

WEEK 29, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 9-12

OVERVIEW:

Wisdom's invitation; the contrast between the righteous and the wicked; the contrast between the upright and the wicked.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we begin chapter 9 today, just as we saw in chapter 8, wisdom is personified as a woman. Verse 1 of chapter 9 says, "Wisdom hath builded HER house." In this chapter, the "WISE woman" is contrasted with the "FOOLISH woman." And notice in this chapter that both the "WISE" and the "FOOLISH woman" extend an invitation to the "simple," who is identified in verse 4 as one who lacks or "wanteth understanding." Both "women" have similar invitations — but very different motives... and results!

Note in verse 1, that "... she (wisdom) hath hewn out her seven pillars." These seven pillars are the seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit referred to in Revelation 4:5 as the "seven Spirits of God." (See also Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 5:6) These "pillars" or "manifestations" are specifically identified in Isaiah 11:2 as:

- 1) The spirit of the Lord.
- 2) The spirit of wisdom.
- 3) The spirit of understanding.
- 4) The spirit of counsel.
- 5) The spirit of might.
- 6) The spirit of knowledge.
- 7) The spirit of the fear of the Lord.

The invitation that is extended to the "simple" by both of these "women" (the "WISE woman" in verse 1, and the "FOOLISH woman" in verse 13) is to a "feast." Notice that "wisdom" offers a feast of "bread" and "wine" in verse 5, which coincidentally enough, just happens to be the same elements of the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 10:16). The feast offered by the "foolish woman" is described in verse 17 as "stolen waters" and "bread eaten in secret." Though the verse says that her water is "sweet" and her bread is "pleasant," it is only temporarily satisfying! That "bread" and "water" ultimately ends up being a stinky pile of worms in the place where the fire is not quenched! (See Exo. 16:20 and Isa. 66:24!)

What the Lord reveals in 9:9-10 is a key truth in the Book of Proverbs. To "increase in learning" we must possess the "fear of the Lord" — and have the "knowledge of the holy." (i.e. Holy God, Holy Word, Holy Spirit, Holiest of Holies, Holy Place, Most Holy Place, etc.) Anyone who does not acquire this "knowledge" will be unable to make sense out of the Bible, will be unable to tap into life's purpose, and will be forced to come up with his own meaning and purpose for living — which will be "foolish," and completely irrational to the mind, will and word of the Lord.

Perhaps one of the most incredible qualities of the Bible is its ability to transcend time and culture. Though it is thousands of years old, its relevancy and application to today is nothing short of supernatural. Because of the way the Book of Proverbs was actually designed and structured by the Holy Spirit — the Book of Proverbs is perhaps one of the easiest Books in the entire Bible in which to make application to those of us living in the 21st century.

With that in mind, perhaps we will find it beneficial today to discuss what we might call the “big picture” of the Book of Proverbs. The Book can be broken down into three “divisions.” (2 Tim. 2:15) These divisions can be identified by the three times Solomon identifies himself as the author of Proverbs. (Pro. 1:1; 10:1; 25:1)

- Division One — Proverbs 1–9
- Division Two — Proverbs 10–24
- Division Three — Proverbs 25–31

As we find ourselves in today’s reading moving into that second “division” (Pro. 10–24), be aware that there are actually 375 actual proverbs (note that some proverbs extend into several verses) connected to one of three types of “couplets:”

1. **CONTRASTIVE COUPLETS.**

The “couplet” in these proverbs is normally identified by the word “BUT.”

The intent is to catch your attention and present a truth by the compact presentation of some striking contrast, as in, “The lips of the righteous feed many: BUT fools die for want of wisdom.” (Pro. 10:21)

2. **COMPLETIVE COUPLETS.**

The “couplet” in these proverbs is normally identified by the word “AND.”

The second line of the proverb agrees with the first, and often adds to it, or “completes” it, as in, “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: AND his children shall have a place of refuge.” (Pro. 14:26)

3. **COMPARATIVE COUPLETS.**

The “couplet” in these proverbs is normally identified by the word “THAN.”

The focus in these proverbs is often to what is actually the more excellent of the two things being “compared,” as in “Better is a little with righteousness, THAN great revenues with right.” (Pro. 16:8)

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As ONE who HATES LYING – Proverbs 12:22 — (Rev. 21:5,8 – “He that sat upon the throne said... all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”)

WEEK 29, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 13-16

OVERVIEW:

The contrast of the upright and the wicked.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 13 begins this way: "A wise son heareth his father's instruction..." Remember, Solomon's son was Rehoboam. Like any father, Solomon hoped that his son would follow his counsel, and actually "hear" and "receive" his instruction. For truth to be productive, it's not simply enough that instruction be GIVEN — it must be RECEIVED! Solomon longed for his own son to apply the truth that he was imparting to him, so that his life would actually be "BRANDED" by it!

Note some of the wisdom and instruction in today's reading to which Solomon was urging his son to both "hear" and "receive" — recognizing that God inspired Solomon to write these things because He is, likewise, urging all of us to both "hear" and "receive" them!

13:7 — Maybe another way of saying it is... "It's possible to have NOTHING, and yet, have EVERYTHING! And it is possible to have EVERYTHING, and yet, have NOTHING!" Jesus wrote to the church in Smyrna, saying, "I know thy... POVERTY, (but thou art RICH)..." (Rev. 2:9) Jesus also wrote to the church of the Laodiceans, saying, "... Thou sayest, I am RICH... and knowest not that thou art... POOR." (Rev. 3:17)

13:10 — Any time and every time there is "contention," whether it be in a marriage, a family, a friendship, a church, a neighborhood, or a community — the root of it is always "pride." Pride is present in one of the parties involved, and sometimes, pride is present in both of the parties involved — but this verse is very forthright in connecting ALL contention with pride! When we are in a contentious situation, may we examine ourselves to discover the pride that may be lurking in us, before looking for where it may be found in others.

13:18 — There are just some people who won't listen to anybody — and no amount of correcting them seems to do any good. Solomon lets us know that following that path will lead us directly into "poverty and shame." If we will respond in obedience when we are reproved, however, we are following a path that will lead us directly into "honor." Perhaps we should all ask ourselves how we respond when we are corrected!

13:20 — Where we end up in life is largely determined by the friends we choose to hang out with. If we choose wise friends, we will become wise. If we choose foolish friends, we will be destroyed right along with them.

13:24 — The wording in the first half of this verse sounds rather radical, but the point is this... Sometimes people think they love their children too much to see them affected by the results of corporal discipline. If they could see, however, the result of how NOT disciplining their children ultimately affects their lifestyle and character,

they would understand why God says they actually "hate" them!

- 14:12 — This is another verse that should be committed to memory! If it is in your arsenal of memorized verses, you will be surprised how often you will have the occasion to use it in witnessing to the lost. (Notice the repetition of this verse in 16:25.)
- 14:15 — This verse certainly has application in many avenues of life. We must be certain, however, to make application of this verse when it comes to listening to preaching and/or teaching! 1 John 4:1 echoes the same sentiment of Solomon in this verse: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
- 14:20 — One would think that this would be a 21st century A.D. problem... not a 1000 B.C. problem! Some aspects of our depravity, however, transcend time and culture.
- 14:23 — Maybe we could verbalize this verse this way... There are two types of workers in the world: those who work — and those who talk about working. Those who work will find PROFIT. Those who talk about working will find PENURY (extreme poverty).
- 14:26 — Everyone is going to fear something! Those who choose to "fear the Lord" will have a strong confidence and a place of refuge in typically fearful situations. Those who refuse to "fear the Lord," will find themselves without a refuge and fearful in many situations.
- 15:1 — This is also a verse that should be committed to memory. All of us will have ample opportunity to apply it's wisdom over the course of our lifetime!
- 15:10,12,32 — Very few people can handle others "correcting" them, "reproving" them, or "instructing" them. That rebellious attitude, however, will cost them in the long run!
- 15:17 — Having few material possessions, but having people who love you — is a whole lot better than having many material possessions, but having no one who loves you!
- 15:22 — Never forget the importance of seeking wise counsel — and a lot of it! We'll never accomplish the things we really want to accomplish in life without it!
- 15:23 — We never really know what people are actually dealing with internally. Sometimes a simple word of encouragement to them can be used of God to bless and refresh them more than we would ever realize!

15:25a — Wow! What a strong warning! May it be used to humble us all!

15:27 — If we're always looking for a way to make a fast buck, or if we're constantly looking for how to get something for nothing — we will end up making decisions that will make life extremely difficult for our family.

15:28 — Think before you speak!

16:2 — Because of our tendency as humans to continue on through life seldom pausing for introspection to determine the real motives behind our actions — perhaps this is another verse that should be committed to memory to serve as a personal reminder to do so!

16:7 — This truth should certainly serve as a great motivation for us to make certain that our ways always please the Lord!

16:9 — Having a heart for God that has great passion for ways of serving and pleasing Him is awesome and necessary — but we must be certain that "OUR plan" for our lives doesn't lord over our submission in allowing the Lord to direct us each step of the way into "HIS plan!"

16:18 — When we see the manifestation of "pride" or a "haughty spirit," whether it be in ourselves, or in someone else — just know that things are on the verge of collapsing!

16:19 — We must learn to surround ourselves with people with a "humble spirit!"

16:32 — The only way to be "slow to anger" and "rule our spirit" — is to be "FILLED with the SPIRIT" and to "WALK in the SPIRIT!" (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16)

CHRIST IS REVEALED

As the One Who punishes the proud — Proverbs 16:5 (Luke 14:11)

As the FRIEND that sticks closer than a brother — Proverbs 18:24 (John 15:14–15; Heb. 13:5)

WEEK 29, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 17-20

OVERVIEW:

The contrast between good and evil; warnings and instructions about life.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we have constantly and consistently seen all the way through the 52 Weeks of Pursuit, the Bible is filled with practical truths for living. Those truths are especially recognizable in the Book of Proverbs, for it is really nothing more than a collection of God's complex and diverse statements of what is TRUE about life — compared or contrasted with that which is NOT TRUE. As was suggested in Week 28, Day 4, one of the best ways to get these truths as a functional part of our lives is to read the chapter each day that corresponds with the day's date. If we would simply add one chapter of Proverbs a day to our regular Bible study each year, do you realize that in the next 20 years, we will have made our way through the Book of Proverbs 240 times?! Before we know it, the contrasts and parallels of God's truth will become recorded onto the hard drive of our mind, providing us with moment by moment wisdom as the Holy Spirit guides us to walk in the way with the wise. (Pro. 13:20)

And wow! I couldn't agree more with Solomon in verse one in today's reading! "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife." (17:1) I'd much rather have my family all intact, living in peace ("quietness") in a shack with just enough food to get us by, than to live in a fat house, able to eat whatever we jolly-well please, but have it all in the midst of strife in our relationships with each other! (See also Pro. 21:9) In the pursuit of the "things on earth" (Col. 3:1-2), many Christians around the world... "GOT what they WANTED, but LOST what they HAD!" We must be careful! We must be wise! There are treasures in life far more valuable and precious than material wealth and monetary gain!

The second half of 17:6 packs such a wallop that I can't just pass over it — though there's not enough space in this venue to really nail all of the unbelievable implications of this tremendously powerful truth. Solomon simply says, "The glory of children are their fathers." And do note that Solomon isn't giving instruction here concerning something we are to teach our children — he is simply stating a fact! And the fact is, "The glory of children are their fathers!" And what those seven simple words actually reveal to us, is that by God's divine design, He places into a child's little heart, even before they are born, a passionate desire to "glorify" the man in their life that they will refer to as their "father." It's what some choose to refer to as "Father-Power." Because of "Father-Power," more than anything else in our culture, environment, and education; more than the circumstances of our life or our socio-economic level; even more than our MOTHER(!!!); humanly speaking, nothing has had or will ever have a more profound influence and impact on who we are, what we are, and what we do — than our fathers! Whether he was present or absent; whether he was living or dead; whether we knew him very well or didn't know him at all; whether we loved him, hated him, or somewhere "in-betweened" him — whether we like to admit it or not, the fact is, all of us were greatly affected and deeply impacted by the man in our life that we refer to (or, refuse to refer to!) as our "father." Whether we are a son or daughter, a mother or a father — and whether we are old or young, the biblical information regarding fathers is something every person needs to understand.

And once again, this venue will not allow for an in-depth analysis, but please allow me to attempt to at least provide a cursory glimpse into this vitally important biblical subject. For some reason, God chose to give to men in their relationship with their children, the same title He reserved for Himself in the relationship He has with His children!

That "title," of course, is "Father." I stated this in the previous paragraph, but try to get your mind wrapped around the fact, that for some reason, God also chose to design human life in such a way, so that we are all born into this world with the innate desire put to "glorify" the man in our life we call "Father." It's why totally unprovoked, a little boy will say while playing with his friends, "My Dad can 'beat up' your Dad." Or, "My Dad is 'taller' than your Dad." Or, "My Dad is 'whatever' than your Dad!" And it's that way all over the world! Somewhere along the way you'd think we'd have to ask ourselves, "How do those thoughts even pop into their little minds?" And the answer is "Father-Power!" (Pro. 17:6b) And I would suggest, that apart from the power of the Godhead — and the power of His Word, "Father-Power" is perhaps "the" most powerful influencing force on human behavior in the universe! And God's intention in building this desire into a child's heart, is that if a man will be a good steward of this incredible entrustment by putting on display what the character of our "real Father" in heaven is like, it is an indescribably tremendous positive power for good! Through it, a father can develop a such a significant relationship and bond with his children, that as his child grows and matures, he can use his temporal and earthly relationship with his children — to connect them in a personal relationship with their real, Heavenly Father, in the intimacy of a relationship and bond with Him that lasts for all of eternity! Hallelujah! What a blessing — and at the same time, what a stewardship!

