

Remembering the Old Testament Lesson 13

Key Verse

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
—Psalm 40:7

Key Verse Thought: Read the Key Verse. We are to recognize that this verse is referring to Jesus who was to come. That is what the “volume of the book” is written about – Jesus. From the beginning all of the way through the Bible, we are to recognize that it is all and completely about Jesus. Remember that God promised immediately after man sinned, that Jesus would come (see Genesis 3:15). Throughout the Old Testament, God continued to remind His people – until Jesus was born on earth in the New Testament timeframe. That is why we are studying the Bible through from beginning to the end. It will be then that we can recognize that it was Jesus who was to come – for in the volume of the book (the Bible) it is written of Him.

Emphasis: Through this study, we are to recognize that the Bible is about Jesus from beginning to end. In addition, we are to understand that the Bible teaches that we must know Jesus, and we are to obey God’s Word.

Lesson Summary: This lesson is an opportune time to review what we have learned about the Old Testament. Use the following pages (and the charts in the front of your book) to remember what each book is about, and its’ placement in history. Be encouraged to recall as much information as possible. Most importantly, make sure you understand the flow of the history. As we learned of the failure of God’s people, be sure you understand that it was to help reveal the great need for Jesus. That is what the whole Bible is about: the need of a perfect propitiation for sinful man, which could only be met in Jesus – promised from Genesis 3:15. We today, are to recognize the need to have Jesus in our heart, believe in Him, and then obey God’s Word.

Remember that all of the Personal Books, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets took place in the books of Genesis through Esther. We have tried to study them in historical order to understand the Old Testament even better. Once again, hold the Old Testament books from Genesis through Esther, helping you understand that all of the rest of the books left in the Old Testament take place within that group (timeframe).

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

- Monday: Proverbs 24
- Tuesday: Proverbs 25
- Wednesday: Proverbs 26
- Thursday: Proverbs 27
- Friday: Proverbs 28
- Saturday: Proverbs 29

Remembering the Old Testament

1. The 5 Books of The Law
 - Genesis – Deuteronomy
 - Five pre-Canaan history books

2. 12 Historical Books
 - Joshua – 2 Chronicles: reveal history while Canaan is occupied (9 occupied books)
 - Ezra – Esther: reveal history after expulsion from Canaan (3 post-exile)
3. 5 Personal Books
 - Job – Song of Solomon
 - Individual and Experiential books dealing with problems of the individual heart
4. 5 Major Prophets
 - Isaiah – Daniel
5. 12 Minor Prophets
 - Hosea – Zephaniah (9 pre-exile)
 - Haggai – Malachi (3 post-exile)

Note: Use the following information to review what we have learned about the Old Testament.

1. 5 Books of the Law

The first 5 books of the Old Testament are referred to as “the Law.” Moses recorded these books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The books of the Law are also called the Pentateuch. The word Pentateuch means “five books.” Within these books, we find the first twenty-five hundred years of history. Sin entered into the world, causing separation from God. Nevertheless, God was actively involved in men’s lives.

Genesis:

- **4 Main Events:**
 - 1) **Creation** (Genesis 1-2)
 - 2) **Fall** (Genesis 3-4)
 - 3) **Flood** (Genesis 6-9)
 - 4) **Babel** (Genesis 10-11)
- **4 Main People:**
 - 1) **Abraham** (Genesis 12-23)
 - 2) **Isaac** (Genesis 24-27)
 - 3) **Jacob** (Genesis 27-35)
 - 4) **Joseph** (Genesis 37-50)

Genesis begins with the creation of all that is in existence. It records the ruin of man through sin (separation from God). Genesis also reveals the sovereignty of God – first in creation, then in the choosing of Abraham and his descendants in a covenant relationship.

