

my soul hates;

they have become a burden to me;

I am weary of bearing them

16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,

17 learn to do good;

seek justice,

correct oppression;

bring justice to the fatherless,

plead the widow's cause.

16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,

17 learn to do good;

seek justice,

correct oppression;

bring justice to the fatherless,

plead the widow's cause.

Social justice is vital to our Lord. He points us to the source of social justice in Amos 5:4,6-7.

Seek me and live;

…

Seek the Lord and live,

lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,

and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,

O you who turn justice to wormwood[a]

and cast down righteousness to the earth!

Righteousness through God enables us to seek social justice for others. God given power enables us to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and in self-control. Galatians 5:22,23 God is our source of strength to put others’ gain over unfair advantage that our social privilege might otherwise take.

God does not compromise. He requires a sense of obedience in doing right with him beside us. He seeks righteous worship with him on Sabbaths. And he seeks righteous, respectful dealings and relationships throughout the week. He seeks for us as believers to be a light sharing a reflection of his love and character among the many he yet seeks to draw unto him.

OBADIAH: DEATH TO EDOM!

Obadiah, whose name means “the servant of Jehovah” (apparently Godly parents), pronounces doom on the land of Edom, often referred to as Negev or Negeb. Obadiah tells a story about the brothers Jacob and Esau, the nations Israel and Edom. The nations had been enemies since the wilderness experience of Israel.

“Even before they were born, they struggled together in their mother's womb. That antagonism marked the lives of these two men, and, consequently, the lives of their descendants, the two nations of Israel and Edom… In the New Testament we discover that there is a perpetual antagonism within the nature of the of the Christian. In Galatians 5:17 we are told that the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; they are opposed to one another… These two men, Jacob and Esau, and the nations Israel and Edom, always appear as a picture of a struggle between the flesh and the spirit that is going on in our own lives as believers.” -lecturer

The pride of your heart has deceived you,

you who live in the clefts of the rock,

whose dwelling is high,

who say in your heart,

"Who will bring me down to the ground?" {Ob 1:3 RSV}

Esau excels in the sin of pride. [Makes me think of Pride marches and celebrations in America’s streets.] Pride stands out as an identifier, a red flag, of our natural, *flesh nature* which as humans we never entirely shake away from. Pride headlines the Proverbs 6:16 list of things the Lord hates.

Pride asserts itself in self-sufficiency.

The pride of your heart has deceived you,

you who live in the clefts of the rock,

whose dwelling is high,

who say in your heart,

"Who will bring me down to the ground?"

Though you soar aloft like the eagle,

though your nest is set among the stars,

thence I will bring you down, says the Lord. {Obidiah 1:3-4 RSV}

To get to the city of Petra in the Negev you go through a narrow fissure only a few yards wide running a mile through the rock until you come at last into an open place where temples have been carved out of the rock with doorways as much as 30 feet high. Petra was the capital of Edom.

The secular person says he doesn’t need God to live a successful life. Many times we Christians act on a much similar kind of self sufficiency. I can usually do quite well with my education, intelligence, and skills. However, if I get cancer or face a scary situation, I know I have my faith in God to fall back on.

Eventually the Romans, the iron beast of prophecy, invaded the Edomite impregnable fortress which has been in ruins ever since.

Another form of pride is found in this little book, too (verse 10):

For the ***violence*** done to your brother Jacob,

shame shall cover you,

and you shall be cut off for ever. {Ob 1:10 RSV}

Violence is a form of pride; the man who strikes his wife and violates his child exhibits this variant of pride.

On the day that you stood aloof,

on the day that strangers carried off his (Jacob’s) wealth,

and foreigners entered his gates

and cast lots for Jerusalem,

you were like one of them. {Obidiah 1:11 RSV} [You just stood and watched.]

***Indifference*** is a form of pride. Allowing our privilege to blind us to the needs of others is pride. Ignoring the efforts of your wife to please you and the efforts of your family to experience quality time with you, this indifference results from unrecognized pride.

