

# Promise and Deliverance

## Student Workbook

Volume 10

Level 4

Harvey De Groot

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# Preface

When S.G. De Graaf wrote his four-volume series, *Promise and Deliverance*, he showed educators how to teach Bible stories from a redemptive-historical perspective. Rather than turning Bible stories into moralistic tales, De Graaf taught us how all the Bible shows God revealing himself as the God of the covenant, who is working out His redemptive plan for humanity and all of creation.

The 80 workbooks written by Harvey De Groot are meant to supplement De Graaf's work. They are divided by volume and level number: 20 volumes with four levels per volume. Workbook lessons are written at four levels so that families with students in various grades can study the same Bible stories during the week in preparation for their classes on Sunday. Prior to class, the Sunday School teacher should study the lesson in De Graaf's book. The teacher and students can go through the workbook during class.

The levels are divided according to the following grades:

- **Level One:** Grades K-1
- **Level Two:** Grades 2-3
- **Level Three:** Grades 4-6
- **Level Four:** Grades 7-8

Each volume contains 12 or 13 lessons, and each lesson has the following sections:

- **Reference:** The volume and lesson number in De Graaf's series.
- **Scripture:** The passage from Scripture on which the lesson is based.
- **Memory Verse:** A memory verse related to the lesson.
- **Lesson Truth:** A short statement to help the class focus on the main point of the lesson.
- **Lesson:** The lesson itself, which the teacher can read in class. For older grades, the teacher may opt to assign it as homework.
- **Questions:** Items to be discussed in class. For older grades, the teacher can assign these questions as homework but should also use them as a basis for class discussion. These are not the only questions that could or should be asked. Teachers should encourage students to come with their own questions as well.

This edition was written by Harvey De Groot and edited by his son Norlan De Groot.



## Lesson 1

# The Power of Grace in a Time of Judgment

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 52

**Scripture:** II Kings 21; II Chronicles 33

**Memory Verse:** “Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him, and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.” (II Chronicles 33:12-13)

**Lesson Truth:** Manasseh is subjected to the power of grace in a time of judgment.

### Lesson

Hezekiah had been a good king in Judah. He brought many reforms and destroyed the high places of idol worship. After Hezekiah’s death, his son Manasseh became king when he was twelve years old. Under the rule of Manasseh, the land of Judah became ripe for judgment. The story of Manasseh begins the account of Judah’s decline into captivity. Manasseh intentionally reversed many of the reforms of his father Hezekiah. He rebuilt the high places for idol worship and brought back the Baals. The one message of comfort in the story of Manasseh is his conversion after he was taken captive. His conversion is an account of the power of God’s grace in a time of judgment.

Manasseh did not understand that as king of Judah he was called to be the protector of God’s people in the bond of the covenant. Instead, he forsook the covenant and deliberately erected altars to the Baals. He brought in worship of the sun moon and stars from Babylon and Assyria. Manasseh even went so far as to sacrifice his own sons in the valley of the son of Hinnom. It is hard to imagine that a son of Hezekiah would profane the sacred things of the Lord in this way. The Lord had instructed His people to make animal sacrifices that would point to the sacrifice of Christ Jesus for the remission of sins. It was these sacred things that Manasseh profaned and in doing so, provoked the Lord. How could the Lord tolerate such behavior? The sad truth was that the Lord’s tolerance was an indication that He would forsake His people and allow them to destroy themselves by their own sins. Judah was ripe for judgment!

But this story has an unexpected turn that helps us understand that grace is always more powerful than sin. The Lord showed in the life of Manasseh that His grace can triumph over sin. This triumph pointed to the victory of grace that was to come through the Lord Jesus Christ. Manasseh had turned so completely against the Lord that he ruled in Jerusalem with a high hand and spilled innocent blood. What a tragedy that the one who was supposed to be a shield to the people became their destroyer.

The Lord in His mercy sent prophets to Manasseh and the people of Judah to warn them that destruction would come because of their sins. But the king and the people paid no attention to the voice of the Lord. In the face of this evil, the Lord sent the Assyrian army to take the city of Jerusalem. The Assyrians put hooks in Manasseh’s nose and carried him away in bronze fetters to Babylon. Then an amazing thing happened! The Lord allowed Manasseh to see that the cause of his misery was his sins against God. This wicked king then remembered the God of his father Hezekiah and humbled himself as he pleaded with the Lord to remember the Land of Judah.

The Lord then showed the power of grace in this time of judgment. He listened to the prayer of Manasseh and permitted him to return to Jerusalem and reign as king. Now Manasseh tried to rid the country of idolatry. He

removed the idols he had erected in the temple and in Jerusalem. He tried to restore the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem, but the idolatry that he once practiced now hindered the people from a complete return to the Lord. The tragedy of Manasseh's early years of rebellion against the Lord made the land of Judah ripe for judgment. Because the Lord showed the power of His grace, Manasseh died a man of faith.