Exodus: From Egypt Through the Wilderness; God Revealed

Between Genesis and Exodus, God’s people grew into a nation numbering around two to three million people. At least four hundred years had passed since they entered into Egypt. The ten plagues (ending with the Death Angel passing over) revealed God’s power preceding the exodus from Egypt. The word **Exodus** means “*the way out*” or “*outgoing*.” Exodus reveals the redemption of God’s people through the blood of a lamb. God revealed Himself to His people, reminding them that He was their God, and that they were His people.

The law was given from the top of Mount Sinai (beginning with the Ten Commandments see Exodus 19-20). The Israelites were taught that obedience to God is necessary. They could not be a redeemed, set apart people, unless they obeyed God’s commands. The tabernacle was described, and then completed to God’s specifications. Afterward, the cloud covered the tent filling the tabernacle with the glory of the Lord.

Leviticus: The Way to God; The Worship of God

Once the tabernacle was completed, God spoke to Moses from the tabernacle instead of Mount Sinai. Now the people needed to know how to live as a sanctified people. God instituted the Offerings (Leviticus 1-7), the Priesthood (Leviticus 8-10, 12-22), and a Clean Lifestyle (Leviticus 11-20). The foundation of a relationship with God was based on the propitiation (appeasement from God’s wrath) with a blood sacrifice. Man could have fellowship with God when they come to Him as a sanctified people. (Because He is a Holy God and man is sinful.) The people were to learn how to live. God began with the condition of the priests. We will learn (in the New Testament) that when we belong to Jesus, we are “kings and priests” to Him.

Knowing this, we need to look at what God required of His priests. They must live a life “set apart.” They were to be “holy” before God. Christians must put worldly lusts to death and live a life pleasing to God.

Leviticus ended with the blessings of obedience, the penalties for disobedience, and with the importance of keeping vows to God. (Only about a month’s time passes during the book of Leviticus.)

Numbers: Wandering in the Wilderness

The name Numbers comes from a numbering of two different groups of people: the old generation (Numbers 1-14) of the people at the beginning of the book, and then a new generation (Numbers 21-36) at the end. Joshua and Caleb were the only two of twelve spies who brought back a good report claiming with God they would conquer the Promised Land. The Israelites were disciplined for refusing to enter the Promised Land: the old generation would wander in the wilderness for forty years never entering the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb entered.

Less than forty years elapsed during the book of Numbers. Things of interest in Numbers: Miriam’s leprosy (Numbers 12), Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16), budding of Aaron’s rod (Numbers 17), water from the rock (Numbers 20), the fiery serpents (Numbers 21), Baalam’s donkey (Numbers 22), a listing of the Levites duties, a murmuring of the people with discipline, the death of Aaron, and Joshua introduced as the successor to Moses (see Numbers 27:15-23). The new generation was numbered and prepared to enter the Promised Land. The promise to enter came with a warning.

God guided, provided, protected, and even disciplined His people until they reach the Promised Land, staying with them even when they departed from Him and His Words.

Deuteronomy: Remember the Past, Review God’s Laws & Prepare for Promised Land

Deuteronomy looked back to what God had done for His people (Deuteronomy 1-11), and looked forward to what He would do (Deuteronomy 12-34). What God wanted most from his people was for them to love Him with all of their heart, soul, and might. They were to *show* their love for him by their remembrance and their obedience. God reminded the new generation who He is in Deuteronomy. He reminded them of the promises and the deliverance he had shown their fathers, and reminded them what he expected from them – and they were to teach these things to their children.

Moses warned all of the people not to forget the words of God’s Law. He told them of the blessings for following God’s Law, and he then warned them of the curse of God if they failed to obey. Deuteronomy is a reminding of the Law, and the people were brought to the brink of the Promised Land, ready to continue. The main theme was the importance of obedience to God, for God wanted obedience from His people – but He gave them the choice. Joshua is appointed the new leader (Deuteronomy 31), and Moses died (Deuteronomy 34). Throughout the entire book, it showed the faithfulness of God and revealed that God loved his people (Deuteronomy 4:37 and Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

2. 12 Historical Books

The next **12** books pick up the history of the Israelites where it ended at the brink of the Promised Land (Israel – no longer called Canaan land) in Deuteronomy, completing the books of history: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The first **9** record the history while the Jews occupy Israel. The last

3 revealed the period after they were carried away captive, and then returned to Israel. The books of the prophets took place during this time in history – beginning in the books of the Kings.

