

See Christ in the Old Testament: From Genesis to Daniel

LHC: Message Twenty-Two (951108WE)

Week 22: See Christ in the Old Testament

(From Genesis—Daniel)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you see Christ in the Old Testament—from Genesis to Daniel!

SUNDAY: See Christ in the Entire Old Testament

Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

—Luke 24:27, emphasis added

Last week we were transported in time to the worship center of the universe to adore the loveliness of our awesome Sovereign, Jesus Christ, who sits on the throne in Revelation 4. Now hold onto your seat, because we are about to depart on a “Jet Tour” of the Old Testament prophets. Many of the 404 verses of Revelation are quotations and allusions to these prophets, but most believers have trouble understanding the Old Testament in general, let alone the seventeen prophetic books of Isaiah to Malachi.

If you will stay on board with me over the next three weeks, you should grasp the simple message and direction of each Old Testament book, and especially the seventeen prophetic books. As you see the whole scope and plan of God in these books reflected in Revelation, they will become even clearer.

The Scriptures are all about God revealing himself to His human creatures. The ultimate expression of God’s nature and character is Christ. Note the words of Hebrews 1:3: *Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

W. A. Criswell liked to say that the only God we will ever see is Jesus Christ. There is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are invisible. They have representations such as a dove and a glowing light, but they are not corporeal. However, God the Father did take on some kind of form at times; it was called a theophany, which is a *visible* but not necessarily *material* manifestation of deity to a human person. Christ, however, will eternally exist in His resurrection body.

Since the Word of God reveals God, and Jesus is the image of the invisible God, then we can find and worship our Lord Jesus Christ in every part of the Bible. Each book reveals some truths about our beautiful Lord Jesus! (To see the central theme of Christ in all the Scriptures, look at Revelation 19:10, John 5:39, and Luke 24:27.)

The Scriptures are Christ-Centered. They are unique, powerful, and divine! Note the symmetrical pattern God presents in the Old Testament:

- **Books of History—17:** Five are major (Genesis to Deuteronomy); twelve are historical (Joshua to Esther).
- **Books of Poetry—5:** Job to the Song of Solomon (located in the middle of the Old Testament).
- **Books of Prophecy—17:** Five are the Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel); twelve are the Minor Prophets (Hosea to Malachi). Of these twelve, nine are pre-Exilic and three are post-Exilic.

Today is an overview of seeing Christ in the books of History; the books of Poetry will be covered on Monday; and on Tuesday we will then begin our tour of the seventeen prophetic books.

The Five Major Books of History: The Pentateuch is the designation for the first five Old Testament books that were authored by Moses. We are sure of that because Jesus said so in His ministry while here on earth. In the books of History we see God's servants following the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Creator in the garden, the Rock in the wilderness, the Angel of the Lord, and so on. These five books are crucial because they lay a foundation for the rest of God's Word; note their unifying themes:

1. **Genesis** pictures Christ as "**calling all things into being**" by creating the universe. The Scriptures are the only reliable source of information on the origin and purpose of the universe, man, sin, nations, the Covenant, and the Curse. **Key Word—Generations** (used ten times as an outline).
2. **Exodus** pictures Christ as "**calling Israel out of bondage**" by delivering His people. He is "*the Way*" out of Egypt, out of sin, out of earth. **Key Word—Deliverance.**
3. **Leviticus** pictures Christ as "**calling Israel unto consecration**" by opening the approach to a holy God. He is present with His people ("*before the Lord*" appears sixty times), and He demands holiness of them (11:44; 19:2; 20:7). **Key Word—Holiness** (occurs ninety-three times).
4. **Numbers** pictures Christ as "**calling Israel from confusion**" by dealing with His unfaithful people. Christ is the Faithful One. **Key Word—Chastening.**
5. **Deuteronomy** pictures Christ as "**calling Israel back to the covenant**" by seeking loyalty from His chosen people. He is the Promise Keeper. **Key Word—Covenant** (occurs twenty-seven times).

