

The Decline and Fall of Israel

Year 2, Quarter 2

This study centers upon the spiritual, moral and political decay which caused Israel's downfall. Attention will also be given to conditions in Judah during Israel's decline. The history of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles will be studied along with the prophets whom God sent to the people: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Special emphasis will be given to Messianic passages.

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Day 1: The Reign of Zechariah

The last thirty years of Israel's existence as an independent nation are filled with treachery and intrigue. As we will note in later studies, idolatry has so completely undermined the moral and spiritual fabric of Israel that the nation is beyond redemption. As the threat from Assyria looms ever closer, Israel turns further from God and looks for salvation in political alliances and treaties. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam II, reigns six months before his public assassination by Shallum (2 Kgs 15:8-12).

1. What prophecy was fulfilled by the short reign of Zechariah? Cite the passage.

Day 2: The Reign of Shallum

The usurper Shallum reigns only a month before the same fate - assassination - befalls him (2 Kgs 15:13-16). Israel's lack of respect for civil rulers reflects their lack of respect for God.

2. Who assassinated Shallum?
3. For what vile act is Menahem remembered?

Day 3: The Reign of Menahem

Menahem reigns in Samaria for ten years, but his reign is overshadowed by the encroachments of the expansionist Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser (or Pul) (2 Kgs 15:17-22; see 1 Chr 5:26). Tiglath-pileser came to power in about 745 BC reigned for 18 years. The tribute received from Menahem is recorded in the Assyrian annals.

4. What indicates that Israel still possesses some degree of wealth?
5. What was Menahem's main objective in paying tribute to Tiglath-pileser?

Day 4: The Reign of Pekahiah

The transition of power from Menahem to his son Pekahiah is the only peaceful and orderly one among the last six kings of Israel (2 Kgs 15:23-26). This destabilization alone should have caused some godly reflection among the people, but they remained blinded by their apparent wealth and false optimism.

6. How long did Pekahiah reign?
7. What was the connection between Pekahiah and his murderer?

Day 5: The Reign of Pekah

Pekah's assassination of Pekahiah was likely due to Pekah's displeasure over Menahem's capitulation to the Assyrians. Pekah joins an anti-Assyrian alliance with Syria, and together they plot the overthrow of Judah (Is 7:1-2, 5-9), apparently for Judah's refusal to join the coalition. Though Judah was not completely destroyed and Ahaz not dethroned, still the southern nation suffered heavy losses (2 Chr 28:5-8). As a consequence of Pekah's rebellion, Tiglath-pileser destroyed Syria and invaded northern Israel, conquering land and taking Israelites captive (2 Kgs 15:29-31; 16:8-9).

Consider the following observations upon the events at hand:

“The Assyrians were famous for their ruthlessness in dealing with adversaries - massacres and/deportation were used both to curb resistance and rebellion and to assure obedience and the prompt payment of tribute. A distinct pattern or plan lay behind their methods of consolidation. States within the empire had various degrees of dependence. At the outer limits of the empire the requirement was initially a vow of allegiance and loyalty, with the result that tribute was given to Assyria and a vassal status to the particular state. If any resistance to these conditions was made by the state, the Assyrians would reduce it by military means into a province and appoint another vassal state to govern it. If resistance still occurred, the final step of extermination of the state and deportation took place. This pattern is important, for it helps to explain the history of Israel and its captivity” (ISBE, Vol. 1, p. 613).

8. Who was the king of Syria who allied with Israel and threatened Judah?
9. What would happen to Israel (Ephraim) within sixty-five years (Is 7:8)?
10. List the cities and areas taken captive by Tiglath-pileser in his first major campaign against Israel. Find as many as you can on a map or in a Bible atlas.

Day 1: Uzziah: A Good and Prosperous King

After the crippling defeat of Judah by Israel (2 Chr 25:17-24), Uzziah is named king of Judah (2 Chr 26:1-15; also known as Azariah in 2 Kgs 15). Though characterized as a righteous king, Uzziah fails to completely rid the land of idolatrous worship (2 Kgs 15:4). His foreign and domestic policies are, however, successful. Through Uzziah's huge, well-equipped army, Judah dominates its heathen neighbors. He fortifies Jerusalem, digs wells, builds towers and fosters agriculture, all of which brings a measure of security and prosperity to Judah. In all, Uzziah reigns fifty-two years over Judah.

1. Comment on Uzziah's attitude toward God in his early reign (2 Chr 26:5).
2. How large was Uzziah's standing army?

Day 2: Uzziah's Later Downfall

Uzziah later falls victim to his own success. Success can lead to pride, and pride often promotes a sense of privilege that elevates one above the law. Because of his great accomplishments by the hand of God, Uzziah presumes that he has the right to worship God in violation of Mosaic Law (2 Chr 26:16-20). When confronted by Azariah the priest, Uzziah suffers a leprous outbreak and is driven into seclusion for the remainder of his life (2 Chr 26:21-23).

3. T/F Isaiah began to prophesy in the first year of Uzziah's reign (Is 6:1).
4. What quality is displayed by Azariah and the other priests in rebuking Uzziah?
5. Who implemented Uzziah's policies among the people after he became leprous?

Day 3: Jotham

Jotham continues as a competent leader of Judah; he expands upon his father's building programs and keeps his enemies at bay (2 Chr 27). For a reason not explained, Jotham dies at a young age and Judah enters a period of moral and spiritual decline under the reign of Jotham's son, Ahaz.

6. What mistake did Jotham share with his father (see 2 Kgs 15:35; 2 Chr 27:2)?
7. What is the reason given for Jotham's success?
8. How long did Jotham reign?

Day 4: Ahaz: A Wicked, Compromising King

Ahaz followed in the footsteps not of his father and grandfather but “*in the ways of the kings of Israel*” (2 Chr 28:1-4). For this he was continually plagued with threats from his enemies: Israel and Syria (28:5-8), the Edomites and Philistines (28:17-18) and even the Assyrians, whose favor Ahaz courted (28:20-21). Isaiah stood opposed to Ahaz’ corruption and compromise but did not have a significant impact upon the king during his sixteen year reign. Ahaz rules over Judah during the fall of Israel to the Assyrians, ca. 722/1 BC.

9. For what was Ahaz and all Judah punished by God (2 Chr 28:19)?
10. What kinds of abominations were practiced by Judah under Ahaz?
11. Though Israel had acted as God’s instrument of punishment against Judah, what made them guilty before God (2 Chr 28:9-11)?
12. What tribe in Israel still has some regard for God (2 Chr 28:12-13)?

Day 5: Ahaz’ Complete Abandonment of God

Times of crisis will either drive men closer to God or further away from Him, depending upon their quality of faith. Ahaz, distressed over the conflicts which plagued his reign, finally transfers his loyalty completely to the gods of the Syrians (2 Chr 28:22-25; 2 Kgs 16:10-18). On a visit to Damascus, Ahaz is so impressed with the gods of his enemies that he sends back to Jerusalem detailed patterns of an altar with which he replaces the altar of Jehovah. Not content with worshiping the Syrian gods concurrently with Jehovah, Ahaz attempts to destroy the worship of God altogether.

