

## **Psalms: *God's Rule Over the Nation***

### **Focal Verses: Psalms 47**

**Feb. 25, 2024**

#### **I. Aim for change!**

#### **II. In Focus: The very last paragraph is so important.**

#### **III. Keep in Mind**

#### **IV. The People, Place, and Times**

- Israel knew the power and the authority of earthly Kings; they had seen how they were praised and celebrated.
- They needed a reminder that God was King!
- We need the reminder that Christ is King!

#### **V. God is King over all the Earth.**

- A. Verse 2 used the term most high (powerful image...the Kings of the Earth sat on a high throne.)
- B. The word Selah (Say-La)
  - Psalms is the Hebrew praise book, worship book. The word has possible two meanings:
    - 1) It could be where the music is asking the singers to raise their voices.
    - 2) It also could indicate a pause in the music.

#### **VI. God has ascended.**

- This is an image of the loftiness of God!
- This is a reminder that He sees us from where He is!

#### **VII. God is reigning over all the Earth.**

- We need to ever be mindful and embrace the fact, as believers, that God is sovereign!
  - Despite the chaos in the world!
  - Despite the evil in the world!
  - Despite the powers in the world.

#### **VIII. Psalms is a Book in the Bible that collected the experiences personally of men like David, and collected the songs of Praise that the children of Israel would use in worship and traveling.**

- It's a catalog of Hebrew liturgy and Hebrew living.
- It was written by several writers: David, Moses, Asaph, Korah.

**Proverbs: *A Treasure Worth Seeking***  
**Focal Verses: Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:1-6, 13-18**  
**March 3, 2024**

**I. Aim for Change!**

**II. In Focus: The last line is a powerful statement!**

**III. Keep in Mind.**

**IV. The people, places, and the times.**

- Solomon was not only king, but he was classified as the epitome of wisdom.
- It is interesting that in the Old Testament the first person wisdom is attributed to is a woman from Tekoa. (2 Samuel 14:1-20)
- Wisdom in Proverbs was often based upon following instructions, adhering to teaching, precepts...

**V. Wisdom: What Is It? (Proverbs 2:1-5)**

- We are not what we know, but what we are willing to learn!
  - We really don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.
  - Don't mistake knowledge for wisdom; one helps you to make a living, the other helps you to make a life.
- A. We are told to hide wisdom in our heart (2:1, Psalm 119:11)
- This means that we should treasure it!
- B. We are encouraged to cry out for it! The implication is to seek it and to want it!
- When we find God, we also find a depth of wisdom that comes out of that relationship.
  - This aspect of wisdom helps us to understand faith, our personal walk with God, and perhaps even our trials in a different perspective.

**VI. Wisdom: why do we need it? (3:1-6)**

- A. It helps us and our trust.
- B. It guides us and our thoughts.
- C. It promises us that a path will be available to us.

**VII. Wisdom: what are the rewards? (vss. 13-18)**

- A. Happy???? What is implied there?
- B. The contrast between silver and gold! What is implied there?
- C. What is implied with the woman holding the treasures of wisdom in her hand?

## **Ecclesiastes - Song of Solomon: *The Most Beautiful Bride***

### **Focal Verses: Song of Solomon 6:4-12**

**March 10, 2024**

#### **I. Aim for change.**

#### **II. In Focus: The last paragraph raises a relative question.**

#### **III. Keep in Mind**

- A. Concubines were legal wives of those that had them. Often, they have been thought to be “options”. But they were not; they were priorities with ranking (for instance, concubine 1, 2, 3...were as those contractual agreements were made on time and date that they were ranked). In marriages of polygamy, all the wives have a legal place, but they are the first, second,...)
- B. Shulamite was a woman of color.

#### **IV. Complementing Beauty**

- A. Solomon was captured by her beauty.
- B. He uses 2 cites to compare her beauty.
- C. He is painting a picture in words in contrast to what is known.

#### **V. Convinced by Beauty**

- A. The image of a dove is white: purity.
- B. It's also the language of perfection.
- C. Remember, Solomon had an enormous harem.

#### **VI. Captivated by Beauty**

- A. A love that was renewed.
- B. A love that was radiant.

