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# DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE



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ADULTS



FALL | 2025



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# GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

## WE NEED THE TRUE KING

The last verse in the book of Judges—a book that chronicles the downward spiral of disobedience of those who were called to be radically different as the people of God—is one of the most depressing verses in the Bible: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Judges 21:25). Is this not a fitting definition of sin? In this one verse, we see the prideful root of self-lordship, self-exaltation, and self-determination at the core of all our rebellion. We are, in our own minds, the gods of our own universe; we choose whatever is right and wrong for ourselves, and anything that imposes some authority over us other than our own autonomous minds, hearts, and desires is a constraint that must be thrown off.

As sinners, we are like the Israelites of old, convinced of our own truth, our own ideas, and our own wisdom. Our sin has blinded us to what is truly good and right, and it's precisely because of this blindness that we need a true king.

We need a king who tells us the truth, guides us with justice, and leads us in righteousness—a king who can open our eyes to these things and more. Because we are enslaved by sin, the true king must not only be our ruler but also our rescuer.

In Jesus, we find this King—the One before whom every knee will bow and whose greatness every tongue will eventually confess. In Jesus, the true King has come. He is the King of love as well as the King of power. In Jesus, and in Him alone, will we finally find all our desires for peace, security, and wholeness met.

We must then acknowledge that every other king we seek to enthrone is only a substitute for Jesus. It is far better for us to trust in Jesus, not only as our rescuer but also as our ruler, and to acknowledge that all authority has been given to Him.

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## THE EDITOR

Our lives are a series of decisions and choices we make that can result in positive or negative consequences. If we try to base these decisions on our own thoughts and morality, we will soon realize that it will lead to pitfalls in life. That's why we need God, His Word, His Spirit, and His people to help us and teach us the way toward life. But even with those things, we may choose not to listen and still choose our own prideful ways.

This is as true of us as it was of God's people of old, the Israelites. Though God sent prophets to point them toward the right path, the Israelites chose their own path many times, deciding to do evil in the Lord's sight. The few that were faithful, from kings to commoners, found joy in the Lord and His Word. But those who weren't found that they made their own destructive paths. And in the end, the split kingdom of Israel and Judah both failed to be faithful to the Lord and both became captive to their enemies.

Through it all though, God's mercy and compassion still overcame. God did not destroy them completely as they deserved, but He sent prophets to let them know a day of hope was coming, a day when a Savior would come and lead and guide them and take away their sins. God would restore and refresh His people, and they would follow Him toward life everlasting.

These prophets were pointing to Jesus, the Messiah. He is the hope that we all need. He took on our sin and made atonement, which restored our relationship with the Father. He put His Spirit in us and established a new covenant that we would have life with His presence forevermore. Praise be to God!

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## SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point people to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

### GOSPEL STORY

Our aim is to help people understand the storyline of Scripture and to see the thread from the beginning to the end that weaves through it all—God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

### GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him and helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

### GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to encourage believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.



### 3 YEAR PLAN

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#### **VOL 01: CREATION AND COVENANT**

(Genesis; Job)  
Fall 2024

#### **VOL 02: LAW AND LIFE**

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)  
Winter 2024–25

#### **VOL 03: LAND AND LOSS**

(Joshua–1 Samuel)  
Spring 2025

#### **VOL 04: FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM**

(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)  
Summer 2025

#### **VOL 05: DIVISION AND DEFIANCE**

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)  
Fall 2025

#### **VOL 06: PROPHETS AND PROVISION**

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)  
Winter 2025–26

#### **VOL 07: THE SON HAS COME**

(The Gospels)  
Spring 2026

#### **VOL 08: THE SON HAS AUTHORITY**

(The Gospels)  
Summer 2026

#### **VOL 09: THE SON HAS TRUTH**

(The Gospels)  
Fall 2026

#### **VOL 10: THE SON HAS RISEN**

(The Gospels; Acts)  
Winter 2026–27

#### **VOL 11: THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION**

(Acts; The Epistles)  
Spring 2027

#### **VOL 12: THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE**

(The Epistles; Revelation)  
Summer 2027

## HOW TO USE THE PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

The Personal Study Guide is a vital tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

### 1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- Daily Readings
- Chronological Timeline





## 2) STUDY THE PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages you will examine and discuss with your Bible study group. As you read each Scripture passage, a Bible study prompt will help you highlight, underline, or jot notes to help you engage with the Scripture and to provoke discussion with your group on the following Sunday. A brief commentary with thought-provoking questions will help you dig deeper into the text and reflect on what the text teaches you about God and yourself. You have the full week to work on your personal preparation, so whether you prefer to break it up into parts or do it all in one day, the flexibility is there for your schedule.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

**PERSONAL PREPARATION**

1 KINGS 12:10-13

**BEING A SELF-SERVING LEADER RATHER THAN A SERVANT LEADER BRINGS DIVISION.**

Highlight Rehoboam's response to the people. Underline the response of the people.

**10** The young man who had grown up with him told him, "This is what you should say to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us.' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist!'"

**11** Although my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips."

**12** So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered. "Return to me on the third day."

**13** Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him and spoke to them according to the young man's advice. "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips."

**14** The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the LORD to carry out his word, which the LORD had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

**15** When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse, so now, return to your tents, David, now look after your own house! So Israel went to their tents, but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah."

**Key Concept: Division results when solutions to a problem**

Rehoboam had two options: gentleness or force. Out of pride, he followed the advice of his peers and spoke harshly to the people, not listening to their burden, and this lack of consideration divided his kingdom. Being a self-serving leader rather than a servant leader brought division and rebellion against his crown.

The kind of leadership we exhibit will impact many situations in our lives. Our roles and responses in the family, workplace, neighborhood, community, and even our country can bring peace or cause division. Rehoboam should have listened to his elders and the proverbial advice of his father—"A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath" (Proverbs 15:1). We would do well to heed this humbling advice as well.

**What words could Rehoboam have used to respond as a servant leader?**

God's sovereign judgment as prophesied to Solomon (2 Kings 15:9-13) and Jeroboam (yr. 38-40) was fulfilled through Rehoboam's foolish actions (cp. Exodus 7:3-4, 8:15). Rehoboam didn't listen to the people but responded harshly, and this whole scenario—the people's request, the king's response, and the people's rebellion—fulfilled God's word.

The discipline against Solomon was experienced and simultaneously earned by his son. Yet there was also purpose and grace in this punishment. Through the division, idolatry and pride were shown to be counterproductive. Some wise kings learned Old lessons, while many foolish kings did not. Beyond this, the Lord showed His faithfulness and grace in keeping Rehoboam on king over the tribe of Judah because the Lord would not fail to fulfill His promise to David and to send us our Messiah King—Jesus Christ.

**CHRIST CONNECTION**

One son of Solomon's dynasty (2 Kings 11:1-13). God would lead the nation away from him as he had with Saul. Because of his promise to David, the Lord would allow one tribe of Israel to remain under the authority of Solomon's son, Rehoboam (yr. 38-40). This nation would continue with the line of David's descendants that would eventually lead to the promised King and Savior, Jesus, the King of kings.

**What are some ways you need to humble yourself to bring peace instead of division?**

20    Old • 12 • Genesis • 1 • A Blessed Kingdom

21

### 3) PARTICIPATE IN THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to make the most of your group experience. Depending on your leader, he or she may have you do the activity on your own before doing it together as a group, or your leader may want you to wait until group time. Either way, the personal prep you've put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during group time.

**GROUP EXPERIENCE**

**FAVORING OUR OWN BELIEFS**

Identify and record potential biases that existed for the people listed and how they influenced their decisions and actions.

BEHOBOAM

BEHOBOAM'S FRIENDS

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

As an adult, whose advice are you listening to, and how do you assess if it is wise advice or foolish?

22 Book 15: Session 4: A United Kingdom



- Group Activity
- Interactive Questions
- Theological Applications



#### 4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of your group time, consider how to apply the day's Scripture lesson by walking through the Head, Heart, and Hands application questions. Share and discuss answers to the questions for the mutual benefit of everyone in the group. Then take time in your group, and during the week after, to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word. And finally, record prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week.

**Key Concept:** Diversity occurs when wisdom is ignored.

**HEAD**  
What are some ways we can increase our exposure to golly wisdom?

**PLAYING SCRIPTURE**  
Read Psalm 72, remembering that God accomplishes His good and just purposes through leaders just as He did with Deborah. Pray this psalm for the leaders in your life. Note your thoughts to your faith in your government officials.

**HEART**  
How can you develop compassion for others to serve them like Jesus would?

**HANDS**  
How will you seek and follow wise counsel for a difficult decision in your life?

**PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES**

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- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

# DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

By Allyson Howell

Growing up in the land of SEC football, I saw a common yard decoration. It wasn't a gnome or a flamingo but a flag that said "House Divided" with a split down the middle. On either side would be the color and logo of a preferred team and an opposing preferred team on the other. One of the most curious divisions was that of Alabama and Auburn. This is one of the most intense rivalries in all of college football. My family's allegiance was to Auburn, and my younger self couldn't fathom a family member supporting that other team! It seemed impossible to live in the same house with an Alabama fan.

Football rivalries only matter during one game when the teams play each other. A couple can wear different colors and cheer for different accomplishments, and three-and-a-half hours later, it's over. You can boast about your team's win or pout about your team's loss, but life moves on and nothing is different. This kind of division is trivial and temporary, for most families.

But imagine all but one state in America stripped from their identity as an American state and given to an enemy ruler. This kind of conflict would evoke fear and uncertainty and would affect daily life. But even this doesn't capture the true devastation

that Israel faced when the nation was divided. The split of the kingdom didn't just mean the descendants of Jacob were no longer a unified nation but that they were distanced from God. The security that came from knowing they were God's nation became fragile, whether they knew it or not. In their sin, they were divided from one another and divided from God.

## DIVISION

Sin was the reason a formerly unified kingdom of Israel endured a painful and tumultuous division. Because Solomon allowed idolatry to gain a foothold in his life and Rehoboam followed in his father's foolish footsteps, the kingdom was divided.

From there on out, division was the defining reality of Israel's story. The kings of Israel and Judah were divided, often causing friction between their two nations. These rulers also led the people into idolatry, creating a division in their worship from the true God to false gods. God's people allowed the wicked practices of other nations to influence their worship and divide their hearts from full focus on the Lord. Elijah emphasized this point in 1 Kings 18:21 when he said, "How long will you waver between two opinions?"



The question showed that the hearts of the people were divided—they were not in full allegiance to God or to the other idols.

This was not simply a physical or political division, it was spiritual. Not only were the nations themselves divided, but the people were divided from God's favor as they continued to pursue idols instead of God. Division from God meant removal from the safety and security He brought. It meant exposure to attacks from other nations and exposure to God's wrath and judgment.

## DEFIANCE

God's people allowed their own desires and idolatries to replace the relationship God offered to them in His covenant. Instead of recognizing God's faithfulness and great love for them, they chose to worship things made with human hands that were false gods and could not love them back.

As a response to this rebellion, God sent several prophets to call the people back to a right relationship with Him. Repeatedly the kings and people ignored these prophets. They were defiant in the face of God's chosen messengers, openly mocking their prophecies (2 Chronicles 36:16).

Even one of God's own prophets, Jonah, acted in defiance against God and initially refused to share the message he was given (see Jonah 1–4). No one was blameless in the constant rebellion and dismissal of God's warnings. The people refused to listen, and yet, God demonstrated His continued love for the people in His patience and longsuffering.

Still, judgment was inevitable, and both Israel and Judah eventually were exiled from their homeland. Even in this, however, the story wasn't over.

While the prophets were warning of judgment and destruction to come, they were also pointing to a promise. In Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 37, we hear of God's promise to turn division and defiance into restoration and renewal. We also know that God's ultimate promise of salvation would come through a descendant from Judah in the line of David—One who sees all the ways we are defiant and divided and takes the punishment for those sins upon Himself. Jesus would bring about the new kingdom, and He would be the perfect ruler, never leading the people to idolatry but only ever leading them to the throne room of grace.

God remains faithful. He will call His people back to Himself, and He offers forgiveness and relationship through Jesus Christ.

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Allyson Howell is the Communications Director for a non-profit organization. She holds an MDiv from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Allyson has served in churches through women's ministry, worship ministry, and is a writer and editor of many topics. She is married to Randy.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 13

## DIVISIONS



1 KINGS



MEMORY VERSE

“Then Elijah approached all the people and said,  
‘How long will you waver between two opinions?  
If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow  
him.’ But the people didn’t answer him a word.

—1 Kings 18:21



# A DIVIDED KINGDOM

CORE PASSAGE: 1 KINGS 12:1-8,10-17

## CONTEXT

Solomon had been made the wisest man on earth by God, and his reign as king brought prosperity to Israel and glory to God as people came from all over to hear Solomon's godly wisdom. But Solomon married foreign wives who worshiped other gods that he eventually worshiped as well (1 Kings 11:4-8). Because of this evil, God told Solomon that He would tear the kingdom from him during his son Rehoboam's reign, leaving only one tribe for his son's rule. At his coronation, Rehoboam was presented with a choice of what kind of king he would be. His unwise decision fulfilled the Lord's judgment.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Division occurs when wisdom is ignored.**

As you examine 1 Kings 12:1-8,10-17:

- Note the differences between Rehoboam's advisors and the advice they gave to their king.
- Recognize that God's sovereign will as prophesied to Solomon was being fulfilled through Rehoboam's actions.





## TIMELINE

Solomon Becomes King and God Gives Him Wisdom (1 Kings 1–3)

Solomon Builds the Temple and His Palace (1 Kings 5–9)

Solomon Marries Foreign Women, Turns to Idolatry, and Is Disciplined by the Lord (1 Kings 11)

Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam Lead Their Nations in Idolatry (1 Kings 12–14)

**SESSION STUDY:** Rehoboam Accepts Foolish Advice; the Kingdom Is Divided (1 Kings 12)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                         |                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> 1 Kings 11:1–13  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> 1 Kings 12:20–24       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> 1 Kings 11:14–43 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> 2 Chronicles 9:29–11:4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> 1 Kings 12:1–19  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 72               |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

### 1 KINGS 12:1-8

## REJECTING THE ADVICE OF GODLY ELDERS LEADS TO RUIN.

*Highlight the key words of the elders' advice given to Rehoboam.  
Underline the choice Rehoboam made.*

**1** Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. **2** When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard about it, he stayed in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon's presence. Jeroboam stayed in Egypt. **3** But they summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam: **4** "Your father made our yoke harsh. You, therefore, lighten your father's harsh service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." **5** Rehoboam replied, "Go away for three days and then return to me." So the people left. **6** Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive, asking, "How do you advise me to respond to this people?" **7** They replied, "Today if you will be a servant to this people and serve them, and if you respond to them by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever." **8** But he rejected the advice of the elders who had advised him and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and attended him.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CHRISTIANS AND THE SOCIAL ORDER:** All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.



Solomon had been a mighty king and brought prosperity to Israel, but his many building projects took their toll on the people. Israelites were conscripted to work up to a month at a time, followed by two months off, over the course of seven years to build the temple and another thirteen years for Solomon's palace, plus other constructions, cities, and places for his resources (1 Kings 5:13-18; 9:15-19).

When the Israelites came to the new king Rehoboam's coronation, they brought with them Jeroboam, who had once served Solomon as chief over the forced labor from his tribe but who had also rebelled against Solomon (11:26-28). No doubt the people believed Jeroboam was someone who could champion their cause with the young king. But behind the scenes some years earlier, the prophet Ahijah had told Jeroboam that he was chosen by God to be the instrument of judgment against Solomon and his lineage for the once-wise king's idolatry (vv. 29-40).

