

Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 8



SESSION 8

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Section 1

The purpose of God revealed

In this section we are going to look at the real purpose of God in creating the earth and the human race. One clue is given in Isaiah's prophecy.



Read Isaiah 45 v 18

Another clue is given in the last book of the Bible.



Look at Revelation 4 v 11

The book of Numbers gives us more information.



Read Numbers 14 v 21

If you have marginal references, this verse in Numbers sends us looking at other passages giving the same idea.



Look at Psalm 72 v 19
Habakkuk 2 v 14

From these verses you learn that:

- a) God created the world to be inhabited
- b) The inhabitants were created as part of God's purpose, or "will", and
- c) That purpose involves filling the earth with His glory.

You could ask, "What does filling the earth with God's glory mean?"

Applying the principles we learnt in the "Concordances" section (Session 5, Section 1), we look up "glory" and see that the word "glory" in the last three references mentioned above comes from the Hebrew word "kabod". We also notice in the list of references in the concordance:

Exodus 33 v 18 – "And he [Moses] said, Please, show me Your glory"
Could this reference help in telling what "the glory" is?



Read Exodus 33 v 18 to 34 v 8

If you look at this passage carefully you learn:

a) God's name, glory and goodness are interchangeable expressions (v 18 to 22).

b) God's name is His character or attributes. This character is a perfect blend of "mercy" and "truth". That is to say, that God is merciful, but He cannot alter His standpoint. This is the foundation principle of all God's dealings revealed in the Bible.

Watch out for "echoes" of this principle. We shall look a little more at this idea later.

You have learnt that it is God's plan to fill the earth with His mercy without compromising His principles. What a contrast with how things are now! There are several word pictures given of what this will involve.



Read Psalm 72
Isaiah 2

Notice how the human race will eventually live up to God's standards. People will obey God and acknowledge that He knows best.

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 10

The character, purpose and glory of God

Look at the references we have mentioned and write down in your own words what they are saying about God's character, purpose and glory. If you have a Bible with cross-references, look up the cross-references and write down where they lead you and what you learn from them.

Section 2

Overview of the books of the Bible (Part 4)

In the last “overview” section (Session 6, Section 1) we left off with the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. The Assyrians then turned their attention to the southern kingdom.

This time we follow the southern kingdom of Judah from the reign of Hezekiah to when the kingdom was destroyed. At this time the Jews were taken to Babylon, where they stayed for seventy years. At the end of the seventy years, they returned to the land of Israel. The next phase in the story leads up to the birth of Christ.

This is a not an easy period to understand, so it will help you to look at the time chart again (see pages 2 and 3 of Session 6).

2 Kings 18 and 19 The Assyrians invaded Judah, conquering virtually all the kingdom except the city of Jerusalem. This occurred during the time when Hezekiah was king of Judah.



An Assyrian soldier from the palace of Sargon II. He had a curled beard, and held a quiver and bow, heavy club and sword.

Isaiah 36 and 37 The king of Assyria came with a vast army which surrounded Jerusalem while Hezekiah was king. They called for Hezekiah's surrender. The Assyrians had overcome all the gods of the other nations, so they thought that they could conquer Israel. They thought that the God of Israel was no different from the gods of the other nations.

Hezekiah took the problem to God in prayer. Isaiah brought an answer from God.



Read Isaiah 37 v 33 to 35

We see God's dramatic response.



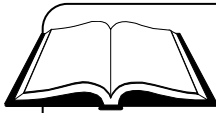
Read Isaiah 37 v 36

This is a graphic example of God's deliverance, because He wanted to show that He was different from all other gods.

2 Kings 21

Hezekiah's reign was followed by two very wicked kings, Manasseh and Amon. It was because of the wickedness of Manasseh that God told them that their nation would be taken into captivity for a period of seventy years.

The seventy years captivity was foretold by Jeremiah.



Read Jeremiah 29 v 10

2 Kings 22

The next king, Josiah, was a good king. When Josiah became king at a very young age, he removed the idols which past kings had established.

While clearing out the temple, the priests found a book of the law.

Josiah had the book read and was concerned because clearly the nation had strayed away from God. And so Josiah made further efforts to remove idol worship.

Unfortunately, these efforts were short lived as Josiah died prematurely in a battle against Egypt.

2 Kings 23 v 31 to 2 Kings 24 v 20 As a result of Josiah's death, his sons came to power and the next four kings are wicked. These are Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last king.

2 Kings 25 During Zedekiah's reign, the Babylonians invaded. Jerusalem was ransacked and the temple was destroyed.

The southern kingdom was then taken captive to Babylon for seventy years.



An artist's impression of "great Babylon".

Towards the end of the seventy years, Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians, and a decree was granted allowing the Jews to restore the temple.

Ezra and Nehemiah Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah were leaders at various times. There were several interruptions to the rebuilding as the surrounding nations interfered, but eventually, through a series of decrees, the temple and the city walls were constructed.

Haggai and Zechariah Haggai and Zechariah were prophets who encouraged the people in their job of building the temple.

Esther The book of Esther also enters into this time period. Esther was married to a king of Persia and she interceded when there was a plot to destroy the Jews. The Feast of Purim, still kept by orthodox Jews today, is a celebration of this event.

Leading up to Christ There is a period of silence from God for 400 years.

The Persian kingdom was conquered by the Greek empire.

The region of Israel was now ruled by the Greeks, who encouraged harmony and practised religious tolerance for a time.

The Greek empire was divided and Israel became a place of dispute between two sections of the Greek empire.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a particularly cruel Greek ruler over the land of Israel. He imposed terrible evil on the Jews and humiliated them in their worship. As a result of this, a Jewish family known as the Maccabees rose in revolt, reclaimed Jerusalem and purified the temple.

The Jews ruled their land for a short time until the Roman empire swallowed up the Greek empire and asserted control over the area then known as Palestine, which included the land of Israel.

..... And so this sets the scene for the New Testament period.

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 11

Overview of the books of the Bible

Continue making your own summary of the Bible story using the references we have given you, and add it to your summaries from assignments 6 and 8.

Notes

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