#### **VII. Solomon wrote three books, and it appears that each one was written in different seasons of his life:**

- Song of Solomon was believed to be his middle-aged writings.
- Proverbs was in the latter years after he had written ballads of love.
- Ecclesiastes was when the sun was setting in his life because he writes when he thinks about life, so much was vanity.
- **Ecc. 1:2-3** “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” <sup>3</sup> What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?

## **Isaiah: God Promised a Righteous Lord**

### **Focal Verses: Isaiah 9:2-7**

**March 17, 2024**

Christ was born to be our Lord and Savior. He would ultimately redeem the world. As our hope, the prediction of the birth of a child finds fulfillment in the birth of Christ (Matthew 4:12-16).

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will:

- ANALYZE the relationship between Isaiah's prophecy and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ
- REFLECT on God's promise of justice to those who are without hope
- IDENTIFY signs of hope in conflict-ridden areas such as inner cities and our government.

**Keep in Mind:**

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6, KJV)

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Isaiah.** One of the most influential Old Testament prophets, Isaiah lived and ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah for 58 years. Isaiah lived through one of his nation's most turbulent periods during which he witnessed Judah's defeat by the Babylonian Empire and actually saw his fellow citizens taken into captivity. He prophesied during the reign of five kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. His free access to the palace in Jerusalem and his familiarity with court life imply that Isaiah belonged to Judah's wealthy class and may have been related to the ruling family. However, this did not keep Isaiah from verbally attacking the aristocracy in defense of the common people. Scripture refers to his wife as a "prophetess" and identifies him as the father of at least two sons: Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 7:1-3; 8:1-3)

**In Depth**

1. **End of the Darkness (Isaiah 9:2-5)**
2. **Gift of Forthcoming Peace (vv. 6-7)**

**Say It Correctly**

Gideon, **GID**-ee-uhn   Hezekiah, Hez'uh-**KI**-uh   Jotham, **JOH**-thuhm   Midian, **MID**-ee-uhn  
Tiglath-pileser, Tig'lath-puh-**LEE**-zuhr

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. Do you think that our society is suffering from the effects of spiritual darkness? In what ways?
2. How does our near worship of materialism contribute to this spiritual darkness?

**Jeremiah – Lamentations: *Mediator of the New Covenant***  
**Focal Verses: Jeremiah 31:27-34**  
**March 24, 2024**

Try as we might, humans often fail in our relationships. How can we restore broken relationships with others? Jeremiah foresaw a time when God would make a new covenant, writing His laws in human hearts with the vow to be Israel's God and to make Israel His people.

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will:

- EVALUATE Jeremiah's message about the new covenant
- CARE about how the new covenant makes a difference in our relationship with God
- DECIDE to live in accordance with the law written on our hearts.

**Keep in Mind:**

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31, KJV)

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Jeremiah.** Jeremiah was born into a priestly family and called to be a prophet at a young age. His words were not accepted by the establishment in Judah. Considered one of the most revealing prophets of the Old Testament, Jeremiah's prophetic career prepared the Children of Israel for their imminent exile. His poetic words, graced by God's calling, offered both warning and promise to the Israelites. Jeremiah's words are regarded as an important part of the prophetic calling and trajectory of the Israelites and still resonate as important words for us today.

**Pre-Exilic.** The book of Jeremiah is a pre-exilic prophetic book, meaning that it was written prior to Israel's exile from the Promised Land. This is important to know as it helps us better understand Jeremiah's role as a prophet. It also helps us understand his prophecy of impending exile and the promise of a new covenant as reflective of the overarching themes of the text. Jeremiah's prophecy speaks into the future when God's new covenant would restore them to the Promised Land and empower His people to live for Him by writing His laws on their hearts.

**In Depth**

1. Payback for Disobedience (Jeremiah 31:27-30)
2. Restoration Through a New Covenant (vv. 31-34)

**Say It Correctly**

Iniquity, ih-NICK-wih-tee

Captivity, cap-TIH-vuh-tee

**Discuss the Meaning**

Oftentimes we become so legalistic in our worship to God that we forget the ways in which He wants our hearts to be soft and open toward Him. How can we begin to shift our worship of God to less focus on rules and more focus on our hearts and attitude?