Judah followed in the sins of Manasseh and now the Lord showed His judgment against His people by giving them Amon as king. He served only two years as king of Judah, but he contributed to the downfall of Judah. The Lord's people in the kingdom of Judah needed the victory of Christ Jesus over the judgments of God. Just as Judah was consumed by the judgments of God, we too will be consumed if we remain outside of the saving grace of Christ Jesus.

### **Questions**

1. How long did Manasseh reign in Jerusalem? (II Kings 21:1)
2. How does the Bible characterize Manasseh's reign? (II Kings 21:2)
3. How did Manasseh reverse the renewals of his father Hezekiah? (II Kings 21:3)
4. How evil did the land of Judah become when Manasseh was king? (II Kings 21:9-11)
5. What sensation would come to the ears of everyone who heard of the calamity the Lord would bring on Judah? (II Kings 21:12)

6. What calamity did the Lord bring on Manasseh by the hand of the Assyrians? (II Chronicles 33:11)

7. What did Manasseh do when he was afflicted? (II Chronicles 33:12)

8. What was the Lord's response to Manasseh after he humbled himself? (II Chronicles 33:13)

## Lesson 2

# The Need for Reformation by the Spirit

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 53

**Scripture:** II Kings 22–23; II Chronicles 34–35

**Memory Verse:** “Go inquire of the Lord for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book.” (II Chronicles 34:21)

**Lesson Truth:** Josiah’s reformation cries out for a reformation by the Spirit.

### Lesson

In the downward spiral of the history of the kingdom of Judah we get a wonderful reprieve when we learn about King Josiah. Following the long and wicked reign of his grandfather Manasseh and the two-year reign of his wicked father Amon, it is a blessing to read about Josiah. The Bible says of Josiah that there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might. In spite of the reformation under this good king, the people of Judah did not turn from their evil ways. The people of Judah would certainly be carried into captivity. From this story we learn that the old covenant under the Law could not save God’s people. The new covenant of grace would bring the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of men and bring a reformation of the heart.

The study of King Josiah helps us understand the impotence of the old covenant. Even though Josiah brought real reformation to the land of Judah the judgments spoken in the Book of the Law, to lawbreakers, applied to Judah. Josiah showed when he was very young that he would serve the Lord. He was crowned king when he was only eight years old. When he was still a young man he began the restoration of the temple. He received money for the temple restoration from a free will offering of the people. Then in the eighteenth year of his reign he sent Shaphan his secretary to Hilkiah the high priest with the money to repair the temple. Then a tremendous thing happened; not only was the temple repaired, but Hilkiah also said that he found the Book of the Law. He told Shaphan to inform the king.

Shaphan did more than inform Josiah, he also read the Book of the Law to the king. When Josiah heard the Book of the Law and the judgments that would come to those who broke the Law, he tore his clothes in anguish. He understood that in breaking the Law, Judah was ready for judgment. Because Josiah was a God-fearing king, he immediately looked for a word from the Lord. He sent messengers to Huldah the prophetess who lived in Jerusalem to ask her for a prophecy from the Lord. Huldah had to inform Josiah that the judgments of the Lord would come on Judah just as the warnings in the Book of the Law predicted. However, she prophesied that because Josiah had torn his clothes in anguish for the sins of the people these judgments would not come in his lifetime. Here we see that in spite of Josiah’s repentance and reformation the old covenant of the Law did not turn aside God’s judgments. Josiah along with people of all ages had to look to the new covenant of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. The old temporary covenant pointed ahead to the new covenant in which God’s people live with the Lord today.

Even though Josiah knew that God’s judgments would come on Judah he went ahead with his reforms anyway. He wanted to restore God’s rights in Judah for the sake of the honor and righteousness of the Lord. In order to do this he had all the people assemble in the front court of the temple. When they were assembled, he had the Law read as he stood with the people to listen. The people shouted that they wanted to live in





## Lesson 3

# Fading Light

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 54

**Scripture:** II Kings 24–25

**Memory Verse:** “Surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon.” (II Kings 24:3-4)

**Lesson Truth:** The light in Jerusalem fades so that it may appear anew in the Christ.

### Lesson

In Psalm 118:24 the psalmist declares that, “God is the Lord, and He has given us light.” A manifestation of that light was seen in the reign of David, and in the temple that Solomon was allowed to build. As the kingdom of Judah came to an end and the house of David was carried away captive to Babylon, the light in Jerusalem was put out. However, God’s light continued to shine by means of the prophecies He provided for the captives in Babylon. His light also shone through the prophecies that Jeremiah brought to the people who remained in Judah. The lesson today tells us how the light in Jerusalem faded in order to prepare for the light that would appear in Christ Jesus.