Joshua: The Occupation and Conquering of the Promised Land:

Joshua covered about twenty-five years of history. It showed the Israelites (lead by Joshua) enter the land of Canaan (Joshua 1-5), conquer the land (Joshua 6-12), and finally occupy the land (Joshua 13-24), making it the land of Israel. Something to think about – Joshua was born a slave in Egypt (witnessed God’s miracles there), learned much from Moses, endured the forty years of wandering, and then became the leader of God’s people into the land of promise. (Until Joshua and his leading them into Canaan, they were a nation without a land. At the close of the book of Joshua, they were a nation with a land mass.)

Judges: the People Turned from God and Were Then “Judged”:

Judges was a sad time in Israel’s history. We see the Israelites reject God as their king. The dominant theme within the book is as follows. “*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). Notice that it does not say they did wrong, men *thought* what they were doing was right. They forgot God and served idols (see Judges 3:7). Although it did not appear wrong to them, it was wrong in God’s eyes. They did not obey the commands God had given them. There was a vicious cycle of the people forsaking God, God allowing the enemy to oppress the people, the people crying out to God, and God sending a deliverer (a judge) to end the oppression. (They had a people and land but rejected their God.)

Ruth: A Personal Life during the Time of the Judges:

Ruth took place in the time of the Judges with all of turmoil in the nation Israel. The book of Ruth is a picture of redemption. She was a gentile (a Moabitess) who was living in a pagan land. She did not know the one true God. When an Israelite family moved to Moab (because of a drought in Israel), she married into this family and heard of God. When her husband, father-in-law, and brother-in-law died, she returned with her mother-in-law to the land of Israel. Her view is clearly stated. “16. *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: 17. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me*” (Ruth 1:16-17). It was there, after being redeemed by a kinsman, that she forever became a part of Jesus’ genealogy. She was the great-grandmother of King David.

1 and 2 Samuel: The People Rejected God as their King Desiring an Earthly King:

1 and 2 Samuel revealed the lives of four main characters: Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David. We learned the office of the priest was in a very low period. Eli and his sons were wicked men. Samuel was not only a good priest, but also a prophet of God. Saul became the first king of Israel, but had the kingdom removed from him and his family, forever, because of his disobedience to God’s words. “*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king*” (1 Samuel 15:23). The kingdom was then given to David and his descendants. “12. *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.*”

16. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:12, 16). This was a promise not only of his son, Solomon, who became the next king, but a promise that God’s son, Jesus, will one day be King of Kings.

1 and 2 Kings: The Nation Ruled by Kings:

The books of the Kings began with King David’s death and his son, Solomon, taking the throne. One special thing to note is that much of the prophets’ ministries took place during this timeframe. During this time in Israel’s history, we read of the nation’s decline from one of the greatest kingdoms ever to a completely non-existent kingdom. When King Solomon turned his heart from God to idols, God promised to divide the kingdom. After King Solomon’s death, the kingdom was divided into the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, Judah. Israel never had a good king. Judah had a few. Mostly, God’s people turned from worshipping God to idols. Despite the prophets’ warnings, the people refused to turn back to God. God allowed both kingdoms to be taken captive. Israel was taken captive by Assyria, and later Judah was taken captive by Babylon. Both places were desolated and the Temple of God was destroyed.

1 and 2 Chronicles: The Kings Remembered from a Spiritual Perspective:

1 and 2 Chronicles reveals the history of the kings from the priests’ perspective (a spiritual point of view), whereas the books of Kings were written from the prophets’ perspectives (a moral point of view). These books help us understand the spiritual and moral reasons for the ultimate downfall of the nation Israel.