Jeroboam and the Israelites presented their case to the king: If Rehoboam would reduce the hard labor Solomon had placed on the people, then they would serve the new king (12:4). Service to the king was an expectation of the people (1 Samuel 8), but the level of requirement could be misused and abused. Israel's kings were supposed to shepherd and serve for the good of their people, but sin and foolishness have derailed many from such goals.

**How can believers faithfully fulfill their responsibilities to lead and to serve?**

Rehoboam asked for three days to respond to the people's request. He sought advice from his father's advisors, who said he should be a kind servant leader. Following their wisdom would earn a good standing with his people, as kindness tends to do. But Rehoboam rejected their sage advice and instead would follow the unwise counsel of his peers.

**Why is listening to wisdom and experience so important?**



## BEING A SELF-SERVING LEADER RATHER THAN A SERVANT LEADER BRINGS DIVISION.

*Highlight Rehoboam's response to the people. Underline the response of the people.*

**10** The young men who had grown up with him told him, "This is what you should say to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you, make it lighter on us!' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! **11** Although my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips.'" **12** So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered: "Return to me on the third day." **13** Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him **14** and spoke to them according to the young men's advice: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips." **15** The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the LORD to carry out his word, which the LORD had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. **16** When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him: What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Israel, return to your tents; David, now look after your own house! So Israel went to their tents, **17** but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.



**Key Concept:** Division occurs when wisdom is ignored.

Rehoboam had two options: gentleness or force. Out of pride, he followed the advice of his peers and spoke harshly to the people, not listening to their burdens, and this lack of consideration divided his kingdom. Being a self-serving leader rather than a servant leader brought division and rebellion against his crown.

The kind of leadership we exhibit will impact many situations in our lives. Our roles and responses in the family, workplace, neighborhood, community, and even our country can bring peace or cause division. Rehoboam should have listened to his elders and the proverbial advice of his father—“A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). We would do well to heed this humbling advice as well.

**What words could Rehoboam have used to respond as a servant leader?**

God’s sovereign judgment as prophesied to Solomon (1 Kings 11:9-13) and Jeroboam (vv. 26-40) was fulfilled through Rehoboam’s foolish actions (cf. Exodus 7:3-4; 8:15). Rehoboam didn’t listen to the people but responded harshly, and this whole scenario—the people’s request, the king’s response, and the people’s rebellion—fulfilled God’s word.

The discipline against Solomon was experienced and simultaneously earned by his son. Yet there was also purpose and grace in this punishment. Through the division, idolatry and pride were shown to be counterproductive. Some wise kings learned this lesson, while many foolish kings did not. Beyond this, the Lord showed His faithfulness and grace in keeping Rehoboam as king over the tribe of Judah because the Lord would not fail to fulfill His promise to David and to send us our Messiah-King—Jesus Christ.

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

Because of Solomon’s idolatry (1 Kings 11:11-13), God would tear the nation away from him as He had with Saul. Because of His promise to David, the Lord would allow one tribe of Israel to remain under the authority of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam (vv. 34-37). This nation would continue with the line of David’s descendants that would eventually lead to the promised King and Savior, Jesus, the King of kings.

**What are some ways you need to humble yourself to bring peace instead of division?**



## FAVORING OUR OWN BELIEFS

*Identify and record potential biases that existed for the people listed and how they influenced their decisions and actions.*

### REHOBOAM

### REHOBOAM'S FRIENDS

### THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

As an adult, whose advice are you listening to, and how do you assess if it is wise advice or foolish?



**Key Concept:** Division occurs when wisdom is ignored.



## HEAD

What are some ways we can increase our exposure to godly wisdom?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 72, remembering that God accomplishes His good and just purposes through leaders just as He did with Rehoboam. Pray this psalm for the leaders in your life, from your teachers to your boss to your government officials.



## HEART

How can you develop compassion for others to serve them like Jesus would?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How will you seek and follow wise counsel for a difficult decision in your life?



# DIVIDED KINGS

CORE PASSAGE: 1 KINGS 12:25-32; 14:21-26

## CONTEXT

After King Rehoboam's disastrous start, the northern tribes united under Jeroboam and made him their king. Rehoboam mustered 180,000 troops from his tribes of Judah and Benjamin to fight against the rebel Israelite tribes. The prophet Shemaiah brought Rehoboam a message from the Lord: "You are not to march up and fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Each of you return home, for this situation is from me" (1 Kings 12:24). Judah listened to the Lord and went home, but both kingdoms were at odds with each other for several decades.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Our sin and false worship anger God.**

As you examine 1 Kings 12:25-32; 14:21-26:

- Reflect on how Jeroboam's worry caused him to lead Israel into idolatry.
- Consider how Rehoboam allowed Judah's idolatry to run rampant, and that God subsequently allowed enemies to seize treasure from the temple and palace.





## TIMELINE

Solomon Marries Foreign Women,  
Turns to Idolatry, and Is Disciplined  
by the Lord (1 Kings 11)

**SESSION STUDY: Both Rehoboam  
and Jeroboam Lead Their Nations  
in Idolatry (1 Kings 12–14)**

The Prophet Elijah Confronts  
Ahab (1 Kings 17–21)

Rehoboam Accepts Foolish Advice;  
the Kingdom Is Divided (1 Kings 12)

Wicked Ahab Becomes King  
in Israel (1 Kings 16)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                            |                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> 1 Kings 12:25–14:20 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> 2 Chronicles 11:5–14:1  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> 1 Kings 14:21–15:24 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> 2 Chronicles 14:2–16:14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> 1 Kings 15:25–16:34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 135               |



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

### 1 KINGS 12:25-32

## SELF-INTEREST SKEWS OUR WORSHIP AND LEADS TO IDOLATRY.

*Circle Jeroboam's motivations, underline the actions he took, and then draw an arrow to the result.*

**25** Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built Penuel. **26** Jeroboam said to himself, "The kingdom might now return to the house of David. **27** If these people regularly go to offer sacrifices in the LORD's temple in Jerusalem, the heart of these people will return to their lord, King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and go back to the king of Judah." **28** So the king sought advice. Then he made two golden calves, and he said to the people, "Going to Jerusalem is too difficult for you. Israel, here are your gods who brought you up from the land of Egypt." **29** He set up one in Bethel, and put the other in Dan. **30** This led to sin; the people walked in procession before one of the calves all the way to Dan. **31** Jeroboam also made shrines on the high places and made priests from the ranks of the people who were not Levites. **32** Jeroboam made a festival in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the festival in Judah. He offered sacrifices on the altar; he made this offering in Bethel to sacrifice to the calves he had made. He also stationed the priests in Bethel for the high places he had made.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**SIN AS IDOLATRY:** Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart (Matthew 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshiping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc., where the desires of our heart have turned into idolatrous demands (James 4:1-3).

Jeroboam, the newly enthroned ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, worried about losing his power, so he worked to solidify his control. First, he built up his defenses at key military points in the region. But his main concern was the worship practices of his subjects: If the people went to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, they would eventually return to the king of Judah. So Jeroboam created his own substitute religion for the worship of the Lord.

The Lord had told Jeroboam that if he would follow the Lord like David, the Lord would establish a dynasty for him as well (1 Kings 11:38). Instead of following the Lord's commandments, however, Jeroboam took a page from the Israelites' playbook in Exodus 32:4—he made two golden calves. Instead of brute force, Jeroboam appealed to people's love for convenience and set up two places of worship, with one calf on the southern border in Bethel and one in the north at Dan. He also opened the priesthood to tribes other than the Levites. Jeroboam's religion was inclusive and convenient, but his self-interest skewed Israel's worship and led the whole nation into idolatry.

**What are some ways we might skew our worship of God for convenience or self-interest?**

The Levites, who were supposed to make God's sacrifices and teach His law, were righteously angry about the appointment of non-Levites to lead worship. So they left and moved south to Judah (2 Chronicles 11:13-17). With their departure, the spiritual shepherds of the north were gone.

These spiritual shepherds were to teach the Israelites the law so they in turn could disciple their children as they went about everyday life (Deuteronomy 11:19). But with their departure, the tribes in the north lost all semblance of faithful worship and simply followed their king into his imposed idolatrous worship practices. They quickly forgot that whom we worship and how we worship matters greatly to God.

**How can we be on guard against imitations of the true worship of God to which we are called?**



## PERSONAL PREPARATION

1 KINGS 14:21-26

### GOD WILL PUNISH ALL WHO FOLLOW THE DETESTABLE WAYS OF THE WORLD.

*Underline what Judah did to anger the Lord. Highlight what the Lord allowed to happen to His temple.*

**21** Now Rehoboam, Solomon's son, reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king; he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city where the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put his name. Rehoboam's mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. **22** Judah did what was evil in the LORD's sight. They provoked him to jealous anger more than all that their ancestors had done with the sins they committed. **23** They also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree; **24** there were even male cult prostitutes in the land. They imitated all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites. **25** In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt went to war against Jerusalem. **26** He seized the treasuries of the LORD's temple and the treasuries of the royal palace. He took everything. He took all the gold shields that Solomon had made.

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

So often the kings of Israel and Judah led their people astray into idolatry that imitated the world, but a true king leads his people to worship faithfully the one true God. Jesus came as this King, for He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).



As forceful as Rehoboam presented himself when he rejected the request of the northern tribes and then rallied troops to put them under his subjection, he ultimately proved to be a weak and permissive king—“he abandoned the law of the Lord—he and all Israel with him” (2 Chronicles 12:1). Rehoboam allowed Judah’s idolatry to run rampant.

Rehoboam’s father had been deeply attached to foreign wives who worshiped foreign gods. Solomon’s marriages, numbering 700 wives with 300 concubines, represented political alliances with foreign nations. Solomon built a form of peace that was characterized by the absence of war, but the kingdom was divided in worship with each wife he married. Like his father, Rehoboam pursued peace in a similar manner by permitting whatever kind of worship the people wanted rather than promoting obedience to the Lord as his grandfather David had done.

**What do you do when you know you need to root out sin?**

Rehoboam allowed Judah’s idolatry to reach the most intimate parts of the people’s lives. They built high places and Asherah poles, and male cult prostitutes were in the land (1 Kings 14:23). These practices came from surrounding cultures, and God had taken the land away from Israel’s predecessors for detestable activities such as these (v. 24).

Israel had lived among these cultures for centuries, but they did not keep God’s covenant laws, which would have set them apart from the pagans around them. So God allowed Judah’s enemies to seize the treasures of the temple and palace. In another sign of weakness, Rehoboam had to replace the gold shields his father had made with inferior bronze shields (v. 27).

**What role should our holiness as believers play in sharing the gospel with the world around us?**

## CHEAP IMITATIONS

*Read 1 Kings 12:25-32; 14:21-26, and identify the ways Jeroboam/Israel and Rehoboam/Judah imitated forms of worship that angered the Lord.*

JEROBOAM/ISRAEL

REHOBAM/JUDAH

What are some ways we might step into the trap and consequences of sinful imitation and false worship?

**Key Concept:** Our sin and false worship anger God.



## HEAD

Why does God deserve our sole devotion and worship?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 135 and consider how our Lord is better and stronger than all the imitations of this world. Pray through the psalm, confessing your repentance of false worship and your faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Bless the Lord!



## HEART

How do you guard your heart to protect it from temptation taking root?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

With whom will you share the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ this week?



# THE PROPHET ELIJAH

By Jim Gantenbein

The prophet Elijah was a pivotal figure for the Old Testament people of Israel, and his significance reached far beyond his own life on earth. Yet he did not author a book of the Bible, as did later prophets, nor have a book named for him. His ministry is primarily narrated from 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2.

## ELIJAH'S MINISTRY

As a prophet, Elijah was personal, empowered by the Holy Spirit, prayerful, and peculiar. His clothes were crafted from animal skins (2 Kings 1:8), and for a time, he dined on food brought to him by ravens (1 Kings 17:5). He prophesied a drought in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (17:1). He raised a boy to life (17:22). He challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a sacrifice duel and executed them when they lost (18:38-40). Yet when threatened by Jezebel, he ran away and hid in a cave (19:1-9). Later he anointed two future kings as well as his own successor (19:15-18), and he prophesied the deaths of Ahab, Jezebel, and all of their dynasty (21:20-24).

This was Elijah's life, but perhaps he is most remembered for his departure from this life with transportation more spectacular than any hearse could provide. God carried him into heaven in a whirlwind with

a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11-12), but his work was not yet finished.

Elijah relied completely on the Lord to prove Himself in front of the people. Both on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:36-37) and earlier at the onset of the drought in the land (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17), Elijah prayed. He prayed and proved his faith in the Lord by acting on God's word even before it came to fruition.

## ELIJAH'S IMPACT

Elijah's impact continued well beyond his lifetime. He was mentioned by name 29 times in the New Testament, 7 times by Jesus Himself. Alongside some of the most significant Old Testament figures, Elijah often was connected with the life and ministry of Jesus.

In the close of the Old Testament, God foretold the coming of His promised Messiah with a connection to the past: "Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (Malachi 4:5). God promised the arrival of a familiar and powerful prophet who would boldly declare God's truth and confront the godless, regardless of what it might cost him personally. More bold confrontation was coming!

The Jewish scribes in Jesus's day knew of this promise and believed that Elijah would return before the Messiah appeared (Matthew 17:10), and that prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist (17:11-13). The single-mindedness of Elijah's work had such an impact that when Jesus's ministry was causing a stir and shaking up the religious establishment, some people thought He was Elijah (16:13-14). The Jews understood there was a direct link between Elijah and the coming of the promised Messiah.

Elijah continues to be a significant figure in modern-day Judaism. Drawing from Aharon Weiner's essay, "The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism," commentator Ralph L. Smith writes:

Elijah still plays a significant role in Jewish liturgy and ritual. He is mentioned when grace is said after meals . . . in the benedictions after the weekly Sabbath reading of a chapter from the books of the prophets . . . in the circumcision ceremony and in the Passover seder. At the beginning of the celebration of the Passover a special cup of wine, called "Elijah's cup" is placed on the table. When grace is said after the meal, a child opens the door in expectation of Elijah's appearance and biblical passages are recited which express the hope of Jewish people for deliverance from oppression.<sup>1</sup>

## ELIJAH'S MISSION

Jesus—the promised Messiah and God in the flesh—was not being deceptive by saying the long-dead prophet was coming.

He was using a figure of speech the Hebrews of the day understood quite well. As recorded in Luke 1, the meaning was stated plainly when God sent an angel to the aged priest Zechariah announcing that his wife, also advanced in years, would bear him a son and he was to name him John. Part of that announcement was a callback to the prophecy we find in Malachi:

He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people. (Luke 1:17)

The Jews knew about Elijah, his life and ministry, and they were anticipating his return, whether literal or symbolic. During His crucifixion, some thought Jesus was calling for Elijah (Matthew 27:46-49; Mark 15:34-35). Yet not everything was symbolic or representative. At the transfiguration, Jesus was with Elijah and Moses as they "were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). In this one-of-a-kind moment, all the words and works of Moses and Elijah served as an endorsement of God's Son, Jesus. Elijah had faithfully served the Lord as a prophet in his days on earth, and even in the New Testament, he faithfully pointed people to Jesus Christ.

1. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1984), 342 [Logos].