If, however, a man "breaks" his "Father-Power," be aware that it doesn't cause its power to be diminished one iota! It's just that the power he wields in his child's life ceases to be a positive power for good, and becomes a tremendously negative power for evil! Apart from God's grace and mercy, in many cases, broken "Father-Power" will insure that his children will never want to have a part in a relationship with the God who wants us to find Him, and relate to Him, as a father does with his children. This is precisely why God tells us in the New Testament, "And, ye fathers (notice, specifically "fathers," not "mothers!) provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Because you see, when a father "provokes" his child (i.e. breaks his "Father-Power!"), it manifests itself in either a "rebellious wrath" (Eph. 6:4), or a "discouraging anger." (Col. 3:21) Interestingly enough, we could go to any major city around the world tonight and on one side of the street, find a gang of angry young men, who don't even know what they're angry about, just looking for a way to demonstrate their anger. While on the other side of the street, is a man so broken down, he barely has enough fortitude to pick up his feet when he walks, much less, go find a job and become a responsible, mature adult. And on both counts, all it really is is two opposite reactions to broken "Father-Power!" Contained within God's monumental declaration in the second half of Proverbs 17:6 concerning the passion He placed in children's hearts to glorify their fathers, is the powerful, inherent message to fathers: "Make sure you don't break your 'Father-Power!'"

Note also that the first half of Proverbs 17:6 is also tremendously powerful... "Children's children are the crown of old men!" You might have to wear the "crown" of being a grandfather to understand just how powerful those grandchildren are!

If you are prone to have diarrhea of the mouth, verse 27 of chapter 17 might be a great verse to memorize. Proverbs 17:27 says: "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." This verse has spawned quite a few catch phrases and quips through the years, such as:

- "Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, refuses to give evidence of it."
- "Silence is a hard argument to refute"
- "He can never speak well who cannot hold his peace."
- "As a man grows older and wiser, he talks less — but says more."

Chapter 18 and verse 1 is key. It lets us know that to arrive at wisdom, we must possess a "desire" that is so intense, that we are willing to "separate" ourselves from anything and everything that would interfere with that pursuit! If you are looking for a reason to continue on in our 52 Weeks of Pursuit (I hope you don't need a reason!), this verse is a great one! "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddeth with all wisdom." (18:1)

The "fool" on the other hand (18:2), has only one pursuit: "That his heart may discover itself." How many "fools" (God's identification, not mine!) have "LOST" themselves — in the midst of trying to "FIND" themselves! And the fact is, allowing our "heart" to "discover itself" — is an invitation to disaster! We have been instructed to "KEEP our heart with all diligence" (Pro. 4:23)... not FIND it! Without that "guardianship" of our hearts, the "issues of life" coming out of it — will destroy us! (Pro. 4:23)

Verse 8 of chapter 18 is extremely graphic: "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." If you've ever been on the receiving end of them, you understand just how perfect that description is. The talebearer, in effect, is a murderer! He slays a person's reputation and/or character with a sword that Psalm 57:4 and 64:3 identifies as the tongue. There are many hearts that are bleeding today because they have been stabbed by someone's tongue. No, we can't help it happening TO us, but we most certainly can help it happening BY us! Once again, it's a heart issue. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." As always, the heart of the matter... is the matter of the heart! May God help us to "Keep (guard) our heart" today!

CHRIST IS REVEALED

As THE KING Who sits on the throne of judgment — Proverbs 20:8. (Joh. 5:22)

WEEK 29, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 21-24

OVERVIEW:

Warnings and instructions about life.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In the same way that Solomon, the "son of David," intended for his son, Rehoboam, to personally apply the wisdom, admonition and instruction he was imparting to him when these proverbs were initially written — our Lord Jesus Christ, the "Son of David," intends for us, as His "sons," to personally apply the wisdom, admonition and instruction He is imparting to us through these same proverbs now! Make certain that you note that in the New Testament, our identification as "sons" (Joh. 1:12; 1 Joh. 3:1–2; Php. 2:15) includes both males and females!

With that connection clearly in mind, note some of the key bits of wisdom/admonition/instruction the "Son of David" gives to his "son" in today's reading — and how profoundly these things apply to our lives some 3000 years later!

- Regarding Human Authority. (21:1)
The Lord's authority trumps any and all earthly authority. The Lord, however, works through human authorities, directing them as He will, to accomplish His own purposes. The simple rule of thumb is that we are to obey our human authorities until following human authority would cause us to disobey what God's authority in His Word has clearly revealed.
- Regarding Self-Justification. (21:2)
Solomon tells us, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." That should tell us that we have the dangerous ability to justify anything!
- Regarding Choosing a Spouse. (21:9, 19)
Simple instruction to the wise: "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." (21:9) "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." (21:19)
- Regarding Pleasing People. (21:10)
Some people are just so evil, nothing we do will ever be enough, or win their favor.
- Regarding Treatment of the Poor. (21:13; 22:16, 22–23)
We need to be very careful about how we deal with the poor, because how we deal with them — is how the Lord is going to deal with us! If we mess with their souls — God will mess with ours!
- Regarding the Tongue. (21:23)
We need to learn to not say everything we think! Involving ourselves in other people's matters never works to our advantage.

- Regarding Our Attitude Toward Preparation. (21:31)
We need to always work like crazy to be prepared, but all the while, realizing that without the Lord, we can do nothing! (John 15:5)
- Regarding Our Name. (22:1)
We must be very careful not to put a blot on our name, for the simple fact that we have taken Christ's "good name!" We are, as it were, "CHRIST-ians," or "CHRIST'S-ones!" It is better to receive Christ's "loving favor," than to receive "silver and gold" (wealth)!
- Regarding Borrowing Money. (22:7)
The problem with borrowing money from people is that they end up owning us!
- Regarding Team Building. (22:10)
Having the wrong people on the team will always keep things stirred up!
- Regarding Laziness. (22:13)
A lazy person always has some "good excuse" for not doing what they ought to be doing!
- Regarding Disciplining Children. (22:15)
There is only one thing that is able to free a child from the foolishness that is bound in their heart! It is the "rod of correction!" Parents, psychologists, psychiatrists and and/or other experts will never invent or discover another successful alternative.
- Regarding Choosing Friends. (22:24-25)
We are instructed not to hang out with or be friends with an angry person, because inevitably, they will rub off on us! We'll start acting like just like them, and it will be a snare to our very soul! We must choose our friends wisely!
- Regarding Co-signing. (22:26-27)
As a general rule, we should not co-sign on loans for people. If we do, we should be fully prepared and willing to joyfully assume the entire debt as a gift! In other words, if we're not willing to give them the money, we should not co-sign on the loan.
- Regarding "Humility" and the "Fear of the Lord." (22:4)
Notice that according to this verse, "humility" and the "fear of the Lord" go hand in hand. The only way to really see ourselves for who we really are, is to see the Lord for who He really is! Until we "fear the Lord," we will continue to be preoccupied with thoughts about self. Andrew Murray's definition of humility is classic: "Humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves; it is not thinking of ourselves at all."
- Regarding Child Training. (22:6)
Every child is different, so there is a "way" God intends every individual to "go." It is a parent's responsibility to so understand the truth and wisdom of the Word of God —and to so understand the uniqueness of their own children, that they are able, not only to direct them toward that "way," but to "train" them in it! That is how God intends for them to remain in "His way" their entire lives, and how He intends to keep them focused on

how He uniquely desires to use them.

- Regarding Not Losing Sight of Our Familial and Spiritual Roots. (22:28; 23:10)
"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." (22:28) "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." (23:10)
- Regarding Alcohol. (23:19–21, 29–31)
"Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." (23:19–21) "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." (23:29–31)
- Regarding Having a Home Blessed of the Lord. (23:3–4)
There are three key components to having a home that is blessed of the Lord. It is "built" by WISDOM. It is "established" by UNDERSTANDING. And it is "filled with all precious and pleasant RICHES" (i.e. the things money can't buy!) by KNOWLEDGE!
- Regarding Seeking Wise Counsel. (24:6)
Seeking wise counsel is imperative before making important decisions. The danger of our blind spots is removed when we have heard the wisdom and insight of a "multitude of counsellors."
- Regarding Hard Work. (24:30–34)
We can learn a lot from people whose field is overtaken with thorns and weeds, and whose territorial wall is breaking down. What they teach us is the inevitability of coming to poverty if we are only interested in sleeping and relaxing. God admonishes us to learn how to work hard.

CHRIST IS REVEALED

As HE THAT IS PURE, WHOSE WORK IS RIGHT — Proverbs 21:8 (John 4:34; 17:4).

WEEK 29, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 25-28

OVERVIEW:

Similitudes and instructions; warnings and instructions.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Today we enter into the third and final section of the Book of Proverbs — chapters 25–31. Keep in mind that God neatly “divides” (2 Tim. 2:15) the Book of Proverbs into three sections that are clearly identified by the three times He inspired Solomon to pen the words, “The proverbs of Solomon.” (1:1; 10:1; 25:1) The first three chapters in today’s reading (chapters 25-27) are different in structure than what we have encountered thus far in this Book. The difference is that the proverbs in this section are presented in groups of verses on the same topic, rather than individual verses that present a specific proverbial truth. Literary truths presented in this fashion are often referred to as an “epigram” — which is defined as “a brief, clever, pointed remark or observation typically marked by an antithesis.” The last chapter in today’s reading (chapter 28) shifts back to the comparative, complete, or contrastive couplets type of proverbs as in the previous sections of the Book.

The first part of chapter 25 refers to **KINGS** (or, monarchs, rulers or presidents of nations). Solomon reveals to us that...

1. Kings like to “search out a matter.” (25:2)
2. A king’s heart is “unsearchable.” (25:3)
3. Kings’ thrones are “established in righteousness.” (25:5)
4. Kings reject people who praise themselves. (25:6)
5. Kings have no patience with people who vaunt themselves. (25:7)

The second part of chapter 25 is sort of a conglomerate of information concerning interpersonal communication and human relationships.

In chapter 26, Solomon gives us a discourse concerning **FOOLS**. He reveals that...

1. What fools really need is the rod of correction. (26:1–3)
2. The “committed” fool will conform you to himself if you attempt to answer him, so don’t! (26:4)
3. The “simple” fool can be turned from becoming like the “committed” fool —so answer his questions, providing him with wise counsel. (26:5)
4. The fool is unable to articulate the truth of a proverb. (26:7)
5. When a fool is given honor, it is dangerous to himself and to others. (26:8)
6. A parable in a fool’s mouth is as a wound — i.e. he’ll hurt you with it! (26:9)
7. Any reward a fool receives comes from the God of all creation. (26:10)
8. The fool will inevitably return to his folly. (26:11)
9. There is more hope for a fool than for a self-proclaimed “wise man.” (26:12)

Because of the "apparent contradiction" concerning "answering a fool according to his folly" in verses 4 and 5 in chapter 26, perhaps a little more explanation can provide clarity. Notice that verse 4 instructs us not to answer a fool according to his folly — lest we become like him. Then, in the very next verse he instructs us to answer a fool according to his folly — lest he become wise in his own conceit. So which is it? Are we supposed to answer a fool in his folly or not?

Note that the key is the difference between the two types of fools with whom we may potentially be dealing. The first type of fool (verse 4) is what might be called a "committed" fool. He is already "wise in his own conceit." He has accepted that wrong is right, and is committed to persuade others to believe the same. To answer this type of fool doesn't do anything to convince him otherwise — it only drives him deeper into his folly. He is argumentative and will twist our words to negatively influence new and/or immature Christians, or twist our words to convince a "simple" fool that the truths we're communicating are wrong. Verse 4 lets us know that we are to ignore this type of fool.

The second fool, is what might be called a "simple" fool. As mentioned above, he is reachable and teachable. He says foolish things and is involved in foolish behavior mainly because he has lacked the proper influences in his life to teach him about God's wisdom. He is looking for a role model, and inevitably will find one! He is a perfect candidate for those in gangs to initiate into their criminal activity on one hand (1:10–19), and yet, on the other hand, he is a perfect candidate for those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ to reach him with the gospel of salvation — introducing him to the ultimate Role Model, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (1 John 2:6), and providing him a human role model ourselves, by entering into a discipling relationship with him. (1 Cor. 11:1)

In the next group of verses, 26:13-16, Solomon gives us a discourse concerning SLUGGARDS.

1. The sluggard gives exaggerated reasons for not leaving his house. (26:13)
2. The sluggard has restless sleep. (26:14)
3. The sluggard doesn't even like to exert the energy to feed himself. (26:15)
4. The sluggard is very skilled in creating ways to avoid work. (26:16)

The final two chapters in today's reading (chapter 27–28) are full of extremely practical proverbial truths for living. I've chosen to highlight a few of them below, but recognize, God may want to highlight different ones as you make your way through these chapters today.