Ezra: The Beginning of the Return from Captivity:

Ezra showed us the beginning stages of the return of the people back to the land of Israel. The return of God’s people took place in three stages. Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6), led the first return of people. Their first act was to rebuild the altar, and then began working on the Temple. Because of opposition, the building was stopped. Fifteen years passed before they completed the building of the temple. Ezra led the second return of the remnant (Ezra 7-10). About fifty-eight years divided these two returns. He was a scribe and taught the people the Word of God to bring about very important reforms. He emphasized that they were to be a separate people. He encouraged them to separate themselves from the other people of the land.

Nehemiah: Led in Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem:

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king Artaxerxes (in Persia) when he received word that his beloved homeland laid in ruins. The walls were broken down and the city gates were burned. He had a burden for his people, and he took that burden to God. He prayed. God answered his prayer by allowing him to go to the city of Jerusalem to lead the people to rebuild the walls and gates (about twelve years after Ezra led a remnant home). In spite of much opposition (they had to build with a sword in one hand), they completed the work in fifty-two days. The people were led to a time where the Word of God was read, the people repented, and worshiped God.

Esther: A Woman Who Saved Her People

Esther is the only other book to be named after a woman (Ruth being the first). The events take place in history between the return of Zerubbabel and Ezra. It dealt with the people

who remained in the land of captivity instead of returning to Israel. In this book, we read God intervened in history, using Esther (the Jewish young woman who became queen) and her cousin Mordecai, to deliver His people from extermination. When faced with certain death because she was a Jew, the essence of the book is revealed in Esther's understanding of God's sovereignty. "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish*" (Esther 4:16). She trusted God knew what was happening, and that He was in control. She allowed God to use her to deliver His people.

3. 5 Personal Books

The 5 books following, we call the Personal Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. They are all books written as poems. They each deal with individuals' experiences with God. They are very personal. They mainly deal with the individual's heart issues as they seek to know and understand God better. Each of these books not only revealed man knowing God, but what God wants and expects from man.

Job: The Man Tested:

Job opened with a behind the scenes event that Job never knew about (a very important fact for us to consider!). We read of Satan presenting himself before God's throne. God (knowing all) asked if Satan had set his heart upon God's servant, Job. The rest of the book records the events that transpired. Most important to note: through the events that took place in this book, a man known as a "perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth (turns away from) evil" (Job 1:8), Job still grew in his knowledge of God. "5. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.* 6. *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*" (Job 42:5-6). Many believe the book of Job took place about the same time as Abraham, but most all agree that this was the oldest book written.

Psalms: The Hebrew Book of Songs:

Psalms is often accredited to David as its author. Although he probably wrote almost half of them (about 73), there were other authors, known and unknown. The book is divided into five different books, each ending with its own doxology (a hymn of praise to God). They even parallel to the first five books in the Bible (the Law).

Many of the Psalms were written when different men approached God in prayer because of circumstances surrounding them. We read instances of great sorrow, admitted sin, repentance, hope and trust in God, faith, and a great love for God. Some were written in praise and adoration of who God is vs. who man is. So, many of these hymns are rich in Israel's history. By knowing the history, we can better understand the circumstances surrounding many of these songs. Ezra compiled the book of Psalms.

Proverbs: A Book of Wisdom:

Proverbs is known as a great source of wisdom. The wisest man (whose wisdom was a gift from God – see 1 Kings 3:12) wrote many of these words. "7. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.* 8. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*" (Proverbs 1:7-8). These words of wisdom were written to help us live our daily lives wisely. Often it compares the "wise" with the

“fool.” The precepts within are very practical. Much good will come for those who not only memorize these pearls of wisdom, but for those who apply these truths to their lives.