Here we see the true spirit of religious innovation. Ahaz is not satisfied with just a little change; he is intent on sweeping away all vestiges of Mosaic service. The furniture of the temple is demolished and the doors padlocked while idolatrous altars are built in every corner of Jerusalem. This corruption also spreads into every city of Judah. One can only imagine the thoughts and feelings of Hosea, Micah and Isaiah as they helplessly watch the contamination spread throughout their nation. Surely the end of Judah would have come together with that of Israel if not for the coming reforms of King Hezekiah. These reforms, however, will prove to be only a temporary reprieve before Judah, too, is carried into captivity.

13. Contrast Urijah the priest (2 Kgs 16:11, 16) with Azariah, the priest under Uzziah.
14. What was Ahaz thinking when he adopted the gods of Syria? How *should* he have evaluated the Syrian victory against Judah?
15. To what did Ahaz’ actions lead (2 Chr 28:23)?

Day 1: Hoshea: The Last King of Israel

Hoshea had secured the throne as so many had before him: by assassination (of Pekah - 2 Kgs 15:30). He thus has the unfortunate distinction of ruling when Jehovah's patience with Israel finally runs out (2 Kgs 17:1-4). Shalmaneser, the successor of Tiglath-pileser, first makes Hoshea his vassal, then completely destroys the nation.

1. Why did Shalmaneser finally move to crush Israel?
2. To whom had Hoshea appealed for help?

Day 2: Justification for the Captivity

More is said about the reasons for Israel's captivity than the details of the downfall itself (2 Kgs 17:5-23). We are only told of a three-year siege against Samaria, a horrible process indeed. In a word, **idolatry** destroyed Israel: they "*feared other gods*" and "*walked in the statues of the nations*" (vv 7-8); they built high places, set up idolatrous pillars and images and worshiped the heathen gods "*on every high hill and under every green tree*" ... "*they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, 'You shall not do this thing'*" (v 10, 12). God had born with their rebellion for about 200 years, sending many prophets to encourage their repentance, but they "*stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers who did not believe*" (v 14). Finally, God had enough. Israel was beyond recovery, no longer fit as a "host" nation for the coming of the Messiah. "*Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight*" (v 18).

3. Against whom had the prophets of God testified (2 Kgs 17:13)?
4. What can demonic doctrines do to natural affection (see 2 Kgs 17:17)?
5. Who was initially responsible for leading Israel into idolatry (2 Kgs 17:21-22)?

Day 3: The Samaritan Settlers

As we noted earlier, the Assyrian policy of resettlement aided in their control over subjugated nations. The Israelites were transported to provinces in Assyria and Media (2 Kgs 17:6), and people from various locations were imported to the lands and cities of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:24). Thus we find the basis of animosity between Jew and Samaritan which is still prevalent when the Messiah comes 700 years later (Jn 4:9; 8:48; Lk 9:52-54).

6. What hazard did the new inhabitants of Samaria face initially (2 Kgs 17:25)? Why?
7. How did they attempt to solve the problem (2 Kgs 17:26-28)?

Day 4: The Land of Israel: Reversion to Canaanite Idolatry

The land so long ago promised to Abraham and his descendants has now come full circle back to its original idolatrous state. God had removed the original Canaanite inhabitants and replaced them with Israel, to whom He promised peace and prosperity in return for exclusive devotion. But when Israel adopted the idolatry of the Canaanites they, too, were removed from the land. Canaan was now resettled by foreigners who reverted to Canaanite idolatry (2 Kgs 17:29-41).

What a sad state of affairs has come to pass after such a glorious beginning! All of God's promises have been forfeited; all of His power wasted, and all of the potential of the nation ruined - the very repetition of the scene in Eden when Adam and Eve chose sin and death over obedience and life. The prospect for redemption now appears very dim. But all is not lost. A remnant of righteousness remains in Judah, and God will preserve that remnant and fulfill the covenant made with Abraham. Man's disobedience will not frustrate the purposes of God, but that disobedience will exempt him from fellowship and cooperation with God in the realization of those purposes.

8. Which settlers sacrificed their children to their gods?

9. Is it possible to have some respect for God but still serve idols?

Day 5: A Supplemental Listing of Israelite and Judean Kings

Kings of Israel: (Refer to the earlier listing of kings in Y2/Q1/W8.)(All dates B.C.)

Jehu (841-814): Punished house of Ahab; descendants ruled to fourth generation.

Jehoahaz (814-798): Son of Jehu; afflicted by the Syrians.

Jehoash (798-782): Son of Jehoahaz; defeated Judah; mourned death of Elisha.

Jeroboam II (793-753): Prosperity and expansion; prophets Jonah, Amos and Hosea.

Zechariah (753-752): Son of Jeroboam II; last of Jehu's line; publicly assassinated.

Shallum (752): Reigned one month; assassinated.

Menahem (752-742): Tiglath-pileser threatens; Menahem pays tribute.

Pekahiah (742-740): Son of Menahem; murdered by one of his officers.

Pekah (752-732): Much of northern Israel taken by Tiglath-pileser; threatened Ahaz.

Hoshea (732-722): Murdered Pekah; sought Egyptian help; Israel destroyed by Assyria.

Kings of Judah:

Jehoram (853-841): Married to Athaliah, Ahab's daughter; stricken by God with disease.

Ahaziah (841): Slain by Jehu for promoting Baalism.

Athaliah (841-835): Executed by priest Jehoiada who restored Joash as rightful heir.

Joash (835-796): Restored temple/worship; later unfaithful; killed prophet Zechariah.

Amaziah (796-767): Defeated Edom, then worshiped their idols; defeated by Israel.

Uzziah (792-740): A time of prosperity and security; stricken by God with leprosy.

Jotham (750-731): Competent leader; dies at young age.

Ahaz (735-715): Corrupted the nation; completely abandoned God for idols.

Day 1: The Prophet

Amos was not a prophet by vocation but rather a common man who tended sheep and kept sycamore trees (Am 7:14-15). There is a rugged, no-nonsense quality about him; he has not been softened by luxury or political compromise. Homer Hailey notes, “*There was not in Amos the sympathy, warm love, and feeling of the statesman or citizen, but a cold sense of justice and right*” (**Minor Prophets**, p. 83). He is a “southerner,” an outsider called by God from Judah to cry against the corruptions of Bethel, the center of idol worship in Israel. 760-750 B.C. would be a fairly accurate date for Amos’ prophecy.

1. From what town in Judah was Amos (Am 1:1)?
2. Which kings of Israel and Judah ruled during Amos’ prophetic work?

Day 2: God’s Anger with the Nations

In the first two chapters of Amos “*the LORD roars from Zion*” against the neighbors of Israel and Judah: Damascus (1:3); Gaza (1:6); Tyre (1:9); Edom (1:11); Ammon (1:13) and Moab (2:1). One can imagine the Jews nodding in hearty agreement to these thundering pronouncements of Amos against their enemies. But the prophet next turns his sights upon God’s people. Judah is lashed for its unfaithfulness to the law (2:4-5), but Israel bears the brunt of Amos’ blistering attack (2:6ff). Israel has become like the Amorites whom God had destroyed from the land when their iniquity finally became full. Shall Israel escape the same fate when they behave in the same ways?