- Proverbs 27:1 is a verse that every believer should commit to memory. Not only is it a very vivid reminder not to presume upon the future, it is a verse that we will find ourselves repeatedly able to use as we witness to lost people.
- One would think that the wisdom presented in Proverbs 27:2 would be a no-brainer — but it isn't! The "pride of life" that causes us to want others to recognize our "greatness" can either blatantly or subtly be evidenced in our speech. The key to not praising oneself, of course, is not in controlling our tongue, but in recognizing our own

"nothingness!" (Gal. 6:3)

- As Proverbs 27:6 suggests, having a friend who loves us enough to speak hard truths to us, even at the risk of hurting our feelings, is a great treasure. Being the kind of person who is willing to receive the rebuke of a friend should be our aim.
- Proverbs 27:10a lets us know that relationships with family friends that cross generational lines is something that we should work very hard to maintain!
- There is the obvious practical wisdom we all can glean from the teaching of Proverbs 27:12, but it is important not to miss the prophetic application — especially for those of us living in the last days. The "day of evil," that the Bible refers to as the "tribulation" is fast approaching. God has provided a hiding place "in Christ" (Col.3:3), and those who are prudent will enter that refuge. Those who are "simple" will see all of the warning signs around us, and continue headlong into the punishment that awaits the lost.
- Proverbs 27:17 makes very clear that having friendships that result in mutual spiritual stimulation and edification are imperative for our spiritual well-being.
- May Proverbs 27:23 admonish every father, as well as every pastor, to constantly have the spiritual pulse of what is happening or not happening in the lives of those under our watch care, and may it challenge us to provide even greater loving oversight.
- Proverbs 27:26a lets us know what kind of animal it actually was that God used to clothe Adam and Eve after they sinned in the Garden. As you might expect, note that this verse reveals that to clothe them required the shedding of blood and the death of a sacrificial lamb! (Joh. 1:29; Rev. 4:4)
- Proverbs 28:6 tells us that we would be much better off to have absolutely no material possessions, and yet, possess great character — than to have great possessions, and possess no character.
- God certainly wants all of us to pray, but Proverbs 28:9 lets us know that if our lives reflect the fact that we disregard God's word, God will neither be blessed or impressed by our prayers to Him. Much to the contrary, if we are not listening to Him, it is an abomination to assume that He will listen to us! Perhaps we could say it this way: if we disregard how God has chosen to communicate to us, He will choose to disregard how we communicate to Him.
- Proverbs 28:13 implores us to always take full ownership and responsibility for our sin. As we consider this verse, recognize that sometimes we try to "cover our sins" from God, but most often, we tend "cover our sins" from people with whom we have wronged — and refuse to own our wrong with them. Getting right with people is imperative to being right with God!
- Proverbs 28:21 lets us know that we must be certain to treat every person with the same respect — regardless of their physical comeliness, their position or stature in the community, their material wealth, or any other standard of measurement we may tend to use to elevate one person above another. This proverb teaches us that if we have

respect of persons, we will inevitably make compromises over the simplest matters of life.

- In Proverbs 28:20 and 22, God lets us know that being rich is not wrong in and of itself. It is wrong, however, to desire to be rich! The desire to be rich will leave us impoverished in other key areas of our life!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO REWARDS THOSE WHO REPAY EVIL WITH GOOD — Proverbs 25:21–22. (If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him a drink. — Romans 12:20)

WEEK 30, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: PROVERBS 29-31

OVERVIEW:

More warnings and instructions; the words of Agur; the words that Lemuel's mother taught him.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we conclude the Book of Proverbs today, please keep in mind that this is a Book that merits continual and life-long reading, study, meditation and memorization.

Whereas the Book of Psalms presents the HEART of GOD, the Book of Proverbs presents the MIND of GOD, or perhaps, even more specifically, the MIND of CHRIST. (1 Cor. 2:16) It is the most intricate Book in the entire Bible to reveal to us how God THINKS, or to reveal to us "the mind of the Lord." (1 Cor. 2:16) In essence, this Book reveals to us God's viewpoint and opinion on virtually every issue of life. If, as God's people, we would simply make God's opinion as it is revealed in the Book of Proverbs, our opinion... and if we would simply adopt God's viewpoint as it is revealed in the Book of Proverbs, as our viewpoint, not only would it SIMPLIFY our lives — it would REVOLUTIONIZE them!

Whereas the Book of Leviticus is an intricate Book detailing God's instruction concerning the PHYSICAL aspects of ISRAEL'S life, the Book of Proverbs is an intricate Book detailing God's instruction concerning the SPIRITUAL aspects of a BELIEVER'S life. Any squabble or conflict we face in life, whether it be relational or financial — and whether it be in our home, church, workplace or neighborhood, it can invariably be traced back to a violation of a spiritual truth God specifically revealed in the Book of Proverbs. This Book is actually that comprehensive — and that practical!

Proverbs 31 is infamous for its teaching on the "Virtuous Woman." (31:10) From an historical and devotional standpoint, it is filled with significant and admirable qualities that God wants every woman to aspire to possess. But from a prophetic standpoint, however, there's a whole lot more going on in this chapter! Much more! Though Proverbs 31 presents God's description of the "virtuous woman" (through the counsel provided to King Lemuel from his mother — 31:1), did you know that there is only one woman in all of Scripture that is actually specifically referred to as a "virtuous woman?" And do you know who she is?

It just "happens" to be Ruth! (Ruth 2:3; 3:11) And as we've already seen concerning Ruth in our 52 Weeks of Pursuit, she is that member of a cursed race, who in a time of famine hears the "good news" that there was bread in the city of Bethlehem. Upon hearing this news, she leaves her father and her mother, and all that she holds dear in her homeland — to partake of this Bread. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, she goes to work in the harvest field of her one and only Jewish Kinsman Redeemer, until he called her up out of that field to be his bride. Obviously, she is the greatest picture of the church (the Gentile Bride of the Jewish Kinsman Redeemer from Bethlehem — who is the Bread of life!) in the entire Old Testament. From a prophetic standpoint, the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31 finds her fulfillment in us, the Bride of Christ! Once we make that connection, this chapter takes on a whole new significance, not just for ladies, but for every person who is "espoused" to Jesus Christ as their "one husband!" (2 Cor. 11:2)

With that connection in mind, check out verse 28: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." And notice how this verse points to a time when all of God's "children" will "arise up." That "rising up" is specifically spelled out in 1 Thessalonians 4:11–17. It is an event we call the Rapture.

And once we are raptured ("caught up"), the Bible teaches that we will then all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. At the Judgment Seat, all of the people God has graciously permitted us to win to Christ (i.e. our "spiritual children!") will call us "blessed." My, what a joyful and humbling experience that will be! But, not to compare, however, with the joy and humility for those to whom our "husband," the Lord Jesus Christ, will "praise," because He regards them a "virtuous woman." What greater joy could there possibly be, than on that day, for our "husband," the Lord Jesus Christ, to "praise us," by saying, "Well, done!" (Matt. 25:21)

If we would simply allow the Book of Proverbs to be our wise and "Wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6) for living life, by the time we apply God's wisdom as it is revealed in the first 30 chapters, we would find that we had actually become the "Virtuous Woman" of chapter 31. The question of Proverbs 31:10 is a good one: "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Sadly, the answer to that question in these last days of the Laodicean Church Period is... NOT MANY! She is definitely hard to find. She is extremely rare. She is almost extinct. Would our Lord consider you a "virtuous woman?"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE ONE WHO DESCENDED FROM AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN – Prov. 30:4 (John 3:13 – Jesus came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Who is (now) in heaven.)

WEEK 30, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: ECCLESIASTES 1-6

OVERVIEW:

The vanity or emptiness of life under the sun (apart from God); the vanity in life's cycles (chapter 1); the vanity in life's pursuits (chapter 2); the vanity of time (chapter 3); the vanity of social status (chapter 4); the vanity of religion and riches (chapter 5); the vanity of a long life (chapter 6).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we pick up in our journey through the Bible in the Book of Ecclesiastes today, let's begin by talking about the title of the Book. The word "Ecclesiastes" is actually from the Greek word, "ecclesia," which means "a called out assembly." In theological realms, the study of "the Church" is called, "Ecclesiology." And interestingly enough, the human author of this Book repeatedly refers to himself as "the Preacher." (1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8,9,10) Now, we know by the other descriptive phrases that the author uses to refer to himself (i.e. the "son of David" and "king in Jerusalem" — 1:1; the one who had "gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem" — 1:16; and the one who had "set in order many proverbs" — 12:9), that from an historical standpoint, the author is none other than Solomon.

But how interesting it is, that here is a Book in our Old Testament, written by the "son of David, king in Jerusalem" — "preaching," as it were, to His "called out assembly." Could it possibly be, that from a prophetic standpoint, our Lord Jesus Christ ("the Son of David, King of Jerusalem") is actually "preaching" a message to those of us in His "church" — about what is really important in life? And how interesting it is, that in these last days of the Church Age — one of the key difficulties (i.e. sins!) found in Christ's Church is the misprioritization of time we spend chasing after things we think will cause us to find meaning in life — which are invariably, the wrong things! And are, in fact, the very things for which Solomon was chasing!

To help fit the Book of Ecclesiastes into the big picture of where we find ourselves in the Bible, understand that whereas the Book of Psalms reveals the HEART of GOD, and the Book of Proverbs reveals the MIND of CHRIST, the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals to us the MIND of the SPIRIT. It is a Book that shows the great contrast between the workings of the spirit of MAN — and the Spirit of GOD.

As mentioned above, the Book was written by King Solomon, the son of King David, in his old age after a life full of selfish living, worldly pursuits and many regrets. He writes this Book, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to spare us the bitterness of learning by our own experience that nothing "under the sun" (a phrase Solomon repeats 29 times in 27 verses in this Book!) really satisfies the human heart apart from God. This small book in the Old Testament gives us undeniable evidence of our need for a Savior in order to provide us a purpose for living on earth. Without Jesus Christ, and the mission for which He left us to accomplish, we also would be living empty lives without any meaning, as Solomon so eloquently describes for us in this Book.

The basic theme of the Book of Ecclesiastes can actually be summed up in one verse found in Jeremiah 2:13: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." That was precisely Solomon's problem — and continues to be the problem of many believers (dare we say "most" believers today?). From this verse we learn three things about people in general:

- 1) They are EMPTY (because they have no God!)
- 2) They are STUBBORN (because they are determined to be filled with something!)
- 3) They will ultimately be DISAPPOINTED (because they cannot be filled!)

Ecclesiastes is a Book written about things that do not have the ability to satisfy, and yet, are the very things for which men in every generation continue to seek. (See John 4:13) Solomon lets us know that men will invariably seek...

- Human wisdom. (1:16–18)
- Pleasure. (2:1–3)
- Superiority. (2:15)
- Hard work/labor. (2:19–21)
- Alcohol. (2:3)
- Possessions. (2:4–6)
- Power. (2:7)
- Money. (2:8–9, 5:10–11)
- Music. (2:8)

Solomon was correct in concluding that in our labor "under the sun" — "all is vanity!" It's completely meaningless. It's totally useless. Thankfully, Jesus came to meet our every need — and to give us an eternal purpose for our lives here on earth. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says... "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOUR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD!" Hallelujah! May we spend our lives faithfully seeking our Lord Jesus Christ — and passionately carrying out His mission!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE SON OF DAVID — Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Matt. 1:1— Jesus Christ is the Son of David)

As THE KING OF JERUSALEM — Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Psalm 2:6)

WEEK 30, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: ECCLESIASTES 7-12

OVERVIEW:

The vanity of wisdom apart from God (chapter 7); the vanity of hoping in government (chapter 8); the vanity of life's unfairness (chapter 9); the vanity of foolish living (chapter 10); the vanity of selfish living (chapter 11); the vanity of forgetting God (chapter 12); Solomon's conclusion of the whole matter.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we make our way into Ecclesiastes 7 in today's reading, perhaps we should note that we are entering into the 666th chapter in the Bible. If you are not familiar with the number 6-6-6, it is the number of that "man" that Revelation 13:18 refers to as the "Beast" — the "man" that 2 Thessalonians 2:8 refers to as "that Wicked"... and 1 John 2 refers to as the "Antichrist." And, coincidentally enough, note that this 666th chapter just happens to inform us that "there is a WICKED MAN that lonongeth his life in his wickedness!" (Ecc. 7:15) And, coincidentally enough, Revelation 13 just happens to inform us that "that Wicked" man, the "Beast" or "Antichrist" is going to receive a life-ending head wound at the end of the first 3 1/2 years in the Tribulation Period, and yet, he will "prolong his life in his wickedness" — as Satan literally inhabits his body, and continues his rampage for the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation Period, as Satan in human flesh.

And wouldn't you know, that in this same 666th chapter in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 7), not only do we "just happen" to find the "WICKED MAN," but we also "just happen" to find his female counterpart from the Book of Proverbs — the "STRANGE WOMAN!" She is the "woman" that Revelation 17 says is riding on the back of the "BEAST"... or, "that WICKED MAN!" In other words, she is the "harlot and fornicating religious system" that the ANTICHRIST will use to unite the world religiously during the Tribulation Period! (Rev. 17:3–6) You can't make this stuff up! And with that in mind, check out the warning Ecclesiastes 7:26 gives concerning her: "And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her." Check it out — a perfect description of what will take place religiously on this planet during the Tribulation!