**Ezekiel: *God's Divine Glory Returns***  
**Focal Verses: Ezekiel 43:1-12**  
**March 31, 2024**

People look for a place in which they can experience some sense of release and orderliness, away from the chaos that sometimes surrounds them. Ezekiel's vision, given to him by God, revealed to the Israelites that God's calming presence and merciful glory could be felt in sacred places where He is truly worshiped.

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will:

- COMPREHEND the vision of God's holy and merciful glory in the temple
- ASSOCIATE a sense of holiness of place with the presence and mercy of God
- GROW in respect for the sacredness of worship settings

**Keep in Mind:** "So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house." (Ezekiel 43:5)

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Inner Court.** The inner court was a separate area in the temple reserved only for priests. This separate area contained ten golden lampstands. It also contained a table for the shewbread, which was constantly on display and replaced every Sabbath. An altar of incense stood in the inner court before the entrance into the Holy of Holies, where the glory of the Lord was manifested. As a member of the priesthood, Ezekiel was qualified to have access to this area of the temple (1:2).

**The River Chebar.** The Chebar was a river that ran through the land of the Chaldeans. Many of the captive Jews settled here. Many believe that the Chebar was the royal canal of Nebuchadnezzar that joined the Tigris and Euphrates. Ezekiel sat here among the captives and received many of his visions and prophetic words at this location (1:1–3).

**In Depth**

1. The Return of the Glory (Ezekiel 43:1-5)
2. Return to the Glory (vv. 6-9)
3. The Requirements for the Glory (vv. 10-12)

**Say It Correctly**

Chebar, Keh-**VAR**

Shekina, sheh-kee-**NAW**

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. In what ways can we as God's people defile His name in the 21st century?
2. How can we experience the glory of the Lord today?

**Daniel: *A Sincere Faith***  
**Focal Verses: Daniel 1:8-21**  
**April 7, 2024**

People find themselves confronted by contradictory requirements from different sources of authority. How do we resolve such conflicts? Daniel's active faith, combined with his tact, helped him resolve his conflict and remain obedient to God in terms of dietary requirements.

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will:

- ANALYZE the choice that Daniel and his friends faced and that choice's outcome
- ASPIRE to have the faith of Daniel when confronted with contradictory directives from authorities
- IDENTIFY similar situations that call for the exercise of faith.

**Keep in Mind:** "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Daniel 1:8, KJV)

**The People, Places, and Times**

**Pulse.** In the Hebrew language, this includes everything that is grown from sown seed—not only vegetables, but also fruit, legumes, grains, and bread. It was very similar to a healthy vegetarian diet. This type of food was eaten in a partial fast, excluding meat, dairy, and other delicacies. Eating pulse was not a condemnation of meat eating in general, but regarded by the participant as a way to humble themselves before God.

**Eunuch.** A eunuch was usually a man who was castrated. These men were guardians of the women of the court, chosen because they could not harm them sexually. Eunuchs were also placed in charge of other court offices because they were single-minded; they were not distracted by sexual desires or family responsibilities. In the ancient world, eunuchs were considered remarkable for their faithfulness to their masters. Eunuchs were common in the royal courts of the Jews, Persians, Babylonians, Romans, and Greeks. In the Law, it was forbidden for eunuchs to be a part of public worship (Deuteronomy 23:1). Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus commends those who have figuratively made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:12).

**In Depth**

1. Purpose Over Pressure (Daniel 1:8-14)
2. Faith Over Fear (vv. 15-16)
3. Testimony After the Test (vv. 17-21)

**Say It Correctly**

Hananiah, hah-nah-NIGH-ah      Mishaël, MEE-shah-el      Azariah, As-uh-RYE-uh

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. How can we be sure that we are able to defend our faith?
2. What are some of the "Nebuchadnezzars" that we face today?

## **Hosea: Hosea Preaches God's Accusation against Israel**

**Focal Verses: Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1-2; 12:8-9**

**April 14, 2024**

Hosea identifies many sins the people of Israel had committed in rejecting the covenant commands of God. Since God had not judged the nation so far, the people boasted that judgment would never come. The prophet pleaded with them to repent and return to God in order to avoid His judgment.