3. What two nations had been especially cruel to the Gileadites?
4. How are God’s judgments upon the nations described (1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5)?
5. How had Israel treated the Nazirites and prophets?

Day 3: The Greed and Treachery of the Wealthy

“*During the reign of Jeroboam II the northern kingdom reached its zenith of wealth and power with the attendant results of luxury and excess, a situation reflected constantly in the prophetic visions of Amos*” (**ISBE**, Vol. 1, p. 115). Advantage was taken of the poor and upright and the unfortunate were considered as property (2:6-7); the rich had winter and summer homes, great mansions and decorated with ivory (3:15); the women were “fat cows” who demanded their husbands satiate them at all costs (4:1). Woes are pronounced against those who “*are at ease in Zion ... who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from ... the stall*” (6:1, 4). No doubt the wealthy saw their prosperity as validation of their moral and spiritual lives.

6. How did the wealthy view the warnings of Amos and other prophets (6:3)?
7. How did the greedy, materialistic women view their husbands?
8. What would God do to their great homes in which they took such pride?

Day 4: Idolatry and Immorality

Besides mistreating the helpless, the Israelites reveled in their idolatry and its immoral excesses (2:7-8). God vows to destroy the altars of Bethel which had supplanted true Jehovah worship (3:14). Idolatry had swept through the Jews from Dan in the far north of Israel to Beersheba in the south of Judah (8:14). Thus, Israel had become “*the sinful kingdom*” (9:8). *“Idolatry, rejection of the law of God, hardness toward the poor, greed, and immorality are the charges that summarize the sins of Israel. Against these the prophet continued to cry throughout his ministry in Israel”* (Hailey, p 97).

9. What abominable thing would an Israelite and his father do?
10. What god had been set up in Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:29)?

Day 5: Religious Ceremonialism

For all of their desire for the idols and craving for immorality, Israel had not abandoned the notion of Jehovah worship altogether. To the contrary, they diligently kept up their rituals and ceremonies to salve their conscience while gorging themselves on lust, greed and violence. God mocks their offerings of tithes and sacrifices at Bethel and Gilgal (4:4-5). They kept feast days, held sacred assemblies, sacrificed, sang and played, empty hypocrisy which God hated and refused to accept (5:21-27). The service God had asked of them had become a nuisance: *“When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain?”* (8:5). Such a danger as vain worship should cause every Christian to carefully examine his/her attitude toward worship and service. God is not looking for form or formalism, for ritual or repetition, for mindless motions. If our spirits are not engaged in what we are offering to God, if our lives do not reflect the ideals of Christ, then the worship we offer to God will be a stench instead of a sweet savor.

Listen again to brother Hailey: *“One of the great lessons of the prophets and of history is that back of a nation’s decay in moral, social, and political life there is first a decay in its religious life. Doctrinal decay leads inevitably to decay in all phases of life”* (ibid, p. 122).

11. T/F Israel was offering God worship less than one time per week.
12. Who was Israel worshiping during the wilderness years?
13. What did God desire to flow from the hearts of the people (5:24)? Can you think of where Jesus said something similar to the scribes and Pharisees?

Day 1: The Failure of Corrective Judgments

God had tried to arrest the growing apostasy of Israel through a series of trials both natural and man-made (Am 4:6-13). These afflictions were things God had said would not come upon them in Canaan *if* they remained loyal to Him (see Dt 28:1-14, 20-26; note also the progressive judgments of Lev 26, especially vv 18, 21, 23, 27). Thus they should have concluded that disobedience had drawn God's disfavor and been led to repentance, "*yet you have not returned to Me, says the LORD*" (4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

1. With what things did God punish Israel for their rebellion?
2. For what must Israel now prepare since God's correction has failed (4:12)?

Day 2: The Coming Captivity

Sprinkled throughout Amos are references to the calamity of deportation which God has decreed upon Israel. Israel's courage and military might would fail before a threatening army (Am 2:14-16; 3:11). The people would be slaughtered and taken captive (9:1-4), sifted among the nations (9:9-10). Note the figurative language of judgment and wrath: "*I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight*" (8:9). What makes these prophecies especially remarkable is that they were uttered before Tiglath-pileser came to power in Assyria. Israel was enjoying a time of peace and prosperity with no threat in sight. But God was building up Assyria against them (6:14).

3. In spite of God's increasing pressure upon Israel, what did many believe (Am 9:10)?
4. What was the worst famine which would eventually strike the land (Am 8:11)?
5. What did Amos plead when seeing the visions of destruction (Am 7:2, 5)?

Day 3: The Authority of the Prophet

In uttering his prophecies of doom and destruction Amos affirms that he speaks with the authority of heaven (Am 3:1-8). The Israelites, if they had been honest, would have seen the consistency between Amos' rebuke and Moses' warnings of long ago. Amos and God "walk together" in condemnation of Israel (v 3). God is a lion roaring over His prey (v 4); Israel is a bird ensnared in sin (v 5); the trumpet-alarm is blowing in the city (v 6). Amos has the spirit of all great prophets: "*The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?*" (v 8). One might ask Israel: "The Lord has spoken; who can but obey?"

6. What does Amos 3:7 say about the activities of God regarding Israel? What complaint could Israel not make against God?

Day 4: Amaziah's Resistance

The courage of Amos is remarkable as he proceeds to the heart of corruption in Israel - Bethel - and prophesies of Jeroboam's downfall and the captivity of the people. As to be expected, those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo fiercely oppose Amos, including the priest of Bethel, Amaziah (Am 7:10-13). Amos, the unrefined, unsophisticated country-bumpkin holds his own and prophesies disaster for Amaziah in consequence of his opposition to the words of God (7:14-17).

7. Of what was Amos accused by Amaziah (Am 7:10)?

8. What was Amaziah's suggestion to Amos?

9. T/F Amos' father was a prophet before him.

Day 5: A Day of Future Blessing

Amos' prophecy ends on a high note of future repair and restoration (Am 9:11-15). At first glance it may appear that the passage speaks of some literal restoration of the Israelite nation to its former glory, and many appeal to such prophecies to teach that the Jews are yet to be so blessed by God. But if we let God, Himself, interpret the meaning of this passage we will find the true meaning. When controversy arose in the early church concerning the circumcision of Gentile converts, a discussion was held at Jerusalem to settle the matter. In the course of that discussion, James refers to the events in Cornelius' home and says, *"And with **this** the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written ..."* (Acts 15:15). He then goes on to quote Amos 9:11-12. Amos' words, then, agree with **what concept?** A future restoration of Jews to Palestine? A thousand year reign of Jesus from Jerusalem? No, the words of Amos agree with Peter's extension of the gospel to the Gentiles via Cornelius, an event which itself was under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. The raising of the "tabernacle of David" has direct implications upon the acceptance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. The only restoration of Israel that Amos foresees is one that has Jesus sitting on David's throne over a universal, spiritual kingdom that includes people of all nations.