Ecclesiastes: The Conclusion of the Matter:

King Solomon, the man who had it all – riches, fame, rich heritage, a personal relationship with God, and wisdom beyond measure, wrote Ecclesiastes. Yet with all of that, he found that all of life is “**vanity and vexation**” (**vanity** means “*any thing that is futile, or worthless*” and **vexation** means “*something that disturbs or annoys*”). He repeated that phrase seven times in Ecclesiastes. Solomon had not learned how to restrain his desires, and that was the cause of all of his “vanity and vexation.” Even with all of his wisdom, Solomon did not have all of the answers of life. He wrote this book from a worldly man’s point of view. He tried to make sense of life apart from God, yet could not. What was his final conclusion? “13. **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.** 14. **For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil**” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Song of Solomon: The Perfect Love:

Song of Solomon is a collective love song written by King Solomon to a young maiden. Within we find the beauty of a perfect love in marriage. It is also a picture of the love of Christ for his church, and the love the church should have for Christ, under the guise of a bride and groom.

4. 5 Major Prophets

The Major Prophets are the next **5** books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. The Major Prophets are not more important than the Minor Prophets, the volume is just greater.

Prophets were called such because they were messengers of God to the people. They were men who were called by God to proclaim the words of God to the people. God used many avenues to speak to these men: angels, dreams, visions, miracles, even an audible voice. Their job was not to “tell the future” although many times they did foretell future events that would take place. Primarily, they were to expose the sins of the people, revealing the need for repentance (turning a humble heart back to God). Prophets were also to remind the people of God’s laws, and that the people were to obey them. They warned of God’s judgment upon those who refused to obey God’s laws. But importantly, the prophets reminded the people that the Promised One (Jesus) would come. They gave many insights as to the timing, the place, and even the manner in which He would come.

Isaiah: A Prophet to the Kings in their Court:

Isaiah examined the sins of Judah, speaking to the kings in their courts. He spoke during the days of King Ahaz, a very bad king, who made himself and the nation of Judah servants to their enemy, Assyria (see 2 Kings 16:7-9). Isaiah warned against such alliances in Isaiah chapters seven through nine. He also strongly influenced King Hezekiah, a very good king, (see Isaiah 36-37) encouraging him to hold out against the Assyrian threat, and God supernaturally won the battle for them. He prophesied about forty years (or more), and lived into the reign of Manasseh, one of the worst kings Judah had. Tradition says that Manasseh had Isaiah “sawn asunder” (see Hebrews 11:37). He was a prophet to Judah before they were carried into captivity and warned

them of that pending captivity, but saw Israel, the Northern Kingdom, carried away captive by Assyria.

Jeremiah: The Weeping Prophet:

Jeremiah lived about one hundred years after Isaiah, before Judah was carried into captivity, prophesying they would be held in captivity seventy years (see Jeremiah 25). God knew Jeremiah would be a prophet before he was even born (see Jeremiah 1:4-5). Jeremiah was both a priest and prophet. Jeremiah is known as the “Weeping Prophet.” He lived during the last five kings of Judah of which only one was a good king: King Josiah. Jeremiah preached through his reign (see Jeremiah 2-12) during which time King Josiah eliminated idolatry and cleaned the temple finding a copy of the Law. King Josiah read the Law, leading Judah to one final time of repentance and reformation. Jeremiah wrote the words of the Lord, and the evil king Jehoiakim cut it up with a penknife and threw it into a fire (see Jeremiah 36). The people of Judah were at the depths of moral and even spiritual depravity. Jeremiah declared the coming certain judgment for the people’s sins, but with the promise of restoration. He witnessed the captivity of Judah by Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah called Jesus the Branch of David (see Jeremiah 33:15). Tradition has it that Jeremiah was stoned to death.

Lamentations: A Poem by Jeremiah about the Fall of Jerusalem:

The book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah, is a poem revealing the horrors of seeing the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God destroyed after a terrible siege against the city. Notice that it falls in the center of the five Major Prophets, helping us see the division in history of before the captivity, and the return to Israel.

Ezekiel: A Prophet who Witnessed Judah’s Fall:

Ezekiel was carried captive from Jerusalem during the second invasion by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon. Once in Babylon, God called him to be a watchman for God to the house of Israel, especially the children of God’s people (for the children would be the ones who would eventually return to Jerusalem). Ezekiel preached that they were being disciplined for their sin (they forsook God and worshiped idols instead). However, most importantly, God wanted His people **to know that He is the Lord** (this is expressed around seventy times in Ezekiel). Ezekiel was to tell God’s people that He had not forsaken them, but that God had future plans for them.