The Twelve Historic Books:

1. **Joshua** pictures Christ as **Commander of the Lord's Army**. He is leading His people in conquest. **Key Idea—Obedience.**
2. **Judges** pictures Christ as the **Chastener of His Wayward People**. There are seven specific sin-salvation cycles in this book. **Key Idea—Disobedience.**
3. **Ruth** pictures Christ as the **Kinsman to His Needy People**. **Key Word—Loyalty.**

- 4–9. **First Samuel–Second Chronicles** pictures Christ as the **Perfect King**. In Samuel God seeks for a man; in Kings God sees all; in Chronicles God saves, preserves, and rewards His own. **Key Words—Eyes of the Lord** (used thirteen times).
10. **Ezra** pictures Christ as our **Peg** (this was a figure of speech that indicated permanence and prominence) **in the Holy Place** (9:8). **Key Word—Returning**.
11. **Nehemiah** pictures Christ as our **Sure Foundation**. **Key Word—Restoring**.
12. **Esther** pictures Christ as our **Unseen Defender**. **Key Word—Protecting**.

The whole Bible is unlike any other book in the universe! And with that truth deeply upon your heart, in the days ahead, shouldn't you treat His Word differently, read it diligently, wait before it expectantly, and from it learn to live triumphantly? Remember: Jesus shines from every book of the Bible!

My Prayer for You This Week: *Lord Jesus, thank You for letting us see a little bit of what You must have taught on the road to Emmaus—beginning with Moses and pointing out to those disciples how You are in every part of the Bible. There's no greater study than to find that one thread links together every part of Your Word, and that thread is finding Christ in all the Scriptures. Thank You for letting us go on this journey together. Strengthen our hearts, and attune our minds, to the treasures of Your Word. We want to see, to find, to believe, and to feast upon those treasures! Oh Christ, thank You for making us conquerors, satisfying us, giving us hope in all our days. And we thank You in the name of Jesus, and for His glory we pray. Amen.*

MONDAY: See Christ in the Books of Poetry

*They **divide My garments** among them, and for My clothing they **cast lots**.*
—Psalm 22:18, emphasis added

The Five Poetic Books: these five books, in the middle of the Old Testament, deal with the heart of Jewish life: pain, worship, living, life, and love.

1. **Job** pictures Christ as our **sure Redeemer**. This book gives the truth from God that “Christ is our sufficiency” in pain and suffering.
2. **Psalms** pictures Christ as our **Good Shepherd**. This book gives the truth from God that “Christ is our worship.”
3. **Proverbs** pictures Christ as our **wisdom**. This book gives the truth from God that “Christ is our wisdom”—He is wisdom incarnate. Proverbs teaches us how to live by principles, not promises.
4. **Ecclesiastes** pictures Christ as our **hope of contentment**. This book gives the truth from God that “Christ is our way of life.”
5. **The Song of Solomon** pictures Christ as our **beloved**. This book gives the truth from God that “Christ is our altogether lovely one.”

The Scriptures are all about God revealing himself to His creatures. The ultimate expression of God's nature and character is Christ. In the Books of Poetry we see God's servants worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the suffering One, the Good Shepherd, the Redeemer!

We can learn from a seasoned sufferer—Job. High on the list of what Job's perseverance taught is this: even when suffering, pleasing God should be our goal in life—not happiness, comfort, or satisfaction. For *“happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.” . . . Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. . . . Make it [your] aim . . . to be well pleasing to Him* (Job 5:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9).

Following God often entails losing precious possessions and suffering pain for His sake: *“Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him”* (Job 23:8–9). Tests like this are meant to be faith builders. When we need God most, yet He seems silent, it is time to stretch our faith and, like Job, say *“He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). What a precious and proven truth!

Trusting God turns present losses into future gains: *And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. . . . After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days* (Job 42:10–11, 16–17).

Ecclesiastes 9 contains some valuable life principles. For example, by the fruit of the Spirit called joy, we can rise above our circumstances by choosing to be contagiously happy: *Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works* (Ecclesiastes 9:7). As God's children, through Christ's forgiveness and approval, we can be continually free of guilt and its bondage: *Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil* (Ecclesiastes 9:8).

Ecclesiastes 9:9 tells us of the importance of being constantly committed to God in every area of life: *Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun* (Ecclesiastes 9:9). God desires that we live life to the maximum by the power of the Holy Spirit: *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going* (Ecclesiastes 9:10). In other words, live life zestfully!

Now that we have had an overview of seeing Christ in the Old Testament books of History and books of Poetry, tomorrow we will begin focusing on the theme of these three weeks—seeing Christ in the seventeen prophetic books. Remember: many of the 404 verses in Revelation are quotations and allusions to these prophets. By

understanding Isaiah to Malachi, we can better appreciate the richness of Revelation and more fully worship the One whom the book exalts. Are you worshiping Christ as He deserves?