10. When Zacharias prophesied at the birth of John ... (Lk 1:67-79)

a. What had God done for His people (v 68)?

b. Where was the horn of salvation found (v 69)?

c. Whose promise was being fulfilled (v 73)?

d. What was the nature of this restoration and blessing (v 77)?

Day 1: Hosea's Family

Hosea is evidently a younger contemporary of Amos; at least his prophecies stretch over a longer time of Israelite history (Hos 1:1). Hosea is given a peculiar charge by God: he is to take a wife "of harlotry" as a figure of Israel's own harlotry toward God (1:2-3). Whether Gomer was a literal harlot or merely an Israelite woman influenced by idolatry is not clear. Her orientation, however, apparently leads to unfaithfulness as Hosea takes her back from adultery (Hos 3:1-3). Three children are born to Gomer, the names of which suggest God's coming wrath upon Israel (1:4-9). Homer Hailey suggests that Hosea suspected the daughter was not his and knew the son Lo-Ammi was fathered in Gomer's adultery.

1. God would not have mercy upon _____ but would have mercy upon _____.
2. What would Hosea learn about God by having an unfaithful wife?

Day 2: The Harlotry of Israel

Hosea's prophecy is filled with references to Israel's spiritual harlotry; in fact, the main theme of **H**osea is **H**arlotry and its effects upon the nation. God strongly charges Israel with harlotry (Hos 2:2-5) saying the children of the nation were illegitimate (v 4). This may substantiate the above observation of brother Hailey. He further condemns the idolatry of Israel in 4:11-13, 17-19 saying "*Ephraim is joined to idols.*"

3. What did Israel attribute to the idols (2:5)?
4. Where did the Israelites offer sacrifices and burn incense?

Day 3: Lack of Knowledge

When Jeroboam I led Israel in dividing from Judah, he "*made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi*" (1 Kgs 12:31). These pseudo-priests did not properly educate the people in the Law of Moses, for in so doing they would have condemned their entire political and religious system. Thus Hosea faults the Israelites for ignorance (4:1, 6, 14; 5:4; 6:6; 8:12) and lays heavy blame upon the priests (4:6-10; 5:1; 6:9; 10:5) who actually encouraged sin so they could profit from the sacrifices.

5. Compare the above scenario with modern denominationalism. What would happen if denominations vigorously taught **all** of God's word in its simplicity?
6. How were the people deceived according to Hosea 8:2?

Day 4: Wickedness: The Fruit of Idolatry

God and His laws are one in nature; God is good and His laws are good and promote well-being among men. But when men depart from God, they also abandon moral uprightness. Man, on his own, does not improve on God's law. Hosea is littered with statements about Israel's wickedness which was the fruit of its idolatry. Hosea 4:1-2 provides a snapshot of moral conditions in Israel during Jeroboam II's prosperous reign: lies, treachery, swearing, murder, stealing, adultery. Hosea 7:1-7 also paints a similar scene. "*All their kings have fallen*" (7:7) seems to refer to the political chaos which befell Israel after the death of Jeroboam II. God laments, "*My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him*" (Hos 11:7). All in all, the description sounds much like our own country today.

7. What did Israel not consider in their hearts?
8. What had prosperity done to Israel (Hosea 13:5-6)?

Day 5: Call to Repentance

Hosea calls the people to repentance (Hos 6:1-3), but it is clear that Israel has gone beyond the point of no return. In times of trouble they would wail upon their beds, but their wailing was not born of genuine sorrow for sin and heartfelt need for God (Hos 7:14). God already foresees that "*the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim*" (Hos 3:5). He declares that the people will go into captivity in Assyria (Hos 8:13; 9:3, 17; 10:6; 11:5). The words of the prophet will fall upon deaf ears, but God calls anyway.

9. Would God take Israel back if they were to repent?
10. Harmonize these two statements: "*But Ephraim shall return to Egypt*" (9:3) and "*He shall not return to the land of Egypt*" (11:5).

Day 1: Warnings to Judah

Hosea's rebuke is mostly directed toward Israel because its destruction by the Assyrians is near. But Judah is heading down the same path (Hos 5:5) and will suffer the same fate if its course remains unchanged. Israel began its idolatry by worshiping the calves set up by Jeroboam I (Hos 8:4-6) which only conditioned them to later accept Baal worship. Judah is warned not to "*come up to Gilgal, nor go up to Beth Aven*" (Hos 4:15). Comparing these references with Amos 4:4 and 5:5, it appears that Hosea has renamed Bethel ("house of God") to Beth Aven ("house of idolatry or wickedness"; "house of nothing"). Hosea also reminds Judah of the patriarch Jacob and how he was blessed by God (Hos 12:2-6). The irony is that God renewed the covenant promise to Jacob in *Bethel*, the very city now given over to idolatry (see Gen 35:1-15).

1. What showed Judah's lack of faith in God (Hos 8:14)?
2. What did Jacob command his household to put away upon the return to Bethel?

Day 2: The Work of the Prophets

As Israel walked in self-will and by its own precepts (Hos 12:8; 5:11), God's prophets were held in contempt and their messages rejected. But God reminds Israel of its history, how He raised them up from a servant (Jacob) to a nation in bondage to a free people in their own land (Hos 12:9-14). All this He did under the direction of prophets, and by prophets God would return them to their former servitude.

3. To whom did Ephraim give credit for his prosperity (Hos 12:8)?
4. What did Israel consider a strange thing (Hos 8:12)?

Day 3: Foreshadowing the Messiah

In a passage which shows the tender affection of God for Israel (Hos 11:1-9), God reflects upon the nation while still in Egyptian bondage: "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son*" (11:1). This verse seems to have no other significance than God's liberation of Israel. But Matthew, commenting upon the flight of Joseph and Mary from the infant bloodbath in Bethlehem, notes "*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'*" (Mt 2:15). The word "fulfilled," therefore, carries a greater significance besides the realization of a specific ancient prediction. The period of Egyptian bondage foreshadows an event in the life of the Messiah, the two events being similar in character. As Israel was protected and nurtured in Egypt, so was Jesus until His return to Nazareth.

“The OT passages are not treated as mere predictions but as anticipations. From the standpoint of the Jew living at the time of the original prophetic utterance, the utterance was about something significant in the history of the Jewish people. It was something that had happened or was happening in history. Matthew’s idea of fulfillment says, in effect, that the event that the Jews thought was significant turns out to be only an anticipation of an event of a similar kind but ultimately more significant in God’s purposes for the salvation of mankind. It is in this sense that the latter fulfills the former” (NIDNTT, Vol. 1, p. 737).

Thus Jesus could be said to come from Judah (born in Bethlehem), Egypt (saved from Herod) and Israel (raised in Nazareth). His life broadly mirrored Israel’s history.