Though we are most definitely commanded by God to "incline our ears unto wisdom" (Pro. 2:2), Solomon lets us know in 7:23 that even acquiring wisdom will not bring us fulfillment in life if it is done apart from God. And while we are commanded to seek it, the fact is, real wisdom (God's wisdom, as opposed to "the wisdom of this world" — 1 Cor. 1:20–21; 2:6; 3:19) is not actually the result of seeking wisdom — it is a by-product of seeking God! (Ecc. 2:26; Eph. 1:17; Jam. 1:5)

Chapter 8 deals with the vanity of hoping in government or politics to make everlasting change. If this world will ever experience real change, it will be because believers in Jesus Christ take both the "privilege" and "responsibility" of our entrustment with the gospel (1 Thes. 2:4), and faithfully carry out our mission, seeing God change hearts — one soul at a time! The laws of government and/or the policies of politicians and other government leaders can only change behavior. Only God Himself has the power to change people's minds and lives — by changing their hearts through the new birth! No law on earth is perfect, but Psalm 19:7 declares that God's is! No man's judgments are

altogether true and righteous, but Psalm 19:9 declares that God's are! Our hope must be placed in God and His glorious gospel — not the government!

Chapter 8 and verse 11 is worth noting on several fronts. The verse states that “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Note that the principle revealed in this verse has key applications...

1. In a NATION.

This principle provides a perfect explanation as to why the death penalty in America and many other countries in the world is not an effective deterrent to crime. The average wait on death row is over 10 years! Not quite what you'd call being "executed speedily," that's for sure!

2. In a HOME.

Another practical application of this verse has to do with the disciplining of our own children. Rather than disciplining at the point of infraction, most parents allow their child's disobedience/wrong doing to cause them to become more and more frustrated and angry, while continuously hurling idle threats concerning consequence. Our failure to discipline "speedily," sets our children on a collision course for their hearts to become “fully set in them to do evil.”

3. In a CHURCH.

A pastor/leader always needs to give extreme carefulness to make certain that he has properly assessed what appears to be some type of "evil work" being carried out by an individual, or a group of individuals in the church, lest he get the facts wrong. Acting in haste without careful assessment can damage people — not to mention, do significant damage to the pastor's on-going leadership. However, once a situation has been properly and biblically assessed to be an "evil work," it is incumbent upon the leader to deal with the situation "speedily," lest the problem fester and spread like a cancer throughout the fellowship.

As we make our way into chapter 12, Solomon has some choice words of wisdom to impart to young people. Many times, young people get the idea that since they "have their entire lives before them," (or so they think! — Pro. 27:1) they can live for themselves NOW — and get serious about God and His mission LATER... after they've done the things they want to do... after they've "sown their wild oats," as it were. In chapter 12 and verse 1, Solomon is trying to let us know just how whack that kind of thinking actually is! Solomon dogmatically states and pleads with young people to: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Solomon is purporting in this chapter the audaciousness of offering to the holy, Creator God our "left-overs," rather than our very best! In stark contrast to presenting ourselves to the Lord as a strapping and vivacious young man or woman with unending promise, potential and possibility (12:1a), in 12:1b–7, Solomon paints a picture of us presenting ourselves for the Lord's use at a time in life when we are so decrepit, that...

- Life, itself, is a burden. (12:1b)

- We have one health crisis after another. (12:2)
- Our hands are shaking and our knees are bowing and weak. (12:3a,b)
- Our teeth are falling out. (12:3c)
- We're losing our sight. (12:3d)
- We're losing our hearing. (12:4a)
- We awaken from sleep at the slightest sound. (12:b)
- Our voice is deep and weak. (12:4c)
- We become afraid of heights, and all kinds of other minor things. (12:5a,b)
- Our hair turns white... just before turning loose! (12:5c)
- The smallest things become a hassle. (12:5d)
- The desires that used to drive us are no longer there because we're about to die. (12:5e,f)
- Our body, in general, is just falling apart, until it is thrown in the ground and returns to dust. (12:6–7)

Oh, may the words of Solomon that come to us by Divine inspiration arrest the very soul of every young man and young woman today: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth!"

In light of all that Solomon experienced in his life "under the sun," Solomon concludes that everything in life all comes down to this..."Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (12:13) After being born again, those two simple pieces of advice will take us far in our journey!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE POOR WISE MAN — Ecclesiastes 9:14–16 (2 Corinthians 8:9 tells us that Jesus Christ became poor, so that He, by His grace, might make us rich.)

As THE CREATOR — Ecclesiastes 12:1 (John 1:1–3,14)

WEEK 30, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: SONG OF SOLOMON 1-8

OVERVIEW:

The song of all songs that describes the love between a man and a woman. SCENE 1: In The King's Palace. (1:1–2:5) SCENE 2: In The Young Maiden's Bedroom. (2:6–3:5) SCENE 3: The King's Entrance. (3:6–11) SCENE 4: In The Young Maiden's Bedroom. (4:1–5:1) SCENE 5: In The Presence of the King. (5:2–7:13) SCENE 6: In The Beloved Shepherd's Town. (8:1–14)

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we make our way into the Song of Solomon today, note first in 1:1, that Solomon refers to this Book as the "Song of Songs." The construction of this phrase is how God often chooses to identify something or someone in His Word that is supreme, the highest, and/or the best — as in, the "holy of holies," the "King of kings," the "Lord of lords," and in this case, the "Song of Songs." Though Solomon had composed a total of 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), it is apparent by Solomon's introduction in 1:1, that he regarded this one as the greatest of them all. And no wonder! By virtue of the fact that this song is included in the canon of Scripture, we know that it was actually written under divine inspiration! This song was dramatically different than the other 1004 songs Solomon wrote, in that he wrote these words as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21)

This "song" is actually a love story that involves three main characters. The first character is a beautiful young maiden (the "fairest among women" — 1:8; 5:9; 6:1) who appears to come from an oppressive family. (1:5–6) The second character is the man of her dreams, a simple shepherd (1:7), yet, he is the maiden's "beloved," who has stolen her heart. (1:13–14) The third character is none other than the wealthy and mighty king Solomon, who is renown for his obsession for beautiful women — and for getting whomever he wished! (1 Kings 11:3)

The storyline of the song is somewhat difficult to follow in its written form, because it is often hard to distinguish which of the three characters in the story is actually speaking. Were the trio of characters actually singing this song, it would be obvious.

The essence of the story (song) is basically this: on one of Solomon's journeys, he meets a beautiful young lady, and is so smitten by her that he exercises his self-invented "kingly privilege" in taking her to his palace. The young maiden, however, is not impressed with his wealth nor his words, and has no interest whatsoever in having a relationship with the king. She is already madly in love with a young shepherd from "back home." Though the "daughters of Jerusalem" (which is a nice way of referring to the women in Solomon's harem — 2:7; 3:5; 8:4) try to persuade her to turn her affection toward Solomon — she can only think of her true love, and desires only to be with him. On several occasions, Solomon seeks to win her affection — but to no avail. She is passionate only for her "beloved." Finally, Solomon sees that it is futile, and frees her to return to her family — and the man of her dreams.

In navigating through the Book, seeing it as a musical/drama with the following six "Scenes" — and distinguishing the following "Singers/Actors" may prove extremely beneficial.

SCENE 1 — In The King's Palace

- 1:1 – The Title of the Song (Musical)
- 1:2–1:4a – The Young Maiden (her part ends with the word "chambers.")

- 1:4b – (Chorus)
- 1:5–7 – The Young Maiden
- 1:8 – (Chorus)
- 1:9–10 – The King
- 1:11 – (Chorus)
- 1:12–14 – The Young Maiden
- 1:15 – The King
- 1:16–2:1 – The Young Maiden
- 2:2 – The King
- 2:3–5 – The Young Maiden

SCENE 2 — In The Young Maiden’s Bedroom

- 2:6–3:5 – The Young Maiden

SCENE 3 – The King’s Entrance

- 3:6–11 – (Chorus)

SCENE 4 — In The Young Maiden’s Bedroom

- 4:1–5 – The King
- 4:6 – The Young Maiden
- 4:7–15 – The Beloved Shepherd
- 4:16 – The Young Maiden
- 5:1 – The Beloved Shepherd

SCENE 5 — In The Presence of the King

- 5:2–8 – The Young Maiden
- 5:9 – (Chorus)
- 5:10–16 – The Young Maiden
- 6:1 – (Chorus)
- 6:2–3 – The Young Maiden
- 6:4–9 – The King
- 6:10 – (Chorus)
- 6:11–12 – The King
- 6:13a – (Chorus – ends with “upon thee.”)
- 6:13b – The Young Maiden
- 7:1–5 – (Chorus)
- 7:6–9a – The King
- 7:9b–13 – The Young Maiden

SCENE 6 — In The Beloved Shepherd's Town

- 8:1–4 – The Young Maiden
- 8:5a – (Chorus – ends with “beloved”)
- 8:5b–8:7 – The Beloved Shepherd
- 8:8–9 – (Chorus)
- 8:10–12 – The Young Maiden
- 8:13– The Beloved Shepherd
- 8:14 – The Young Maiden

In this story, Solomon is a picture or type of the world — who tries anything and everything to lure the young maiden (“bride-to-be” — 2 Cor. 11:2) away from the “beloved Shepherd.” As believers, we are the bride of Christ, and like the young maiden, our affection for our “Beloved” should be so all-encompassing that we would never allow anything in this world to come between us! We are commanded by God to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) — just as we are commanded not to love the world, or even be its friend! (Jam. 4:4; 1 Joh. 2:15) May we remember daily, the faithfulness and love our beloved Savior/Shepherd has shown and shows us — and return that same kind of faithfulness and love to Him!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE SHEPHERD — Song of Solomon 1:7 (Jesus is the Shepherd of our souls — 1 Pet. 2:25)

As THE BELOVED — Song of Solomon 1:14; 2:8; 8:5 (Mat. 3:17; 12:18)

WEEK 30, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 1-6

OVERVIEW:

Israel's backslidden condition; Isaiah's exhortation for repentance; the coming of Christ's kingdom; Jerusalem's glorious future; God's judgment upon sinners; Isaiah's vision of God's holiness.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Book of Isaiah is one of the most intriguing Books of the entire Bible. There are either some very strange "coincidences" found in this Book — or there are some very incredible things God reveals to us through it!

Is it mere coincidence that the Bible is comprised of 66 Books — and that the Book of Isaiah is comprised of 66 chapters?

Is it mere coincidence that Isaiah chapter 1 begins, as does the Book of Genesis, talking about the "heaven" and the "earth?" (Gen. 1:1 c.f. Isa. 1:2)

Is it mere coincidence that chapter 40 of Isaiah, corresponding to the 40th Book of the Bible (or the first book of the New Testament) — talks about, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," just as does the Gospel of Matthew? (Isa. 40:3 c.f. Matt 3:1–3)

Is it mere coincidence that Isaiah chapter 66, corresponding, of course, to the last Book of the Bible (the Book of Revelation) — talks about the "new heaven and the new earth," just as does Revelation 21? (Isa. 66:22 c.f. Rev. 21:17)

Is it mere coincidence that the first 39 chapters of Isaiah (i.e. representative of the Old Testament) is so distinctly different in content from the last 27 chapters (i.e. representative of the New Testament), that many have insisted that there are actually two "Isaiah's" that actually authored this Book? The first 39 chapters, coincidentally enough, point to man's tremendous need for salvation — and the last 27 chapters point to God's gracious provision of it!

Wow! Obviously, we're not dealing here with mere "coincidences!" The Book of Isaiah is actually a microcosm of the Bible. If you are unfamiliar with the term "microcosm," it simply means "a miniature," or "a small and yet perfect representation of the whole." Because New York City has residents from literally every nation on earth, we could say that it is a "microcosm" of the world. Because the capstone of a pyramid is simply a miniature of the entire pyramid, we could say that the capstone is a "microcosm" of the pyramid itself. Again, the Book of Isaiah is a perfect, miniature representation — or microcosm of the entire Bible!

Note also that the Book of Isaiah begins the Books of the Bible referred to as "the Prophets." (Luk. 24:27,44) Of course, "the Prophets" are divided into two main categories or headings: the Major Prophets, and the Minor Prophets. What determines the distinction between their being "Major" or "Minor" is not the significance of their content, but very simply the amount (or length) of their content. The Books comprising the Major Prophets are simply longer than the Books comprising the Minor Prophets.

The theme of Isaiah is the same as in all of the Prophetic Books: it is "the day of the Lord," or the second coming of Christ. Regardless of the situations that Israel was facing... regardless of the sins that Israel was committing...

regardless of the subject of which the prophet was preaching... the theme in the Prophetic Books always the same! It always ends with and/or is pointing to "the day of the Lord!"

Note also that the time of Isaiah's prophecy is approximately 814 to 769 B.C., and takes place during the last half of the Book of 2 Kings, chapters 16 through 25. Primarily, Isaiah writes to the two southern tribes.

Israel's spiritual condition in chapter 1 is a familiar one in Israel's history. Once again, they have allowed themselves to spiral downward into apostasy. Note that Isaiah actually uses seven different terms or phrases in verse 4 to describe their backslidden state: 1) "sinful;" 2) "laden with iniquity;" 3) "evildoers;" 4) "corrupters;" 5) "forsaken the Lord;" 6) "provoked the Holy One;" 7) "gone away backward." The pitiful thing about it, however, is that though these terms were accurately descriptive of Israel's true spiritual condition, it did not stop the people from going through the motions of all kinds of activity that made them think they were doing okay spiritually! Despite God's graphic commentary of their pathetic spiritual condition, they continued all of their religious observances: the feasts, the sacrifices, the new moons and the sabbaths long after they had any meaning in their hearts or bearing on their lives. If I may paraphrase, God says to Israel through Isaiah in 1:10–15: "I'm sick of all of your religiousness! Don't bring me any more of your vain oblations! I can't stand it! You're wearing me out with all of this stuff you're doing! I'm going to close my eyes so I don't even have to see any more of your hypocrisies! When you lift up your hands in prayer, all I see is all of the sinful things you've been doing with them! Spare Me!"