TUESDAY: Isaiah Says to Worship Our God of Salvation¹

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53:5–6, emphasis added

Isaiah (740–681 B.C.) was a contemporary with Hosea (753–715 B.C.) and Micah (742–687 B.C.). From the revolt of Satan to the rule of the Savior, all is told by this most eloquent prophet, Isaiah. He was the “Shakespeare of the prophets” and the “Paul of the Old Testament.” Isaiah has more to say about the greatness of God (Isaiah 40, 43), the horrors of the Tribulation (Isaiah 24), the wonders of the Millennium (Isaiah 35), and the ministry of Christ (Isaiah 53) than any other book in the Bible. Isaiah 53 is probably the most important and far-reaching chapter in the Old Testament, as it is quoted from or alluded to eighty-five times in the New Testament. Jesus said that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (John 12:41).

The book of Isaiah is an extended commentary on Jonah 2:9, where that prophet exclaimed from the fish’s belly, “*Salvation is of the Lord!*” The word “salvation” appears thirty-three times in the writing of the prophets and, of these, twenty-six instances occur in Isaiah. Isaiah is divided into two sections: 1:1–39:8 and 40:1–66:24.

The first thirty-nine chapters describe the judgment by the Lord. (This seems to almost parallel the Old Testament’s thirty-nine books that declare the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God.) The next twenty-seven chapters describe the comfort in redemption and restoration. (This seems to almost parallel the New Testament’s twenty-seven books that declare the grace, compassion, and glory of God.)

The book of Isaiah has three major themes that may be summarized in personal choices similar to those made by Isaiah.

First Theme—The overwhelming sense of sin and the wrath of God against it. This is clearly seen in the twenty-one times that Isaiah uses the word “*woe*.” In God’s sight, *We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses [good deeds] are like filthy rags; . . . And there is no One who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities* (Isaiah 64:6–7). **Personal choice:** I will become a person of conviction.

Second Theme—The all-pervading awareness of the power, majesty, and holiness of God. Twenty-three times Isaiah uses the divine name of “*The Holy One of God*,” a name nearly unique to Isaiah (except for five other passages). *The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever* (Isaiah 32:17). **Personal choice:** I will confess that You, oh God, are holy.

Third Theme—The crystal clear sight of the salvation and coming victory of Christ: *Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off* (Isaiah 33:17). **Personal choice:** I will live with confidence.

I pray that you will choose to become a person of conviction: acknowledge that God is holy, and is therefore One in whom you can place your total confidence. Oh worship your King in all His beauty, and bow before Him!

WEDNESDAY: Jeremiah Says to Worship Our God of Repentance

*“Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. . . . It is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and **the fear of Me is not in you**,” says the LORD God of hosts.*

—Jeremiah 2:19, emphasis added

Some contemporaries of Jeremiah (627–586 B.C.) were Habakkuk (612–588 B.C.) and Zephaniah (640–621 B.C.). The Scriptures tell us: *“Before I formed you [Jeremiah] in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:5). This is a great scripture for those who say that human life begins at conception. God communicated with a human in the womb; Jeremiah was there as a person, and God chose him there. Jeremiah must have had an incredible childhood!

Jeremiah’s woes were unimaginable to our relatively peaceful lives. He lived through the death throes of the nation of Judah. From an earthly perspective, his life was a failure. During his lifetime he watched the decay of God’s chosen people, the horrible destruction of Jerusalem, and the deportation of the nation to Babylon. **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we feel like our lives are failures.*

Jeremiah preached for forty years and saw no visible result among those he served. Instead, those countrymen sought to kill him if he wouldn’t stop preaching doom (11:19–23). He had virtually no converts to show for a lifetime of ministry. **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we see no results from all we try to do for God.*

This suffering and lonely prophet had no one in whom to find joy and comfort; his own family and friends were involved in plots against him (12:6). He never had the joy of a godly home because God never allowed him to marry, and thus he suffered incredibly agonizing loneliness (16:2). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we are alone.*

Jeremiah lived under a constant threat of death; there were plots to kill him in secret so no one would find him (18:20–23). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we are close to death.*

He lived with physical pain; he was beaten severely and then bound in wooden stocks (20:1–2). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we are filled with pain.*

He lived with emotional pain; his friends spied on him deceitfully and for revenge (20:10). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we are sad and disheartened and feel betrayed.*