***Gloating*** (Obidiah 1:12-13) demonstrates another kind of pride. Exploration (Obidiah 1:14) comes up in Obidiah as pride. We face this temptation when we stand to gain at the expense of another person’s ignorance or need.

But at the end of Obidiah’s one chapter book, God gives the nod to Jacob, despite Jacob’s many failures (person and nation).

But in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape [Mount Zion is Jerusalem, or Jacob],

and it shall be holy;

and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.

The house of Jacob shall be a fire,

and the house of Joseph a flame,

and the house of Esau stubble;

they shall burn them and consume them,

and there shall be no survivor to the house of Esau;

for the LORD has spoken. {Obidiah 1:17-18 RSV}

Apparently the capitols of Edom and Judah were destroyed about the same time, 68-70 AD. But the Edomites had largely assimilated with other peoples before then. Rome destroyed both. Jews as Jews had emigrated to other lands but largely remained separate, retaining their Jewish ethnicities and history. They’ve been repeatedly persecuted but survived as an identifiable people. And God still wants them to accept the Messiah, which in Messianic churches some do.

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1. How has this module helped your studies?

God returned to Job what he’d lost after he prayed for his friends. Job 42:10 How many blessings and answers to prayer do we lose because we naively or intentionally fail to pray for our friends?

We’re shown this as sequential action. We’re not to my knowledge told restoration was conditional on Job’s forgiving his friends. I simply see God holding back a bit in foreknowledge of Job’s character for him to forgive first.

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“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [or wisdom];

fools despise wisdom and instruction”. {Prov 1:7 RSV}

Solomon wrote this either in his youth or in old age. “This whole book approaches life from the position that God has all the answers -- God is all-wise; God knows everything.” -lecturer

Fear today means primarily terror. In an age when you bowed before a king it carried a dual meaning of respect. Some ministers preach an eternally burning hell to promote the motivation of the first and common kind of fear. But when Jesus walked the earth he inspired people to come close to him to learn of him in respect of his eternal truth and love. He commended Mary who sat listening at his feet instead of fishing about to please him. We can fear the Lord in respectful worship and obedience, following in his ways.

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“Like a gold ring in a swine's snout

is a beautiful woman without discretion.” {Prov 11:22 RSV}

Indiscretions smears everyone’s reputation, not just but including that of the beautiful woman. “The prudent man ignores an insult.” {Prov 12:16 RSV} is a challenging proverb, especially for the young. But the old might shoulder with unexpressed anger. Dwelling on the insult does not really ignore it.

I find questions 1, 2, and 4 to be closely equivalent.

2. What new lessons have you learned?

Satan abtains greater permission to hurt still faithful Job and inflicts boils upon his body. Satan now seems to use Jobs' wife to torment him. Most versions of the Bible translate her words “curse God and die”. The ASV says “renounce”. However two versions say “Bless God and die.” The Douay-Rheims and Young’s Literal Translation. I’ve come to prefer the bless version. I’ve read that the same Hebrew word can equally mean curse or bless and in different instances in texts is translated differently.

I realize that Satan would have been happy to use Job’s wife’s words to skewer him. But I recall that she shared in the same loss of wealth as her husband. She shared in the same grief as her husband. But she may have respected her husband’s steady faith. She may have told him, “I don’t know how you do it, but I admire your steady, unflinching faith. You don’t need to surrender your faith. I’ve shared our loses with you with perhaps greater struggle. But I don’t physically hurt like you hurt. I don’t know how to ease the pain. There is no medical treatment. Bless God one last time and let life go. You deserve to be pain free.”

In the NIV we read in the first verse of Job that he was “blameless and upright”. The KJV says he “eschewed evil”. I doubt the boils lasted more than a year. I don’t see any indication his wife died. I doubt he waited 30 years for his second family of children. I see God honoring the faith of both husband and wife with his younger children. Job did remonstrate with his wife in 2:10 but I can see him saying “foolish woman, with God there can always be a cure. I can endure what God allows to put upon me.”

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I’ve never noticed Job 42:17 “After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.”