Following the death of good King Josiah, Jehoahaz reigned for only three months before Pharaoh Necho put him to death. Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim, the son of Josiah, king in his place and changed his name to Jehoiakim. It was during the reign of Jehoiakim that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the king of Egypt and took over Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. During the first few years, Jehoiakim served as vassal to Nebuchadnezzar and paid taxes, but then he decided to rebel. In response to this rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar sent bands of raiders to plunder Judah.

While it is true that Nebuchadnezzar sent raiders to spoil Judah, it was the Lord who prompted Nebuchadnezzar to do so. The Bible tells us that it was the Lord who sent raiding bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites to destroy Judah. The Lord sent these raiders just as the prophets had predicted He would. This was the Lord’s response to the wickedness of King Manasseh. The sin of Manasseh in spilling innocent blood in Jerusalem caused the house of David to forfeit the Lord’s favor. In spite of the warnings of Jeremiah the prophet neither the king nor the people of Judah paid attention.

The kingdom of Judah, the house of David, was now ready for destruction. After Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin was king for only three months before the Babylonians came and took him prisoner. Even in his short reign Jehoiachin lived in disobedience to the word of the Lord. The light of the house of David was fading in Jerusalem as the kingdom of Judah fell apart. This time Nebuchadnezzar carried away all the nobles, the princes, the craftsmen, and the smiths from the land of Judah. He also took all the treasures from the temple and the king’s palace. For the faithful remnant, it seemed that the light of the Lord in David’s house was going out. But it would shine again even more gloriously in Christ Jesus.

The captivity that occurred in the days of Jehoiachin was the first deportation to Babylon. Now the king of Babylon made Zedekiah king. He was the third son of Josiah to reign in Jerusalem. But he did not follow in the ways of his father to bring reformation. Instead, he ruled as his brothers had ruled and rebelled against the king of Babylon. This brought about the second deportation and the end of the kingdom of Judah. All the prominent



5. What special things were carried off to Babylon when Jehoiachin was taken prisoner? (II Kings 24:13)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Who were carried away as captives to Babylon? (II Kings 24:14, 16)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Who was king in Jerusalem when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem? (II Kings 25:2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What horrible thing did the Babylonians do to King Zedekiah? (II Kings 25:7)

## Lesson 4

# A Kingdom Not of This World

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 55

**Scripture:** Daniel 1–2

**Memory Verse:** “Daniel answered and said: ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.’” (Daniel 2:20-22)

**Lesson Truth:** Babylon receives a prophecy about a Kingdom that is not of this world.

### Lesson

The light from the reign of David had been extinguished in Jerusalem. Most of the people had been carried off to Babylon. God’s faithful people may have questioned if God would fulfill His covenant promise to David. The first two chapters of Daniel assure faithful people of all ages that God’s promises are certain. Through the interpretation of the dream of a pagan king we are told of the Kingdom of Christ Jesus. This is the Kingdom, not of this world, that will never be destroyed.

Among the captives carried off to Babylon were bright young men of noble birth from Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, selected some of these young men to be trained to serve in the Babylonian court. God used this period of training to prepare these young men to bring a prophetic message to the king of Babylon. One component of their training consisted of eating the king’s food and drinking the king’s wine. This diet was supposed to improve their health and appearance.

Daniel and his three friends believed that they would be defiled if they ate the king’s diet. Therefore, they asked the eunuch in charge if they could eat only vegetables and drink water. Because God caused the chief of the eunuchs to look with favor on Daniel and his friends, he agreed to allow them a ten-day trial of eating only vegetables. After the ten-day trial, Daniel and his friend’s appearance was superior to any of those who ate the king’s food. Not only did God give them a good appearance, but He also gave them knowledge in all literature and wisdom. Daniel was also given understanding of dreams and visions. God would reveal Himself to Babylon through Daniel and his friends.

God’s revelation came about after king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that really disturbed him. It was also disturbing that the king did not remember his dream. Therefore, he called his magicians and wise men and insisted that they tell him the dream as well as the interpretation. When they were unable to tell him what he had dreamed the king commanded that these wise men and magicians be put to death. As the king’s officers were rounding up the wise men to be executed, they also intended to execute Daniel and his friends. When Daniel heard of the king’s command he asked for a short delay of the execution and promised that he would tell the king his dream and the interpretation. When Daniel was ushered into the king’s presence, he testified that the God in heaven was able to make known the king’s dream and its interpretation.