It is quite interesting to observe how much this particular passage in Isaiah 1 mirrors the letter our Lord Jesus Christ wrote to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14–22 — describing the spiritual condition of His church in our day. God's people come to church in the Laodicean Church Period — looking the part... faithfully participating in the offering... standing and singing the songs... taking copious notes... nodding our heads in all of the right places... saying "amen" in all the right places... and yet, our hearts are not in it! Somehow, all of these things we do on Sundays, have little, if any, bearing on what will take place in our lives Monday through Saturday!

God's answer in Isaiah's day, just as it is now, is "Get your heart right! And then, get your heart into it!" God says in verses 16–20 of Chapter 1: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." The key parallel passage in the New Testament is, no doubt, 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.

Notice a key phrase in Isaiah 1:19. God says, "If ye be willing AND obedient." Perhaps the key word in this phrase is the word "AND." Laodicean churches are filled with many "WILLING" people. They're WILLING to serve in a children's class... they're WILLING to be involved in the upkeep of the facilities... they're WILLING to offer the Lord a gift of love upon the first day of the week... they're WILLING to do any number of things! The only problem is — they just seldom ever "DO" any of these things! WILLING? Yes! OBEDIENT? No!

On the other hand, Laodicea is filled with "OBEDIENT" people. They would never think about not obeying Hebrews 10:25 by missing a service... they would never not obey 1 Corinthians 16:2 by not participating in the offering... they would never miss taking notes during the message on Sunday morning... they would never not "DO" a lot of things! The only problem is, their OBEDIENCE is strictly a matter of DUTY! It is ritualistic, legalistic, hypocritical, and the result of self-disciplining and suppressing their real desires, and "cranking out" spiritual-looking activity — rather

than the joyous, passionate, heart-felt, Spirit-led response of a "WILLING" heart. Oh, may we surrender ourselves to be both "WILLING... AND OBEDIENT!"

As we start down the path of "the Prophets" in today's reading, may I suggest that you underline in your Bible every specific reference to "the day of the Lord" (the Tribulation/Second Coming of Christ/the Millennium). I'll list the ones I see each day, but it'll be a whole lot more engaging and valuable if you underline them as you find them yourself first. By doing this, you'll understand in a whole new way why the first day of our 52 Weeks of Pursuit began by emphasizing that "the day of the Lord" is the theme of the Bible!

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

2:2	–	"And it shall come to pass in the last days"
2:11	–	"in that day"
2:12	–	"For the day of the Lord"
2:17	–	"in that day"
2:19	–	"when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth"
2:20	–	"in that day"
2:21	–	"when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth"
3:7	–	"in that day"
3:18	–	"in that day"
4:1	–	"in that day"
4:2	–	"in that day"
5:30	–	"in that day"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS — Isaiah 2:2–4 (The Lord Jesus Christ... shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing — 2 Timothy 4:1.)

As the BRANCH OF THE LORD, BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS — Isaiah 4:2 (Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Isa. 11:1.)

WEEK 31, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 7-12

OVERVIEW:

Isaiah's message for King Ahaz; Christ's birth and Kingdom foretold; Assyria to be broken; the promise of Israel's restoration; Christ, the Branch.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The chapters in today's reading (Isaiah 7–12) are sometimes referred to as "The Book of Immanuel" because of their clear prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind as we continue through this Book, that Isaiah prophesied during the time period that is chronicled in 2 Kings 16–25, during the reigns of King Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

Also keep in mind that the nation of Israel became divided after the death of Solomon — the 10 northern tribes being referred to as Israel, and the two southern tribes being referred to as Judah. The capital city of Israel was Samaria, and the capital city of Judah was Jerusalem. Though Isaiah's ministry was centered in Jerusalem, his messages influenced both the northern and the southern kingdoms.

As we pick up in chapter 7 today, understand that because of Assyria's menacing power, the surrounding nations wanted to form a coalition to stand against her. King Ahaz of Judah, however, refused to join the confederacy, so Syria and Israel actually joined forces to attack Judah to try to force her to cooperate with them. (7:1-2) 2 Kings 16:1–9 lets us know that rather than trusting the Lord to help, Ahaz was secretly negotiating with Assyria to protect to him. While Ahaz was inspecting the safety of the water supply, God sent Isaiah and his son, Shearjashub (meaning "the remnant shall return"), to give the king a message of confidence and hope. They tell him not to fear, because Israel and Syria would both be "broken" within 65 years. In the fulfillment of the prophecy, Assyria defeated Syria (Damascus) in 732 B.C., and defeated Israel in 721 B.C.

In 7:10–16, God wanted Ahaz to ask for a sign to confirm the prophecy, but Ahaz piously refused. The Lord then determined to give a sign to the entire "house of David." (7:13) The sign is delineated in 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." As with many of the prophecies in the Old Testament, there is actually a "double fulfillment" included in this sign. In other words, to affirm and confirm that the prophecy would be fulfilled in the future, God would often allow there to be a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in more of the immediate present. That seems to be the case in the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. This is an obvious reference to virgin birth of Jesus Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb, Mary having never known a man. (Luke 1:31–35) The more immediate partial fulfillment of the prophecy, however, was that a child was to be born to Isaiah's wife — as detailed in Isaiah 8:1–8. Apparently, Isaiah's first wife, the mother of Shearjashub had died, and Isaiah had taken a new wife shortly after giving this prophecy, and the virgin he took to wife gave birth to a child by the name of Mahershalalhashbaz (meaning, "speed to the spoil, haste to the prey") within the next year.

From 7:17 through 10:34, Isaiah is preaching to apostate Israel, warning the northern kingdom that Assyria would come upon them and completely annihilate them. It was at this very juncture that Mahershalalhashbaz was born — his very name pointing to the soon destruction of Samaria and Syria. (8:4)

In chapter 9:1–7, Isaiah gives a second prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. (Compare this prophecy with Matt. 4:13–16.) In 9:8 through 10:34, Isaiah continues to warn Israel of her impending ruin. At the same time, he warns Assyria not to become proud of her victories, recognizing that she would simply be a tool in the hand of God — and that she, too, would soon be defeated.

Note also in this section, that Assyria is a type of the Antichrist (“The Assyrian” – 14:25; 19:23; 30:31; 31:8; 52:4; Eze. 31:3; Hos. 5:13; 11:5; Mic. 5:5–6) who will gather the nations of the world together in battle against Israel at Armageddon at the end of the Great Tribulation!

In chapters 11 and 12, Isaiah prophesies that Israel and Judah will unite in the Kingdom.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO “THE DAY OF THE LORD”:

7:18	–	“in that day”
7:21	–	“in that day”
7:23	–	“in that day”
9:7	–	“and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it”
9:1	–	“in one day”
10:3	–	“in the day of visitation”
10:17	–	“in one day”
10:20	–	“in that day”
10:27	–	“in that day”
10:32	–	“that day”
11:10	–	“in that day”
11:11	–	“in that day”
11:16	–	“in that day”
12:1	–	“in that day”
12:4	–	“in that day”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the SON WHO IS BORN OF VIRGIN, CALLED IMMANUEL — Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:26-35.)

In the CHILD UPON WHOM THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER — Isaiah 9:6 (Rev. 11:15.)

WEEK 31, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 13-18

OVERVIEW:

The judgment of Babylon; the judgment of Assyria; the judgment of Philistia; the judgment of Moab; the judgment of Damascus; the judgment of Ethiopia.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we move into chapter 13 today, we find ourselves in the midst of a transition. Whereas chapters 1–12 dealt with judgments specifically related to Judah and Jerusalem, chapters 13–23 broaden the prophecies of judgment to include the Gentile nations.

Because Babylon was the nation that destroyed Jerusalem and took the people of Judah captive in 586 B.C., it is no coincidence that Babylon is at the top of God's list of the Gentile nations to receive the execution of His judgment! In 13:1–5, God prophesies concerning those who would actually wield His judgment, saying, "they come from a far country." In an historical sense, those "from a far country" were the people of Persia, whose nation was positioned approximately 350 miles east of Babylon. In a prophetic sense, those who will "come from a far country" to execute judgment will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ and the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11–16), and will take place on this planet... "in that day" — "the day of the Lord!" (13:6,9,13)

Once God has executed His judgment "in that day," Isaiah says to the nation of Israel in 14:3 — "And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve." Obviously, this is a reference to the peace and rest Israel will experience during the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you just have to love the way God describes what it will be like when His kingdom has finally been established in 14:7: "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing." Hallelujah! What a day that is going to be! May we all say with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

Just as in Ezekiel 28:11–17, where the Lord was not just speaking to the King of Tyrus, but was also speaking to the power that was working in him and through him (none other than Eden's first "King," Lucifer himself!), Isaiah 14:8–23 does the same basic thing. The passage has application to the king of Babylon, but is obviously also referring to the satanic power working behind and through that earthly king, and provides us with vital information concerning Lucifer's fall. Notice in 14:13–14, Lucifer's infamous five "I wills:"

- "I will ascend into heaven."
- "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."
- "I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north."
- "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."
- "I will be like the most High."

Each of these blasphemous declarations are tremendously significant and teach us many things about the location of heaven, and the position Lucifer once held. Notice that the presence of our Lord in heaven is way far out in a "northerly" direction (check out Psalm 75:6; 48:2; Job 26:7; 37:22), far "above the heights of the clouds," and "above the stars of God." Notice also, that Lucifer had a "throne"(!!!) — and comparing Isaiah 14:14 with Ezekiel 28:13, that throne just happened to be in "Eden, the garden of God!" Hmmm.

Of significant importance is Lucifer's fifth "I will," because it foreshadows for us what has been Satan's mode of operation all through the annals of human history. He is, first and foremost, a "deceiver!" Revelation 12:9 even identifies him as the one "which deceiveth the whole world!" Listen to that! He "deceiveth the whole world!" You see, Satan has been successful in his evil campaign, not by presenting himself as Satan so he can turn the world into a bunch of Satan worshippers, or try to get all the inhabitants of the earth to hate God or to set themselves against God. No, what he seeks to do is COUNTERFEIT God — by actually POSING to BE GOD... and through RELIGION, deceive people into thinking that they are actually following God... and loving God... and obeying God! We must be very discerning — especially in these last days! (1 Tim.4:1; 1 John 2:18) Don't ever lose sight of the fact that Satan has always been impassioned to "be LIKE the most High!"

And this may sound a little "back-woody" to some, but if I had a Bible that didn't identify "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12, I'd get me one that did! Satan has done a masterful job of writing himself right out of almost every church history book on the market, and in the past several decades, he's also written himself out of almost every Bible on the market! Some Bibles refer to him in Isaiah 14:12, not as "Lucifer, son of the morning," but as the "Morning Star" — some actually even having cross references in the margin pointing people to 2 Peter 1:26, and then to Rev. 22:16, where the "Morning Star" is specifically identified as our very Lord Jesus Christ Himself!!! And again I say, we must be very discerning, and fully acquainted with how the Bible says Satan operates!

Obviously, in the context, Isaiah 14:27 is talking about what God purposed concerning Babylon and Israel. Devotionally, however, it is a tremendous verse that also applies to anything and everything God has promised that is in accordance with His purposes for us as New Testament believers: "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

In chapters 15 and 16, Isaiah prophesies the destruction of Moab. Though it definitely had an application for what would be happening in the near future in Isaiah's day, don't miss the fact that it also has application for what would be happening in the far distant future! Isaiah 16:5 refers to the time when Moab will seek refuge in Judah (16:3–4), and the rescue will come from the Lord Jesus Christ as He rises to his throne at His Second Coming, "judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness." (Compare Isa. 16:5 with 9:7; 11:4; 28:6; 32:16; 33:5; 42:1,3–4; 51:5). Recognize, also, that though the prophetic application of this verse was in "the far DISTANT FUTURE" for Isaiah and those living in HIS time — its fulfillment will, no doubt, be "in the NEAR FUTURE" for those living in THIS time!

Chapters 17 and 18 prophesy both the destruction of Damascus and Ethiopia, and yet, is filled with verbal "icons," as it were, that point to the time of Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation Period, and the beginning of His Millennial reign. (17:4,7,9,11; 18:4)

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

13:6	–	"the day of the Lord"
13:9	–	"the day of the Lord"
13:13	–	"in the day"
14:3	–	"in the day"
17:4	–	"in that day"
17:7	–	"at that day"
17:9	–	"in that day"
17:11	–	"in the day"
18:4	–	"I will take my rest"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO WILL SIT ON THE THRONE OF DAVID — Isaiah 16:5 (Luke 1:32–33)

WEEK 31, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 19-25

OVERVIEW:

The judgment of Egypt; the judgment of Babylon; the judgment of Edom; the judgment of Arabia; the judgment of Jerusalem; the judgment of Tyre; the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom; the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Isaiah prophesies to the judgment of Egypt as we come into chapters 19 and 20 today. He writes of the "Lord riding upon a swift cloud" coming in judgment into Egypt (19:1) — wreaking such havoc and upheaval that it sends Egypt into a massive civil war. (19:2) Once again, though there was certainly an historical fulfillment of this prophecy in Isaiah's day, it is also pointing to a different day... specifically, "THAT day!" What day? "The day of the Lord!" The day of our Lord Jesus Christ's Second Coming!