Job lost adult sons and daughters. He was not young during this test. God not only blessed Job, and I believe his wife, with additional sons and daughters. God blessed Job with grandsons and daughters, great-grandsons and daughters, great-great grandsons and daughters.

3. Your critical evaluation on the topic. We mean what is the shortcoming you see in the text, your suggestions for improvement.

Re: This revival under King Josiah was a rather superficial matter; in fact, the prophet Hilkiah had told him that though the people would follow him in his attempt to reform the nation and return to God, they would only do so because they loved him and not because they loved God.)

It would be helpful to be told the supporting text. I searched and failed to find reference to Hilliard telling this to Josiah. I did find references regarding (1)the people serving God during Josiah’s reign and yet (2) God’s warning of punishment following Josiah’s reign.

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“This indeterminate period, which has now spanned more than nineteen hundred years, comes between the sixty-ninth week of years and the seventieth of the prophecy. The seventieth week, a week of seven years, is yet to be fulfilled for Israel.” -lecturer

I offer the explanation by Clifford Goldstein at <https://adventistreview.org/the-70-weeks-made-simple/>

We agree I believe on the start of the 70 week prophecy in 457 BC. This begins with the “commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the *Messiah the Prince.”* The 489 days bring us to 27 AD, the start of Jesus ministry. (There is no year zero so 1BC is followed by 1 AD.) Where the lecturer and we as Adventists disagree is the positioning of the 70th week of seven years. I support the Adventist explanation that the 70th year follows immediately after the 69th year.

In the midst of the week, or three and half years later, which comes to A.D. 31, “the sacrifice and the oblations” are brought to an end. At the death of Jesus, that is, when the Messiah was “cut off” in A.D. 31, the veil in the temple was torn apart, from top to bottom(Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38), signifying the end of the purpose of the sacrifice and oblations because what they all pointed to, the death of Jesus, had been fulfilled. -Goldstein

The prophecy in verse 9:27 says “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose. Matthew 27

The rent curtain effectively ended the sacrificial system representing Christ’s salvation for centuries in Israel and millennia since sin entered in Eden. Daniel 7 says, still referring to the Messiah, “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” This is one week from the beginning of the 70th week in 27 AD. The Jews had called for the Messiah to be crucified, but as he had always done before, Jesus as God exercised patience for yet another small period of time, begging for his people whom he had remained faithful during previous rebellions against him to yet again repent and return to him. He was finished at Calvary against the great deceiver Satan. *But God was not yet finished with his people whom he so loved.*

Three and a half years after the crucifixion, God’s patience expended on his Hebrew people for 400 years under the patriarchs and in slavery under the Pharoahs, the 400 years governed by God through the judges, the 400 years during the times of the kings of Israel and Judah, the 70 years of the captivity, and the 490 years of the 70 week prophecy - this patience was to end in 34AD. Even in this 490th year it would have overjoyed God to have seen his people the Hebrews, the Jewish nation repent of their rejection of the Messiah. Had they turned to the Messiah even as late as 34 AD then God ***could*** have disarmed the Roman military in Palestine and amazed the world in his power and grace. Had his Hebrew people as late as AD 34 been willing to follow Jesus’ lead in embracing Samaritans and gentiles, even the emperor of Rome may well have come to Jerusalem to worship God. This embrace of all peoples of the world into the family of God is what God had desired this entire period of 1770 years of Israel’s special place in the heart of God.

But the leadership of the Jewish people, the priests and Pharisees, the Sanhedrin refused to acknowledge Jesus, the Messiah who had lived, preached, and ministered among them. They demonstrated their final rejection of the Messiah when they stoned Stephen who apparently preached something more infuriating to them than what the disciples of Jesus had yet preached. Or Stephen was a Hellenistic person of Jewish ethnicity (he had been appointed deacon to minister to the Christian widows among the Hellenistic believers in Jerusalem). Yes, Stephen was likely stoned in 35 or 36 AD, ***after the 70 week prophecy*** had ended. The end of the prophecy required no identifying historical event like the intervening midpoints may have required.