He was consumed with sorrow and shame; Jeremiah even cursed the day he was born (20:14–18). His life ended with no relief; he was falsely accused of being a traitor to his own country (37:13–14). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we are sorrowing.*

He was arrested, beaten, thrown into a dungeon, and starved many days (37:15–21). If an Ethiopian Gentile had not interceded on his behalf, he would have died there (38:7–13). **The lesson:** *We can hope in Christ even when we find no relief from trials.*

Perhaps the most striking feature of the book of Jeremiah is the fact that despite the terrible woes in his life (1:5), he saw that it was from the Master Potter's hand (18:1–6). At the point of near despair over his failed ministry, God asked him to go to the potter's house, and there he would get a message from the Lord (18:2). Although Israel had failed so grievously, the heavenly potter was willing to bless His people again if they would repent and yield to His perfect touch.

In the end, tradition tells us that Jeremiah was exiled to Egypt. While faithfully preaching God's Word to the exiles, he was stoned to death by his own people. In spite of everything, he found hope in worshiping our God of repentance. And you, too, can find living hope in Christ even when supposedly bad things happen to good people. Here is how: *Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him* (Lamentations 3:22–25; emphasis added).

When troubles come, knowing that God is good to all who turn to Him for help, the person who is genuine trusts in Christ and finds hope to "keep on keeping on"!

THURSDAY: Lamentations Says to Worship Our God of Hope

"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I hope in Him!"

—Lamentations 3:24, emphasis added

Lamentations was written by Jeremiah. As he sat down and looked over the smoldering ruins of his beloved Jerusalem, his voice rose to the wail of sorrow, a lament. That is why the book is called Lamentations, which was a funeral dirge over the City of God. Inspired by the Spirit of God, this serves as a message of encouragement that the next time things crash and burn in your life and your whole world is falling apart—family, health, finances, emotions—look to God as the God of hope!

Lamentations is a beautiful master-crafted poem with five stanzas. Chapters 1–2 and 4–5 each start with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (twenty-two in all). This form of poetry, called an acrostic, is lovely in form and powerful in communication. Chapter 3, the poem's centerpiece, has three acrostics, or a total of sixty-six verses. The theme of Lamentations and this middle chapter agree: "Great is Your faithfulness, almighty God!" The Lord taught Jeremiah that no matter how the world was falling apart, personally or nationally, he could still hope in God. And that is why we can find living hope for the end of days!

For an even clearer picture, let's go back to where we started in Lamentations. Meet Jeremiah. With his life in shambles—his friends all dead, and the smoke and

stench of destruction all around everything he had ever held dear—Jeremiah wrote the poem that explains the pathway of hope.

The Pathway of Hope: Have you ever felt that life was too painful to even go on? Jeremiah did, and without the benefits and blessings we have in this church age. He persevered with living hope in the midst of that pain. In Lamentations 3, we can see the pains God uses, manages, allows, and, most of all, handles for us. Note how Jeremiah trusted and endured through the pain of these stresses.

- **Broken physical health:** *He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones* (v. 4).
- **Deep emotional strain:** *He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe* (v. 5).
- **Periods of dark depression:** *He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago* (v. 6).
- **Desperation and the burden of being trapped:** *He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy* (v. 7).
- **Feeling out of touch and distant from God:** *Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer* (v. 8).
- **Frustration and confusion:** *He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked* (v. 9).
- **Anxiety and sadness:** *You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity* (v. 17).
- **Physical weakness and hopelessness:** *And I said, “My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD”* (v. 18).
- **Bitter affliction and aimlessness:** *Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall* (v. 19).

If Jeremiah were to stop with verse 19, we might feel discouraged as we face our own trials. But his list of woes actually crescendoed until it broke forth into overflowing hope in verses 21–26. After praising God for His daily compassions and great faithfulness, Jeremiah testified: *The LORD is good to those who **wait for Him**, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should **hope and wait quietly** for the salvation of the Lord* (vv. 25–26, emphasis added).

What a God we serve! Just as He offers *hope* in Lamentations, allow Him to be what you need to make it through life on a *hopeless* earth. As we speed toward the end of days, God offers living hope to each of His children. Let Him weave your weaknesses, like fragile fibers, in with the countless strands of His promises. Let Him stretch and twist you into waiting hope. And then, when troubles increase, let Him bring you a fresh portion of His hope and goodness as you wait enduringly with hope in Christ.