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Jim Gantenbein is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He retired in November 2022 after more than thirty-one years of ministry, including over sixteen years as a Senior Pastor. Jim and Cathy have been married over fifty-one years and live in Port Orchard, Washington.

# A DIVIDED PEOPLE

CORE PASSAGE: 1 KINGS 18:20-26,30-39

## CONTEXT

Following the pattern of Jeroboam, every king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel did what was evil in the Lord's eyes. The worst was Ahab, who set up a temple for the false god Baal in the capital city of Samaria and made an Asherah pole, leading Israel further into idolatry. The Lord sent Elijah to Ahab to prophesy about a three-year drought throughout Israel as a punishment against the wicked rule of Ahab and his father, Omri (1 Kings 17:1; 18:18). With no rain in the land and the famine affecting their food, the time had come for Elijah to present the question to the people of Israel: Who is the true God, Baal or the Lord?

## KEY CONCEPT

**The Lord alone is the true God and worthy of worship.**

As you examine 1 Kings 18:20-26,30-39:

- Recognize that Elijah demanded that the people stop trying to worship both God and Baal.
- Dwell on the fact that a true, living God will act and respond to His people.





## TIMELINE

The Kingdom Is Divided  
(1 Kings 12)

Wicked Ahab Becomes King  
in Israel (1 Kings 16)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
**2: Elijah Challenges the Prophets  
of Baal at Mount Carmel**

Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam Lead  
Their Nations in Idolatry (1 Kings 12-14)

The Prophet Elijah Confronts  
Ahab (1 Kings 17-21):

3: Elijah Declares God's Judgment  
for Naboth's Vineyard

1: Elijah Prophesies a Famine

## Daily Readings

- |                                                         |                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> 1 Kings 17:1-18  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> 1 Kings 19:1-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> 1 Kings 18:1-19  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> 1 Kings 20:1-43 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> 1 Kings 18:20-46 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 97        |



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

1 KINGS 18:20-26

### PEOPLE WILL FOLLOW THE LORD OR THEY WILL FOLLOW COUNTERFEIT GODS.

*Circle each use of the word “answer.” Underline any number or reference to quantities.*

**20** So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel.

**21** Then Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.” But the people didn’t answer him a word. **22** Then Elijah said to the people, “I am the only remaining prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. **23** Let two bulls be given to us. They are to choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and place it on the wood but not light the fire. I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood but not light the fire. **24** Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers with fire, he is God.” All the people answered, “That’s fine.” **25** Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Since you are so numerous, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first. Then call on the name of your god but don’t light the fire.” **26** So they took the bull that he gave them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “Baal, answer us!” But there was no sound; no one answered. Then they danced around the altar they had made.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE KINGDOM:** The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly, the kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.

**Key Concept:** The Lord alone is the true God and worthy of worship.



King Ahab had established Baal and Asherah worship in Israel, though that had come at the cost of no rain in the land for three years (1 Kings 16:30-33; 18:1). Ahab's wife, Jezebel, had executed the Lord's prophets (18:4). So it may have seemed to the Israelites as if Baal were more powerful than the Lord, and were it to rain, they might have attributed that to Baal. Therefore, Elijah issued a challenge to the Israelites that they should only follow the one true God. They could not serve both God and Baal; one would always have their devotion.

The terms of Elijah's challenge allowed each deity to show their strength with an element both were believed to command: fire. Baal was the Canaanite god of lightning and fertility; so if Baal indeed were a god, then he would have no trouble setting a sacrifice ablaze with a bolt from the sky. The terms were acceptable to the people and the false prophets, and to sweeten the set up, Elijah let Baal's prophets pick their bull and go first.

**How might you challenge the false gods of your culture in a way that people will listen?**

The prophets of Baal called on their god until evening using prayer, dancing, and their most vigorous, bloody practices (18:26-29). But no fire descended, no lightning bolts flashed. No sound from the sky, only the voices of their prophets. No answer from their god, only the silence of nothingness.

The prophets looked foolish for their efforts, and Elijah mocked them as such (18:27), because those who follow false gods are foolish, just as it is foolish to think an idol crafted by a human being could control the weather or anything for that matter (Isaiah 44:9-20). The modern idols we bow to in place of God are just as foolish. These may even be good gifts and important responsibilities from the Lord, but none of our idols can compare with the one true God—none of them can save.

**What are some modern-day idols that draw people away from the Lord?**



## THE TRUE GOD WILL ANSWER, ACT, AND REVEAL HIMSELF AS LORD.

*Highlight Elijah's simple prayer to the Lord.*

**30** Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near me." So all the people approached him.

Then he repaired the LORD's altar that had been torn down: **31** Elijah took twelve stones—according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel will be your name"—**32** and he built an altar with the stones in the name of the LORD. Then he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold about four gallons. **33** Next, he arranged the wood, cut up the bull, and placed it on the wood. He said, "Fill four water pots with water and pour it on the offering to be burned and on the wood."

**34** Then he said, "A second time!" and they did it a second time. And then he said, "A third time!" and they did it a third time. **35** So the water ran all around the altar; he even filled the trench with water. **36** At the time for offering the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah approached the altar and said, "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that at your word I have done all these things. **37** Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back." **38** Then the LORD's fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. **39** When all the people saw it, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!"

**Key Concept:** The Lord alone is the true God and worthy of worship.



Even though God's people were divided into two nations, Elijah rebuilt an altar with twelve stones so all twelve tribes were represented in this sacrificial showdown. It may have been decades since the people in the north had seen an altar to the Lord with an appropriate sacrifice on it. This would have reminded the Israelites of God's faithfulness in the past as well as His covenant.

Elijah's next step was to douse the altar and sacrifice with water, possibly drawn from the nearby Mediterranean Sea on account of the famine in the land. By drenching the sacrifice, Elijah seemed to make this challenge more difficult for his God, yet he acted in faith according to God's word (v. 36). This set up God's glory to be displayed all the more in the presence of the people as the Lord would answer, act, and reveal Himself as the only true God.

**Should we try to make our circumstances more difficult to help point people's attention to the Lord? Why or why not?**

Baal's prophets spent all day begging their god to answer them with fire, but all their efforts amounted to nothing. By contrast, Elijah's prayer to the Lord was an economy of words. And within

seconds of Elijah's petition, God didn't just burn up the sacrificial animal, He incinerated the drenched altar and dried up the overflowing trench. God did the impossible at Elijah's prayer.

The true, living God will act and respond to His people. God proved Himself to be the one true God to the Israelites, and their response showed their recognition. The Lord turned their hearts back to fear Him and to know that He alone is God. Unfortunately, witnessing this event did not stir up a national revival as the rest of Israel's history shows.

**How has God answered your prayers, and how did you show your gratitude?**

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

The Lord is the one true God, and "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:11).

## PROS AND CONS

*Using 1 Kings 18:20-26,30-39, consider how the Israelites might have evaluated the pros and cons of worshiping the Lord or Baal.*

### WORSHIP OF BAAL

PROS

CONS

### WORSHIP OF THE LORD

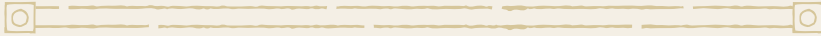
PROS

CONS

What are some idols that draw us away from God? How can we keep God's good gifts in perspective so that the Lord alone is the God we worship?



**Key Concept:** The Lord alone is the true God and worthy of worship.



## HEAD

How are you forming your understanding of who God is and who is God?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read and pray through Psalm 97. Praise the Lord that He alone is God and worthy of worship. Confess the ways you might worship idols of your own making. And commit yourself to obedience to the Lord's commands for the sake of His glory and His gospel mission in the world.



## HEART

How are you wavering in your opinions regarding the Lord and potential idols?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

What opportunities might you have this week to obey the Lord, whether alone or with fellow believers?



# A DIVIDED RESPONSE

CORE PASSAGE: 1 KINGS 21:17-29

## CONTEXT

After Elijah's victorious showdown on Mount Carmel with the 450 prophets of Baal, whom Elijah executed, the Lord sent torrential rain on Israel for the first time in three years. The drought was over. Ahab told his wife, Jezebel, what Elijah had done, and she swore an oath that she would kill Elijah. Some time later, Jezebel found Ahab pouting because his neighbor Naboth would not let Ahab buy his family's vineyard. So she hatched a plot to bring false accusations against Naboth that led to his execution. Then she told Ahab to take what he had wanted. All this incurred the wrath of the Lord against Ahab and Jezebel.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God will not ignore injustice among His people, but He is merciful.**

As you examine 1 Kings 21:17-29:

- Recognize that Ahab and Jezebel thought they could get away with false witness, murder, and theft.
- Marvel at the mercy God showed to Ahab because of his humble response to Elijah's proclamation of judgment.



## TIMELINE

Wicked Ahab Becomes  
King in Israel and Marries  
Jezebel (1 Kings 16)

Elijah Challenges the Prophets of  
Baal at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Elijah Declares God's Judgment for  
Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21)

Elijah Prophesies a  
Famine (1 Kings 17)

Elijah Flees from the Threat  
of Jezebel (1 Kings 19)

Ahab Dies in Battle,  
Fulfilling Prophecy (1 Kings 22)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 1 Kings 21

☐ **Day 4:** 2 Chronicles 19–20

☐ **Day 2:** 1 Kings 22

☐ **Day 5:** 2 Kings 1

☐ **Day 3:** 2 Chronicles 17–18

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 58



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN INJUSTICE WILL BE JUDGED.

*Underline the reasons the Lord gave for bringing destruction to both Ahab's and Jezebel's legacy and lineage.*

**17** Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: **18** “Get up and go to meet King Ahab of Israel, who is in Samaria. He’s in Naboth’s vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. **19** Tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Have you murdered and also taken possession?’ Then tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: In the place where the dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, the dogs will also lick up your blood!’” **20** Ahab said to Elijah, “So, my enemy, you’ve found me, have you?” He replied, “I have found you because you devoted yourself to do what is evil in the LORD’s sight. **21** This is what the LORD says: ‘I am about to bring disaster on you and will eradicate your descendants: I will wipe out all of Ahab’s males, both slave and free, in Israel; **22** I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have angered me and caused Israel to sin.’ **23** The LORD also speaks of Jezebel: ‘The dogs will eat Jezebel in the plot of land at Jezreel: **24** Anyone who belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and anyone who dies in the field, the birds will eat.’” **25** Still, there was no one like Ahab, who devoted himself to do what was evil in the LORD’s sight, because his wife Jezebel incited him. **26** He committed the most detestable acts by following idols as the Amorites had, whom the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites.

**Key Concept:** God will not ignore injustice among His people, but He is merciful.



King Ahab wanted a vineyard that belonged to his neighbor Naboth, offering a better vineyard in its place or its value in silver. But Naboth, obeying the law of the Lord (Leviticus 25:23), was unwilling to give his ancestral inheritance to the king for any price. Ahab pouted at his rejection, but Jezebel orchestrated events to falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy so they could claim the vineyard after his execution (1 Kings 21:1-16).

Ahab and Jezebel thought they could get away with stealing, false witness, murder, and exerting unjust power over others, but Elijah found them out by the word of the Lord. Elijah pronounced a stark message of judgment against the power couple—death, disgrace, and destruction to their house and descendants—making it clear that those who participate in injustice will be judged by the Lord.

**How are you challenged and comforted by the truth that God sees and will judge all injustice?**

God's announcement of judgment on Ahab recalled His judgment on the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha, two early kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:9-11; 16:1-4). But as bad as those kings were, they had nothing on Ahab, who was notable for all the wrong reasons. The Lord had sent His people into

the promised land to conquer it, in part, to judge the current inhabitants because of their extreme wickedness. Ahab led Israel in that same type of wickedness.

Proverbs 13:20 says, "The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm." Ahab allowed Jezebel to influence him and the people of Israel to do evil. Ahab followed his wicked wife rather than the Lord, and both Ahab and Jezebel were judged by God for their evil.

**What qualities should we look for when deciding who influences us?**

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"Do not be an Ahab and covet a neighbor's possession. Let not Jezebel dwell with you, that deadly avarice that persuades you to bloody deeds; that restrains not your desires but urges you on; that makes you sadder even when you gain possession of what you desire and that makes you destitute when you are rich."<sup>1</sup>

—Ambrose of Milan (c. 339–397)

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

1 KINGS 21:27-29

### GOD SHOWS MERCY WHEN SINNERS HUMBLE THEMSELVES.

*Highlight how God responded to Ahab's humility.*

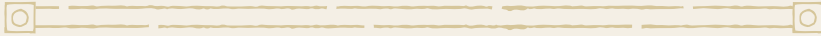
**27** When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put sackcloth over his body, and fasted. He lay down in sackcloth and walked around subdued. **28** Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: **29** “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? I will not bring the disaster during his lifetime, because he has humbled himself before me. I will bring the disaster on his house during his son’s lifetime.”

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

Ahab, a thief, a murderer, and one of the most wicked kings in Israel’s history, had earned God’s judgment, yet he humbled himself before the Lord, and God mercifully delayed that judgment. Like Ahab, we all have earned death as the wages for our sin, but those who humble themselves before the Lord, who repent of their sin and believe in Jesus, will never be condemned and will receive God’s gift of eternal life with Him.



**Key Concept:** God will not ignore injustice among His people, but He is merciful.



Ahab humbled himself before the Lord, putting on sackcloth and fasting, basic outward displays of repentance and mourning in ancient Israel (see 1 Samuel 7:6; 2 Samuel 3:31; 12:16,22). Receiving word of a punishing famine upon the land didn't faze him. Seeing the Lord light up a sacrifice from the sky, followed by the execution of his favored prophets, didn't sway him. But to Elijah's message of judgment for his injustice against Naboth, Ahab reacted with humility and the marks of repentance.

Not only did Ahab put on sackcloth and fast, he also took on a "subdued" attitude, reflecting an inward change in his demeanor (1 Kings 21:27). Ahab's self-humiliation was prolonged and heartfelt, not just a pretend act of manipulation.

**What are some ways we might display repentance for our sin before God?**

God had told Ahab that he and his whole family and dynasty would be wiped out (vv. 21-24). But in response to Ahab's humility, God showed him mercy! God would delay the disaster for a few years to fall upon his sons (2 Kings 1; 9-10). God's patience and mercy make no sense from a human mind-set. Ahab was the worst and most wicked king of Israel, and yet,

because he responded to the Lord with humility, God had mercy on him.

Such mercy doesn't make sense until we recognize that all of us are "the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15-16). God is perfect in His justice—sin will be judged—yet He loves to show mercy when sinners humble themselves and believe in Him. We see a picture of this in God's response to Ahab's humility, but we see the fullness of God's mercy in His gospel to save sinners who repent and believe in Jesus for eternal life.

**How does God's mercy extended to Ahab help you to grasp the gospel of Jesus?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**GOD IS MERCIFUL:** Mercy refers to God's compassion and is often expressed in God's withholding something, such as punishment for sin (Ephesians 2:4-5; Titus 3:5). Both mercy and grace are undeserved, meaning humanity can do nothing to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the free gift of mercy or grace.

## WHAT WE DESERVE

Read 1 Kings 21:17-29. Write down what was deserved and what was received in each square.

AHAB DESERVED JUDGMENT BECAUSE ...

AHAB RECEIVED MERCY BECAUSE ...

I DESERVED JUDGMENT BECAUSE ...

I RECEIVED MERCY BECAUSE ...

What does this passage teach us about God's concern for justice?  
About God's delight in showing mercy?