5. How did God feel about Israel (Hos 11:1, 4, 8-9)? What would He not do to them?

Day 4: The Future People of God

Like Amos, Hosea shines a ray of light through the darkness that lies ahead. Though God would not annihilate Israel altogether as he did Sodom and Gomorrah and its environs (Hos 11:8), He would bring a great slaughter upon them and scatter them among the Assyrian kingdom. But in the future He would again offer to make them His people (Hos 1:10; 2:23). The proper application of this promise is crucial. Does it refer to a yet future reconstitution of the physical nation of Israel? What is the import of the promise? The Scriptures again serve as their own commentary, giving us an inspired guide to the interpretation of prophecy. Two different apostles apply Hosea’s prophecy to the redemption offered to Jew and Gentile together in one body: 1) Paul: *“that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ... as He says also in Hosea ...”* (Rom 9:23-26); and 2) Peter: *“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people ... who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy”* (1 Pet 2:5, 9-10). Apostles and prophets consistently apply restoration prophecies spiritually - to the church of Christ.

6. Who is the one head under which Judah and Israel will unite (Hos 1:11; Eph 1:22)?

Day 5: Victory over Death Itself

Though Israel would suffer a political and national death, God promises a spiritual resurrection in the future (Hos 13:14). Again, the fullest significance of this passage is not realized until Paul applies it to the final victory of the redeemed in heaven (1 Cor 15:54-57). Israel has broken the covenant and forfeited its special relationship with God. Its only hope for restored fellowship lies in new terms to be issued under the Messiah.

7. Where is the victory over death to be found - for Jew or Gentile (1 Cor 15:57)?

Day 1: The Reforms of Hezekiah

With Israel in the midst of collapse, Hezekiah takes the throne in Judah and immediately begins reforms that will extend the life of the southern kingdom (2 Chr 29:3-11). The worship of God in Judah had gone dormant under Ahaz's idolatry. The Levitical priesthood is reinstated; the temple is reopened and purged of idols (2 Chr 29:15-19); the sacrifices are resumed and sacred music restored (2 Chr 29:20-30). Further, the Passover is revived and its celebration heralded even throughout Israel (2 Chr 30:1-12). The beginning of Hezekiah's reign is filled with joy of revival and the optimism of rebirth.

1. What did the Levites do during the Passover celebration (2 Chr 30:22)?
2. How long had it been since such a celebration in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:26)?
3. How did many in Israel respond to the invitation to repent and attend the feast?

Day 2: The Assyrians Threaten Jerusalem

Several years after the destruction of Israel, the Assyrians return and take all the fortified cities of Judah (2 Kgs 18:13). At first, Hezekiah capitulates and pays tribute to the Assyrian king Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:14-16), but Sennacherib is not appeased by this gesture. A large army is sent to threaten Jerusalem, and a speech is made by the delegation from Sennacherib for the purpose of demoralizing Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This speech of defiance and blasphemy against God has been preserved in three different passages: 2 Kgs 18; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36. Truly, as the people look out from the walls of Jerusalem upon the terrible Assyrian war machine which has already decimated Israel, demolished their own fortified cities, and brought every enemy into submission, the situation would appear hopeless.

4. How do the Assyrians try to shake Judah's faith in God (2 Chr 32:13-15, 19)?
5. What psychological ploy is used against Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 18:25?
6. How do the Assyrians make going into captivity sound (2 Kgs 18:31-32)?

Day 3: The Defeat of the Assyrians

In the face of such imminent danger, Hezekiah does what all faithful men before him have done: he puts his trust in God. He spreads out a letter of threat before Jehovah and asks for His help (Is 37:14-20): *"Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD, You alone."* He also appeals to God's great prophet, Isaiah (2 Kgs 19:1-7), who reassures the king that

God would both drive Sennacherib back to his own country and eventually bring his life to an end. In the midst of overwhelming odds, Isaiah pronounces judgment upon the threatening Assyrians (Is 37:21-29). They had erroneously attributed their victories to their own military prowess, not realizing that God had raised them up for His own purposes: *“Now I have brought it to pass, that you should be for crushing fortified cities into heaps of ruins”* (Is 37:26). Failing to appreciate this truth, the Assyrians became arrogant and exercised cruelty for their own purposes and satisfaction, blaspheming God in the process. *“Therefore,”* God says, *“I will put my hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way which you came”* (v 29). Furthermore, the Assyrians would not even launch an offensive attack against Jerusalem (Is 37:33-35). True to prophecy, God destroyed 185,000 of the Assyrian army in a single night, thus ending the Assyrian threat (2 Kgs 19:35-37). Sennacherib was assassinated about 20 years later.

7. How did God say He would save Judah (Hos 1:7)?

8. T/F Hezekiah left the Assyrians’ siege mound as a memorial of God’s saving power.

Day 4: Hezekiah’s Life Extended

At some point in the midst of the Assyrian crisis, Hezekiah becomes critically ill and near death; in fact, Isaiah tells him to get his affairs in order (2 Kgs 20:1-11). Hezekiah petitions God with bitter tears, and before Isaiah can depart from the palace God sends Hezekiah a reprieve and promises him fifteen more years of life. Truly Hezekiah did *“according to all that his father David had done”* (2 Kgs 18:3), for he sought the Lord in times of personal and national crisis even as David.

9. What sign did Hezekiah request to confirm his recovery?

10. T/F God cannot lie but can change His mind in accordance with man’s behavior.

Day 5: Hezekiah’s Later Pride

After the defeat of the Assyrians and the “cheating” of death, Hezekiah succumbs to the besetting sin of the prosperous and successful: pride (2 Chr 32:25). In the midst of the trauma over his illness, Hezekiah had vowed *“I shall walk carefully all my years in the bitterness of my soul”* (Is 38:15). But this sentiment fades after his recovery and he becomes proud because of his exalted position and the favor shown him by God. The boastful display of his material wealth brought the condemnation of Isaiah (2 Kgs 20:12-19), but Hezekiah’s subsequent repentance persuades God to reserve punishment unto the king’s wicked descendants (see 2 Chr 32:26).

11. To whom did Hezekiah show his wealth?

12. In what way was Hezekiah made vulnerable (2 Chr 32:31)?

Day 1: Introduction

Isaiah was a rock in the midst of a crumbling nation, a light shining through the moral and spiritual darkness of his generation. He was a counselor of kings. He pronounced universal condemnation upon nations present and future. But Isaiah also looked beyond the coming judgments to the dawning of a new day and the establishment of a different kind of kingdom, a kingdom inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles and based on redemption from sin. This redemption would be provided in a Servant sent from God, His specially Anointed One, the Messiah. *“Although all of the prophets who wrote of the latter days and the events of that period told of ... the Messiah who was to come, Isaiah had by far the deepest insight into and clearest concept of the Redeemer. This is by no means to disparage any of the other prophets, but simply to note that God singled out Isaiah for that purpose and so inspired him”* (Homer Hailey, **Commentary on Isaiah**, p. 27). Isaiah’s work centered upon Judah but did not ignore Israel even though its destruction was a foregone conclusion. His prophecies range from about 740 to 700 B.C.