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will:

- ANALYZE the need to confess and be forgiven
- SENSE that although God is displeased when we sin, He forgives and restores us when we truly repent
- ASK God to forgive us for any known sin of acting callously or selfishly

**Keep in Mind:** “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” (Hosea 4:1, KJV)

### **The People, Places, and Times**

**Hosea.** The name Hosea means “salvation.” Hosea served from 753 to 715 B.C. as a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He came to be called a “minor” prophet due to the relatively short length of his prophetic book. Hosea was obedient to God’s directive to marry a whore, Gomer, who was unfaithful to him and would cause him many headaches and heartaches. Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is a picture of the relationship between a faithful God and an unfaithful Israel. It illustrates the love of a merciful but jealous God for His sinful people.

**Gomer.** Gomer was Hosea’s unfaithful wife, the daughter of Diblaim. According to the Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, the name Gomer comes from a Hebrew term signifying “lump or double cakes of figs and raisins.” Some theologians believe that the name is figurative, i.e., “Gomer, the daughter of raisin cakes,” meaning that she was wholly given up to her harlotry since raisin cakes were used in certain fertility cult rites (457). She was also the mother of Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi (the second and third children may not have been Hosea’s). As Gomer violated her sacred vows of marriage to Hosea, so did Israel act toward God.

### **In Depth**

1. **God’s Disobedient People: God Charges Israel (Hosea 4:1-4)**
2. **God’s Disobedient People: God knows (7:1-2)**
3. **God’s Disobedient People: God’s Invitation (12:8-9)**

### **Say It Correctly**



Abal, aw-BAL  
Amal, aw-MAL

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. As believers, we must constantly seek to serve God and turn from sin. There is a constant battle between our flesh, or sinful nature, and our spiritual nature. When we sin, why doesn't God immediately confront us in our sin? Discuss the opportunities that God gives us to repent.
2. Ask the students to recognize that leadership is an important responsibility. Remind the students that God blamed Israel's leadership for not teaching the people the knowledge of Himself. Discuss why God blamed the leadership. Ask the students who serve in leadership positions if they realize the significance and the responsibility that accompany their position.
3. God compassionately loves all of humanity. When we sin and sever our relationship with God, He desires that we repent, or turn wholeheartedly from our sin to Him. Ask the students to personally consider their emotions when they sin.

**Joel: Call to Repentance**  
**Focal Verses: Joel 2:1-2, 12-14, 28-29**  
**April 21, 2024**

God's call in this lesson is a call to repentance. As a symbol of pending judgment and darkness, God sent a plague of locusts. Joel told the Children of Israel that judgment could be avoided if they repented. God promised the people a day in which God's Spirit would be poured out on the people.

**Aim For Change:** By the end of the lesson, we will

- SUMMARIZE the changes in the heart of the believer and their behavior in response to God
- APPRECIATE God's plan of salvation for us
- SEEK God's rewards for righteousness

**Keep in Mind:** "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." (Joel 2:12, 13 KJV)

**The People, Places, and Times**

Joel's name means "whose God is Jehovah." The time of the writing of the Book of Joel is debated, and scholars are divided. Some believe it could have been written as early as the ninth century B.C., while others support a pre-exilic date. Most now have arrived at a date between 500 and 350 B.C. The time is after the Babylonian exile, subsequent to the building of the second temple and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Far more important than the time of the prophecy is the content of the message. Judah had previously been taken into Babylonian captivity. Upon release, some of the people decided to return to their homeland, while others decided to remain in Babylon. The temple has been rebuilt, according to Joel 1:2–2:27, and the walls of Jerusalem have been reconstructed. This message from God, delivered by Joel, will impact many future generations.

**In Depth**

1. God's Plague in Judah and the Prophetic Messenger's Warning (Joel 2:1-2)
2. God Uses Symbols to Turn His people Back to Him (vv. 12-14)
3. God's Ultimate Blessing: God's Spirit Poured Upon All Flesh (vv. 28-29)

**Say It Correctly**

Inhabitant, in-hab-i-TANT      Rend, **REND**      Repent, re-PENT      Prophecy, proph-e-SY

**Discuss the Meaning**

1. What response did God desire from Judah? (Joel 2:12)
2. Discuss why God wanted the people of Judah to tear their hearts & not their garments? (v. 13)
3. Who were the soldiers of the great army of God? (vv. 1–2, 25)
4. What was the role of priests? (v. 17)
5. What does it mean to receive the Spirit of God? (vv. 28–29)