**Key Concept:** God will not ignore injustice among His people, but He is merciful.



## HEAD

How do you reconcile God's perfect justice and His perfect mercy?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Pray through Psalm 58. Recognize the innate and true desire to cry out for God's justice and entrust your need and desire for justice to His perfect will. But also pray for the Lord to convict you of your own injustice against Him and others and pray for His mercy and forgiveness in Christ.



## HEART

How does it feel to know that mercy is found just by repenting and turning to the Lord?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How will you reach out to unbelievers, knowing that the Lord delights in showing mercy to all who repent?



THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 14

# RENEWAL



2 KINGS; HOSEA; JONAH



MEMORY VERSE

“Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, ‘Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips.’”

—Hosea 14:2



# RESURRECTION

CORE PASSAGE: 2 KINGS 4:18-22,24-25,28-37

## CONTEXT

The prophet Elijah's ministry ended when he was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha, his successor, went to Shunem, where he met "a prominent woman" who fed him and provided him a place to stay whenever he came that way. In response, Elisha desired to help her in some way. He learned she had no offspring and her husband was aging. Aside from the general desire to bear children, if she were to become a widow with no offspring, the Shunammite woman would be vulnerable and likely oppressed. Therefore, Elisha prophesied that in one year she would have a son, and it came to pass, just as Elisha had promised.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God has the power to overcome death.**

As you examine 2 Kings 4:18-22, 24-25,28-37:

- Recognize that when her son died, the Shunammite woman knew to seek God through His prophet.
- Consider that both the woman and Elisha needed to persist in their hope in the resurrection.





## TIMELINE

Elijah Anoints Elisha as His Successor (1 Kings 19)

Elijah Goes into Heaven in a Whirlwind (2 Kings 2)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Elisha Raises the Shunammite Woman's Son to Life (2 Kings 4)

Ahab Dies in Battle, Fulfilling Prophecy (1 Kings 22)

A Shunammite Woman Shows Hospitality to Elisha (2 Kings 4)

Elisha Heals Naaman the Syrian of Leprosy (2 Kings 5)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Chronicles 21

☐ **Day 4:** 2 Chronicles 22–25

☐ **Day 2:** 2 Kings 2–8

☐ **Day 5:** 2 Kings 13–14

☐ **Day 3:** 2 Kings 9–12

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 30



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 4:18-22,24-25

### GOD'S PEOPLE PUT THEIR HOPE IN HIM.

*Underline all the action verbs to reveal the fast-paced action of this narrative.*

**18** The child grew and one day went out to his father and the harvesters. **19** Suddenly he complained to his father, "My head! My head!" His father told his servant, "Carry him to his mother." **20** So he picked him up and took him to his mother. The child sat on her lap until noon and then died. **21** She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut him in, and left. **22** She summoned her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so I can hurry to the man of God and come back again." . . . **24** Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Go fast; don't slow the pace for me unless I tell you." **25** So she came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to his attendant Gehazi, "Look, there's the Shunammite woman."

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**RESURRECTION:** Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it will take place at the future return of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians confidence that death has been defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.



The Shunammite woman had placed her hope in God, supported His prophet, and experienced His blessing—she was given a son! But one day her son, whom she had not asked for, died of a sudden illness. One moment he was fine, the next, he had a headache, and within a few hours, he died in his mother’s arms. Can you imagine? She held the son God had miraculously given her and watched the child slip away.

But then the Shunammite woman did something unexpected. Instead of weeping over her son’s body, changing into mourner’s clothing, or preparing his body for burial, she laid him on Elisha’s bed and hurried to find the prophet. She hoped that the Lord through His prophet would intervene in her desperate situation. What faith! She pursued “the man of God” as quickly as possible and found him at Mount Carmel, the place where the Lord demonstrated His superiority to all Israel (v. 25; cf. 1 Kings 18:19-20).

**How would you react if you lost what was most precious to you?**

out to meet her and make sure everything was okay. The woman told Gehazi, “It’s all right” (2 Kings 4:26). When she reached Elisha, however, she clung to his feet in anguish. Gehazi tried to push her away, but Elisha realized something was wrong that the Lord had not revealed to him (v. 27).

The woman had told no one what happened to the child, refusing to accept her child’s death without first seeking the prophet’s help.<sup>1</sup> She had learned to place her hope in the Lord through her contact with Elisha. So when the unimaginable, unexpected tragedy happened, she wasted no time in exercising hope that the all-powerful God of Elisha could intervene. She exemplified Hebrews 11:6: “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” In seeking after God, the woman pleased the Lord with her faith and compelled Elisha to act. God’s people place their hope in Him.

**What does it mean to put your hope in the Lord?**

Elisha had great affection and concern for the woman and her family, recognizing her from a distance. Seeing the woman approach, he sent his attendant, Gehazi,

## OUR HOPE RESTS IN THE RESURRECTION POWER OF GOD.

*Circle each time someone changes their physical posture,  
considering the significance of each action.*

**28** Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn’t I say, ‘Do not lie to me?’” **29** So Elisha said to Gehazi, “Tuck your mantle under your belt, take my staff with you, and go. If you meet anyone, don’t stop to greet him, and if a man greets you, don’t answer him. Then place my staff on the boy’s face.” **30** The boy’s mother said to Elisha, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So he got up and followed her. **31** Gehazi went ahead of them and placed the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound or sign of life, so he went back to meet Elisha and told him, “The boy didn’t wake up.” **32** When Elisha got to the house, he discovered the boy lying dead on his bed. **33** So he went in, closed the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. **34** Then he went up and lay on the boy: he put mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. While he bent down over him, the boy’s flesh became warm. **35** Elisha got up, went into the house, and paced back and forth. Then he went up and bent down over him again. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. **36** Elisha called Gehazi and said, “Call the Shunammite woman.” He called her and she came. Then Elisha said, “Pick up your son.” **37** She came, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; she picked up her son and left.

**Key Concept:** God has the power to overcome death.

Clinging to Elisha's feet, the woman reminded the prophet that he had promised she would have a son, and Elisha immediately understood this to mean the boy was either ill or dead (v. 28). So Elisha instructed his assistant to go quickly in his place; nothing was to interrupt his mission. Yet when Gehazi put Elisha's staff on the boy, nothing happened. But the story wasn't over.

Elisha and the Shunammite woman needed to persist in their faith and hope. Upon finding the boy, Elisha closed the door on the two of them and prayed. Then he lay on the boy, and the dead body grew warm, but Elisha needed to continue. He did not give up hope. He paced back and forth, undoubtedly crying out for God to intervene. Elisha bent over the boy once more, and this time, the once-dead child began to sneeze and opened his eyes, fully alive. Then the mother who fell at Elisha's feet in anguish and faith fell at his feet once again, this time in reverence to the Lord and His prophet.

**What role does persistence play in our prayers and hope?**

The Shunammite woman had no hope other than the resurrecting power of God. The resurrection of her son reminds us

of the resurrection of another son: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is only in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that we have hope for our salvation from sin and to eternal life.

Without the resurrection, we are dead in our trespasses and sins (1 Corinthians 15:17; Ephesians 2:1). Because of Christ and His resurrection, our hope rests in the resurrection power of God who "loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

**How does faith in Jesus's resurrection and hope for the future resurrection impact your life?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Because God has the power to bring the dead to life, He was able to give His Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice, knowing He would be resurrected to defeat sin and death for the salvation of all who believe in Him.

## POWER OVER LIFE AND DEATH

*Read 2 Kings 4:18-22,24-25,28-37 and Mark 5:21-24,35-43.*

*Compare the similarities and differences between these two resurrections.*

**THE SHUNAMMITE  
WOMAN'S SON**

**JAIRUS'S  
DAUGHTER**

Knowing that God has the authority to defeat death, how should we approach death?

Knowing that God has the power to bring new life, what should be our response?

**Key Concept:** God has the power to overcome death.



## HEAD

What role does the hope of resurrection have in your understanding of salvation?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 30 carefully and slowly, listing in the margin the attributes of God you come across. Once your list is complete, call upon the Lord, worshiping Him and thanking Him for each attribute as it encourages your hope in Him.



## HEART

In what areas of your life do you need to repent of resisting the joy, peace, and hope God provides?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How will the hope of the resurrection motivate you to action this week?



# REPENTANCE

CORE PASSAGE: JONAH 3:4-10; 4:1-2,6-11

## CONTEXT

Jonah, a contemporary of Amos and Hosea, was a prophet of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II, who did evil in the Lord's eyes. Yet the Lord spoke graciously to Israel through Jonah in order to help them (2 Kings 14:25-27). God also commanded Jonah to go and proclaim judgment against Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. But Jonah fled in the opposite direction. Through a series of circumstances orchestrated by God, Jonah found himself in the belly of a large fish and then back on dry land. God gave Jonah a second chance, and this time Jonah obeyed, going to Nineveh to preach the message the Lord gave to him.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.**

As you examine Jonah 3:4-10; 4:1-2,6-11:

- Recognize that because the Ninevites fasted and repented, God relented in His judgment and spared the city.
- Contemplate Jonah's reason for fleeing from the Lord's mission—he knew the Lord is gracious and compassionate.





## TIMELINE

Elijah Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2)

Elisha Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (2 Kings 2–13)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
**Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)**

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

### Daily Readings

- |                                                  |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Jonah 1–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Amos 3–6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Jonah 3–4 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Amos 7–9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Amos 1–2  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 85 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

JONAH 3:4-10

### GOD RELENTS FROM ADMINISTERING JUDGMENT WHEN HE SEES REPENTANCE.

*Circle every action (verb) the Ninevites and the king of Nineveh took in response to God's message.*

**4** Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" **5** Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least. **6** When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. **8** Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. **9** Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish. **10** God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**REPENTANCE:** Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Psalm 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.



The city of Nineveh was an evil place. As the capital and most prominent city of Assyria, Nineveh was the center of anti-Israel fervor. The Assyrians were sworn enemies of God's people, and they historically dominated the entire Near East. After conquering a people, they often would stack their enemies' corpses and skulls in celebration. The Assyrians and Israelites hated one another.

Nineveh deserved God's judgment for their wicked ways. Having been given a second chance to obey God's call, Jonah walked around and throughout the densely populated city, taking three days to saturate the people with God's message. He declared, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" (v. 4). God had planned a disaster in judgment of the wicked people.

**What role might the announcement of judgment for sin play in the sharing of the gospel?**

The Assyrians were a polytheistic people, believing in many gods, but when they heard Jonah's preaching on the first day of his walk in the city, they believed Jonah's God. They understood that they deserved God's judgment for their sins, so they took steps of repentance. Even the king declared a city-wide fast from

food and water and that all the people and animals should be covered in sackcloth. These outward signs were to accompany the people's inward repentance from evil. And finally, they were to call out earnestly to God in hopes that He would relent from His anger and judgment.

The Ninevites heard God's message and responded with repentance. God saw their repentance and relented from administering His judgment. God's merciful forgiveness is not constrained to one particular nation or ethnicity. He is compassionate to all who respond to Him in repentance.

**How might you evaluate your own response of repentance to conviction from God's Word?**



## PERSONAL PREPARATION

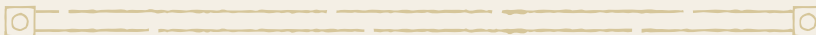
JONAH 4:1-2,6-11

### GOD DESIRES THAT HIS PEOPLE SHOW MERCY AND FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS.

*Underline Jonah's description of God and reflect on the characteristics he lists.*

**1** Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. **2** He prayed to the LORD, "Please, LORD, isn't this what I said while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster." . . . **6** Then the LORD God appointed a plant, and it grew over Jonah to provide shade for his head to rescue him from his trouble. Jonah was greatly pleased with the plant. **7** When dawn came the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, and it withered. **8** As the sun was rising, God appointed a scorching east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head so much that he almost fainted, and he wanted to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live." **9** Then God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "Yes, it's right!" he replied. "I'm angry enough to die!" **10** And the LORD said, "You cared about the plant, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night. **11** So may I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than a hundred twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?"

**Key Concept:** God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.



God mercifully relented from sending disaster upon the city of Nineveh in response to the people's repentance. But in response to the Lord's mercy, Jonah threw a tantrum. He complained to God about the turn of events and sought to justify his previous disobedience of running away from Nineveh based on God's character. The Lord is "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster" (v. 2). Jonah didn't want Nineveh rescued from God's wrath—he wanted them destroyed—so he initially opted to keep the Lord's message from them to help ensure they never repented. In his anger, Jonah demonstrated the misalignment between his own heart and God's.

**What are some ways you find yourself at odds with God's character?**

sinful anger toward the Ninevites and his resentment toward the Lord.

Jonah had such a wild range of emotions concerning the plant that lived for a day. God used this to patiently point out the hypocrisy of Jonah's love for the plant and his unwillingness to forgive the more than 120,000 people of Nineveh. God compassionately explained His heart of mercy to forgive the Ninevites and challenged Jonah to turn his care for a plant into care for people.

**How are you showing others God's heart of care, mercy, and forgiveness?**

Whatever Jonah's reason to be angry at God's mercy, the Lord wanted His prophet to grasp the bigger picture of His heart to save sinners. So every step God took over the next couple of days—addressing Jonah's anger directly, growing the plant, sending the worm to eat the plant, sending the scorching wind—was meant to prompt Jonah to repentance of his

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

God is compassionate and will forgive when people repent. All who believe in Jesus Christ and repent of their sin will be saved.

## TOO FAR GONE?

*Read the passages and write down how God showed mercy and how the people responded.*

**THE NINEVITES' REPENTANCE**  
(JONAH 3:4-10)

**DAVID'S REPENTANCE**  
(2 SAMUEL 12:7-20)

**THE SAMARITAN WOMAN'S MESSAGE**  
(JOHN 4:7-30,39-42)

**SAUL'S REPENTANCE AND  
TRANSFORMATION** (ACTS 9:1-20)

Knowing that God desires for no one to perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), how should this influence the way we interact with those around us?

**Key Concept:** God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.



## HEAD

What are some potential results of showing mercy to those who don't seem to deserve it?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read and pray through Psalm 85. Thank the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness of sins in Christ (vv. 1-3), and pray for a revival in your heart to show God's mercy to others so the Lord will be glorified (vv. 6-9).

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HEART

What are some ways you struggle to reflect God's merciful heart, for which you need to repent?



## HANDS

What are three ways you can show mercy or forgiveness to those around you in the coming week?



# RECONCILIATION

CORE PASSAGE: HOSEA 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23; 3:1-5; 14:1-4

## CONTEXT

Though he is often listed as a minor prophet in the Bible based on the length of his book, Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah for many decades. Through Hosea's life and message, God presented His case against Israel, stating, "There is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God in the land! Cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery are rampant; one act of bloodshed follows another" (Hos. 4:1-2). God used Hosea's family as a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to Himself, comparing their relationship with that of a husband and an unfaithful wife.