While he called the people to repentance, God had Ezekiel use many signs to gain the people’s attention, and to reinforce the message from God (some of the signs of Ezekiel: a tile, filthy food, a razor, a pot, a fire, lay on left/right, prepare his clothes to move, smite hands together, not to mourn his wife’s death, etc.). Especially remember: Ezekiel saw the wickedness that had permeated God’s Temple, and God’s Spirit depart from the Temple in Jerusalem; and Ezekiel preached the Word of the Lord in the valley full of dry bones (and they lived).

Daniel: God’s Man:

Daniel lived during the lives of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Daniel and his three friends were most likely taken during the first siege of Nebuchadnezzar when many nobles and princes were taken captive: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel was of the kingly lineage of Judah). They chose to obey God rather than the king, God blessed them, and they become rulers in the enemy land.

Some familiar events:

1. Daniel and his three friends refused to eat the king's meat, but were found wiser than all of the wise men in Babylon.
2. Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream that God revealed to Daniel with its meaning.
3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar's ninety foot statue, were cast into the fiery furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar again acknowledged God was real.
4. Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, and Daniel warned him to repent of his sins. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar lived as a wild animal for seven years, until he acknowledged God as the most High God, and he was finally saved – all because of the witness of these four men.
5. The new king Belshazzar saw a hand write on the wall. Daniel read the message: King Belshazzar would lose his kingdom that night – and he did.
6. King Darius, the new king, was tricked into making a law. When Daniel prayed, breaking that new law, he was thrown into the lions' den. When Daniel lived, King Darius recognized God's hand in Daniel's life. Daniel not only wrote many of God's Words (recorded in the Bible), but he read God's Words recorded by other men of God. He learned while reading the book of Jeremiah.

5. 12 Minor Prophets

The final division in the Old Testament consists of the last **12** books of prophecy: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Once again, there is an obvious division: the first **9** (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah) are pre-exile – before the people were expelled from the Promised Land. The last **3** (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) are post-exile – after the people are carried away captive. We learned the approximate historical place of each book.

Hosea: God's Enduring Love:

Hosea suffered personal tragedy that God paralleled to Israel's sin against God. He preached in the days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Hosea cried for the people to return to the Lord. Hosea's life was a message for God's people. In that message was a revealing of the nation's sin. It continued with a promise of punishment of that sin. Nevertheless, God never left His people without hope. If they would only seek God, and reject the idolatrous practices they had established, God would return to them. God left his people with one final invitation to return to Him. It was man's choice – to receive or reject God's Word. Hosea's life was a prophecy to the people.

Joel: A Message in a Plague of Locusts

Joel most likely took place, beginning in Second Kings chapter twelve (when Jehoash was revealed as king of Judah by Jehoiada the priest, wicked Queen Athaliah was killed and the house of God was repaired). God spoke and Joel relayed God's message to the priests and the elders (remember that Jehoash was only seven years old when he became king, and Jehoiada the priest counseled him). After seeing a plague of locusts, Joel warned of a coming invasion that he compared to that plague of locusts: a plague of locusts completely destroying everything in its path. That was what the enemies of God would do to His people unless they repented of their sins against God. Joel called for the people to repent. Joel continued his cry with an alarm warning of the "day of the Lord." Judah would be taken captive, but when they repented, God would restore

the years that the locust had eaten. God's judgment would fall upon the enemy nations and hope would once again be restored.