God would reveal to a pagan king in Babylon that He would establish a Kingdom that was not of this world. This Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ would crush all other kingdoms and stand forever. This revelation came through the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar. He dreamed he saw a huge image with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. He also dreamed he saw a stone cut without hands that crushed the image and filled the whole earth. Daniel also told

the king that the God of heaven was telling him what would happen in the future. This was God's answer to a king who wanted to know what was to come.

Nebuchadnezzar knew that Daniel not only related the dream correctly, but he also gave him the correct interpretation. He fell down and worshipped before Daniel because of the light of prophecy that he was given. He acknowledged that Daniel's God was the highest God and ordered that an offering be made to God in honor of Daniel. Still the king did not acknowledge Daniel's God to be the only true God. In spite of this God chose to reveal to the king of Babylon the astounding news that Christ Jesus would establish a Kingdom, not of this world, that would never be destroyed.

### Questions

1. What Babylonian names were given to Daniel and his three friends? (Daniel 1:6-7)
2. Why did Daniel request to be excused from eating the king's food? (Daniel 1:8)
3. What did Daniel request that he and his friends be allowed to eat instead of the king's delicacies? (Daniel 1:12)
4. What was the result of Daniel and his friends eating common foods? (Daniel 1:15)
5. What did king Nebuchadnezzar want his wise men to do? (Daniel 2:3)

6. What would be the consequence if the wise men could not tell the king his dream? (Daniel 2:5)

7. According to Daniel, who was able to reveal the king's secrets to him? (Daniel 2:27-28)

8. What kind of kingdom would the God of heaven establish? (Daniel 2:44)

## Lesson 5

# The Power of Grace in Babylon

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 56

**Scripture:** Daniel 3

**Memory Verse:** “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:17-18)

**Lesson Truth:** The power of grace is revealed in Babylon.

### Lesson

The power of God’s grace was demonstrated in Babylon when Daniel’s three friends refused to bow down and worship the image Nebuchadnezzar set up at Dura. God showed His grace not only to the three men who were cast into a fiery furnace, but also to the king who had become proud.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon became proud when he saw the lands he conquered and the empire he built. Because of his pride in the power of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge image in the plains of Dura. He then decided it would be proper to have the people of all the lands he conquered acknowledge the power of Babylon. To acknowledge that power he commanded that when the people heard the sound of an orchestra of musical instruments they were to fall down and worship this great image. The people were supposed to pay homage to the power of Babylon. Babylon was their god!

This image and the command to fall down and worship it, was a defiance of the God of heaven. Would God allow this defiance of His name and power to go unchecked? The king of Babylon would soon learn that the power of God’s grace was much greater than the power of Babylon. In this story, God demonstrated the power of His grace in a dramatic way through the actions of His servants, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These three friends were devout men of Israel who worshipped only the God of heaven. They would not bow down to an image even under the threat of death. Imagine how easy it was to spot these three God-fearing men who remained standing while everyone else bowed down to the image. Leaders from Babylon who were envious of the positions of honor of these men of Israel immediately reported these actions to the king. They encouraged the pride of Nebuchadnezzar by insisting that the three men who refused to bow to the image defied the decree of the king. They also reminded the king that he had decreed that anyone who did not bow to the image would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar first seemed to be sympathetic to the three men of Israel. He invited them to the palace to remind them of his decree and to give them a second chance. He warned them that any further defiance of his decree would surely result in their being thrown into the fiery furnace. Consider the response these men of God gave the king. They told the king they did not need to give any excuses for not bowing down to the image because they were followers of the God of heaven. Without apology they said they worshipped only the God of heaven and would never bow to an image. They also assured the king that they knew this would result in their being thrown into the fiery furnace. Then they gave a testimony to the power of God’s grace when they said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king” (Daniel 3:17). However, they added, “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:18).





## Lesson 6

# The Sovereignty of Israel's God

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 57

**Scripture:** Daniel 4

**Memory Verse:** “I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked on me. How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” (Daniel 4:2-3)

**Lesson Truth:** All authority on earth depends on God's reign of grace through the Christ.

### Lesson

The God of Israel is the Supreme Ruler of the universe. He revealed His sovereignty to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in a dream. This pagan king acknowledged that God was the Most-High God, yet he did not acknowledge Him as the only true God. In His love and mercy God showed that He has all authority in heaven and earth and that the world would be preserved for the coming of Christ.

Once again Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. He was filled with fear because of the dream. He sensed that the dream was from the Most-High God and that he would have to bow before the authority of that God. In his dream he saw a huge tree that could be seen over the whole earth. The beasts of the earth found shelter under it and the birds of the earth roosted in its branches. Then in his dream he saw a supernatural being come out of heaven and shout with a loud voice that the tree should be cut down. The animals and birds would have to find shelter elsewhere. The being from heaven then seemed to change his metaphor when he said the stump of the tree should be bound with a band of iron and bronze. This stump had changed to an animal-like person. For seven spans of time this creature would eat grass like an animal and would be wet with the dew of heaven.