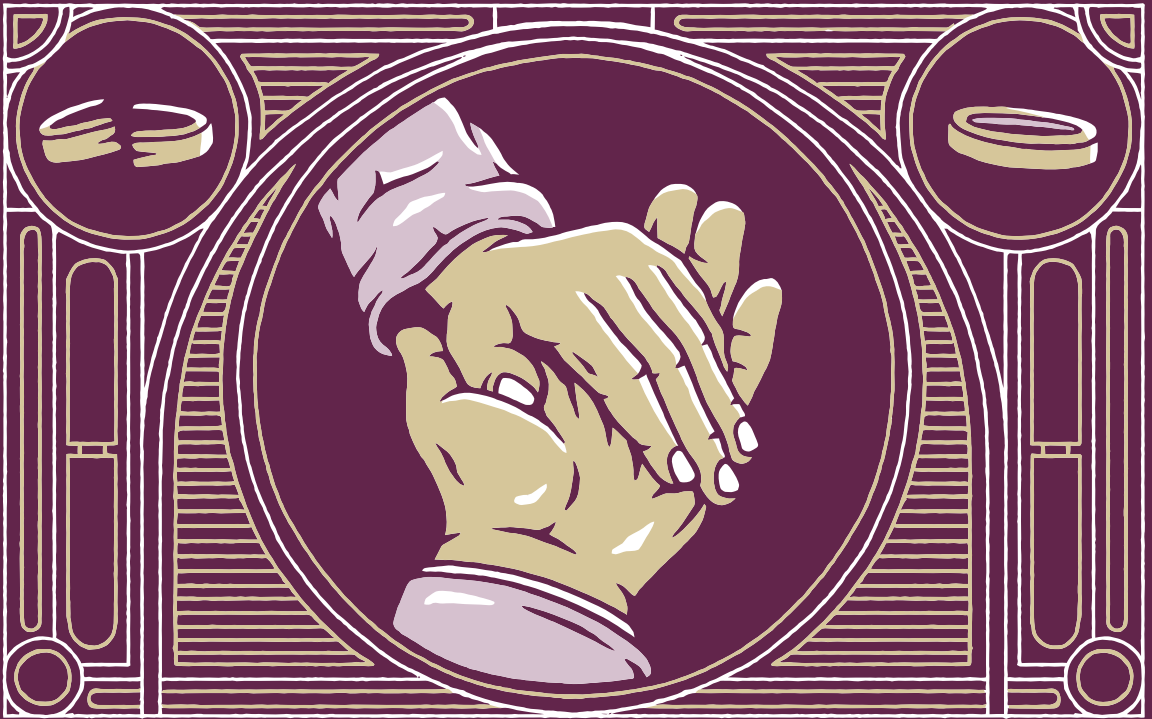
## KEY CONCEPT

**God in His grace reconciles with His sinful people.**

As you examine Hosea 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23; 3:1-5; 14:1-4:

- Contemplate the difficult call of God upon Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman and his willingness to obey.
- Rejoice in the example of Hosea and the greater reality of the faithful love and reconciliation found in Christ.





## TIMELINE

Elijah Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2)

Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

Elisha Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (2 Kings 2–13)

**SESSION STUDY: Hosea Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Hosea 1–14)**

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                  |                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Hosea 1–3 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Hosea 8–10  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Hosea 4–5 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Hosea 11–14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Hosea 6–7 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 89    |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

HOSEA 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23

### GOD'S LOVE IS BASED PURELY ON HIS COMPASSION AND CHARACTER.

*Underline each word used to describe Israel's unfaithfulness, and circle each word used to describe God's character.*

**2** When the LORD first spoke to Hosea, he said this to him: Go and marry a woman of promiscuity and have children of promiscuity, for the land is committing blatant acts of promiscuity by abandoning the LORD. **3** So he went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

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**19** I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. **20** I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD. . . . **23** I will sow her in the land for myself, and I will have compassion on Lo-ruhamah; I will say to Lo-ammi: You are my people, and he will say, "You are my God."

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**CHRIST AS RECONCILIATION:** Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in enmity between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides the means whereby that broken relationship is restored and renewed (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Hosea's prophetic ministry was unique, to say the least. God instructed him to marry an adulterous woman and raise a family with her, symbolizing God's faithful love for His unfaithful people: the Israelites. In this way, Hosea's life showed the people a picture of their own "blatant acts of promiscuity by abandoning the LORD" (1:2).

Hosea obeyed God's command and married a woman named Gomer, who fit God's description of "a woman of promiscuity." She most likely was a prostitute, although her life may simply have been characterized by sexual activity within the community. Gomer bore Hosea three children of questionable parentage, and God gave each of their children names that symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness (vv. 3-9).

**What has been the hardest thing the Lord has called you to do?**

Hosea's broken family on account of his wife's unfaithfulness may have been cause for a declaration of divorce, but the Lord was still working through this situation. Hosea's family was a call to repentance in his generation and an opportunity for God to teach the Israelites about His compassion and mercy (1:10).

The Lord promised Israel, despite their unfaithfulness, "I will take you to be my wife forever" (2:19). To the nation He had declared "No Compassion"—"Lo-ruhamah"—He promised compassion. To the people He called "Not My People"—"Lo-ammi"—He will call them "My People" (2:23). God's love for Israel was not dependent on Israel's faithfulness; rather, His love was rooted in His compassion and character. Even though His bride—Israel—was unfaithful, God's mercy led Him to love His wife.

God has not changed (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17). Even though we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), God had mercy. In fact, Hosea was not the only one to marry an unfaithful wife. Ephesians 5:25-26 pictures Jesus Christ as married to the church: "Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her." One day the Bridegroom will come for His bride (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2), and the church will be with Jesus forever. God loves His unfaithful people because of His unchanging compassion and character.

**Why is it important that God's love for Israel was rooted in His character and not Israel's faithfulness?**

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

HOSEA 3:1-5; 14:1-4

### GOD IS READY TO HEAL AND SAVE HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE READY TO TURN TOWARD HIM.

*Circle each instance of the words “turn” and “return.”*

**1** Then the LORD said to me, “Go again; show love to a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and nine bushels of barley. **3** I said to her, “You are to live with me many days. You must not be promiscuous or belong to any man, and I will act the same way toward you.” **4** For the Israelites must live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. **5** Afterward, the people of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come with awe to the LORD and to his goodness in the last days.

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**1** Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. **2** Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips. **3** Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses, and we will no longer proclaim, ‘Our gods!’ to the work of our hands. For the fatherless receives compassion in you.” **4** I will heal their apostasy; I will freely love them, for my anger will have turned from him.

**Key Concept:** God in His grace reconciles with His sinful people.

Even when we are far from God, He desires for His people to turn toward Him so they may receive healing and salvation. Israel had forsaken their covenant with God in egregious ways. They worshiped the Canaanite god Baal (2:8,13,16-17) and attributed their prosperity to false gods (2:12). Because of this, Hosea prophesied the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness: the Lord would expose their shame (2:3,10) and take away their provision (2:9,12). Still, God desired Israel's repentance and remained faithful to her. He patiently waited for Israel to return to Him so that He may heal and free them.

**In what ways have you, like Israel, been unfaithful to the Lord?**

God's readiness to accept Israel's "repentance" (14:2) points to His character. When Israel returned to Him, He was ready to forgive their sin, save them from their enemies, and let them experience His love and compassion once more. God is ready to heal and save His people when they are ready to turn toward Him (2 Chronicles 7:14). God's readiness to accept His people's repentance is ultimately exhibited in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God is always ready to heal His people when they repent and turn to Him—this is the heart of gospel reconciliation (Romans 5:6-11).

**How have you experienced healing from your sin when you turn to God in repentance?**

God instructed Hosea to go again and love Gomer "just as the LORD loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods" (3:1). Hosea had to buy Gomer back. It is not clear why Gomer needed to be redeemed, but she did, and Hosea paid that price. Hosea's pursuit of Gomer and his desire to remain faithful to her illustrates God's covenant relationship with His people. Though God would exile His people in punishment, He would still pursue them in compassion.

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Though Gomer was unfaithful, God commanded Hosea to take her back in love and compassion, symbolizing God's own love and forgiveness for His people, Israel. One day, Israel will return and seek after the messianic King, Jesus (Romans 11). Through faith in Jesus, all who believe are forgiven and reconciled with God because of God's grace and mercy.

## RADICAL RECONCILIATION

*Examine the following biblical accounts of separation and reconciliation to better understand what God has done for us in Jesus.*

	ACTIONS	RESPONSE	RECONCILIATION
<b>Joseph and His Brothers</b> (Genesis 45:1-15; 50:15-21)			
<b>The Prodigal Son</b> (Luke 15:11-32)			
<b>Paul and Peter</b> (Galatians 2:6-16; 2 Peter 3:15-16)			
<b>Hosea and Gomer</b> (Hosea 3:1-5)			

What does Hosea's pursuit of Gomer teach you about God's pursuit of you?

**Key Concept:** God in His grace reconciles with His sinful people.



## HEAD

What are some specific ways you have broken God's law and need reconciliation?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read and pray through Psalm 89, focusing on verses 19-37. Seeing yourself as a descendant of David through faith in Jesus, the Messiah, praise and thank the Lord for His faithful discipline and His faithful love to reconcile you to Himself.



## HEART

How does the anticipation of full reconciliation with God for eternity strengthen or comfort you today?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

Who do you need to forgive and reconcile with, and what steps will you take to do so?



# RETRIBUTION

CORE PASSAGE: 2 KINGS 17:6-15,18-20

## CONTEXT

The books of 1 and 2 Kings record the history of the kings of Israel over approximately four hundred years. Beginning with the death of King David and the start of Solomon's reign, through the split of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem, the author documented each king in both the north and the south in light of their faithfulness to the Lord. While Judah enjoyed a few faithful kings, Israel's kings consistently followed a path away from the Lord, in spite of the warnings from the Lord's prophets. This led to their destruction and exile at the hands of the Assyrians.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.**

As you examine 2 Kings 17:6-15,18-20:

- Recognize that Israel sinned against God, and God allowed them to be conquered by Assyria.
- Recall how God used prophets to warn the people, but they still disobeyed.





## TIMELINE

Elijah and Elisha Perform Miracles and Prophecy to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13)

Hosea Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Hosea 1–14)

**SESSION STUDY:** Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

Assyria Threatens Judah, but Hezekiah Relies on the Lord (2 Kings 18–20)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 15–17

☐ **Day 4:** Isaiah 13–24

☐ **Day 2:** 2 Chronicles 26–28

☐ **Day 5:** Isaiah 25–35

☐ **Day 3:** Isaiah 1–12

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 12



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

**WHEN WE WORSHIP OTHER GODS, DISASTER HAPPENS.**

*Underline what the Israelites did to deserve judgment.*

**6** In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, along the Habor (Gozan's river), and in the cities of the Medes. **7** This disaster happened because the people of Israel sinned against the LORD their God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt and because they worshiped other gods. **8** They lived according to the customs of the nations that the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites and according to what the kings of Israel did. **9** The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. They built high places in all their towns from watchtower to fortified city. **10** They set up for themselves sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. **11** They burned incense there on all the high places just like the nations that the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did evil things, angering the LORD. **12** They served idols, although the LORD had told them, "You must not do this."

**THEOLOGY CONNECTION**

**SIN AS REBELLION:** Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God's revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: "I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me." Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

**Key Concept:** Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.

Hoshea was the last king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Though not as bad as the kings before him, Hoshea still did what was evil in God's sight (v. 2). God disciplined the Northern Kingdom by allowing Assyria to attack and force them to pay tribute. But after Hoshea rebelled against that arrangement, God's judgment finally came due as Assyria invaded, besieged, conquered, and deported the Israelites, spreading them anywhere from 400 to 1,000 miles from home.

Reading only verses 3-6 would make it seem Hoshea's poor political maneuverings cost Israel their freedom and land. But the Lord made it clear the reason the Israelites suffered—they sinned against God (v. 7). The Israelites were exiled because they were rebellious and disobedient. Though God had brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, they were unfaithful to Him. Though God had conquered and given them the promised land, they worshiped other gods. Though God sees and knows all, His people thought their secret wickedness and idolatry went unnoticed. But they were wrong.

**Why do we sometimes think and act as though the Lord cannot see us?**

The Lord had promised to provide for every need of His people, but Israel habitually sinned against Him. They were continually wicked, rebellious, and disobedient despite God's gifts and His warnings (2 Kings 17:12). Because of this, God allowed them to be captured and exiled by Assyria. The Lord had repeatedly shown that He is merciful, but sin has consequences. Israel's unfaithfulness to God resulted in the disaster they now experienced.

Similarly, people today are responsible for their actions, and sin is rebellion against God. In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul warned Christians to walk in obedience to God: "Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh." When we worship other gods, even ourselves, disaster happens.

**How would you explain sin to someone who has no Bible background?**



## PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 17:13-15,18-20

### GOD WARNS OF THE DANGER OF DISOBEDIENCE, ALLOWING US TO CHOOSE.

*Underline the phrases that express how God responded to His people's sin.*

**13** Still, the LORD warned Israel and Judah through every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commands and statutes according to the whole law I commanded your ancestors and sent to you through my servants the prophets.”

**14** But they would not listen. Instead they became obstinate like their ancestors who did not believe the LORD their God. **15** They rejected his statutes and his covenant he had made with their ancestors and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves, following the surrounding nations the LORD had commanded them not to imitate. . . . **18** Therefore, the LORD was very angry with Israel, and he removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained. **19** Even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God but lived according to the customs Israel had practiced. **20** So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, punished them, and handed them over to plunderers until he had banished them from his presence.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

Sin leads to disaster and death. Trusting and following God is necessary for life. Trusting and following Him leads to a fulfilled life here and in eternity.

**Key Concept:** Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.

God had chosen the Israelites as His people, had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, had given them His law, and had given them the promised land. But from Exodus to Judges to 1–2 Kings, a pattern developed that described hundreds of years of the history of God’s people: The people sinned and rebelled, turning from God to wickedness. Next, God warned them through His prophets. Then the people were faced with a decision: turn from their wickedness and back to God or continue in their sin and rebellion.

Though the Lord had sent them Elijah, Elisha, and Hosea, among other prophets, unfortunately the Israelites had a problem with stubbornness and pride like their ancestors (v. 14). Their false worship of false gods had so marked them that they became worthless like the idols they worshiped. God’s intended purpose for Israel had been rejected, and now they were good for nothing more than to be cast out and trampled (Matthew 5:13). So this time, the discipline for their rebellion would be the most severe.

**What are some ways the Lord warns His children today to turn from evil and to keep His commands?**

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“The sinner mocks and scorns, When offered the love of God. This will be his undoing, For God will not be deceived.”<sup>1</sup>

–George Blaurock (c. 1492–1529)

As the Lord had foretold in His law, He would keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and lead the Israelites into the promised land, but if they rebelled, He would send them away from it and from His presence (Deuteronomy 28:58–68). Israel did rebel, they did reject God’s covenant, they did resist God’s prophets, so “the LORD was very angry with Israel” (2 Kings 17:18), and He “banished them from his presence” (v. 20). Israel had already cut themselves off from the temple of God through their counterfeit idolatry, but now they were cut off from their land and from the patient grace of the Lord. They chose their idols, so they also chose disaster, exile, and death.

**What idols might you be choosing today instead of listening to the Lord?**

## MERCY AND HOLINESS

*Read the following passages from 2 Kings 17. Summarize the problem the Israelites faced, the warning, and the consequence of their actions.*

THE PROBLEM (17:7-12)	THE WARNING (17:13-15)	THE RESULT (17:18-20)

What does this passage have to say to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ?  
To those who do believe in Jesus?

**Key Concept:** Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.



## HEAD

What “sin cycles” have you seen emerge in your own life?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 12 aloud as a prayer to God, adding between verses circumstances and confessions from your own life. When you're done, offer God thanksgiving for His mercy in light of your sinfulness and for His holiness in light of His certain justice.