Amos: The Prophet from the Country

Although Amos was from Judah, God sent him to speak mostly to Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II. He was known as a prophet from the country because he was only a herdsman, yet when God called him, he obeyed God (see Amos 7:14-15). Amos told of the impending judgment on the nations around, ending with the judgment that would fall upon Israel for their sins against God. He asked a pertinent question. **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”** (Amos 3:3). After many warnings to **“Seek the LORD, and ye shall live ...”**, Amos warned of the discipline God would allow if they refused to turn back to Him. When the people refused to heed correction, God showed Amos several things that revealed the judgment that would come to God's people. He saw: grasshoppers, a plumb line, a basket of summer fruit, and finally God standing at the altar. However, even with the impending doom, God left His people with words of hope and restoration.

Obadiah: Edomite's Destruction Foretold:

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and considered one of the older books of prophecy. No one is quite sure when it was written. There are no clues within the book to help us place it in history as many other books of prophecy have. Nevertheless, Obadiah is a book that warns of what will happen to those who are against God's people. It was written as a warning to those who persecuted the Israelites.

God called Obadiah as an ambassador (a messenger representing God) to warn Edom of their pending doom. The people of Edom were the descendants of Esau (the twin brother of Jacob). They were a vocal adversary against Israel, taking pleasure in their troubles. Because of that, God would deal with them. We will read that another reason they would be destroyed was because of their pride; God would bring them down.

We read of the judgments that would fall upon Edom; and the recompense God would pay His people.

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

God sent Jonah to a nation that was the enemy of Israel. Jonah came upon the scene after King Joash (Jehoash) and during the reign of the next king of Israel, Jeroboam II. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to preach. Instead, Jonah went the opposite way on a ship. When the storm came up, Jonah was thrown over, calming the storm. A great fish (whale) swallowed him. Then Jonah prayed. After three days and three nights, the fish threw Jonah up near Nineveh where he preached. The people repented, and the city was spared. The events that transpired in Jonah really happened. Jesus even said that Jonah was a real prophet who spent three days and three nights in the belly of a whale.

Micah: Hear God's Words

Micah spoke during the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah – the same kings to whom Isaiah spoke, so they lived about the same time – Micah coming just a little later. He warned the people of the coming judgment, but he also told them of the future blessing. One of the main things we learned about Micah is that he called for the people to hear. **“Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is ...”** (Micah 1:2a).

Micah spoke to both Israel and Judah (see Jeremiah 26:18), and we can see that this helped King Hezekiah decide to make great reforms in Judah. Also, remember that Israel was carried captive during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. Therefore, Micah saw Israel carried away captive by the Assyrian army. He reminded the people where they had failed, calling for the people to repent and to have a right relationship with God (by obeying His commands), and warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. However, he too, left the people with the hope of restoration one day. God even allowed Micah to reveal where the Messiah would be born (see Micah 5:2). He then left the people with hope – God would remove their sin as far as the depths of the sea.

Nahum: Nineveh’s Destruction Foretold

Nahum took place about the time of Second Kings chapter twenty-one. After many warnings, Israel was carried captive to an enemy land, Assyria. After reading of the prophets’ many cries for Israel to repent and turn back to God, we learned of God’s discipline that fell upon Israel for disregarding that call to repentance. God had previously sent Jonah to warn Nineveh of destruction for their wickedness, but God spared them when they repented. The book of Nahum took place over one hundred years after Jonah. Nineveh was the world’s greatest city at this time in history. Although the nation repented in Jonah’s time, they had reverted back to their sin, falling even deeper. “**The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked ...**” (Nahum 1:3a). Nahum preached against the nation of Assyria – the same nation that carried God’s people, Israel, away from their homeland.

Nineveh was utterly destroyed around 612 B.C.

Habakkuk: One Who Asked God Why? And God Answered

Habakkuk spoke to Judah during the reign of Josiah. He was a unique prophet because he recognized the condition of God’s people, and it disturbed him. When something troubled him, he took his trouble to God. He was a prophet who asked God a question, and God answered him. God knew the problem, and He would deal with it. God was going to do such a mighty work among His people; they would hardly be able to believe it. Probably the most important verse in Habakkuk is the one following. “**Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith**” (Habakkuk 2:4). We will learn that Habakkuk learned to have faith in God. He warned the people of God’s coming judgment, but left them with the hope that God promised to restore His people.