Because Nebuchadnezzar sensed that this was a message from God he immediately called for his magicians and wise men and asked them to interpret his dream. As before, the wise men and magicians were not able to tell the king the meaning of his dream. He then brought in Daniel and acknowledged that no secrets were hid from him because the Spirit of the Holy God was in him; therefore, he could explain his dream. God was mercifully warning Nebuchadnezzar before the judgment struck.

When the king told his dream, the Spirit of the Lord gave Daniel the interpretation. His first impulse was to protect the king from the horror of what the dream predicted would come. He said he wished the judgment predicted in the dream could come on the king's enemies. Sadly, the dream was a judgment against the proud King Nebuchadnezzar. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar. He would become insane and would conduct himself like an animal for seven spans of time. He would eat grass like an ox and the dew of heaven would cover him. All this would come on the king because he had exalted himself in pride and it would last until he humbled himself before God.

Daniel urged the king to leave his pride and humble himself before God. He urged the king to realize that the God of heaven rules the kingdoms of this earth. He begged the king to show mercy to the poor and oppressed that God might lengthen his prosperity. In this warning we get a glimpse of what the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus will be like because we know He was subject to God in all things.

It seemed at first Nebuchadnezzar was impressed by the dream and its interpretation. But soon he forgot and lived on in his pride. He walked about the palace and boasted: “Is not this the great Babylon, that I have built

for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty” (Daniel 4:30). At once the judgment predicted in the dream fell on the king. He was driven away from men and ate grass like an ox. His hair grew like eagles’ feathers and his nails like claws. The one who boasted about his power and authority, now even lost the authority of his own mind. The image of God, which is present in every human being, was totally desecrated in Nebuchadnezzar.

After the seven times passed over the king, his sanity was restored, and he blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever and ever. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that Israel’s God was sovereign, but he did not confess Him as the only true God. To be sure the knowledge of the living God was kept alive in the world. It would always be kept alive until Christ Jesus established His Kingdom for people of every nation. Praise God that you and I are part of that Kingdom!

### Questions

1. Who is the human speaker addressing the peoples of nations in Daniel 4? (Daniel 4:1-2)
2. What was Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to the dream he saw? (Daniel 4:5)
3. Who did the king bring in to tell him what his dream meant? (Daniel 4:6)
4. Why did the king believe that Daniel could tell him the meaning of his dream? (Daniel 4:9)
5. What was the object that the king first saw in his dream? (Daniel 4:10)



## Lesson 7

# Like a Potter's Vessel

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 58

**Scripture:** Daniel 5

**Memory Verse:** “This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God had numbered your kingdom and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:26-28)

**Lesson Truth:** God maintains His grace in the destruction of His enemies.

### Lesson

The story of the handwriting on the wall is much more than a story about the destruction of King Belshazzar. It is a story of how God allowed one major earthly kingdom to succeed another so that there would always be anticipation for the coming of the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus.

The dream that Nebuchadnezzar had about a great image, which meant that one kingdom would succeed another, was partially fulfilled in the story of Belshazzar. Belshazzar was the last king of the Babylonian empire. He was king in a time when the Persian empire had already conquered much of Babylon. Yet this king held out against Persia with a stubborn pride in his own accomplishments. He had a profane attitude against the things of the Lord, which he showed at a drunken feast.

Belshazzar made a great feast for thousands of his lords where the wine flowed freely. He acted as if he was beyond the judgments that the Persians could bring against him. At this drunken feast the king gave the command to bring the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Lord's house in Jerusalem. He and his lords would drink wine from these holy vessels as they honored the gods of Babylon. These vessels were the ones that the Israelites used to praise the name of the Lord as the God of the covenant. Belshazzar profanely scorned the Lord's grace for His people. This kind of disregard for the holiness of the God of Israel would not go unpunished. No king could blaspheme the God of Israel.

As the Babylonians were drinking wine from the temple vessels and praising their gods a hand suddenly appeared on the wall. This hand wrote a message that startled the king so that he showed real fear. We are told that the joints of his hips were loosened, and his knees knocked against each other. He immediately called for the Babylonian wise men and astrologers and asked them to read this message and to tell its meaning. However, this message from the God of heaven; could not be understood by pagan astrologers. Then the king and his lords were even more afraid. They were filled with a fear, that comes upon all those who do not know the God of the covenant.

When the queen heard about the anxiety of the king and his lords, she reminded them of another wise man who lived in Babylon. She remembered what Daniel had done for Nebuchadnezzar and the interpretations he had provided for his dreams. The king took the queen's advice and called for Daniel. He promised Daniel great rewards if he could read the message on the wall and tell the king its meaning.