## HEART

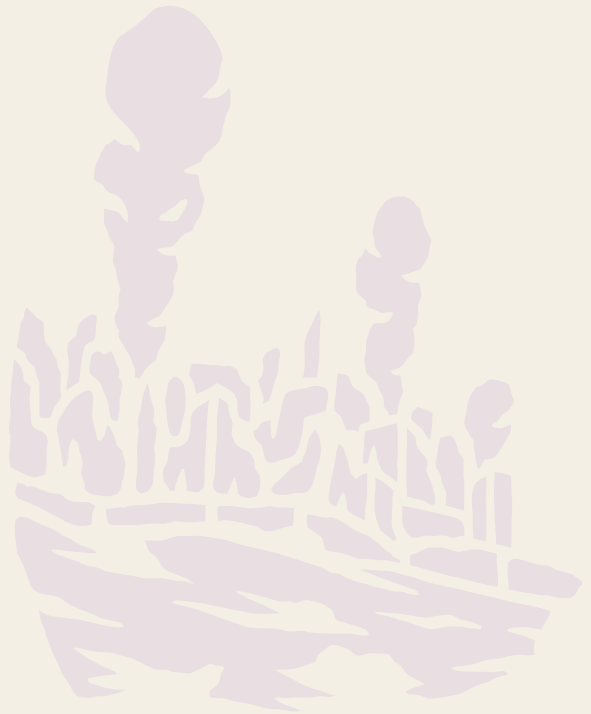
How do you need to reevaluate your perspective and feelings toward God's holiness and discipline?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How will you reflect God's holiness and mercy in your interactions with others this week?



THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 15

## DECLINE



2 KINGS; 2 CHRONICLES; PROPHETS





#### MEMORY VERSES

“Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity  
and passing over rebellion for the remnant of  
his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger  
forever because he delights in faithful love.

He will again have compassion on us;  
he will vanquish our iniquities.

• You will cast all our sins into  
the depths of the sea.”

• –Micah 7:18-19



# GOD'S PEOPLE WORSHIPED

CORE PASSAGE: 2 KINGS 18:1-6; 22:1-2; 23:1-3

## CONTEXT

Throughout most of the history of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, God's people did not follow His ways. Often they chose to worship the idols of the nations around them. In His mercy, the Lord sent prophets to call His people to repentance, but God's message often fell on deaf ears. As a result, God sent the Assyrians to attack, conquer, and exile the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians also threatened the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but the Lord rescued them through a much-needed God-fearing leader. In the declining years of Judah, the Lord gave them two faithful kings who worshiped the Lord alone.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Worship of God includes following Him and His Word.**

As you examine 2 Kings 18:1-6; 22:1-2; 23:1-3:

- Recognize that both Hezekiah and Josiah relied on God's Word to lead the people of Judah.
- Consider how the Word of God convicts us of our sin and leads us to humble ourselves before the Lord.



## TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Manasseh and Amon, Two Evil Kings of Judah,  
Turn Back to Idols with Excessive Wickedness (2 Kings 21)

**SESSION STUDY:** Assyria Threatens Judah,  
but Hezekiah Relies on the Lord (2 Kings 18–20)

**SESSION STUDY:** Josiah Repairs the Temple, Finds the Law,  
and Restores the Worship of the Lord (2 Kings 22–23)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 18:1–20:21

☐ **Day 2:** Isaiah 36:1–39:8

☐ **Day 3:** 2 Chronicles 29:1–32:33

☐ **Day 4:** 2 Kings 21:1–23:30

☐ **Day 5:** 2 Chronicles 33:1–35:27

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 19



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 18:1-6

### WORSHIPING GOD INCLUDES REMOVING OTHER THINGS WE ARE TEMPTED TO WORSHIP.

*Highlight the descriptions of Hezekiah as a king of Judah, and underline the specific actions of Hezekiah recorded in the passage.*

**1** In the third year of Israel's King Hoshea son of Elah, Hezekiah son of Ahaz became king of Judah. **2** He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. **3** He did what was right in the LORD's sight just as his ancestor David had done. **4** He removed the high places, shattered the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake that Moses made, for until then the Israelites were burning incense to it. It was called Nehushtan. **5** Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah was like him, either before him or after him. **6** He remained faithful to the LORD and did not turn from following him but kept the commands the LORD had commanded Moses.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

God's Word teaches us all we need to know and obey the Lord. Scripture compels us to stay faithful to God because God has always been faithful to us through His covenant, especially the new covenant through Jesus Christ. Jesus's death and resurrection is our salvation.

So often Israel and Judah found themselves in a spiral of sin, disobedience, and idolatry, a spiral we ourselves likely are familiar with. We may be believers in Christ, but we are not yet perfect beings, so we still struggle with sin. Yet all throughout the Bible books detailing Israel's and Judah's kings, we see that God is the One upholding His promises. God is the One who keeps the covenant to bring the people back to Himself.

King Hezekiah was a gracious gift from God in the midst of some turbulent years. Many of the kings before him did well but tolerated a form of unsanctioned worship, but his father worshiped idols and led the people of Judah to do the same. Hezekiah, however, walked in remarkable obedience to the Lord, just as David had done. This involved destroying idols (v. 4). He did not simply provide lip-service and tell the people to stay away from idols. Rather, he removed them entirely, even destroying the bronze snake that Moses raised in the wilderness because the people worshiped it (Numbers 21:9).

**What idols do you need to remove from your own life so that you may walk with the Lord more faithfully?**

Hezekiah eliminated idols in Judah because he trusted God alone (2 Kings 18:5). His reliance on the Lord was so remarkable that no other king of Judah could compare to Hezekiah. Relying on the Lord was a key factor missing from the evil kings—they relied on alliances with pagan nations and their worship of false gods. Hezekiah's trust in God led God to bless Judah during Hezekiah's reign, particularly through Hezekiah's faith-filled obedience.

Because of his faith in the Lord, Hezekiah faithfully kept the Lord's commands (v. 6). He knew the law of the Lord, and he was blessed to receive the prophet Isaiah's counsel when the Assyrians—who had just exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel—threatened the people of Judah (18:13–19:37). He understood that the people of Israel were exiled because they turned away from the Lord. Hezekiah's faithfulness as king blessed the people of Judah and delayed their own exile to Babylon by several decades.

**Who has been a faithful, godly leader in your life, and how has their leadership blessed you and others?**

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 22:1-2; 23:1-3

### WORSHIPING GOD INCLUDES KNOWING HIS WORD THAT WE MAY FOLLOW IT.

*Circle each time the word “all” is used in the passage.*

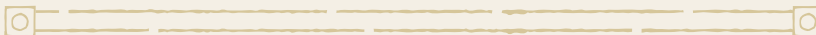
**1** Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. **2** He did what was right in the LORD’s sight and walked in all the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn to the right or the left.

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**1** So the king sent messengers, and they gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. **2** Then the king went to the LORD’s temple with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as the priests and the prophets—all the people from the youngest to the oldest. He read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the LORD’s temple. **3** Next, the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant in the LORD’s presence to follow the LORD and to keep his commands, his decrees, and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul in order to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book; all the people agreed to the covenant.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE:** Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God’s special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity’s source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.



Hezekiah, a righteous king, was followed by his son, Manasseh, whose sins were abundant. Manasseh undid all the good of Hezekiah and even sacrificed his own son (21:1-16). The evil perpetrated during his rule was the tipping point that guaranteed God's judgment against Judah (23:26-27). Manasseh did exhibit repentance under God's punishment and made some significant reforms (2 Chronicles 33:10-16), but when his son, Amon, became king, all of those reforms were undone once again in favor of idol worship. Amon's assassination led to his son, Josiah, taking the throne at age 8 (2 Kings 21:19-24).

Josiah, like Hezekiah, was a faithful king of Judah. He repaired God's temple, and while doing so, the priest Hilkiah found "the book of the law." At the hearing of God's Word, Josiah tore his clothes in repentance (22:3-11). He could have walked in the wicked ways of his father and grandfather, disobeying God's Word or ignoring it altogether, but he took God's Word seriously.

**What is the relationship between the Word of God and our obedience to and worship of the Lord?**

When Josiah heard the words of the law, he understood immediately the judgment that rightly would come upon Judah because they had broken covenant with God (vv. 12-13). Moses had warned the Israelites of the curses that would befall the people of Israel when they turned away from the Lord (see Deuteronomy 27-29).

Even though Josiah was walking righteously and not directly responsible for the sins of his ancestors, he still accepted the wrath of God as an appropriate punishment for the sins of his people. But once more, God showed His grace in response to a king's humility (2 Kings 22:14-20). So Josiah took the Word of God and shared it with all the people of Judah, resulting in a renewed covenant by the whole nation to turn from their sin and follow the Lord alone—a pattern we see perfected in the rule of the Messiah-King, Jesus, with His church.

**What areas of your life require a renewed commitment to the covenant God has created with us in Jesus?**



## WORSHIP: INSIDE AND OUT

*Reflect on the worship displayed by Hezekiah and Josiah in the passages below.*

INTERNAL WORSHIP

EXTERNAL WORSHIP

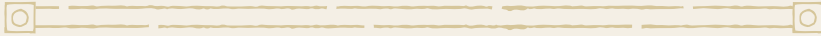
**HEZEKIAH**  
(2 KINGS 18:1-6)

**JOSIAH**  
(2 KINGS 22:1-2; 23:1-3)

Based on the examples of Hezekiah and Josiah, what should our internal and external worship of the Lord look like?



**Key Concept:** Worship of God includes following Him and His Word.



## HEAD

How can the knowledge and study of God's Word inform your worship?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Pray through Psalm 19. In verses 1-6, consider how creation itself declares who God is. With verses 7-11, pray through the ways God's Word has blessed you. Finally, use verses 12-14 to repent of sin and commit yourself to obedience to the Lord.



## HEART

Of what sins do you need to repent, and how will you combat the idolatry present in your life and seek the Lord first?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How can you model the beautiful gift of repentance and obedience to people in your life?



# GOD'S PROPHETS WARNED

CORE PASSAGE: MICAH 5:1-5; 6:6-8; 7:8-9,18-20

## CONTEXT

During the reigns of Judah's kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, God sent the prophet Micah with a message for both Israel and Judah. Micah spoke the word of the Lord and foretold the judgment, destruction, and exile that was coming for both Israel and Judah. Both kingdoms had failed to keep the Lord's covenant and would continue to do so, with a few exceptions from Judah's kings, such as Hezekiah and Josiah. But Micah also had a message for the future, a message of hope and restoration. Micah prophesied that the Messiah-King would come to shepherd God's people in righteousness forever.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.**

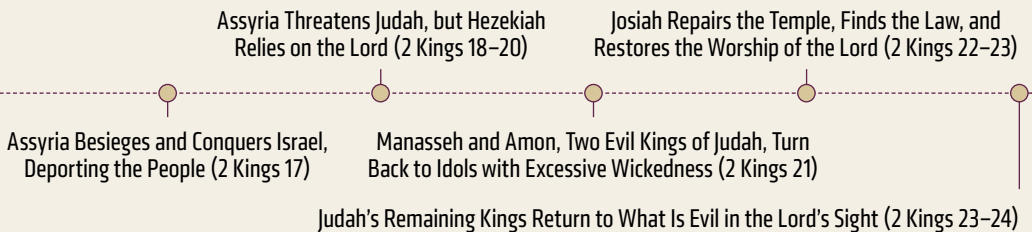
As you examine Micah 5:1-5; 6:6-8; 7:8-9,18-20:

- Emphasize God's desire for His people to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with Him.
- Recognize that disobedience results in judgment, but God's grace and mercy abound as well.



## TIMELINE

### SESSION STUDY: Micah Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Micah 1–7)



### Daily Readings

- |                                                     |                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Micah 1–7    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Nahum 1–3     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Isaiah 40–54 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Zephaniah 1–3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Isaiah 55–66 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 73      |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

MICAH 5:1-6; 6:6-8

## AMID JUDGMENT, THERE IS A FUTURE HOPE OF THE ONE WHO WILL BRING PEACE.

*Underline the prophecies that point to the exile that would be coming.*

*Circle the prophecies that point to Jesus.*

**1** Now, daughter who is under attack, you slash yourself in grief; a siege is set against us! They are striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod. **2** Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; one will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times. **3** Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return to the people of Israel. **4** He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD his God. They will live securely, for then his greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. **5** He will be their peace. When Assyria invades our land, when it marches against our fortresses, we will raise against it seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. **6** They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with a drawn blade. So he will rescue us from Assyria when it invades our land, when it marches against our territory.

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**6** What should I bring before the LORD when I come to bow before God on high? Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? **7** Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand streams of oil? Should I give my firstborn for my transgression, the offspring of my body for my own sin? **8** Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.

**Key Concept:** Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.

The book of Micah is listed in our Bibles in the division of the Minor Prophets, but the term “minor” only refers to the length of their message, not the significance of it. The prophet Micah was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, and his message from God was directed to the cities of Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah).

Micah’s prophecy in chapter 5 opens with Jerusalem being attacked by her enemies. At one point, Assyria was on Jerusalem’s doorstep, but the future threat of Babylon may also have been in mind.<sup>1</sup> (“Nimrod” in v. 6 was associated with both Assyria and Babylon; see Genesis 10:8-12.) More important than the attacker, however, was the Lord’s promised help—the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This Shepherd-King would be born in Bethlehem from the line of David, and He would be a ruler for Israel over the whole earth. This Messiah is the hope and peace of all God’s people to rescue them from their enemies.

**How has Jesus, the Messiah, brought peace into your life?**

In Micah 6:6-8, we see the people of Judah question what God required of them. Verses 6-7 list various offerings someone could make because of their sin. The people even wondered if they should sacrifice a firstborn son for their sins, a pagan, idolatrous practice that God forbade (Jeremiah 19:5). The only firstborn son the Lord ever required as a sacrifice was His own—the sinless, only begotten Son of God, who died on the cross and rose again to cover our sins.

In verse 8, Micah listed what God actually required of His people. God did not want perpetual blood offerings or sacrifices, nor did He require magnificent feats for His name. The Lord wanted His people to act in a way that was good, right, and fair, to love faithfulness to God and one another, and to live in humble submission to God and with God.

#### CHRIST CONNECTION

Micah tells of the One who would come from Bethlehem to shepherd the people and be their peace. This is one of the prophecies about Jesus, who came to be the Good Shepherd and the Prince of Peace.

**What might it look like for you to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with God?**

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

MICAH 7:8-9,18-20

### EVIL WOULD BE JUDGED, BUT GOD WOULD ALSO PROVIDE A WAY OF SALVATION.

*Circle the contrasting phrases in the passage. Then highlight the actions  
God takes to champion for His people.*

**8** Do not rejoice over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will stand up; though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. **9** Because I have sinned against him, I must endure the LORD's fury until he champions my cause and establishes justice for me. He will bring me into the light; I will see his salvation. . . . **18** Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger forever because he delights in faithful love. **19** He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. **20** You will show loyalty to Jacob and faithful love to Abraham, as you swore to our ancestors from days long ago.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE GOSPEL:** The gospel is both an event and a story. First, it is an event that took place in history, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners (1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Second, it is also the story of redemption that God planned “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4), which runs through Scripture and culminates in a restored and redeemed creation—a new heaven and new earth where sin, death, and suffering will never again plague humanity, and God’s people will live with Him forever (Isaiah 25:8; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21). The event and story do not exist apart from or in conflict with one another but together inspire us to a life of devotion and mission.

**Key Concept:** Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.



At this point in the book of Micah, Jerusalem was experiencing moral destitution. Evil was prevalent, and Micah felt like the only righteous person left (vv. 1-2). The Lord's impending judgment on the nation was certain because of their sin and disobedience (v. 9). And yet, Micah declared that those who repented would see the Lord's salvation.