Saul held the garments while angry religious Jews killed Stephen. Saul tried to represent this anger in continued persecution. But God spoke to Saul, Saul repented, converted, became Paul who carried Jesus’ grace to not just Hellenistic Jews but to gentiles as well. Soon gentile Christians outnumbered Jewish Christians.

The “abomination that causes desolation” is the description of the lost covenant between God and the Hebrew ***nation***. The promises had been given to the nation depending on their loyalty to their God above. Instead, like Hosea’s harlot wife, they so often prostituted themselves to other gods. In the end the Jewish leadership prostituted itself to man made laws of religion that made God appear capricious and harsh. It became a materialistic, self serving religion. It made the Sabbath a burden and Christians today read the Bible and insist upon guarding themselves from the burden of guarding the Sabbath hours. Even if the Sabbath ***were*** the first day of the week, Christians seldom observe the whole day in worship and communing with God, instead shopping and watching or playing football, basketball, golfing or in some other sport. Christians try to escape the *burdensome Sabbath the Pharisees of Jesus’ day made it.*

So after the 70th week, God’s promises to evangelize the world through the Hebrew nation ended.

I believe the 70 week prophecy fizzled to an end without a clear historic event because God wanted to blur the transfer of mission from community centered to individual, personal centered mission. God elevated Paul’s commitment and through Paul made Christianity a worldwide commitment. Yet he wanted Jews to not lose hope. He wanted Jews to believe in him. Had they come to feel rejected by God because they had rejected his Son they might have lost hope of belonging to the expanded family of God. With no explosive event concluding the 70 week prophecy, any Jewish person could come personally to his knees before God and in faith claim mercy in the life giving blood of the Messiah. Which on the day of Pentecost many did as first fruits. The initial years after Pentecost saw most of the church growth among the Jews, many of who had no doubt called for Jesus’ blood to be upon them. Now they depended on Jesus’ blood to save them. Which is the response Jesus desired.

<https://smoodock45.wordpress.com/2010/02/13/when-was-stephen-stoned/>

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1360&context=jats>

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You left out the book of Jonah! The file name of the fourth lecture is “Prophetical Books Isaiah to Jonah”. But the last book discussed in the lecture is Obidiah, leaving out Jonah entirely. I looked at the final lecture which is file named “Prophetical Books Micah ff\_” and Jonah is not there either. WHAT HAPPENED? Please reply.

So, some comments on Jonah..

Pastor Shawn Boonstra, speaker for the world wide Voice of Prophecy broadcast and speaker this last Sabbath at the Michigan Conference (SDA) campmeeting told us that Orthodox Jews continue even today to read the book of Jonah on day of atonement. Rabbi Menachem Posner at <https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/568512/jewish/Why-do-we-read-the-Book-of-Jonah-on-Yom-Kippur.htm> tells us they read Jonah to remind us

1. No one is beyond the reach of G‑d's hand.
2. No matter our past behavior, G‑d's benevolence and mercy awaits us if we only repent full-heartedly.

Other than in his book of scripture, Jonah is mentioned only in 2 kings 14. Despite King Uzziah's evil deeds, God prophesied through Jonah Israel’s victory over Damascus. Damascus was an Assyrian city, as was Nineveh. I would imagine this gave Jonah respectability among his people that few prophets enjoyed. Then God sent Jonah to preach against Nineveh to the Ninevites. He was told to go outside the safety of his own country and preach in a violent city. I’d fear to preach in the streets of inner cities in America.

After retirement I applied to drive a van for people who needed transportation in Detroit. The hiring manager was willing to hire me but she advised I not take the job. She told me that not only was I white but I had a soft face, a soft look. She had one white driver for Detroit but she said he had a hard face. I asked a black friend and she said most parts of Detroit would likely be safe enough but that there were parts of Detroit that were too dangerous for most people of color to drive through. I did not take the job.

Jonah feared for safety. He feared for his good reputation. He likely feared his own people would turn against him. Israelites heartedly disliked the Ninevites. They certainly didn’t want Nineveh to repent. They wanted God to destroy Nineveh. Jonah, we learn after Nineveh’s repentance wanted Nineveh destroyed.