FRIDAY: Ezekiel Says to Worship Our God of the New Heart

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; . . . I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

—Ezekiel 36:26–27, emphasis added

Some contemporaries of Ezekiel (593–571 B.C.) were Daniel (605–536 B.C.), Habakkuk (612–588 B.C.), and Jeremiah (627–586 B.C.). While Jeremiah (forty-one years of ministry, 627–586 B.C.) played the funeral dirge of doom over Jerusalem, a lonely exiled prophet named Ezekiel (twenty years of ministry, 592–572 B.C.) was watching the gathering storm God would use to sweep Judah into captivity. In 598 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar captured Ezekiel along with 10,000 other fellow Judeans. Ezekiel arrived in Babylon at the age of twenty-five (2 Kings 24:8–16; Ezekiel 1:1–2). Deported to 200 miles north of Babylon, Ezekiel was 600 miles from Jeremiah in Jerusalem for the last twelve years of Jeremiah’s ministry. And for twenty-six years Ezekiel was 200 miles north of Daniel (606–533 B.C.) who was in Babylon for his seventy-three years of ministry. These three prophets overlapped parts of their prophetic ministries. As Ezekiel lived away from his home and his people, he learned that he was never far from his God. God taught him that His presence was not limited to the temple in Jerusalem.

During the exile, Ezekiel lived in a house to which numerous captives came and sought counsel from him (8:1; 14:1; 20:1). After five silent years of counseling, he began twenty years of speaking for God. At age thirty, Ezekiel, like our Lord Jesus Christ, began his ministry by a river. In an astounding vision he saw cherubim, angelic hosts, and indescribable sights portraying the very throne room of God. Ezekiel was God’s man. He saw God—and it changed his life!

Ezekiel saw God’s glorious majesty. All these sights—“*awesome gleam of crystal . . . glowing metal . . . like fire [like a] rainbow*” (1:22, 27–28 NASB)—were given to Ezekiel to remind him of how awesome, how glorious, and how indescribably majestic God is! *Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. [For] the LORD sits as King forever* (Psalm 29:2, 10b).

Ezekiel saw God’s final authority. Seeing God’s throne taught him that He was in control (1:25a). Ezekiel was a prisoner of war; he was surrounded by numerous enemies who had vandalized his home, dragged him away, and savagely ended the lives of thousands of his people. Yet, in the midst of even that, all the fears of life melted in the radiance of God’s sovereign throne. And because God is on His throne, the words of this well-loved song hold true: *When peace like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like the sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, “It is well with my soul.”*

Ezekiel saw God’s absolute supremacy. The term “*high up*” really spoke to him because the throne of God is atop all else (1:26b). As Ezekiel saw the destruction of his nation he learned that God is not thwarted by man’s disobedience. Though God is grieved and saddened, His plan will not fail. Nothing is beyond His throne or above it. God reigns!

Ezekiel saw God’s unveiled glory in Christ. The sight of Christ “*like a man*” (1:26c) reminds us that our Lord Jesus Christ is *the radiance of His glory and the exact*

representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3, NASB). Ezekiel got to see Jesus Christ, and now you and I get to see Him in His Book, the Bible.

Ezekiel saw God's unchanging promises. "*Like a rainbow*" (1:28) is given by God as a sign that He keeps His Word. What He says, He will do.

Clearly, we can see that God's servants submit to Him: *The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him* (Ezekiel 1:3, NASB).

Did you know that the Word of the Lord can expressly come to you? I don't mean visions; He wants to talk to you through His Word. Will you let Him speak to you today? If you are God's servant, you will be open to God's Word. This means being attuned to His "*still small voice*" so that you can obey His directives as Elijah did on the mountaintop after the wind, earthquake, and fire of 1 Kings 19:10–12. Otherwise, you might miss a real treasure from the Lord!

Ezekiel waited for the hand of the Lord to lead him—like these angelic beings who followed the Lord's leading exactly, and were in concert with Him: *Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels* (Ezekiel 1:20, NASB). I would not want to go anywhere if the hand of the Lord was not on me. Would you? That is what God's servants are like.

Ezekiel demonstrated being in concert with the Lord through the loss of his lovely wife (16:2) who died (24:16–18). God in His sovereignty took her life as a preaching illustration for Ezekiel to Judah. Though saddened, Ezekiel followed the God of the new heart's lead to show these people that they needed a new heart. Are you willing to follow His lead regardless of the personal cost?