1. Isaiah’s work spanned the reigns of how many kings (Is 1:1)?
2. Which of these kings was the worst?

Day 2: Isaiah’s Commission

Isaiah receives a commissioning vision during the last year of King Uzziah (Is 6:1-13). In the vision, God seeks a prophet to pronounce judgment upon a people who have shut their eyes and stopped their ears to the things of God. Consequently, the prophecies are *“until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.”*

3. What feeling overwhelmed Isaiah when he perceived God’s presence (Is 6:5)?
4. T/F Like Moses, Isaiah was reluctant to accept God’s commission.

Day 3: Overview of Judah’s Wickedness

God calls Judah “Sodom” and “Gomorrah” and tells them that their hypocritical exercise of worship is abhorrent to Him (Is 1:10-15). The nation is suffering the side-effects of prosperity: greed, arrogance, oppression and immorality (Is 3:13-23; 5:8-12, 20-23). The people seem insensible to the advancing threat of the Assyrians and are so stiff-necked and hard-hearted that they reject the warnings of God’s prophets (Is 30:8-11). God calls for repentance, but it will not be forthcoming (Is 1:16-20). Judah is doomed, its fate merely delayed for another century.

5. What does God call the people to do (Is 1:18)? Is this a doctrinal debate?
6. What were the elders and princes concerned with (Is 3:14-15)?
7. What will people who are wealthy and bored often seek (Is 5:11-12)?

Day 4: Judah's Reliance upon Egypt

When threatened, those who are weak in faith will often look for security in the things which “are seen” rather than in God. Thus Judah, frightened by the growing menace of the cruel Assyrians, turns to its former captor, Egypt, for protection (Is 30:1-5; 31:1-3). Even the faithful Hezekiah leaned in this direction and was warned by the Assyrians that such was folly (Is 36:6). Isaiah walks around Judah barefoot and in underclothes for three years to demonstrate the future demise of Egypt and to discourage any alliance with them (Is 20:1-6).

8. Whose counsel, plans and advice was Judah not seeking?
9. The Egyptians were men and not _____; their horses flesh and not _____.
10. Who would win the war between Assyria and Egypt?

Day 5: “To the Law and to the Testimony!”

Isaiah and his prophetess wife produce a son whose name is symbolic for the coming invasion of the Assyrians (Is 8:1-4). Isaiah is warned to not be unduly influenced by the fears and anxieties of the people but rather, “*The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread*” (Is 8:11-13). But Jehovah will become a stone of stumbling for both Israel and Judah because their confidence has been placed in mediums, wizards and other idolatrous oracles (Is 8:14-22). As other prophets before and after him, Isaiah calls the people back to God and His law.

11. To what natural disaster is the invasion of Assyria likened (Is 8:7-8)?
12. From whom was God hiding His face?
13. Should men “seek the _____ on behalf of the _____?”

Day 1: Punishment on the Assyrians

All of God's creation is subject to use for His purposes: prophets were taught lessons by fish and talking donkeys and fed by birds; locusts, frogs and flies tormented enemies; lions mauled those marked for death. Fire, hail, earthquakes and storms have all been used by God to accomplish His purposes. God also uses men, either collectively or individually, as He wills. At this time in Israel's history, God is using Assyria as a tool of judgment upon both Israel and Judah. Assyria is described as an ax, saw, rod and staff (Is 10:15). Why then does God vow to punish them (Is 10:5-14; 14:24-27)? Because Assyria does not willingly cooperate with God with a conscious desire to please Him. Rather, *"he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations"* (Is 10:7). In other words, Assyria is pursuing its own agenda and is a violent, arrogant nation with no regard for God. God can still use a nation like this to punish others, but He will hold them accountable for their cruel ambition.

1. What did Assyria consider God to be (Is 10:11)?
2. To what did Assyria attribute its success (Is 10:13)?
3. What happens when God thinks and purposes a thing?

Day 2: Punishment upon Babylon

In this proclamation (Is 13-14:3-23) God is looking beyond the present. Babylon is at this point subject to Assyria; it will yet be 100 years before it supplants Assyria as the dominant world power (Nebuchadnezzar will destroy Nineveh in 612 BC). Isaiah prophesies to a disobedient Hezekiah that his possessions would one day be taken to Babylon (Is 39:6). But like the Assyrians, God would eventually destroy the Babylonians for their wickedness. Of special notice in the prophecies against Babylon are references to "Lucifer," his attitudes and his fate (Is 14:12-15). Isaiah clearly states that this is a proverb *"against the king of Babylon."* The term Lucifer "refers to the morning star, the harbinger of a new day, which is at its brightest just before dawn" (Hailey, *ibid*, p. 139). In other words, the Babylonian king, brilliantly visible in the affairs of the world and glorious in his own estimation, would be *"cut down to the ground"* and *"brought down to Sheol."* To apply this to Satan and his origin completely misunderstands the passage.

4. Is "Lucifer" a man or demon (see Is 14:16)?
5. What would the other dead kings say to the Babylonian king (Is 14:10)?
6. T/F Isaiah 13:10, 13 speak of events occurring at the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world.

Day 3: Judgments against Various Nations

Isaiah addresses prophecies of destruction to Israel's neighbors and those who interact with them past, present and future (chapters 13-23). The thrust of these prophecies is that God will destroy the ancient world order before bringing His spiritual kingdom into existence. We will consider this further in our study of Daniel.

7. What was Moab known for (Is 16:6)?
8. In the terror of God's judgment against Syria, what would men no look to (17:7-8)?
9. What weapon would God use against Egypt (19:2)?

Day 4: The Prophecy of Cyrus

One of the evidences of the divine origin of the Scriptures is the detailed prophecy of events lying far in the future. Biblical prophecy is not a vague guess which can subjectively fit any number of events or the mere forecast of a trend based on present data; i.e., the weather. Biblical prophecy often describes in great detail what lies beyond the foreseeable future. One such prophecy is that of Cyrus (Is 44:24 - 45:7), the Persian king who will free the Israelite captives 200 years later. This whole section exalts the greatness of God in contrast to idols. God alone can reveal future events, even naming a specific individual, and then control all variables to make them come to pass.

10. What effect would Cyrus have upon Jerusalem and the temple?
11. What would serve as evidence of God's power to Cyrus (Is 45:3)?
12. What does prophecy suggest about God (Is 45:5)?

Day 5: The Foolishness of Idolatry

God takes the people to task for putting their belief in gods who have no true existence. He challenges the idols to do as He does in Cyrus - predict the future (Is 41:21-24). God exposes the ridiculousness of serving man-made objects: *"He burns half of it in the fire; with this half he eats meat ... and the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, 'Deliver me, for you are my god'"* (see Is 44:9-20). Further, God upbraids the people for abandoning Him in favor of gods who could not so much as transport themselves (Is 46:1-13).