So Jonah fled the presence of the Lord. He ran from his prophetic assignment. And he fled from the sanctuary. He fled far from his people and far from God’s sanctuary temple, his presence in Jerusalem.

Pastor Boonstra told us that the Jewish Midrash says Jonah bought the ship to take him to the end of the world, as far from the Lord that he could go.

The is what is called the Rule of 1st Mention in the Bible. For instance, the word lamb is first used in the story of Abram’s reluctant obedience to sacrifice his son Issac.

“The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:23-24

There was a sanctuary at the gate of Eden. (<https://www.ritmeyer.com/2017/02/07/the-genesis-sanctuary/>) The early family no doubt worshiped there. Abel’s acceptable sacrifice probably happened in the presence of the angels at the gate. Cain left the presence of the Lord and this could well be the meaning. Cain left the gate of Eden and chose to never approach the gate again. Thus never be in the presence of the Lord in his perception. (Gen 4:16) ***Jonah ran from presence of the Lord.***

Interesting, the phoenicians on the boat prayed while Jonah slept. Jonah was running. He was not praying.

The Assyrians of Nineveh had suffered a major defeat and earthquake before Jonah showed up. Re: Pastor Boonstra in his campmeeting sermon and <https://biblefocus.net/consider/v21uzziah/Jonah-amp-What-it-means-to-Us.html>

God setup events for Nineveh to be receptive to Jonah’s message. Interestingly, even the crew on Jonah’s boat became fearful when they learned Jonah was Hebrew. Running away from God, Jonah had apparently disavowed his identity.

Book of Jonah has no ending. At the end of the book the sailors prayed and the king and Nineveh repented. Only Jonah was troubled by God. They accepted, Jonah resented.

Contrast with Noah. 120 years preaching and no one showed up at the ark until the rain fell but the door was locked.

Jonah sulked because God pulled the plug and didn’t destroy Nineveh. God grew a gourd plant to shade and cool Jonah. Didn’t help Jonah’s mood so God wilted the shading plant. And God asked Jonah, “Should not I pity Nin′eveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” Jonah 4:11 And here the book ends.

Boaz Roth, a Jewish lay leader of the Traditional Congregation of Jews in St. Louis gives this additional, layman’s perspective for reading Jonah during Yom Kippur.

We never hear Jonah’s response: This silence suggests we’re forced to answer God’s question. “Jonah” makes us become Jonah. And what do we make of this question? Clearly we’re forced to wonder about God’s providence, about His salvation for the wicked. God’s very sense of justice is called to question with this question-filled ending. Remember that Ninaveh is not merely a non-Hebrew city—it is the capital of the Assyrians, who will eventually conquer and assimilate the 10 northern kingdoms of Israel. Of course Jonah questions God’s decision; I do, too.

In 1939 Orwell wrote an essay titled “Inside the Whale” that ostensibly critiques Henry Miller’s “Tropic of Cancer.”

“For the fact is that being inside a whale is a very comfortable, cozy, homelike thought. The historical Jonah, if he can be so called, was glad enough to escape [into the whale]…. It is, of course, quite obvious why. The whale’s belly is simply a womb big enough for an adult. There you are, in the dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter what happens. A storm that would sink all the battleships in the world would hardly reach you as an echo. Even the whale’s own movements would probably be imperceptible to you. He might be wallowing among the surface waves or shooting down into the blackness of the middle seas (a mile deep, according to Herman Melville), but you would never notice the difference.”

Following Orwell’s suggestion, here is the other compelling explanation for reading “Jonah” on Yom Kippur. The whale’s belly is a place to escape the world: it is the place of complete indifference. In other words, to acquiesce to indifference is to lie passively inside the whale. The whale is our indifference.

To free himself from the whale and finally follow the path God set before him, Jonah sang hymns of praise. So there you have it: ***wrestling with God’s sometimes unfathomable (sorry!) demands*** and ***freeing ourselves from the self-imprisonment of indifference*** are two possible explanations for our reading “Jonah” on Yom Kippur.