Recognize that the Assyrian judgment of Egypt that we are reading about today is simply a prefigure of the judgment our Lord will execute upon Egypt in the near future! Isaiah sees a time when the land of Judah is preeminent in the world (19:17), and both the Egyptians and the Assyrians will be subject to Israel's Messiah and worship Him. (19:18–23) During the Millennium, Isaiah sees these three former enemies, Israel, Egypt and Assyria, all living in harmony, and blessed of the Lord. (19:24–25)

In chapter 20, God uses Isaiah to be a physical object lesson to warn the people of Judah who were seeking an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. God tells Isaiah to remove his outer garment and his sandals to picture what would actually become of the Egyptians and Ethiopians: the fact that they would become humiliated and destitute ("naked" and "barefooted"). He says that the Assyrians would expose the "buttocks" of the Egyptians (20:4), and because Judah had sought an alliance with them, that they, too, would be ashamed, and realize that rather than put their trust in Egypt, they should have trusted the Lord!

As chapter 21 begins, notice that "the desert of the sea" is a reference to the Babylonian plain by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Babylon is identified in 21:9 as the object of this prophecy, and once again, it becomes obvious that there is both an historic and prophetic fulfillment of God's prophecy through Isaiah, as the words, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (21:9) are repeated in Revelation 14:8 and 18:2, to be fulfilled at the time of the Second Coming. Verse 10 lets us know that Babylon's destruction will spell freedom for God's people, Israel, who will have been "threshed" (i.e. beaten down, or afflicted). The remainder of chapter 21 deals with the judgment of Edom (21:11–12) and the judgment of Arabia. (21:13–17)

Having prophesied God's judgment upon the nations surrounding Jerusalem, in chapter 22, Isaiah prophesies God's judgment upon Jerusalem. It is called, "the valley of vision" in 22:1 because Jerusalem was surrounded by valleys on three sides. From an historic standpoint, this is the judgment found in 2 Kings 25, as Babylon invaded Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar in 588–586 B.C. Notice, however, the tell-tale signs of a futuristic fulfillment at the Second Coming of Christ in 22:8,12,20 and 25 by the now familiar phrase — "in that day!"

In chapter 23, God prophesies that Tyre, the commercial trading center of the Mediterranean world would be destroyed because of her pride. This prophecy was fulfilled in an historical sense by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. when he laid waste the city.

Note the word "Behold" in 24:1. The usage of the word "Behold" in scripture always points to a future event. What Isaiah is describing in chapter 24 is the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. In the first six verses, Isaiah describes a universal judgment of the entire earth. The terms he uses to describe this judgment in verse 1 are tremendously graphic: "Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." In verses 13–16, Isaiah points to the fact that the godly remnant that survives the Tribulation Period will praise the Lord for His righteous judgments. The Apostle John sees the same fulfillment in Revelation 7:1–10; 15:3–4; 16:5,7; 19:2. The remainder of the world will be judged in a horrific fashion, as described in 24:17–23.

In chapter 25, the millennium is described as a feast, or a banquet at which Gentiles from all over the entire world will bow their knee and worship Israel's king who sits on His throne in Jerusalem, or "in this mountain." (25:6–7,10)

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 19:16 – "in that day"
- 19:18 – "in that day"
- 19:19 – "in that day"
- 19:21 – "in that day"
- 19:23 – "in that day"
- 19:24 – "in that day"
- 20:6 – "in that day"
- 22:5 – "it is a day of trouble"
- 22:8 – "in that day"
- 22:12 – "in that day"
- 22:20 – "in that day"
- 22:25 – "in that day"
- 23:14 – "in that day"
- 24:21 – "in that day"
- 25:9 – "in that day"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In ELIAKIM, MASTER OF HEZEKIAH'S HOUSEHOLD — Isaiah 22:20–22 (What is said of Eliakim is true of Christ, Who is the Master over the household of faith, and the one Who is the Possessor of the "Key of David" — Rev. 3:7; Heb. 3:6; Gal. 6:10.)

WEEK 31, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 26-31

OVERVIEW:

Worship in the Millennial Kingdom; praise for the preservation of Israel; woe against the drunkards of Ephraim; woe against Jerusalem; woe against the schemers; woe against those who trust in Egypt; woe against those who trust in Egypt's military defense.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapters 26 and 27 describe the worship that will be taking place in the Millennial Kingdom. Chapter 26 begins with the words, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah," and then it goes on to give us the actual words of the song! The song is a song of praise to the Lord for His glorious protection. The godly will enter into the "strong city" of Jerusalem, but be aware, the strength of the city is not because of her physical walls — it is the spiritual walls of salvation imparted to its occupants by the Lord Himself! (26:1–2) Because of their trust in the Lord and their meditation on the Lord, the Lord blesses them with "perfect peace." (26:3) Don't miss that verse 3 is also a biblical prescription for experiencing that kind of peace now! Oh, may our minds totally and passionately be "stayed on the Lord"... causing us to totally and passionately "trust in the Lord!"

The song continues in chapter 26 with praise for the Lord's judgment against His enemies. (26:5–11) In verses 12–15, the song declares praise for God's permanent victory over His enemies; and verses 16–21 declare praise to the Lord for His deliverance from suffering. Isaiah is describing Israel's suffering in the Tribulation, and is giving to them the glorious promise of resurrection! (26:19)

The song continues in chapter 27, praising God for the slaying of Leviathan. Israel's enemies are pictured here by this slithering creature that is described as a "serpent" and a "dragon." (27:1) As we discussed in our coverage of Job 41, Leviathan is none other than that seven-headed, red dragon (Ps. 74:13-14; Rev. 12:3) that is specifically identified in Revelation 12:9 as "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan!" Israel's enemies in the Tribulation Period are the nations, but God identifies for us that the actual power that is working behind the scenes through these nations is none other than Satan himself! Revelation 12 lets us know that the "woman" who gave birth to the Christ-child was the nation of Israel. God declared that reality to Satan in Genesis 3:15, and until the birth of Christ some 4000 years later, he relentlessly persecuted the seed that would become (and did become!) the nation of Israel, because she would be the nation that would actually bring Him forth. For the past 2000 years since the birth of Christ, he has mercilessly and relentlessly persecuted the nation of Israel because she was the one that did bring forth the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 12 reveals that the persecution against the nation of Israel will only be heightened during the Tribulation Period, until, of course, as Isaiah 27 details, the Lord steps in to defeat Leviathan (Satan). (27:1)

Chapter 27 goes on to praise the Lord for His judgment against the Gentile nations that have been used by Satan to afflict Israel. The chapter ends with Israel "worshipping the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (27:12–13) Be aware, this is no small thing! This is exactly what the Father has always longed for His Son to receive. (Psa. 66:4; Php. 2:9–11) Praise the Lord, it is going to happen sooner, as opposed to later!

In the remaining chapters in today's reading (28–31), Isaiah pronounces five of six "woes" upon those who scoff at God's Word. (28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1) We will pick up the sixth "woe" in tomorrow's reading. (33:1) For the most part, God is indicting Israel and Judah for trusting in their wealth, as well as trusting the help from their alliances with foreign nations — rather than trusting Him.

The first woe is directed against Ephraim, the large tribe that was representative of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It anticipates the Assyrian invasion and subsequent fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., but also looks ahead to the day of the Lord ("in that day" — 28:5) when the remnant of Israel would repent and receive a "crown of glory" and a "diadem of beauty" — which are actually descriptive terms referring to our very Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to the earth to establish His Millennial reign!

In chapter 29, the second woe is given against "Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" (29:1... i.e. Jerusalem.) It prophesies the invasion of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, and describes in an historic sense, as well as in a prophetic sense, how the nations that hunger and thirst for Israel's destruction will themselves be destroyed.

The third woe appears in 29:15–24, and is directed against those who seek to scheme against the Lord — who foolishly think He doesn't see them. That may just be the epitome of what we might call, "delusional!"

Chapter 30 opens with the fourth woe, which is directed against Judah for their rebellion against the Lord — and specifically, the rebellion they expressed by trusting in Egypt rather than the Lord Himself. The chapter continues on to describe how their alliance with Egypt would fail, and how Judah would be chastened of the Lord. In 30:18, God begins to point, once again, to that time when the chastening would be over, and He would destroy the nations of the world that set themselves against Israel — and He would bring Israel into the blessings of the Messiah when He rules in His Kingdom.

The fifth woe, revealed in chapter 31, continues the condemnation against Judah for looking to Egypt for help militarily against the Assyrians. The chapter ends with God's declaration that Assyria would ultimately be defeated... not by MAN, but by HIM(!!!)... and that they would be defeated, not by MAN'S SWORD, but by GOD'S! May I remind you, that you are holding that very Sword in your hands at this very moment! Allow it to defeat and destroy all of the worldliness that is afflicting your life today!

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 26:1 – "in that day"
- 27:1 – "in that day"
- 27:2 – "in that day"
- 27:12 – "in that day"
- 27:13 – "in that day"
- 28:5 – "in that day"
- 29:18 – "in that day"
- 30:23 – "it is a day of trouble"
- 30:25 – "in that day"
- 30:25 – "in the day of the great slaughter"
- 30:26 – "in the day"
- 31:7 – "in that day"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the PRECIOUS (CHIEF) CORNER STONE, A SURE FOUNDATION — Isaiah 28:16 (Eph.2:20–21; Matt. 1:42; Acts 4:10–12; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6–8)

WEEK 31, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 32-39

OVERVIEW:

Israel's deliverance through Messiah's reign; woe against Assyria; destruction of the Gentile nations; blessings in the Millennial Kingdom; the invasion of the Babylonians under Sennacherib; Hezekiah's consultation with Isaiah; Hezekiah's dependence and trust in the Lord; Hezekiah's illness and recovery; Hezekiah's foolish reception of the Babylonian messengers; Israel's captivity into Babylon foretold.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we pick up in chapter 32 today, Isaiah points us to that glorious time in the Millennium when, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." (32:1) This is the same time to which John was referring in the Book of Revelation when he wrote in Revelation 5:10: "[Thou] hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth;" and in Revelation 20:6: "...But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Isaiah said that that time would be when "the spirit [would] be poured upon us from on high." (32:15) It is a prophecy concerning the "last days," which actually kicked in and were partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (see Acts 2:16-17 specifically), but were put on hold after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. They will pick up again during the Tribulation Period after the "parenthesis" of the "Church Age." (Also see Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-32)

In chapter 33, we pick up the sixth and final "woe," which is pronounced on Assyria. Isaiah prophesies that the Assyrians, under Sennacherib, would bring Judah into subjection, forcing them to pay annual tribute (taxes) — while demanding their total surrender. The Lord promises deliverance from the Assyrians, and uses the occasion, as we have consistently seen Him do, to point to the fact that there will come a time (in the Millennial Kingdom) when the nations of the world will never be a threat to Israel again. The righteous will then live in peace with their Messiah: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us." (33:22)

In chapters 34 and 35, just as we saw in chapters 24-27, the Lord goes from talking about the judgment of Assyria (chapter 33), to the universal judgment of the Gentile nations which will be fulfilled at Armageddon. (Rev. 19:11-21) Notice how God points to the universality of this judgment in 34:1 through the words "nations," "people," "earth," and "world." Isaiah points to the physical (35:3-6) and spiritual (35:7-10) changes that will take place on the earth when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this planet at the Second Coming of Christ when He establishes His Millennial Kingdom on the earth. Verse 8 says, "And an highway shall be there!" And you've gotta love it— it's called, "The way of holiness," and only "the redeemed" (those who have been bought by the blood of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ) "shall walk there!" (35:9)

Chapter 36, all the way to chapter 38 and verse 8, parallels what we saw in 2 Kings 18:17-20:11. When threatened by the Assyrians, King Hezekiah looks to Isaiah, God's man (37:1-2), and to God Himself for help! (37:14-15) The proud Assyrians warned Hezekiah in a letter not to trust the Lord to deliver them — and pay real close attention to what Hezekiah did with the letter: "And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD!" (37:14-15). Wow! We all might need to ask ourselves how the Devil is seeking to intimidate us today — and carefully follow Hezekiah's example! The New Testament equivalent is Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Because of

Hezekiah's dependence and trust in the Lord, the Lord promised to protect Jerusalem and deliver His believing remnant. That night, the Lord destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and Sennacherib (the loudmouth, boastful "intimidator") went back home with his tail between his legs!

When Hezekiah got sick (38:1), he prayed that the Lord would spare his life. The Lord answered his prayer, granting him 15 more years. When the Babylonians heard that he had recovered from his sickness (39:1), they sent messengers and a present to him. Hezekiah foolishly received them, and showed them all of the immensity and glory of the treasures in Solomon's Temple. As a result, Isaiah prophesied that they would return and carry away all of the treasures they had seen — along with all of God's people, into Babylonian captivity.