Zephaniah: Wrote of God’s Judgment and Mercy

Zephaniah was the descendant of good King Hezekiah, and that meant he was related to King Josiah. Zephaniah boldly spoke of the day of the Lord – and that it was coming soon. He understood God was displeased with His people. Zephaniah warned of immediate judgment and destruction. Zephaniah encouraged the people to, “**Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger**” (Zephaniah 2:3). He warned the people of God’s coming judgment, but left them with the hope that God promised to restore His people.

The last 3 books of prophecy (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) were after the people were carried captive.

Haggai: Reminded the People that God Comes First

After Zerubbabel led a group back to Israel, they laid the foundation of the Temple of the Lord. Then the troubles began. Adversaries arose, and Zerubbabel understood they were not for God's people, but against them. He would not allow them to help in the building of God's house. These adversaries caused trouble for years, stopping the building of the Temple. God then sent His prophet, Haggai, to encourage the people to build the house of the Lord. First, he scolded them for living in their nice houses while the Temple of the Lord was not completed. He then reminded the people that God was to come first. Haggai then encouraged the leaders to complete the Temple. Zerubbabel and Joshua stepped up and began work on the Temple again – and God kept the enemy from stopping them.

Zechariah: Encourage the People to Finish – God Isn't Finished With Them Yet

After Haggai encouraged the people to begin building the Temple again, God sent Zechariah, another prophet. Zechariah was a priest and prophet who not only encouraged God's people, but especially Zerubbabel. For when God asks His people to do something, he gives them the strength and encouragement to complete it. With those words of encouragement, the Temple was completed. Zechariah wanted to let the people know that God was not finished with them yet – for God had many mighty plans in store. Many of those plans were revealed in the visions that God gave Zechariah. Among the most familiar: a man with a measuring line, Joshua with the filthy garments, a golden candlestick, and the flying scroll. Zechariah understood that Jesus would come – just as God had promised. Just as Isaiah was the Major Prophet with the most prophecies about Christ, Zechariah was the Minor Prophet with the most prophecies about Christ.

Malachi: The Last Warning

Malachi had a message for God's people, beginning with the priests who were just practicing a religion and not serving God according to His Word. The priests, and then the people, had fallen into sin once again. First Malachi reminded the Jews of the great love God had for His people, recalling the memory of Jacob and Esau – the love of Jacob and the hatred for Esau. Jacob loved and sought after the things of God, and Esau hated and despised the people and things of God. Yet, God's people were not living as His people – for they sinned and did not even recognize how great their sin had become. Yet, there were a few people who still feared God, and they encouraged each other often. God knew them and wrote them in a special book of remembrance. Remember, God knows the heart.

Malachi not only had words of correction, but also reminded God's people of the Promised One, Jesus. Malachi was the last voice to God's people before the four hundred years of silence, and that call ended with a promise of a curse.

Reinforcement: We are to recognize that all of the Old Testament was to reveal the need for Jesus. Man could not and would not faithfully live according to the Law – for it is impossible. Even when they tried, they failed. Nevertheless, God wanted them to understand that man cannot do it on their own – for God promised to send One who would do it for them. In our completion of our study of the Old Testament, we have seen clearly the need for Jesus.

Not only that, but we have learned the importance of obedience to God's Word. God demands a life set apart to love and serve Him. We have had mighty examples of people who were faithful to God, no matter what the circumstances were (think of Daniel and his three friends, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, etc.). Even when faced with death, they remained faithful to God – refusing to deny Him and His words. Not only that, but by their faithful

witnesses, they were able to show God to a lost people – some of whom recognized God is the God. That is still the job of God's people – to show a lost people that God is the God and He sent His only Son, Jesus, to save them from their sin.

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today's lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will recognize that the Bible is to teach us about Jesus and our need for Him in our heart and life. We are to please Jesus by obeying God's Word.*