<https://stljewishlight.org/news/news-local/why-we-should-read-jonah-on-yom-kippur/?gclid=CjwKCAjw-b-kBhB-EiwA4fvKrGDPnNPYSHcA4-apz3XKVjDjOhbZEDlokW6wrDw1TybKK8z968eRJBoCLXIQAvD_BwE>

4. How does this lesson help you?

Moses feared to speak after talking mostly with sheep for 40 years. He reluctantly obeyed God. It reminded me that Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 years because the Hebrews feared to go immediately into Cannan. Yet in Joshua 2 we learn Rahab tells the newer spies that Jericho has feared Israel for 40 years, immediately after the miraculous crossing at the Red Sea.

Too often we fear to live as confident Christian believers. My Grandson at age 26 has a touch greater faith. He is a Seventh-Day Adventist with a film degree, of all degrees for a Christian, let alone a Sabbath believer. He graduated from Full Sail University in December of 2019, just as the Covid pandemic hit. Job opportunities shrank. He finally got a broadcasting job as a director at NBC Midland, a small market in Rural Texas, starting in December 2021. He was happy about the job but unhappy about the location.

After six months he applied to NBC and ABC in Phoenix, a top 5 market in the USA. ABC refused to accommodate him in regard to Sabbath and NBC told him he needed more experience. Fast forward another 6 months and he was invited to visit NBC Phoenix to meet and greet and look around their station. He spent four hours enjoying his visit.

Six weeks later NBC Phoenix contacted his manager in Texas for an update on my grandsons success as a director for them and requested permission to contact my grandson about an opening they’d had for some time but couldn’t hire for because of a hiring freeze. This week my grandson interviewed with NBC Phoenix. He already knew the people from his earlier visit. He tells me most of the interview was about what times he would be available fo work and when he would be unavailable because of his Sabbath convictions.

He doesn’t have the new job yet, but he interviews with two additional managers, one of which he knows and who called him with interest in the first place. So we still pray about it. He’s cautiously optimistic. He wants to return home to Phoenix. His manager tells him he’s peaked in the environment where he current works in the small Texas station. And to be honest, and I remind you of my mention earlier about feeling outnumbered as Christians and as Adventists in society, he looks forward to returning to his home church in Phoenix of about 800 members (not a mega-church but still an encouragingly good sized church, especially within Adventism.)

My grandson’s current manager understood clearly from him before hiring that he wasn’t available Sabbaths, with a clear understanding of Sabbath times throughout the year. He’s told him to be completely up front about Sabbath unavailability when applying and interviewing. In fact, my grandson wasn’t hired the first time he applied to NBC Midland. They contacted him a subsequent time to hire him. They’ve supported his Sabbath convictions because they see his gentle but consistent integrity.

My Grandson talked with me this week and praised the Lord for his presence and leading in his life. He said every good thing in his life comes from God.

*A week later*: My grandson interviewed yesterday evening with the line managers. This afternoon he got the job, scheduled Sunday through Thursday with Friday and Saturday off. Perfect scheduling for a Sabbath believer and a gift from God.

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Proverbs 31, Chapter 31 seems relatively modern for contemporary young women. It must be shared with all young women. Probably with women of all ages.

16 She considereth a field, and ***buyeth it***: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. (She’s a successful business woman. Owns her own company.)

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; (She’s educated?)

She multitasks all this with traditional homemaking responsibilities. She raises children. She boosts her husbands standing in the community. ***She is superwoman!*** To do all this she must have the skill of prioritizing. (My addition.)

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It amazes me that God found a dedicated man of God who so loved a wayward wife that he could perfectly model God’s love for his people in that marriage relationship. Hosea could, I think, have legally called for his wife to be stoned to death. Yet he loved her, rescued her, restored her despite her moral, reputational depravity. Hosea doesn’t seem to have done this out of principled obedience to the command of God. He seems to have done it out of a deep love. If feigned, his insincerity would have been transparently obvious to Gomer, his children, and neighbors. God chose the right man for the task - and Hosea joyfully embraced the privilege. He hurt badly during the down years in the middle. But he did not regret his love for Gomer or for his God.

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