Daniel informed the king that he was not interested in the promised gifts and rewards. He would reveal the message and interpret it because he was servant of the Most-High God. Daniel reminded the king how Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled after he had exalted himself. Even though Belshazzar knew how an earlier king had been humbled, he refused to honor the God of grace. Now he would learn that God also held his life in His hands. The message on the wall told the king what would happen.

The message read: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Upharsin. These words meant, numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided. God told the king that He had numbered the days of his kingdom and ended it. He had weighed the kingdom in the balances and found it wanting. Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. The king was true to his word and clothed Daniel in purple and put a gold chain around his neck.

The judgments written on the wall came that very same night. The Persians made a surprise attack and Belshazzar was killed. In His grace, God brought the Babylonian kingdom to an end. It was grace because God could not allow the hope of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ Jesus to perish with the sins of Babylon. Instead, He brought a new king and kingdom where that hope would be kept alive. God would preserve the nations until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Questions**

1. Who gave a great feast for the lords of his kingdom? (Daniel 5:1)
2. What profane command did the king give concerning the vessels from the temple? (Daniel 5:2)
3. As the king and his lords drank wine, what gods did they praise? (Daniel 5:4)
4. What unusual thing happened on the wall of the king's palace? (Daniel 5:5)
5. Who reminded the king that Daniel could interpret dreams? (Daniel 5:10)



## Lesson 8

# Worshipping the Name of the Lord

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 59

**Scripture:** Daniel 6

**Memory Verse:** “I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6: 26-27)

**Lesson Truth:** The worship of the Lord’s name on earth is maintained.

### Lesson

The story of Daniel in the lion’s den is a story about maintaining the worship of God. After the Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, God’s people wondered if the worship of God would continue. It is evident from Daniel and his friends that they did continue to worship God even in a strange land. Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem three times each day to give thanks to God. With evil intentions Daniel’s fellow governors devised a plan to get rid of Daniel and his worship of God. Yet God could not allow the honor of His name to be silenced. That is why He saved Daniel from the lions.

Daniel rose to a position of prominence in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. He was one of three governors in the land to whom one hundred twenty regional governors reported. Daniel was so attentive to his duties that the king considered putting him in charge of the whole kingdom. Daniel’s favor with the king made the other governors so very jealous that they got together to find a way to trap him. However, they also wanted to get rid of the worship of the God of heaven. In order to do this, they decided to place the laws of God in opposition to the laws of the Persian kingdom. The pride of the law of Persia was that once the law was made it could not be changed. Because the governors knew that Daniel prayed each day in obedience to God’s law, they asked the king to pass a Persian law that for thirty days people could pray only to the king. They also asked that the penalty for any violators of this law be death in a den of lions. They were nearly certain that Daniel would obey the law of His God and would therefore be in violation of the Persian law. This would condemn him to death among the lions.

Daniel knew about the decree the king signed into law, but he also knew that there was more at stake than just his life. He knew that the worship of the name of God was in question, so in submission to the law of God he prayed three times each day as usual. Would God protect the honor of His name and save Daniel from the hungry lions? The governors didn’t waste any time to urge the king to enforce the law of the Persians, which could not change. The king first tried to find a way to rescue Daniel, but he knew the law was not to be altered. When he realized that he had been tricked into using the powerful law of the Medes and Persians to do an injustice, he said to Daniel: “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you” (Daniel 6:16). No doubt he remembered the power of God!

The king was not able to rest or eat the whole night as he agonized over the fate of Daniel. Early in the morning he rushed to the lion’s den to check on Daniel. His first question was: “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” (Daniel 6:20). Imagine his relief when he heard Daniel reply, “O king, live forever! My God has sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O King, I have done no wrong before you” (Daniel 6:21-22). The king then commanded that those who had set the trap with the law of the





## Lesson 9

# The Temporary Restoration of the Lord's House

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 60

**Scripture:** Ezra 1–6

**Memory Verse:** “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.’” (Ezra 1:1-2)

**Lesson Truth:** The Lord's house is temporarily restored as a prophecy pointing to God's indwelling in the Christ.

### Lesson

The book of Ezra tells about the temporary restoration of the Lord's house in Jerusalem. There is no question that the return of exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple occurred to fulfill the word of the Lord. One hundred forty years prior to the end of the Babylonian captivity Isaiah prophesied that a man named Cyrus would issue a decree that God's people should return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Jeremiah had also prophesied that the Babylonian captivity would last for seventy years. Now it was time for these prophecies to be fulfilled.