Something to note about chapters 38 and 39 in today's reading: they actually precede chapters 36 and 37 from a chronological standpoint. They are placed where they are, however, because they anticipate the Babylonian captivity, which is the subject matter in chapters 40–66. Also be reminded, that with Isaiah being a microcosm of the Bible, chapter 39 ends the section representing the 39 Books of the Old Testament.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 34:8 – "the day of the Lord's vengeance"
- 34:8 – "the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion"
- 35:4 – "God will come with vengeance"
- 35:4 – "God [will come] with a recompense"
- 37:3 – "a day of trouble"
- 38:1 – "in those days" (more specifically, the Tribulation Period)

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO WIELDS "THE SWORD OF THE LORD" IN JUDGMENT — Isaiah 34:6 (Rev. 19:15)

WEEK 32, DAY 1: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 40-45

OVERVIEW:

Judah's future captivity in Babylon and promise of deliverance (40:1–11); God's omnipotence (40:12–26); God's sustaining power (40:27–31); God's sovereignty in history (41:1–7); God's protection of Israel (41:8–20); God's challenge to the idols (41:21–29); the Servant of the Lord (42:1–25); the assurance of Israel's restoration (43:1–44:5); the witness of the restored nation (44:6–23); the fulfillment of restoration (44:24–45:25).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In the "microcosm of the Bible" that we call the Book of Isaiah, having covered the first 39 chapters, representative of the Old Testament, we begin today the section representative of the New Testament. (Chapters 40–66) Interestingly enough, as we come to chapter 40, Isaiah begins, as does Matthew in the New Testament, with "The voice of him (John the Baptist — Matt. 3:1–3) that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (40:3)

And for the record, this passage in Isaiah is one the key places I take Jehovah's FALSE Witnesses as I engage them outside the doors of my house (2 John 7–10 tells us not to let them in our house!) — just before I lovingly, but very matter-of-factly, tell them they are of an "antichrist spirit!" (2 John 7) Note that when Isaiah makes this prophecy (which the Jehovah's FALSE Witnesses will very readily will agree is in reference to John the Baptist!), Isaiah says, that he (John the Baptist) will be preparing the way of "Jehovah." You see, every time the word "Lord" appears in the Old Testament in a King James Bible (with a tall capital "L," and smaller capital letters for the "ord"), as in Isaiah 40:3, it is signifying that this is the Hebrew word for "Jehovah." The word is even translated "Jehovah" in the "Bible" (and I use the term extremely loosely!) that the Jehovah's FALSE Witnesses use! When Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled and recorded in Matthew 3:1–3, "Jehovah" just happens to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!!! The same incredible truth also took place earlier in the Book of Isaiah, in chapter 6 and verse 5. In this verse, Isaiah saw "Jehovah" (the "Lord" of hosts — KJV)... in all of His glory. When the Holy Spirit writes of this (2 Pet. 1:21) in John 12:37–41, He says that Isaiah was seeing "CHRIST'S glory" and was speaking of "CHRIST!!!" Hallelujah! And all of God's people said, "AMEN!!!" Jesus Christ "IS" Jehovah!!!

And please allow me show you a few more little Jehovah's FALSE Witness "ditties." In chapter 42:8, God clearly says that "GLORY" belongs to "JEHOVAH" ("the Lord" – KJV) ALONE(!!!): "I am the Lord: that is my name ("Jehovah!"): and my glory will I not give to another." John 1:14 says, "And the Word ("Christ" – John 1:1) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Very simply, in light of Isaiah 42:8, if Jesus Christ isn't "Jehovah," where did He get His glory? Hopefully, you're seeing how monumental these verses are! In John 17:5, as Jesus prayed to "Jehovah," His Father, He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Again, in light of Isaiah 42:8, why would Jesus ask for something "Jehovah" doesn't give?

In chapter 43 and verse 10, God makes reference to His "witnesses." These are what we might call the "Jehovah's TRUE Witnesses!" And in verse 11, God says very clearly, that there is only one "Jehovah" ("the Lord" – KJV), and "Jehovah" is the ONLY SAVIOUR: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour." And with that in mind, check out Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR Jesus Christ." Notice that Jesus Christ is referred to as the "SAVIOUR" (Isa. 43:11), and that He is "THE

GREAT GOD!" Not "a" God, like the Jehovah's FALSE Witnesses' "Bible" says in John 1:1... but "THE GOD!!!" And doesn't that just make you wanna shout a big hearty, "AMEN?!"

In chapter 44 and verse 6, it lets us know that "Jehovah" ("the Lord" – KJV) is the ONLY eternal God, and that the attribute of being "the first and the last" is only true of "Jehovah God!" In light of the clear teaching of this verse, check out Revelation 1:10–11! John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice (in the context, it is the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ!), as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, THE FIRST AND THE LAST!!!" Hallelujah to ya!!!

And just one more. Chapter 44 and verse 24 says that "Jehovah" ("the Lord" – KJV) made "all things" by HIMSELF ("myself"). In light of that, check out John 1:1–3: "ALL THINGS(!!!) were made by him (that is, by the "Word," the Lord Jesus Christ!); and without him was not any thing made that was made!" (John 1:3) And then, check out Colossians 1:16: "For by him (the "Son" — Col. 1:13, again, the Lord Jesus Christ!) were ALL THINGS created (just as in Isa. 44:24!) that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: ALL THINGS (there it is again!) were created by him, and for him!" (Col. 1:16) There's no mistaking it biblically, folks! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is "JEHOVAH!"

To help you keep your bearings as you make your way through the chapters in today's reading, please refer to the outline provided in today's more extensive "OVERVIEW."

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 40:10 – "the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him."
- 42:4 – "till he have set judgment in the earth"
- 42:13 – "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As JEHOVAH in the verses in today's reading listed above — Isaiah 40:3; 42:8; 43:10–11; 44:6; 44:24

As SHEPHERD — Isaiah 40:11 (John 10:11)

As CREATOR — Isaiah 40:28 (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16)

As REDEEMER — Isaiah 41:14 (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; Rev. 5:9)

As HE TO WHOM EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW AND EVERY TONGUE SWEAR (CONFESS) — Isaiah 45:23 (Phil. 2:10)

WEEK 32, DAY 2: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 46-52

OVERVIEW:

Israel's preservation and restoration from Babylon (46:1–47:15); admonition to the restored nation (48:1–22); the Mission of the Servant (Messiah) (49:1–26); the Submission of the Servant (Messiah) (50:1–11); the Provision of the Servant (Messiah) (51:1–52:12).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

In yesterday's reading, we saw the Lord's prophecy through Isaiah to raise up Cyrus, the Persian King, to conquer the Babylonians and set the captives of Israel free, enabling them to return to their land. Do note, however, that Cyrus only prefigures "the Lords' anointed," (45:1), the Lord Jesus Christ, who will one day (soon!) establish His Millennial Kingdom and restore Israel to her homeland. "In that day," all of the Gentile nations of the world will submit themselves to the rule of Israel's King, and "every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." (45:23 c.f. Phil. 2:10–11)

In chapters 46 and 47 in today's reading, Isaiah details Babylon's collapse — along with all of its gods. God declares that Babylon's gods are absolutely powerless to rescue Babylon from His impending judgment and destruction. Just as God raised up Cyrus from the east to conquer Israel's oppressor (46:11), the Lord Jesus Christ will also rise from the east as the "SUN of righteousness" to deliver the Nation of Israel on the "day of the Lord!" (Mal. 4:1–2)

In chapter 48, like many in "Laodicea" (Rev. 3:14–22), the Lord indicts those who confess His Name — when it can't be recognized by the life they live. (48:1) The chapter goes on to show that because of Israel's stubbornness ("thy neck is an iron sinew" — 48:4a) and obstinacy ("thy brow brass" — 48:4b), the Lord would discipline them by allowing them to be brought into Babylonian captivity. Even so, notice that He also promises to bring them back. Praise the Lord for His marvelous grace and mercy, because we all need it in our "stubbornness" and "obstinacy" — just as surely as does and did Israel!

As we enter chapter 49, the Lord reveals His Servant (the Messiah), and how He will restore Israel, both physically and spiritually in the Promised Land. Though "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (49:14), the Lord promises that He will not "forsake" or "forget" them! Even though they rejected Him (John 1:11), He will still fulfill His purposes and promises to them, ultimately, bringing blessing to Israel, along with the Gentile nations of the world, in the Millennium. (49:22, 25–26) Chapter 50 contrasts the disobedience of Israel, with the obedience of Israel's Servant (Messiah).

In chapters 51 and 52, the Nation of Israel is exhorted to "look" (51:1–2), through the eyes of the faith, into the future to see the Lord, the Comforter of Zion (51:3), as He rescues Israel from the nations — bringing them into their land and into the blessing of Messiah's rule in the Millennial Kingdom when they will no longer be afflicted by the Gentile nations. (52:1) In light of His promise of deliverance, Israel is exhorted to "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (52:9–10)

Oh, may we be filled with a passion for the "suffering Servant" (i.e. "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" — 52:14) to "be exalted and extolled, and be very high" (52:13), when

"the kings [of the nations] shall shut their mouths at him." (52:15) And, once again, may we all cry out with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 46:13 – "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."
- 51:3 – "the Lord will comfort Zion"
- 51:11 – "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion"
- 52:6 – "in that day"
- 52:8 – "when the Lord shall bring again Zion"
- 52:10 – "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations"
- 52:10 – "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE FIRST AND THE LAST — Isaiah 48:12 (Rev. 1:11; 2:8; 22:13)

As THY SAVIOR AND REDEEMER — Isaiah 49:26 (Tit. 2:13–14; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 4:4–5; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).

WEEK 32, DAY 3: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 53-59

OVERVIEW:

The Humiliation of the Servant (Messiah) (53:1–12); the Blessings of the Servant (Messiah) (54:1–55:13); the Blessing of God upon the Gentiles (56:1–8); the Condemnation of God upon the Wicked (56:9–57:21); the Restoration of True Worship (58:1–14); the Transgression of Israel (59:1–8); the Confession of Israel (59:9–15a); the Lord's Deliverance of Israel. (59:15b–21)

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Isaiah 53 is one of the most incredible chapters in the entire Bible. It was this very chapter that the Ethiopian eunuch was struggling to understand out on that desert road in Acts 8 when the Lord prompted Philip to ask him if he understood what he was reading. When the eunuch responded, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31), the scripture says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto Him Jesus." (Acts 8:35) Philip actually used this passage to lead this Ethiopian dignitary to Christ, and it is commonly believed that it was through his conversion that the gospel first made its way into the continent of Africa in the 1st century. This is the most comprehensive, and yet, concise passage in the entire Bible concerning the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of its significance, we will devote most of our attention to this chapter of today's reading.

In verses 1–3, Isaiah prophesies the rejection that our Lord would endure. John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." By the time the Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth, the Jews were living under the oppression and domination of Rome. Needless to say, they hated it! Therefore, the Messiah they were looking for was a political revolutionary who would come in warrior-like fashion to overthrow the Roman government and establish His own Kingdom and empire on the earth — a Kingdom, in their thinking, in which the Jews would be preeminent. They failed to understand, however, that the physical oppression of Rome under Caesar was just a minor illustration of a spiritual oppression they were experiencing because they were being held in the "snare" of this world by the very will of Satan himself. (2 Tim. 2:26; Eph. 2:2) They failed to realize that in order for their Messiah and King to have citizens in His kingdom, the sin issue that caused spiritual death in them would have to be dealt with (Gen. 2:17; Rom 5:12), and that to qualify for citizenship in His Kingdom, they would need to experience a supernatural spiritual birth by calling upon the name of the Lord. They failed to realize that their Messiah would take up a CROSS — before He would take up His CROWN... that there would be HUMILIATION — before His EXALTATION... and that there would be SUFFERING — before there would be GLORY.

Isaiah begins in verse 1 to foreshadow the fact that the Jews would have difficulty "believing," once the "arm of the Lord" (the Lord Jesus Christ) was "revealed" on the earth. Their difficulty, Isaiah says in verse 2, is because of how the Father chose for Him to make His entrance into this world. He came as a humble bush ("tender plant"), not as a stalwart tree. "Dry ground" is a reference to the barren spiritual condition of the Nation of Israel when their Messiah would be "revealed." He came offering life to the parched soil of their lives, but it wasn't the life they were looking for. He didn't come on the scene displaying the physical power and majesty that would attract them to Him ("he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" — 53:2). Because of it, the Jews "despised and rejected" God's glorious Servant, and their promised Messiah. He who was the King of kings — became "a man of sorrows." The One to whom belongs all glory — was "acquainted with grief." The One who offered life and forgiveness to all who would simply look to Him — had his very own people "hide" their "faces from him." The One who should have been lauded and honored, was "despised" and "esteemed not."