13. What is in the right hand of an idol-worshiper (Is 44:20)?
14. What else can idols not do besides predict the future (Is 41:22)?
15. The principle of Is 46:7 was graphically displayed on Mt. _____.

Day 1: Various Prophecies and NT Citations

Many of Isaiah's prophecies extend beyond the affairs of physical Israel to a future time when God would inaugurate a universal spiritual kingdom. The NT thus makes frequent reference to Isaiah, applying his writings to the events then transpiring concerning the preaching of the gospel and its effect among men. A sampling of these passages:

Isaiah 1:9; 10:22-23 => Rom 9:27-29: God declared that only a remnant of fleshly Israel would ultimately be saved because only a remnant would possess true faith.

Isaiah 9:2 => Mt 4:12-17: Reference to Jesus' travels and work in Galilee. In spite of this prophecy the Pharisees had contempt for the idea that a prominent prophet should arise in Galilee - Jn 7:52.

Isaiah 40:3-5 => Lk 3:4-6: The preparatory work of the prophet John.

Isaiah 49:8 => 2 Cor 6:1-2: Isaiah's day of salvation had come via the gospel.

Isaiah 52:7 => Rom 10:15: Preachers sent from God with the good news.

Isaiah 55:3 => Acts 13:34: The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled the covenant with David.

1. What two tribal lands would receive the first Messianic light?
2. Did God ever promise to save all of Israel? What part would be saved?

Day 2: Mt. Zion

Isaiah 2:2-4 is a "bedrock" prophecy concerning the kingdom of God to come (repeated in Micah 4:1-3 and alluded to in other passages; i.e. Zech 8:21-23). Note that it is "*the LORD's house ... the house of the God of Jacob*" (rather than merely David's house) that is to be established. The term "mountain" often refers to kingdoms inasmuch as city-states were often founded upon high ground (Samaria - Amos 6:1; Babylon - Jer 51:25). Zion was the hill in Jerusalem upon which the fortress of David and the temple were built. Thus God will establish His own royal lineage in conjunction with the house of David; the Messiah would be both son of David and Son of God (Mt 22:42-45). This rule would be universal and men from all nations would be drawn to the "*mountain of the LORD*" for teaching and instruction. The law would go forth from Jerusalem literally (Lk 24:47) and figuratively (1 Tim 3:15 - "*the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*").

3. When would these developments occur (Is 2:2)? Is this a time yet future? (See Heb 1:2; Acts 2:17; etc.)

Day 3: The Branch of the Lord

Another Messianic image is that of a fresh, living branch growing out of the apparently dead stump of Davidic lineage (Is 4:2; 11:1-5, 10; see also Jer 23:5; 33:15 and Zech 6:12-13). This suggests that there is destruction and ruin yet to come; David's house will appear dilapidated until the Branch springs forth. Note the descriptive terms used in these passages: beautiful, glorious, wisdom, understanding, might, knowledge, faithfulness, righteousness, prosper, reign, rule, throne, etc.

4. In what capacities would the Branch serve (Zech 6:13)?
5. From whose roots would He come (Is 11:1)?
6. Contrast the rule of the Branch with the rule of Israelite and Judean kings.

Day 4: The Government of the Son

Isaiah had spoken a dual prophecy to King Ahaz concerning liberation from the threat of Syria and Israel (Is 7:14-16). Matthew later gives these words Messianic significance when he applies them to the circumstances of Jesus' birth (Mt 1:23). Isaiah elaborates on the Son (Is 9:6-7): He will be a ruler - *"and the government will be upon His shoulder ... of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom"*; He will fulfill the covenant of David as both man and God - *"And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"*. The deity of the Messiah is also indicated in the name "Immanuel" - *God with us* (Is 7:14). These passages, along with others we have considered, clearly place the coming Messiah outside the realm of mere human prophet or king. Both the Son and His kingdom will be eternal, for He is the incarnation of God among men and His rule will be from heaven itself. In view of these truths, it is all the more astounding that the Jews were unprepared for the works and claims of Jesus that identified Him with deity.

7. Who would establish the government of the Son (Is 9:7)?
8. God's covenant with _____ would be fulfilled in the throne of the Messiah.

Day 5: The Precious Cornerstone

Another figure used by Isaiah to describe the Messiah is that of a cornerstone (Is 28:16-17; 8:14-15). Peter picks up on this theme and relates it to Christ (1 Pet 2:4-10). Jesus is to the spiritual kingdom what Jehovah should have been to Israel. God was the protection and defense of the people, but they chose to place their confidence in idols and the military might of their neighbors. When God would enter the world 700 years later in the person of Christ, the Jews would stumble over the cornerstone of the kingdom.

9. Where would the precious cornerstone be laid? What does this mean for us today?

Day 1: Who Is the Servant?

The “Servant” of Jehovah is spoken of at some length by Isaiah. The Servant is the same one known as the Branch, the Child/Son, the King, the cornerstone; i.e., the Messiah to come. The term “Servant” indicates that He will not be as a fleshly king, surrounded by a retinue who wait on him hand and foot and attend to his every desire. Instead, the Servant would come *“not to be served, but to serve”* (see Mk 10:45; Ph 2:7). The Servant serves with God’s purpose and blessing behind Him (Is 49:1-2, 5). His words will be full of wisdom and learning and He will heed the will of God (Is 50:4-5). His face is set like a flint; indeed, it must be to endure the abuse hurled at Him (Is 50:6-9). The Servant is someone to be obeyed, for He is the Servant of the Lord (Is 50:10-11). The Servant will accomplish great things, but in the end He will be disappointed over the lack of response to what He offered men (Is 49:4). The Servant, of course, is none other than Jesus.

1. What was like a sharp sword (Is 49:2)? Where is this image of Christ in the NT?
2. Upon whose help did the Servant rely when undergoing suffering?

Day 2: The Servant and the Gentiles

Isaiah sees more in the future than a restoration of Judah; he sees the establishment of a kingdom which encompasses all men. The Jewish heritage would have a central place in this new order - *“for salvation is of the Jews”* (Jn 4:22) - but the Gentiles would enjoy equal standing with them before God - *“neither Jew nor Greek”* (Gal 3:28). The Servant will be a *“light to the Gentiles”* (Is 49:6; 42:6) and will *“bring forth justice to the Gentiles”* (Is 42:1). Isaiah “boldly” states that God would be found by a nation that did not seek Him (Gentiles) because He had been rejected by a “rebellious people” (Jews) (see Is 65:1-2; Rom 10:20-21). But to admit the inclusion of the Gentiles is also to admit the obstinacy of the Jews, and this the Jews of Jesus’ day refused to do.

3. Under what circumstances did Paul quote Is 49:6 (see Ac 13:47)?
4. What prophet quoted Is 49:6 at the presentation of Jesus in the temple?
5. What was considered too small a thing for the Servant?