The Babylonian empire had just been replaced by the empire of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus was the first king of the Persian Empire. In his first year as king, Cyrus recognized that the Lord God of heaven had made him the king of all the kingdoms of the earth. He also acknowledged that the Lord God of heaven commanded him to build Him a house in Jerusalem. It is possible that Daniel had shown King Cyrus the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and why he felt compelled to obey the Lord God of heaven. Cyrus called for God's people from his whole kingdom to return to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord God of Israel. He also urged the people to help those who were going to Jerusalem by giving them silver, gold, and other goods. The people gave as they were able for the service of the Lord.

Not only did Cyrus urge the people to provide the goods to build the temple in Jerusalem, but he also returned the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. He gave these vessels to Zerubbabel who was a son of King Jehoiachin. Once again, a descendant of the house of David became the leader of God's people. Most of the Jews who returned were from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but a few from the other tribes did join them so that they returned as the twelve tribes of Israel. It was the Word and Spirit of the Lord who moved the people to return to Jerusalem. The returning exiles were God's people by the power of His grace. Zerubbabel hoped for the complete restoration of the communion between God and His people, just like it was in the days of David and Solomon. That complete restoration did not occur because the old covenant was not going to be restored. The people had to look forward to the new covenant where they would enjoy full communion with God through Christ Jesus by the power of His Spirit.

Shortly after their arrival, the returning exiles gathered as one man in Jerusalem. The first thing they did was to rebuild the altar of burnt offering on its original site. More than anything they wanted to restore the worship of the Lord so they would be strengthened in their faith. This happened even before they started rebuilding the temple. As they laid the foundations for the new temple, there were two reactions. Most of the people, under the direction of the priests and Levites, sang and shouted for joy. But many of the older people who





## Lesson 10

# The Law Reinstated

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 61

**Scripture:** Ezra 7–10

**Memory Verse:** “Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem, and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes.” (Ezra 7:27-28a)

**Lesson Truth:** The righteousness of the Law is reinstated.

### Lesson

Approximately fifty-seven years after the building of the new temple was completed, Ezra the scribe led a second group of exiles back to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the first group in order to build the temple. They were no longer living so the returned exiles had no spiritual leaders. The people in Jerusalem who had returned with Zerubbabel had forgotten the Law of God. In this critical time God raised up Ezra to rebuild the spiritual lives of the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem. God prepared Ezra for this task. As a learned scribe he knew the Law of God and he was able to teach it. Ezra also identified with the people and made confession for their sins as a priest.

The first group who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel seemed to be primarily interested in their freedom from captivity. They did not seem to have a strong desire to live righteously by teaching and obeying the Law of God. God’s Spirit caused a desire to grow in Ezra the priest to rebuild the spiritual life of the returned exiles in Jerusalem. Ezra actively recruited the priests and Levites to return so that the Law of the Lord could be reinstated in the lives of God’s people. He also shared his plans to return to Jerusalem, with Artaxerxes, the king of Persia.

It was God’s Spirit that caused the heart of Artaxerxes, the king to respond with favor to Ezra’s plans and to support the returning exiles. In a letter that the king gave to Ezra, he offered generous support, both with offerings of gold and silver as well as protection with soldiers and horsemen. In these actions of Ezra and the response of the king we become aware of how God prepared the world for the coming of the Messiah. The purpose of Ezra’s return to Jerusalem was to reinstate the Lord’s righteousness by reinstating the Law. The king’s letter also instructed the governors in Jerusalem to provide all the help and offerings Ezra needed to beautify the Lord’s house and restore a commitment to the Law.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found social, moral and religious degeneracy. The Levites had violated the Law, which prohibited God’s people from marrying the idolatrous people of the land. By this intermarriage God’s people denied the special character they possessed as God’s chosen. Ezra was so grieved to learn of this rejection of the Law that he tore his clothes and pulled hair from his head and his beard. Then Ezra did a Christ-like thing when he took the sins of the people upon himself. He saw that he was one of the people and sat in stunned horror until the evening sacrifice. He finally kneeled before the Lord and said: “O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown to the heavens” (Ezra 9:6).

In this way Ezra humbled himself before God because he identified with the sins of the people. He confessed that in spite of their years in captivity, God’s people had again forsaken His Law. How could God withhold His anger when His people deliberately broke His Law by marrying heathen partners? Ezra was aware that no





## Lesson 11

# A Witness

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 62

**Scripture:** Esther 1–10

**Memory Verse:** “For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

**Lesson Truth:** The Lord’s people are placed among the nations as witnesses for His name’s sake.

### Lesson

The story of Esther shows us how God placed her in the position of queen of Persia so she and her people could be witnesses among the nations. This story also shows us how God elevated Mordecai the Jew to a position of honor in the Persian kingdom. Even more importantly, he was honored by the Jews because he sought the good of his people and he spoke peace to his countrymen.