Even though He came to bare the “griefs” and the “sorrows” man had inflicted upon himself through the choice of sin, it was of no consequence. The Lord Jesus Christ was treated as a common criminal — as if He was worthy of the treatment He received. (53:4)

Note in 53:5, the words used to describe Christ's crucifixion: He was “wounded;” “bruised;” “chastised;” and “striped” (referring to the stripes upon His back through being scourged with whips). Notice also in verse 5, the reason for such brutality: Isaiah tells us it was “for our transgressions” — and it was “for our iniquities.” He then goes on to reveal to us the result of His crucifixion: it was so we might experience “peace” — “peace” with God, and thus, “peace” with ourselves... and it was so we could be “healed!” And certainly not our physical healing, but the healing that was necessary in our soul and spirit because every one of us had “gone astray” — turning from God, “to our own way.” God reveals to us in this passage through Isaiah, that He was providing His only begotten Son to die a substitutionary death for our sin — “the Lord hast laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Notice also, that Isaiah's prophecy lets us know that through the entire ordeal of our Lord Jesus Christ's unfair trial and merciless crucifixion, never would “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) ever “open his mouth.” (Isa. 53:7–8)

Isaiah goes on to prophesy that when Christ died, it would be with “the wicked” (i.e. crucified between two thieves), and yet, His burial would be connected with “the rich.” (i.e. He “borrowed” the tomb of a rich man by the name of Joseph of Arimathea — Matt. 27:57)

And though the details of Isaiah's prophecy are humanly tragic and horrific, verses 10–12 let us know that every single detail of this entire ordeal was purposed and planned by none other than God Himself! It is the same incomprehensible truth Peter preached about on the Day of Pentecost: that Christ was “delivered (to His tormentors) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” (Acts 2:23)

Once again, you can “keep your bearings” through the chapters in today's reading by following the outline presented in today's overview. But at the same time, do allow yourself to “lose your bearings” today in the wonder of our glorious Savior and His willingness to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us as it is detailed in Isaiah 53. And let's also pray that, like Philip, God will allow us to use this chapter to “preach Jesus” to some needy soul today.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ONE WHO WAS REJECTED BY HIS OWN — Isaiah 53:3 (John 1:11; Luke 23:18)

As the ONE WHO REMAINED SILENT THOUGH FALSELY ACCUSED — Isaiah 53:7 (Mark 15:3–5)

As the ONE WHO WAS BURIED WITH THE RICH — Isaiah 53:9 (Matt. 27:57–60)

As the ONE WHO WAS CRUCIFIED WITH SINNERS — Isaiah 53:12 (Mark 15:27–28)

WEEK 32, DAY 4: TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 60-66

OVERVIEW:

The Exaltation of Jerusalem in "the day of the Lord" (60:1–22); the Mission of the Messiah in His First Coming (61:1–2a) ; the Mission of the Messiah in His Second Coming (61:2b–11); the Restoration of Zion (62:1–63:6); the Petition of Israel (63:7–64:12); God's Response to Israel's Prayer (65:1–25); the Blessing of God in the Millennial Kingdom. (66:1–24)

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

All the way through the Book of Isaiah, God has been pointing us through the prophet to that incredible day when the Lord Jesus Christ will establish His rule and reign in His Millennial Kingdom. Once again, that is the theme and focal point in the chapters in today's reading (60-66). When the remnant of Israel returned into their homeland following the Babylonian captivity, the city of Jerusalem, with its walls, gates, and temple was in shambles ("laid waste" – 64:10–11) — and anything but glorious. But Isaiah looks down through the years to a time when the Lord Jesus Christ will have stepped in and reconfigured the entire landscape and situation. Interestingly enough, the word "glory," or one of its forms ("glorify, glorified, glorious") is found 23 times in these seven chapters of Isaiah alone!

Be aware, that according to the New Testament, we are presently living in a biblical "nighttime." The "night" began in Acts 1:9 when Jesus ascended back to the right hand of His Father, because Jesus had clearly said in John 9:5 – "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." At that point, the "Sun" went down, so to speak, and it became "nighttime" as far as God is concerned. (Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:5–7; Phil 2:15). We now await the glorious day when the "Sun" (Mal. 4:1–2 — note that Malachi referred to Christ as the capital "S-u-n," not "s-O-n!") of righteousness" will "arise" — and the light will again shine on this planet because it will be "the DAY of the Lord!" This is exactly what Isaiah is prophesying in 60:1–2: "Arise, shine; for the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." In that day, as Isaiah goes on to explain in verses 3–9, the Gentile nations will be coming in peace to Jerusalem, offering gifts to "the Holy One of Israel," the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. At that time, as Isaiah describes in verses 10–22, the walls of the nation will be rebuilt (60:10), and the "gate shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night" (60:11), implying that there will no longer be the threat of an invading nation or nations. (also see 60:18)

Verses 1 and 2 of chapter 61 were read by the Lord Jesus Christ when He was invited to speak in His "home synagogue" in Nazareth. (Luke 4:16–21) Jesus concluded the reading by saying, "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," letting us know that Isaiah 60:1–2 was/is a specific reference to Him — if, perchance, there could be any doubt of that in anyone's mind. It is also quite interesting to note that when Jesus read these verses that day, He very purposely and calculatedly stopped in the middle of Isaiah 61:2, just before reading the next phrase in the verse: "and the day of vengeance of our God." We now know that the reason He didn't read it, was because the fulfillment of the prophecy was dependent upon what the Nation of Israel would do with their opportunity to receive her King! When Israel refused her final offer of the Kingdom at the stoning of Stephen, God inserted a parenthesis we call the Church Age, and now "the day of vengeance of our God" (i.e. the Tribulation/Second Coming) will not actually begin until God's plan for the church has been accomplished. Because "the day of vengeance of our God" has not yet begun, it lets us know that we are still presently living in what God calls "the acceptable year of the Lord!" We must, therefore, "redeem the time" — making sure that we "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." (Col. 4:5) Notice in Isaiah 61:2, that following the Tribulation and Second Coming (i.e. "the day of vengeance"), the Lord

will “comfort all that mourn” (i.e. the Millennium), and will flip-flop Israel’s suffering and affliction into blessing and rejoicing.

Though Israel in Isaiah’s day was God’s “forsaken” wife (62:4), and had been left “desolate” because of her whoredoms, when the Lord Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom, Israel will then be called “Hephzibah” (meaning, “my delight is in her”), and “Beulah” (meaning, “married”), as once again, she will be “married” to Jehovah, and He will “delight” in her. (Hos. 2:16–17) Keep in mind, Israel is the bride of the Father, we (the church) are the bride of Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:9)

We are presently living at a time when God is pouring out His love, mercy and grace. Be it known, however, justice on this planet will be served! That’s what Isaiah 63 emphasizes. Often, as Christians, we are guilty of only showing the side of the coin that is stamped with Christ’s love. There is, however, another side of the coin. It is stamped with His wrath. (Rev. 15–16) And just as far-reaching and powerful is His love — so, also, is His wrath. Perhaps this is the reason that those who are not saved, as well as those of us who are saved — do not “fear the Lord,” as the Scripture repeatedly admonishes us to do. (2 Cor. 7:1)

But, Isaiah 63 pictures Christ as a bloody warrior. At His first coming, His enemies stained Him with His own blood. When Isaiah sees Him in this passage at His Second Coming, once again, He will be stained with blood. This time, however, it will not be His own blood, but the blood of His enemies! (63:1–4) Never lose sight of the fact that He who was the “Prince of Peace” in His first coming (Isa. 9:6), will be a “Man of War” at His second coming! (Exo. 15:3; Rev. 14:17–20; Isa. 63:1–4)

Chapter 65 records the Lord’s response to the prayer of His remnant, and chapter 66 describes the true worship of the Messiah in His Millennial Kingdom. As we conclude the Book of Isaiah (what we have referred to as a “microcosm of the Bible”) — note that chapter 66 covers the same ground as the 66th Book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation (i.e. the Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennium, and the New Heaven and New Earth).

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO “THE DAY OF THE LORD”:

- 60:1 – “the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”
- 60:2 – “the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”
- 60:7 – “I will glorify the house of my glory.”
- 60:13 – “I will make the place of my feet glorious”
- 60:20 – “the days of thy mourning shall be ended”
- 61:2 – “the day of vengeance of our God”
- 63:4 – “the day of vengeance”
- 63:4 – “the year of my redeemed”
- 66:15 – “the Lord will come with fire”
- 66:18 – “I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the ANOINTED ONE PREACHING GOOD TIDINGS — Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:16–22)

As the CREATOR OF NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH — Isaiah 65:17; 66:2 (John 1:1–3; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1)

As the ONE WHOSE GLORY WILL BE WITNESSED BY ALL NATIONS — Isaiah 66:18–19 (Rev. 5:12–13)

WEEK 32, DAY 5: TODAY'S READING: JEREMIAH 1-4

OVERVIEW:

God's call of Jeremiah (1:1–19); God's explanation that Israel was an unfaithful spouse (2:1–3:5); God's explanation that there was still time for Israel to repent (3:6–4:4); God's warning of judgment for Israel's refusal to repent. (4:5–31)

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Jeremiah was used of God to prophesy during the last 40 years of the small Southern Kingdom of Judah's history. By the time Jeremiah begins his ministry, it had been 100 years since the Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. As the Assyrian empire weakened through the years, they, of course, were overthrown by the Babylonians.

According to 1:2, Jeremiah's ministry actually began in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (627 B.C.), who ruled for 31 years. (2 Chr. 34:1) His ministry continued through the reigns of the last four kings of Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah), all of whom were wicked, as we saw coming through 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings. As Jeremiah reveals in 1:3, his ministry concluded with "the carrying away of Jerusalem captive," which was in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah is sometimes referred to as "the Weeping Prophet." (see 9:1; 13:17; 14:17; 15:17–18; Lam. 1:2; 2:11,18) His tears flowed out of his passion for God's glory (13:15–17), and Israel's "backsliding" from her God. "Backsliding" is the key word in the Book (see 2:19; 3:6,8,11–12,22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7), for which cause the word "repent" is used 11 times by the prophet. Though repentance was his continual message, the sad reality is, Judah never did. There was certainly no Old Testament prophet who suffered more opposition than did Jeremiah. (2:8,26; 4:9; 5:31; 6:14; 14:13–16; 18:18; 23:9–40; 26:8–19; 27:9–16; chapters 28–29)

As we make our way through this Book, it will be important to realize that the Book of Jeremiah is not necessarily arranged in chronological order — but by similar subject matter. By presenting the truth of Jeremiah by similar subject, it helps us to more clearly see the tragic results of sin.

Perhaps the simplest breakdown of the Book is as follows:

- The Fate of Judah. (1–33)
- The Fate of Jerusalem. (34–45)
- The Fate of the Gentile Nations. (46–52)

As mentioned above, Jeremiah details in verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1 that the period in which he prophesied was approximately between 627–587 B.C. His ministry spanned from Judah's last RIGHTEOUS king (Josiah — 640–609 B.C.) to Judah's last ACTUAL king (Zedekiah — 597–587 B.C.). Verse 3 lets us know that Jeremiah lived to see Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians — an event he both prophesied and lamented.

God's call upon Jeremiah, as it is revealed in chapter 1, forever settles the question of when life actually begins. The Bible is very clear that life begins BEFORE our actual BIRTH (Jer. 1:5; Psa. 139:14–15), and continues on AFTER our actual DEATH! (Heb. 9:27) God tells Jeremiah that a whole lot had taken place concerning him before his birth! He tells Jeremiah that even before forming him in his mother's womb: He "knew" him; He "sanctified" him; and He "ordained" him to be "a prophet unto the nations." The same thing could be said about God's purposes for our lives!

In similar fashion to Moses' response to God's call (Exo. 3:11), Jeremiah's initial response to God's call on his life was to focus on his own inadequacies and inabilities. God tells Jeremiah, as He did Moses (Ex. 3:14), that His call upon his life wasn't about who Jeremiah was — but who He was! He tells Jeremiah: "I'll send you... I'll tell you what to say... I'll put My very words in your mouth... and when the people don't like it — I'll deliver you... because I have set you over the nations and the kingdoms." (1:7–10)

God goes on to tell Jeremiah that his actual ministry would be six-fold. It would be: 1) "To root out." 2) "To pull down." 3) "To destroy." 4) "To throw down." 5) "To build." 6) "To plant." Interestingly enough, two-thirds of Jeremiah's preaching was intended by God to be negative! Perhaps this is a good time to make sure we understand what a "prophet" was actually being called to do. Basically, we could say that a prophet in the Bible was a man that God raised up to take His side against the people who had turned away from Him. Obviously, there were other implications, but that's it in a nutshell! And do note, the ministry of the Old Testament prophet is not much different than what God intends for a New Testament preacher! God said through Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2, that a preacher of the Word must "reprove" (negative), "rebuke" (negative) and "exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (positive). Once again, God's instruction is that two-thirds of the preaching is to be negative! No wonder Jeremiah had it so tough in his day — and no wonder those who "preach the Word" have it so tough in our day! In the Laodicea Church Period (1901 – Rapture), just as in Jeremiah's day, "God's side" is a far cry from His "people's side!" (Rev. 3:14–22)

Notice in 1:17–19, God didn't tell Jeremiah that his task would be easy! In fact, He warned that it would be very intimidating ("be not dismayed at their faces" — 1:17c), and that it would be a constant battle ("they shall fight against thee" — 1:19a). Amidst the difficulty, however, God commanded Jeremiah to "man up!" (i.e. "gird up thy loins" — 1:17a), and promised His abiding presence and power. ("I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" — 1:19c). Wow! How much difficulty and adversity do you think you could endure in your mission with a promise like the one Jeremiah received?! But, may I remind you of God's promise to us in our mission?! Jesus said in Matthew 28:18–20: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye THEREFORE (Note that He's implying that He is going to empower us — with His power!)... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!"

In 2:1–3:5, God has some incredibly strong things to say to Jeremiah about His people. He even likens them to an unfaithful, adulterous spouse — in contrast to God's constant faithfulness and goodness to them. In 2:1–3, He tells Jeremiah that Israel had forgotten her devotion to Him in her "youth" (when God had first delivered them out of Egypt — i.e. her "first love" — Rev. 2:4); that she had become ungrateful (2:4–8); that she had changed her God (2:9–13); that she had ignored God's discipline (2:14–19); that she had denied any wrongdoing (2:20–28); that she had mistreated the poor (2:29–37); and that, spiritually speaking, she had been sleeping around. (3:1–5)

In spite of her sin, however, God tells Jeremiah that He is merciful — and that He is willing to forgive her if she will simply return to Him — having put away her other lovers. (3:6–4:4) What an incredibly merciful and gracious God we serve!

In 4:5–31, God tells Jeremiah that though Israel has time to repent — He is only providing a window of opportunity to do so. He warns that if they refuse to return to Him, He will send an army to annihilate their nation.

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO "THE DAY OF THE LORD":

- 3:16 – "in those days" (specifically, the Tribulation Period)
- 3:17 – "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord"
- 3:18 – "in those days" (specifically, the Tribulation Period)
- 4:9 – "at that day"

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS — Jeremiah 2:13 (John 7:37; John 4:1–26)