While punishment for sin is inevitable, Micah encouraged the people, saying that God had not completely turned away from them. He would allow their enemies to take them into exile, but in His mercy, God would bring them back to the land. He would provide the way for them to be restored to Him again.

**How have you experienced God's promise of restoration for His people?**

Despite the sins of the people, God would not abandon the promise He made to Israel. God's faithfulness to forgive sin and have compassion on His people is an essential attribute—it is tied to His name (Exodus 34:5-7). Micah praised the Lord for His uniqueness in love, grace, and forgiveness to remind the people of who God is so they could have hope in their coming exile.

**How should you address your struggles with sin in light of God's faithfulness and forgiveness?**

Micah 7:18-20 uses many action verbs, and most of them are God's actions in response to the sins of the people. God does not hang their sins over their head forever, but when they repent, He forgives, passes over, does not hold on to, vanquishes, and casts their sins into the sea. To use this many descriptions of how God would forget their sin shows how much Micah wanted to emphasize God's eternal covenant-keeping that endures.

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“There is no greater state than to get up from your knees knowing that in God's sight you are clean, that He has forgiven every sin you've ever committed.”<sup>2</sup>

—R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)

## JUDGMENT AND MERCY

*Read the passages below and compare God's holy judgment to His loving compassion.*

**GOD'S HOLY JUDGMENT**

**GOD'S LOVING COMPASSION**

**MICAH 5:1-6**

**MICAH 6:6-8**

**MICAH 7:8-9**

**MICAH 7:18-20**

Why is it important for our sharing of the gospel to speak the truth about God, that He is both the righteous judge and the giver of mercy?



**Key Concept:** Though there is a future judgment, there is also a future hope.



## HEAD

What are some reasons we fail to deal with our sin as we should?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 73, allowing God to convict you of the sins you are envying and the ones you are currently struggling with. Confess these sins to God. Then pray through verses 21-28, reflecting on the forgiveness and faithfulness of God.



## HEART

How do you need the Lord to be your light, your champion, your justice, and your salvation today?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How can you use opportunities to forgive to share the gospel and point others to Jesus Christ?



# GOD'S COVENANT RENEWED

CORE PASSAGE: JEREMIAH 17:5-8; 31:31-37

## CONTEXT

Jeremiah was called to speak for the Lord in the waning days of the kingdom of Judah. Most of his messages warned of the coming judgment, which he witnessed with his own eyes, but a few promised hope for a ruined people. For a time, Judah was looking to put their trust in Egypt to fight the Babylonians, but Jeremiah's warning was to put their trust in God alone. In Jeremiah 17:5-8, which sounds like a psalm or proverb, the prophet addressed Judah's misplaced trust. And in Jeremiah 31:31-37, the prophet foretold the new covenant that God would make with His people to deal with their sin and ours once and for all.

## KEY CONCEPT

**A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.**

As you examine Jeremiah 17:5-8; 31:31-37:

- Understand that trusting in humankind leads to desert places without life.
- Dwell upon the promise that God will write His law on His people's hearts, call us His people, and forgive our sins.



## TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Jeremiah Is Called as a Prophet  
(Jeremiah 1)

**SESSION STUDY: Jeremiah Prophesies Judgment on  
Judah and a New Covenant (Jeremiah 1–38)**

Hezekiah and Josiah Restore the Worship  
of the Lord (2 Kings 18–20; 22–23)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is  
Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

Babylon Besieges and Conquers Judah, Deporting the People (2 Kings 25)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Jeremiah 1–10

☐ **Day 2:** Jeremiah 11–20

☐ **Day 3:** Jeremiah 21–29

☐ **Day 4:** Jeremiah 30–38

☐ **Day 5:** Habakkuk 1–3

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 92



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

### THOSE WHO TRUST IN HUMANKIND ARE CURSED; THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD ARE BLESSED.

*Underline all the truths about those who trust in humanity. Circle all the truths about those who trust in God.*

**5** This is what the LORD says: Cursed is the person who trusts in mankind. He makes human flesh his strength, and his heart turns from the LORD. **6** He will be like a juniper in the Arabah; he cannot see when good comes but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives. **7** The person who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence indeed is the LORD, is blessed. **8** He will be like a tree planted by water: it sends its roots out toward a stream, it doesn't fear when heat comes, and its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a year of drought or cease producing fruit.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**UNION WITH CHRIST:** At the heart of our salvation is our union with Christ. The Bible describes salvation as entering into a covenant relationship with God and also describes the church (which is made up of believers) as the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32). Christians believe that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Christ in us) and that we are simultaneously dwelling in Him (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; 3:1-4). This union is indissoluble; it will last for all eternity.

These verses are structured more like a psalm or proverb than a typical prophecy we might read in the Bible, but they still hold prophetic truth. The curse that Jeremiah pronounced calls to mind the blessings and curses Moses put before the people before his death, his final warnings before the people entered the promised land (see Deuteronomy 27–30). In Jeremiah’s day, the people of Judah were experiencing the punishment associated with those curses, and Jeremiah called them to repent and to trust in the Lord.

Jeremiah compared two types of trees to emphasize the differences between trusting humanity and trusting God. First was the “juniper in the Arabah” to describe those who put their trust in humankind (Jeremiah 17:6). The juniper is a prickly, bushy shrub that grows in the desert, often found in rocky fissures.<sup>1</sup> It barely scrapes by in the arid landscape. Similarly, the people of Judah, leaning on their own power and foreign alliances, were parched and barely surviving.

**What does godly trust in others look like compared to a cursed trust in others?**

For the second tree, the image used to describe those who put their hope in the Lord is that of a lush, thriving tree planted near a water source. Verses 7-8 are very similar to Psalm 1. According to David, the psalmist, those who trust in the Lord are like a tree that prospers and flourishes by streams of water, but those who do not are like chaff and blown away (Psalm 1:3-4).

Jeremiah 17:8 states that even when the heat comes, the tree planted by water does not fear but still flourishes. This does not mean that those who trust in the Lord won’t experience suffering, but when they do, they can be unafraid and unmoved despite their circumstances. No matter what, they can be constant and faithful because their trust is in the One who is always faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

**How can you pursue the Lord now so that when trouble comes, you will be unwavering and strong amid trials?**



## THE NEW COVENANT BRINGS HOPE AND FORGIVENESS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

*Highlight every instance of “the LORD’s declaration” in the passage below.*

*Circle the promises God makes to Israel.*

**31** “Look, the days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **32** This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”—the LORD’s declaration. **33** “Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the LORD’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **34** No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin. **35** This is what the LORD says: The one who gives the sun for light by day, the fixed order of moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea and makes its waves roar—the LORD of Armies is his name: **36** If this fixed order departs from before me—this is the LORD’s declaration—only then will Israel’s descendants cease to be a nation before me forever. **37** This is what the LORD says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below explored, will I reject all of Israel’s descendants because of all they have done—this is the LORD’s declaration.”

**Key Concept:** A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.

Jeremiah prophesied the glorious promise of a new covenant, which would be established not because God broke His end of the deal but because God's people could not keep up their end of the agreement. From the moment He brought them out of Egypt, God's people consistently broke faith and pursued idols instead of God. They had failed to obey, earned God's curses, and would soon be exiled from the land, but now God in His mercy was laying out new terms for their relationship.

Previously, God's laws were written on stone tablets and on stone markers in the land, but in this new covenant, God's law would be written on the hearts of those who belong to Him. This demonstrates a shift from the law being an external commitment that the people broke regularly to an internal commitment that showed a transformation of the heart.

**How does the state of our heart impact our obedience to the Lord?**

This new covenant will also be for all the people, "from the least to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34), including anyone despite their age, social class, or ethnicity. The New Testament confirms the new covenant is for all who repent of their sin and trust in the Lord (Hebrews 8–10).

The new covenant ultimately displays God's forgiveness through Jesus. The old covenant offered forgiveness through sacrifices, but the new covenant provides forgiveness through one ultimate sacrifice—Jesus's blood (Luke 22:20). Jesus's sinless life and sacrificial death for sinners is the perfect display of God's willing forgiveness for our sins. And finally, God declares that this new covenant will be permanent. It will never cease to exist, nor will God's people.

**How has God proven to you that He will uphold His covenant with you?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

The new covenant was established through Jesus, the Son of God, who was a substitute for the penalty of our sin. He fulfilled the law completely and writes the law on our hearts, and we are adopted as children of God. Through the new covenant, all who believe and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior are saved as a free gift because of God's grace and mercy.

## GOD'S NEW COVENANT

*Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. In the spaces provided, identify the ways the old covenant is superseded by the better new covenant.*

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
(Jeremiah 31:32)	<b>Jesus inaugurated and fulfilled this covenant for those who believe</b> (Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 9:11-28)
<b>Laws written on tablets and monuments of stone</b> (Exodus 31:18; Joshua 8:32)	(Jeremiah 31:33)
<b>The Lord's presence was experienced by a few and secluded in the tabernacle</b> (Hebrews 9:1-10)	(Jeremiah 31:34)
<b>Impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins</b> (Hebrews 10:4)	(Jeremiah 31:34)
<b>Mediated by Moses</b> (Exodus 24:3-8)	(Luke 22:20)

How should we view these Old Testament passages as we live in New Testament times?  
How can we as believers in Jesus find strength and hope in these verses?



**Key Concept:** A new covenant will establish followers of Jesus.



## HEAD

Why is it important not just to memorize Scripture but meditate on the words?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 92, then pray specifically through verses 12-15. Acknowledge that blessing is only found in relationship with the Lord and that He alone deserves our praise and obedience.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HEART

How should we respond to our sin in light of God's unbreakable new covenant?



## HANDS

How will you approach your good works and obedience in light of the new covenant Jesus fulfilled for you?



# THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

By Matt Rogers

The theme of God's judgment is threaded throughout the Old Testament, but the notion of God's judgment makes many uneasy. Some neglect the Old Testament or falsely believe that the God it reveals is fundamentally different than the God of the New Testament. A consistent reading of the Bible reveals just the opposite—the themes of God's holiness and the just judgment for sin are established in the Old Testament to make clear the unique hope offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Case in point is the exile.

## THE WARNING AND JUDGMENT OF THE EXILE

God warned Israel of the consequences of their idolatry all the way back when Moses positioned the people on the brink of the promised land in the first place. God warned that they would be judged should they rebel from the Lord once they inhabited the land: "You will become an object of horror, scorn, and ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you" (Deuteronomy 28:37). Though the exile would not take place for generations, the warning was loud and clear and repeated. When God's judgment came, no one would be able to say that God was capricious in His actions.

The looming threat of the exile was a constant reality during Israel's time in the land. Prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah spent years echoing these warnings to no avail. The people persisted in their waywardness, and God did just what He said He would do. He allowed pagan nations to crush Israel, destroy their land, and carry their people off into captivity. Perhaps the high-water mark of this judgment occurred when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and ransacked the Lord's temple (2 Kings 25). As an act of just judgment, God removed His blessings of the land and the temple because He would not allow His people to mock Him with rampant idolatry (Ezekiel 36:16-20).

## THE GRACIOUS GOD OF THE EXILE

A number of themes emerge from the exile.

- First, God is just to judge humans for their sin. He is holy, and He has provided clear standards that must be obeyed. When people fail to honor Him as God, they are rightly judged.
- Second, God gives time to repent. While the final exile was swift, the time of warning was extensive. The people had ample time to repent from their idolatry and turn to the Lord.

- Third, God does what He says. We tend to apply this truth positively and reflect on how God keeps His promises to care, protect, love, and preserve His people—and we should. But we should also consider that God is faithful to keep His promises of judgment. He is not like the parent who threatens a punishment they never intend to enact. God does what He says.
- Finally, God gives grace. The Bible doesn't end with the exile. It's not the final word. The story continues with God bringing the people back to the land and ultimately undoing the exile through the salvation offered in Jesus.

## THE GRACIOUS GOD OF THE GOSPEL

The exile also has implications for unbelievers today. In the same way as with Old Testament Israel, God has given clear warnings about the just judgment due for human sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23). This judgment is more than a physical exile from the land. It is death—physical, spiritual, and eternal death. God also provides time for unbelievers to repent. Sadly, as Paul wrote, many presume upon this time and believe that God has turned a blind eye to their sin and that He will not hold them accountable. Instead, they should see this time as an opportunity to repent (2:1-11).

Unbelievers should feel the burden to flee from the coming judgment because God will keep His word. As Paul warned the church in Galatia: “Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the

flesh” (Galatians 6:7-8). A person who fails to repent of their sin will experience the reality of God’s faithfulness in judgment.

A person who fails to repent of their sin will experience the reality of God’s faithfulness in judgment.

Finally, God does give grace. However, this grace will not come from another offer of salvation on the other side of death like the grace seen after the exile. Instead, this grace is available now. God has provided a means of escape from the wrath to come through the work of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:7). Through faith in Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, sinners can be forgiven of their sins, made right with God, and promised an eternal inheritance with all of the saints that can never be taken away (Romans 8).

Matt Rogers is the pastor of Christ Fellowship Cherrydale in Greenville, South Carolina. He and his wife, Sarah, have five children: Corrie, Avery, Hudson, Willa, and Fuller. Matt is also an assistant professor of church planting at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the church development coordinator with the Pillar Network, and a freelance author.

# GOD'S NATION FELL

CORE PASSAGE: 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-21

## CONTEXT

Josiah was a good king over Judah who followed in the ways of his ancestor David, and he obeyed the Lord in almost all that he did. Josiah's faithfulness brought restoration to God's people. But after Josiah's death, his successors—three sons and a grandson—did not follow in his faithful footsteps. Each one did what was evil in the Lord's eyes. They did not obey God but pursued wickedness and rebelled against His ways and His punishments. Their continual disobedience brought about God's judgment that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and exile from the promised land for God's people.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.**

As you examine 2 Chronicles 36:11-21:

- Recognize the compassion of God in sending messengers to warn and call His people to repentance.
- Understand that apart from Christ, everyone will reach a point of no remedy from the just wrath of God against sin.



## TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Babylon Besieges and Conquers Judah, Deporting the People (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36)

Hezekiah and Josiah Restore the Worship of the Lord (2 Kings 18–20; 22–23)

Jeremiah Prophesies Judgment on Judah and a New Covenant (Jeremiah 1–38)

Ezekiel Prophesies to the Exiles (Ezekiel 1–48)

## Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 23:31–25:26

☐ **Day 2:** 2 Chronicles 36:1–21

☐ **Day 3:** Jeremiah 39:1–44:30

☐ **Day 4:** Jeremiah 45:1–52:30

☐ **Day 5:** Lamentations 1:1–5:22

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 79



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

### 2 CHRONICLES 36:11-16

## THOUGH GOD WAITS PATIENTLY FOR REPENTANCE, HE WILL JUDGE EVIL.

*Underline all the words that indicate Zedekiah's rebellion. Circle the result.*

**11** Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. **12** He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah at the LORD's command. **13** He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God. He became obstinate and hardened his heart against returning to the LORD, the God of Israel. **14** All the leaders of the priests and the people multiplied their unfaithful deeds, imitating all the detestable practices of the nations, and they defiled the LORD's temple that he had consecrated in Jerusalem. **15** But the LORD, the God of their ancestors sent word against them by the hand of his messengers, sending them time and time again, for he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. **16** But they kept ridiculing God's messengers, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the LORD's wrath was so stirred up against his people that there was no remedy.

### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**GOD IS JUST:** God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those standards (Leviticus 11:44-45; Romans 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It would be unjust if God did not uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Romans 3:25-26).

**Key Concept:** God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.



Zedekiah was the last of Josiah's three sons to reign and the last king of Judah. He did not learn from his father's obedience and faithfulness but instead did what was evil in God's eyes. Even though the prophet Jeremiah shared God's warnings and declarations, Zedekiah pridefully ignored Jeremiah and relied on the feel-good messages of false prophets who promised God would never allow His people to be driven from the land (Jeremiah 28:1-4).

In the aftermath of a previous, smaller-scale exile (29:1-2), Zedekiah had been appointed as king by Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of Babylon whom God had appointed to bring punishment on Judah for their disobedience. But Zedekiah disobeyed God and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, also leading the people and even the priests toward evil behavior. A reckoning was coming as the Lord had foretold (Deuteronomy 29:16-29).

**What are some ways we can grow in humility to listen to and accept godly rebuke and correction?**

Despite the people's rebellion, the Lord was patient. He repeatedly sent messengers and prophets, such as Jeremiah, to call them to repentance. He even sent a message to the people who had been carried away to Babylon to encourage them that God would bring them back to the land of Judah after seventy years (Jeremiah 29:1-28). The Lord did this because He wanted His people to repent of their wicked ways and follow Him.

But God's patience and compassion were not met with gratefulness or humility. Instead, God's messengers weren't just ignored but ridiculed and abused, and by extension, so too was God Himself. Having reached a tipping point, the Lord would no longer allow their evil to persist, and His wrath, His appropriate and just response to their rebellion, became unstoppable.

**How have you been treated as you have shared the gospel with others?**



## PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 CHRONICLES 36:17-21

### NO ONE CAN ESCAPE GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT APART FROM REPENTANCE.

*Circle each "he" that refers to the Lord, and underline each "he" that refers to Nebuchadnezzar.*

**17** So he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their fit young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary. He had no pity on young men or young women, elderly or aged; he handed them all over to him. **18** He took everything to Babylon—all the articles of God's temple, large and small, the treasures of the LORD's temple, and the treasures of the king and his officials. **19** Then the Chaldeans burned God's temple. They tore down Jerusalem's wall, burned all its palaces, and destroyed all its valuable articles. **20** He deported those who escaped from the sword to Babylon, and they became servants to him and his sons until the rise of the Persian kingdom. **21** This fulfilled the word of the LORD through Jeremiah, and the land enjoyed its Sabbath rest all the days of the desolation until seventy years were fulfilled.

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Because of God's compassion, Jesus came to make a way of salvation for those who will believe in Him and repent of their sins. But there will come a time when all who harden their hearts against the Lord will be judged.



**Key Concept:** God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.

Here we see the final result of Judah's rebellion against God. After multiple attempts to extend compassion to His people, God determined to judge their evil. Like many before him, Zedekiah had failed as a leader, but the people failed in their willingness to follow the Lord, ignoring the warnings of the prophets. Now the Lord would use King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, to tear it all down and take His people away. The description of God's judgment for Judah is stark and shocking, a reminder of the seriousness of sin and the just punishment for disobedience from which no one is exempt.

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“God’s wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil.”<sup>1</sup>

—J. I. Packer (1926–2020)

For those who reject the gospel, both out of willful rebellion and sin-veiled ignorance, there will come a day when there is no remedy. God must punish sin, but in His mercy He has provided the means of salvation through His Son, Jesus. We have been given this gospel message to share with the world.

**How might you communicate with others the remedy for God’s wrath that God has provided in Jesus Christ?**

The exile, though a form of judgment, was not the final word for Israel. Verses 20-21 allude to the fulfillment of God’s words spoken by Jeremiah, who foretold the length of their exile as seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). Jeremiah also had a message of hope for those who would be taken to Babylon: “This city will bear on my behalf a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, who will hear of all the prosperity I will give them. They will tremble with awe because of all the good and all the peace I will bring about for them” (33:9). God promised to restore His people and bring them back to the land. While there must be judgment for sin, there is also hope for salvation and restoration. And just as God kept his word regarding His wrath against Judah, He also keeps His word for the ultimate blessing of His people.

**How does this passage challenge your perspective on the seriousness of sin in your own life?**



## NO REMEDY

*Read the Scripture passages and briefly summarize the actions of the key figure(s) in the space provided.*

**2 CHRONICLES 36:11-14: “ZEDEKIAH . . .”**

**2 CHRONICLES 36:15: “BUT THE LORD . . .”**

**2 CHRONICLES 36:16: “BUT THEY . . .”**

**2 CHRONICLES 36:17-21 “SO HE . . .”**

How can we avoid reaching a point of “no remedy” with the Lord?  
How can we help others trust in God’s remedy in Jesus Christ?



**Key Concept:** God warns people with compassion but will also judge evil.



## HEAD

What would God have us believe and do in response to Judah's destruction?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

✕ ————— ✕

Read through Psalm 79 in light of a difficult situation you face. Then pray for God's help (v. 9), and pray for God's justice (vv. 6-7) as well as His compassion for any adversaries, just as the Lord has shown His compassion to you in Christ Jesus.



## HEART

How has God shown love and mercy toward you? How have you extended that love and mercy to others?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

How will you encourage others to stay accountable and obedient to God's Word even when it's difficult?



# GOD'S REVIVAL PROMISED

CORE PASSAGE: EZEKIEL 37:1-14

## CONTEXT

Ezekiel was brought up to be a priest in Jerusalem, but he was carried away to Babylon during the first wave of the Babylonian exile. Yet even there, the Lord's hand was on him, and he was called by the Lord as a prophet. Ezekiel prophesied to the people who remained in Judah that their hardheartedness and sin would result in the Lord's abandonment of the temple and the total destruction of Jerusalem. When God's judgment came to pass, the people understandably lost all hope. They had earned their punishment. But God still had a plan for His people, and Ezekiel prophesied their revival and spiritual new birth.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God revives His people when hope seems lost.**

As you examine Ezekiel 37:1-14:

- Visualize Ezekiel's experience of God commanding him to tell dry bones to come to life and them obeying.
- Reflect upon the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming us and drawing us out of hopelessness.



## TIMELINE

Jeremiah Prophesies Judgment  
on Judah and a New Covenant  
(Jeremiah 1–38)

Babylon Besieges and Conquers Judah,  
Deporting the People (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36)

Daniel Prophesies in Babylon  
(Daniel 1–12)

Ezekiel Is Deported in a First Wave of Exiles and  
Prophesies Against Judah (2 Kings 24; Ezekiel 1–33)

**SESSION STUDY:** Ezekiel Prophesies Hope and  
Restoration for the Exiles (Ezekiel 34–48)

## Daily Readings

- |                                                      |                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Ezekiel 1–11  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Ezekiel 25–32 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Ezekiel 12–17 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Ezekiel 33–39 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Ezekiel 18–24 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 80      |



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

EZEKIEL 37:1-10

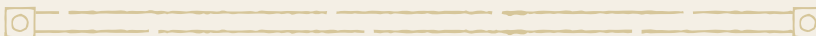
### WHEN HOPE SEEMS LOST, WE RELY ON GOD'S POWER TO REVIVE US.

*Circle every use of "live" and "breath" in the passage.*

**1** The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by his Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me all around them. There were a great many of them on the surface of the valley, and they were very dry. **3** Then he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I replied, "Lord God, only you know." **4** He said to me, "Prophecy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! **5** This is what the Lord God says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. **6** I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you so that you come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD." **7** So I prophesied as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. **8** As I looked, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. **9** He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man. Say to it: This is what the Lord God says: Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into these slain so that they may live!" **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

## GOSPEL CONNECTION

Though sin, guilt, and shame may have a hold on us, God's resurrection power brings renewed life to those who trust in His Son, Jesus, who conquered sin and death through His resurrection.



Several years into their seventy years in exile, God's people were discouraged. But the vision God gave His prophet in Ezekiel 37 signified a restoration of hope. The vision began with the Holy Spirit taking Ezekiel to see a valley of dry bones scattered all about. As a priest, Ezekiel would have been forbidden to touch dead bones and become unclean (Leviticus 21:1-2). Ezekiel likely recognized this shocking scene as an image of judgment against his people.

Ezekiel was led all around the valley to see that the bones had been dry for a very long time. God then asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). Ezekiel responded with reverence, acknowledging that only God would "know," and only in God's power could it be possible.

God instructed Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, commanding them to hear the word of the Lord. As Ezekiel spoke, an unbelievable transformation unfolded. Bones came together; muscle, fat, and skin covered them; and bodies became whole—whole but lifeless. Then God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath. As the prophet obeyed, the breath entered the bodies, bringing them to life. The bones once completely dry rose up as a vast, living army.

**What areas in your life feel spiritually "dry" or lifeless? How can the Lord bring renewal and restoration?**

The vision of the once-dead bones, now-living bodies told the story of Israel. The dead and dry bones represented the Israelites' despair and sense of hopelessness as they lived in exile, feeling abandoned and forgotten by God. Perhaps many of them believed the story of God's mercy and covenant with Israel was over. The living and vast army, however, pointed to the impending revival and God's promise to restore His people from the inside out, cleansing them from their sin and giving them a new heart and spirit (36:24-30).

God is the One who brings judgment and life, and He is the One who restores what is broken. Ezekiel's vision reassured the exiles that their restoration was certain. Likewise, we believers in Christ can be reassured of this unwavering truth: God's covenant faithfulness endures forever.

**How does this passage challenge your faith in God's power to work in hopeless situations?**

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

EZEKIEL 37:11-14

### GOD WILL REVIVE US WITH HIS SPIRIT SO THAT WE WILL KNOW HIM.

*Circle all the times God says the words “I” and “my.” Then underline all the times God says the words “you” and “your.”*

**11** Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Look how they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off.’ **12** Therefore, prophesy and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord God says: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them, my people, and lead you into the land of Israel. **13** You will know that I am the LORD, my people, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. **14** I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I have spoken, and I will do it. This is the declaration of the LORD.’”

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**REGENERATION:** Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person’s life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.



**Key Concept:** God revives His people when hope seems lost.



When Jesus taught His disciples and audiences in parables, they were not readily understood, being somewhat vague stories that invited interpretation. Therefore, Jesus explained His intended meaning of the parables to His disciples. If Jesus told the story of Ezekiel's vision, we might assume it referred to our physical resurrection or life after death, which may not be too far afield. But so it would be clear to Ezekiel and his audience among the exiles, God explained in detail the meaning of Ezekiel's vision.

God stated that the bones represented Israel and their struggle with hopelessness during the Babylonian exile. They had been so confident that Jerusalem could not fall because God had chosen it as the place where His name would dwell (1 Kings 9:3). Now that Jerusalem was destroyed, did that mean the covenant God had made with His people could not be restored? The people of God scattered across the Babylonian Empire were to see themselves in the scattered and disconnected valley of bones.

**What is God's role in our understanding of His Word, and how should we submit to that?**

In the midst of His people's sorrow, which they had rightly earned by their rebellion, God promised to do what felt impossible. He promised to take scattered Israel and re-form them together in their land. This would not be just a physical restoration to the land but also a spiritual restoration in which the people would return to covenant relationship with God. The restoration would not be just individual but communal. Israel would one day be restored back to God as a unified nation in beautiful fellowship with Him.

God will be faithful to His people and keep His promises. For the nation of Israel, the Lord would return the people to the land and His Spirit would be with them and in them, helping them to live in obedience. God would write His new covenant on their heart, and He would breathe new life into them. In this way He would restore, uphold, sustain, and show His sovereignty over His people, proving to them without a shadow of a doubt that He is the Lord.

**How can we rely on the Holy Spirit to live out God's purposes for our lives?**

## DRY BONES COME ALIVE

*Read Ezekiel 37:1-14. Write or illustrate the process that brought the dry bones to life.*

DRY BONES		LIVING BONES

After all that the nation of Israel had done to reject God, why would He choose this course of action? What was His purpose in revealing this scene to Ezekiel?

**Key Concept:** God revives His people when hope seems lost.



## HEAD

How does our understanding and faith in God impact our obedience to Him and our proclamation of His gospel?

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Pray through Psalm 80 by first acknowledging the Lord as your Shepherd and Restorer. Ask God to restore your heart, to renew your faith in Jesus, and to bring you hope and peace through the Holy Spirit.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HEART

In what areas of your life are you lacking hope and feeling cut off from God? How does this passage encourage you?



## HANDS

How will you pray and prepare for sharing the gospel of Jesus with those who are spiritually dead in their sins?



# 3 REASONS WE DON'T SHARE THE GOSPEL (AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT)

By Ken Braddy



When people find a great new restaurant, golf course, retail store, or ice cream shop, they will go to great lengths on social media to let others know about their discovery. Word-of-mouth advertising takes over, and things can go viral. You've seen it happen, I know.

One of the primary purposes we have as Christians is to share the good news of Jesus with others. The Great Commission is clear—we are to make disciples, and

that process takes place when we introduce people to Jesus's redemptive work on their behalf.

Many believers don't step out in faith and share what they've discovered about Jesus for several reasons. Here are three reasons why people don't share their faith and how you can help yourself and your group tell others the most important message in the world.

## 1) PEOPLE DON'T KNOW A SIMPLE GOSPEL PRESENTATION

I remember when people used to attend 12-week seminars to learn a 1-hour gospel presentation. I doubt many people today will sit still that long! Knowing a simple gospel presentation is important. Find a method that can be written down and easily shared quickly using one verse, such as Romans 6:23 or John 3:16.

As a Bible study leader, I've taught groups a one-verse method using Romans 6:23, and it is easy to learn and share with others. The one-verse method feels more like a conversation than a presentation, and you can find visual guides online that you can easily sketch on a napkin too.

## 2) PEOPLE DON'T KNOW HOW TO ARTICULATE THEIR TESTIMONY

Some believers don't know how to give an "elevator speech" about their come-to-Jesus moment. If they haven't thought it out, they just don't know where to start.

Teach your group to write out their story (testimony) in three parts: (1) their life before coming to Christ; (2) the situation surrounding their salvation experience; and (3) their life after receiving Jesus as their Savior.

Give your group time to write this out during Bible study, and then give them more time to practice sharing their testimony with another person in the group. and hone their story. As their confidence grows, they will be more likely to speak up with a non-believing person.

One of the primary purposes we have as Christians is to share the good news of Jesus with others.

## 3) PEOPLE DON'T FEEL THE URGENCY TO SHARE

Just like Peter's critics (see 2 Peter 3), believers can be lulled into thinking that Jesus's return isn't imminent. Peter reminded his opponents that the Lord counts time differently, that He "delays" His return so that people can hear the gospel, and that unbelievers at Christ's return will face a terrible day of judgment. Second Peter 3 is a passage that group leaders can teach to help their group members see the seriousness and the urgency of helping others hear about Jesus.

Ken Braddy is Lifeway's director of Sunday School and is a 30-year veteran of Sunday School ministry and author of *Breathing Life into Sunday School*. He serves as a Sunday School leader at his church in Tennessee.

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## DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

After Solomon's reign over a united people, because of his sin of idolatry, the kingdom split. To varying degrees, the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah often followed that same idolatrous path, with a few exceptions. Thus, God sent prophets to call them to repentance and to warn the people of His judgment. Because they did not humble themselves and listen, their enemies overtook them and they were sent into captivity. But even as the prophets warned of judgment, they also prophesied a future day of hope—a day when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come to establish His kingdom and a new covenant to forgive sin and provide eternal hope for God's people.

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