God’s chosen people were linked to the king and his court in the kingdom of Persia. Many of the children of Israel had chosen to remain in Persia instead of going back to Jerusalem with the returning exiles. They did not long for the revelation of the Lord’s grace in the temple but were satisfied to remain in the land of their captivity. In spite of this disobedience, the Lord kept His covenant with his chosen people in a remarkable way. We see God’s providential care of His people in the actions of King Ahasuerus. The king invited all the people from the capital of Susa to a banquet as a celebration for the outcome of the meeting he had with the nobles of the kingdom. At this feast the king wanted to show off his beautiful queen Vashti to his drunken nobles, but she refused. In response, the king deposed her as queen and then along with his advisors decided to search for a new queen.

That was God’s providential way to make room for Esther. Mordecai, who raised his orphan cousin Esther as his own daughter, brought her to be part of the king’s harem. It was from this harem that the king planned to select his new queen. Because God directs the affairs of men, Esther was chosen queen. Although Mordecai was sinful in putting Esther into this heathen environment, God used this folly to put Esther in a position to be able to speak for His people. God also allowed Mordecai to uncover a plot by two of the king’s attendants to assassinate the king. Later when the Lord would not allow the king to sleep, he was reminded of this deed of Mordecai, and he decided to honor him. That is when the tide of justice turned against the enemy of God’s people.

Esther was used in a dramatic way to approach the king after Haman, the enemy of the Jews, got the king to sign a decree to destroy God’s people. It happened after Haman was promoted to the rank of second in the kingdom. Because of his status all the people in the capital bowed whenever Haman approached, except Mordecai the Jew. Mordecai refused to bow because he feared the Lord and would not bow to a person. This made Haman so intensely angry that he determined to find a way to destroy all the Jews. He was able to do this when he convinced the king that there were people in his kingdom who would not obey his laws. The king issued a decree of the Medes and Persians, that could not be changed, to allow these people to be destroyed.

After this decree was issued Mordecai intervened. He asked Esther to speak to the king on behalf of her people. It was almost suicidal for Esther to fulfill this request, because anyone who approached the king uninvited was sentenced to death. When Esther reminded Mordecai of this law; he suggested that she just might have come





## Lesson 12

# The Temporary Restoration of the City of God

**Reference:** De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, Volume 2, Lesson 63

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 1–13

**Memory Verse:** “And I said: ‘I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which have sinned against You.’” (Nehemiah 1:5-6a)

**Lesson Truth:** The city of God is restored temporarily as a prophecy pointing to the Kingdom of God.

### Lesson

In the study of the book of Nehemiah we learn of the third and last return of the Babylonian exiles to Jerusalem. In the first return under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the temple was rebuilt. With the second return led by Ezra, the Law of God was reinstated. Now under the leadership of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, and the Jews were again reminded of the demands of the Law.

Again, we see the providential hand of God in moving the heart of Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem. He held a position of honor in the king’s court as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was also a believer who held fast to the Word of the Lord. As an Israelite who believed the promises that God made to Abraham, he was shocked when he learned about the conditions in Jerusalem. Nehemiah wanted to return to Jerusalem, but knew he needed permission from the king to leave his service as cupbearer. He made his desire to return to Jerusalem a matter of prayer, praying that God would give the king a heart of mercy when he made his request.

God did move the heart of the king in a unique way when Nehemiah appeared sad before him. Never before had Nehemiah been sad in the king’s presence, so the king asked him why he was sad. This gave Nehemiah an opportunity to request that the king send him to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. He knew the king could very easily be angered to hear such a request, because he was the king who had ordered all building to stop in Jerusalem. But God touched the king’s heart and he agreed to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem to rebuild the city.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he first inspected the city walls, and when he saw their sad condition, he told the city officials why he had come. He assured them that God had touched the king’s heart, so he approved of rebuilding the city walls. Still, the enemies of God’s people harassed Nehemiah in his work and accused him of rebelling against the king. Israel’s enemies always oppose the work of God’s people because they are outside of His grace. Under Nehemiah’s direction the work continued with every family, of both high and low social status, rebuilding a section of the wall in their part of the city. The work progressed in spite of the enmity of Israel’s enemies. Workers worked with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other as Nehemiah assured them that God was with them.

Not only was the wall of Jerusalem rebuilt, but Nehemiah also restored social justice in the land of Israel. He brought the people together and made them take a vow that the rich would share with the poor, so no one had to sell their sons and daughters or their possessions to pay the king’s tribute. As a show of good faith Nehemiah did not take any pay for himself. He did not seek his own interest but did everything for the people. In that way Nehemiah pointed to the Christ who gave Himself for His people.