Day 3: The Servant’s Redemptive Suffering

“It is generally acknowledged by students of the prophets that in this the fourth of the Servant Songs is attained the loftiest height of prophecy” (Hailey, *ibid*, p. 434). The five stanzas from Is 52:13 - 53:12 portray the Servant in extreme physical and emotional suffering. Note the descriptive terms: despised, rejected, sorrows, grief, stricken, smitten, af-

flicted, wounded, bruised, chastisement, stripes, oppressed. But crucial to this picture of suffering is the fact that it was not attributable to any fault in Him; the suffering He endured was due to others on account of their sins: “*He has born **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows ... He was wounded for **our** transgressions, He was bruised for **our** iniquities; the chastisement for **our** peace was upon Him, and by His stripes **we** are healed ... and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of **us all** ... For He shall bear **their** iniquities*” (Is 53:4-6, 11). Another important aspect of this prophecy is that the suffering of the Servant is in accord with God’s will; in fact, God was the ultimate source of the suffering: “*smitten **by God** and afflicted ... **the LORD** has laid on Him the iniquity of us all ... Yet it pleased **the LORD** to bruise Him; **He** has put Him to grief ... When **You** make His soul an offering for sin*” (Is 53:4, 6, 10). This passage above all others should have prepared the Jews for the redemption which God would provide for them in the future. Instead, they fulfilled the prophecy by inflicting upon the Servant everything written about Him and in the process inadvertently confirmed Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy.

6. What does Jesus do for transgressors (Is 53:12)?

7. How are sinful men like sheep? How was the Servant like a sheep?

8. What is the general reaction to the message of the suffering Servant (Is 53:1)?

Day 4: The New Heavens and New Earth

Isaiah has spoken of wholesale changes to come: a new king/kingdom inclusive of all nations (and thus a new name - Is 62:2; 65:15), a true sacrifice for sin, victory over all enemies, etc. “*Behold, the former things have come to pass, and **new things** I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them*” (Is 42:9). It is no wonder that Isaiah describes such sweeping reform of man’s relationship with God as a “*new heavens and new earth*” (Is 51:16; 65:17-19; 66:22). Peter uses the same figure to speak of the final heavenly dispensation wherein God’s people will dwell in His very presence (2 Pet 3:13). In neither Isaiah’s nor Peter’s usage is there any justification for the notion that the earth will be physically renovated and thus serve as an eternal habitation for men.

9. Is the “Jerusalem” of Isaiah 65:17-19 referring to heaven or the church? Consider the context carefully.

Day 5: God’s Powerful Word

The future fulfillment of Isaiah’s words is assured, for they are written by the inspiration of God. “*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*” (Is 55:11). The life and death of Jesus, the church which He established, the word which He taught and the change of character wrought within sinful men all attest to the fact that Isaiah spoke of what is presently enjoyed by the Christian, not of some future millennial kingdom wherein Jesus will reign upon the earth.

Day 1: Corruption in High Places

Micah is a younger contemporary of Isaiah but hails from the country rather than the capital city (Mic 1:1). His prophecies are concise and direct; his collection of sayings resembles a condensed version of Isaiah's book. Micah is unafraid to confront the upper echelons of society and lays the blame for the degenerate conditions directly at the feet of the rulers. The rich and powerful lay on their beds at night and plot the defrauding of others (Mic 2:1-2). Their behavior is described as cannibalism (3:1-3), and all the while they delude themselves by the notion that they have God's favor (3:9-11). The rulers, judges and priests, those entrusted with dispensing knowledge and justice, are interested only in themselves. These conditions exist in spite of the fact that two of the three kings of Judah at this time are good kings.

1. What cliché made the rulers feel secure in their ungodly behavior (Mic 3:11)?
2. What was the prosperity of Judah built upon (Mic 3:10; see also 6:12)?
3. The rulers hated _____ and loved _____.

Day 2: False Prophets

While the term "false prophet" does not occur in the OT, there are numerous examples of prophets speaking untruths for personal benefit. There will always be unscrupulous men "*who suppose that godliness is a means of gain*" (1 Tim 6:5), and they will seek that gain by telling their followers what they want to hear (Mic 2:11). The words of true prophets are rejected (2:6-7), likely because they condemn the behavior of the wealthy and warn of destruction. Hypocritical prophets preach peace while scheming against those who do not contribute to them (3:5-7). Such men are hastening the ruin of Judah.

4. What do the wicked prophets have in common with judges and priests (Mic 3:11)?
5. How would Judah respond to a prophet who approved of drunkenness?

Day 3: The Exaltation of Bethlehem

Another piece of the Messianic puzzle is supplied in Mic 5:2. Whereas Isaiah had spoken of a light shining in Zebulun and Naphtali (Galilee in the NT - Is 9:1-2), Micah points to the small village of Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah's entrance into the world. The chief priests and scribes under Herod's rule recognized this truth (Mt 2:4-8), but they were seemingly unaffected by the description of the King: "*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*" - yet another indication of the divine nature of the coming Messiah.

6. What conditions caused Jerusalem to be troubled rather than joyful at the news from the wise men?

Day 4: A Call to Repentance

God challenges Israel to find some fault in Him which justifies their rebellion: “O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me” (Mic 6:3). He further reminds them of His past care (6:4-5). In imagined reply, the people question what is necessary for restitution and restoration (6:6-7). The answer is one of the most beautifully condensed statements of God’s expectation of man in all the Scriptures: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (6:8). If these basic attitudes are in place, then the details of faithful service to God will work themselves out.

7. What sometimes trips up the sinner in his quest for forgiveness (Mic 6:7)?
8. What is the **only** way to know what pleases God?

Day 5: Future Blessings

Micah includes in his prophecies several statements of future blessings and triumphs for Israel. The indiscriminate use of such passages serve to prop up millennial theories relating to a literal restoration of fleshly Israel. But NT application of these prophecies indicate their spiritual fulfillment in the kingdom of the Messiah which presently exists. For example, Mic 4:6-8, 11-13 speaks of the former dominion of Israel being restored and the nations being trampled beneath the bronze hooves of the daughter of Zion. But the passage begins with “In that day ...” referring to 4:1-5, part of which is a direct quotation of Is 2:2-4, a passage with clear Messianic implications. Also, Mic 7:14-20 tells of God once again shepherding Israel so that the nations “*shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of You.*” But these blessings are tied to the forgiveness of sin with God “*passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage.*”

One of the key terms in properly evaluating such prophecies is the term “remnant,” found six times in Micah alone (Mic 2:12; 4:7; 5:3, 7-8; 7:18). Inspired NT writers connect this term with the faithful, godly Jews who were “*waiting for the consolation of Israel*” and “*looked for redemption in Jerusalem*” (Lk 2:25, 38). These were the ones who responded to John’s call for repentance and embraced the kingdom of Christ when they heard the gospel. Paul refers to his own conversion and salvation as proof that “*at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace*” (Rom 11:1-5). This remnant would not rise to military power and thus dominate the earth but would reign through Christ and the indestructible salvation which is in Him. There are presently no outstanding promises in the Scriptures peculiar to fleshly Jews.

9. What is the context of the triumph of the remnant in Mic 5:7-9? Through whom shall they have such dominion?