SATURDAY: Daniel Says to Worship Our God Who Rules

*"This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that **the Most High rules in the kingdom of men**, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men."*

—Daniel 4:17, emphasis added

Some contemporaries of Daniel (605–536 B.C.) were Jeremiah (627–586 B.C.), Habakkuk (612–588 B.C.), and Ezekiel (593–571 B.C.). In God's opinion of history, the kingdom of Babylon was the richest and most glorious of all the kingdoms of the earth. Babylon was the head of gold in the image God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar. As its realm spread across the then-known world, in its wake it left the dust of crushed opponents foolish enough to challenge God's chosen instrument of prophesied judgment. Nobody could stop the Babylonians because God was empowering them. As God is performing His purposes through His Word, we should not fight against Him. We must be in step with Him.

To the helm of that incredible empire rose an incredible young man of God, Daniel. Have you ever considered what it must have been like to be prime minister to the greatest empire in the world in its time? There would be untold streams of decisions, endless meetings, countless conferences, lavish banquets, and clay tablet work (like our paperwork). And don't forget the delays on the freeways in your chariot as well as the everyday needs of life such as going to the sandal shop, stopping to have new wheels put on the chariot, and tending to the needs of the horses.

Daniel was a very responsible man, committed, and most of all *busy*. How did he cope with life at the top? He knelt on his knees three times a day to pray, *just as he always did*. In the midst of his cabinet position in a worldwide empire, and all the pressures that came with such a position, Daniel *faithfully prayed*. Not just at a meal; no, he found a way to stop it all, go to a quiet, private chamber, kneel, and come into the presence of God in thanksgiving. When life is tough, when it seems like the bad guys are winning, remember there is a God in heaven who rules!

Having a God in heaven who is in charge should cause each of us to live with conviction. Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself (1:8). Why? Because God wants His children to have standards of holiness in their lives.

Make a choice to live in hope: Through the testimonies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, we find living hope to worship our God of salvation, our God of repentance, our God of hope, our God of the new heart, and our God who rules.

As signs of the end of days multiply, never forget that our God rules: *There is a God in heaven who . . . has made known . . . what will be in the latter days* (Daniel 2:28). God is in charge! He cares when you are in the midst of the fires in your life: *Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire* (Daniel 3:26). Just as the Most High God walked beside these three servants in the fire, He will also compassionately walk with you through your fiery trials of faith.

Have confidence in Christ (past and future) because our God moves history along: *"the Most High rules in the kingdom of men"* (Daniel 4:17). Because He reigns, it is better to read His Word than to depend upon the news media to interpret what is happening in the world. Then, when you read or hear the news, you will perceive God's hand in it. For that reason, my interest in the news has been declining. The news is bad and crippling for spiritual lives because we can get addicted to it.

As you have communion (constant prayerfulness) with Christ, you will find enduring hope come what may: *In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul* (Psalm 94:19). Like the psalmist, Daniel knew that if he turned to our Sovereign Lord, that he would find help in time of need.

God wants you to bring all your problems and fears to Him: *Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to . . . his companions: that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven . . . , so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon* (Daniel 2:17–18). In Daniel's night vision, God revealed the secret of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. And Daniel responded in praise: *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are*

His. . . . He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Daniel 2:20, 21c).

All through the ages, saints have worshiped our mighty God who rules. And we now have the privilege of joining our voices with theirs in praise of our merciful and loving God: *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. . . . Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand* (Psalm 95:1–3, 6–7).

Once you really see God, nothing else can fully satisfy. Have *you* ever seen Him? The words of this song beautifully capture the heart of a soul who has truly seen God. I hope it represents yours.

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!*

*My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread thro’ all the earth abroad
The honors of Thy name.*

*Jesus, the name that calms my fears,
That bids my sorrows cease;
’Tis music in the sinner’s ears;
’Tis life and health and peace.*

*He breaks the pow’r of canceled sin,
He sets the pris’ner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

—Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

¹ For further reading, see *Wilmington’s Visualized Study Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1984); J. Sidlow Baxter, *Baxter’s Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); W. Graham Scroggi, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995); W. A. Criswell, ed. *The Criswell Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979); A. M. Hodgkin, *Christ in All the Scriptures* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1943); C. H. Mackintosh, “Notes on the Pentateuch,” *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989); John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), pp. 76–77; J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), pp. 129–36.