# Promise and Deliverance Student Workbook

Volume 10 Level 3

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:** "Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle." (Jeremiah 19:3)

Lesson Truth: Judgment came on Manasseh, king of Judah, but even then, God showed the power of His grace.

## Lesson

When Manasseh was king of Judah, he led the people to forsake the Lord. He rebuilt the high places for idol worship that his father Hezekiah had torn down. This turning away from the Lord made the land of Judah and God's people ready for judgment. Even though Manasseh the king felt the power of God's grace and repented, the people of Judah continued in their sinful ways. The triumph of grace in the life of Manasseh points to the triumph of grace in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Manasseh was made king in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old, and he reigned for fifty-five years. He was king after his father, the good king Hezekiah, but he did not continue with his father's reforms. Instead, Manasseh led the people to rebel against the Lord by introducing widespread idol worship. He placed an image he had carved into the temple of the Lord. The temple in which the Lord had said to David and Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever" (II Kings 21:7). Manasseh not only profaned the temple, but he also profaned the sacrifices that God had instructed the people to use for reconciliation. He made the sacrifices that should have pointed to the remission of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ into a pagan ritual. He did this by having his sons pass through the fire. In this way Manasseh provoked the Lord to His face in open rebellion. How could the Lord tolerate such rebellion?

The Lord allowed the people of Judah to remain in their own sins as they became ripe for judgment. Sin against the Lord always destroys a people, yet the Lord showed that grace is more powerful than sin. He showed this in the life of wicked king Manasseh. This demonstration of the power of grace pointed to the victory of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. How did the Lord show His grace?

He did this in a remarkable way by having Assyria defeat Judah and Jerusalem. In this defeat the Assyrians took king Manasseh with a hook in his nose, bound with bronze fetters to Babylon. Although Manasseh ignored the prophets who were sent to warn him when he was in Jerusalem, he now thought about the God of his father Hezekiah. In his affliction Manasseh humbled himself and begged God in prayer to remove his guilt and restore him. Then an amazing thing happened! God heard his prayer.

Manasseh was not only allowed to return to Jerusalem, but he was also allowed to return to his throne. He became a king who ruled both himself and the people in the name of the Lord. He tried to rid Judah and Jerusalem of the idols he had once introduced. But such is the nature of sin

that when the king wanted to reform, the people continued to sacrifice on the high places. The grace of the Lord had done its work in Manasseh so that he died a man of faith. Yet the consequences of his early years of sinfulness remained. Because this king, who later repented, brought in sorcery and idol worship he was responsible for the spiritual decline in Judah.

It was evident that Judah remained under the Lord's judgment when He gave them Amon as king. Amon was a godless king who led the people into further idolatry in the two years he reigned as king. His servants who were later killed by the people killed Amon. In this way we see the disintegration of the land of Judah. Even though grace gained the victory over Manasseh, his sins contributed to the downfall of the kingdom of Judah. In spite of Manasseh's conversion, the land of Judah remained under judgment and showed the utter need for the redeeming work of Christ Jesus our Lord. In that same way you and I must trust in the redeeming work of Christ Jesus, because we are also under judgment.

## Questions

1. How old was Manasseh when he became king in Jerusalem? (II Chronicles 33:1)

2. Where did Manasseh build altars that were very offensive to the Lord? (II Chronicles 33:4)

3. How did Manasseh profane the sacrifices of fire to the Lord? (II Chronicles 33:6)

4. Who seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do great evil? (II Chronicles 33:9)

5. What was the response of Manasseh and the people when the Lord spoke to them? (II Chronicles 33:10)

6. What instruments did the Assyrians use to carry Manasseh into captivity? (II Chronicles 33:11)

7. What change came over Manasseh when he was afflicted? (II Chronicles 33:12)

8. Why was it good that Amon ruled for only two years? (II Chronicles 33:22)

# 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:** "Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, nor after him did any arise like him." (II Kings 23:25)

**Lesson Truth:** King Josiah brought a reformation to Judah that pointed to the need of a reformation by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus.

## Lesson

Josiah was a good king of Judah who brought great reforms. The Bible characterizes him as even greater in his reformations than Hezekiah. We rejoice to see a good king restore the worship of the Lord at the temple by making the necessary repairs and removing the idols. Yet the real lesson of the reign of Josiah is that keeping the law of the old covenant was not sufficient to save God's people. What God's people needed was a reformation of the heart. This reformation of the heart could only come through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a reformation brought about when the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts.

The Lord in His grace would help Josiah understand that the old covenant was coming to an end. This lesson came to Josiah in a remarkable way. Josiah became king after the death of his wicked father Amon and his very wicked grandfather Manasseh. It was a blessing that Josiah's father died when he was just a young boy. Because his father died when he was young, his godly mother and her counselors brought him up. At an early age Josiah chose to serve the Lord. He showed his love for the Lord by making repairs on the temple and by asking the people to bring offerings for these repairs.

When he was only twenty-six years old the Lord helped Josiah become aware of the Book of the Law. This happened when he sent his secretary to Hilkiah the high priest with the money he collected for temple repairs. Hilkiah agreed to count and store the money but be also informed the secretary that he had found the Book Of the Law. The secretary not only brought this news to King Josiah, but he also read the Book of the Law to the king. When Josiah heard the words of the Book of the Law, which had been forgotten for many years, he tore his clothes in grief. He realized that Judah had not obeyed the law of God and was ready for the judgment the Book of the Law promised to lawbreakers.

If the land of Judah was going to be punished for breaking God's law what could Josiah do? He acted as a man of God and sent messengers to the prophetess, Huldah in Jerusalem. He asked her for a word from the Lord. Huldah informed the king that the judgments of the Lord would surely come on Judah and Jerusalem. Yet because Josiah showed his grief that the law of God had been broken, the judgments would not come in his lifetime. Josiah now understood that the old covenant of the law was ending. He could no longer find God's grace for His people in the old covenant. He now had to look to the new covenant where God would show His grace through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Josiah knew from the word of the Lord that judgment would come on Judah. Still, he wanted to restore the true worship of the Lord in the land of Judah for the sake of the honor and righteousness of God. He called all the people together in the front court of the temple. There he stood with the people as the Book of the Law was read. Josiah and the people heard the Word of the Lord and its judgments, but the people were not ready to humble themselves before God. In spite of the peoples' response, Josiah continued with his renewal. He cleansed the temple and destroyed the images and altars that his grandfather and father had built.

Josiah was a God-fearing king who showed the righteousness of Christ Jesus to the people. But he was not able to do what only the Lord Jesus Christ could do. He could not change the hearts of the people. God would show His grace to His people through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Lord would reform the hearts of the people of Judah and the people of today.

One other instruction Josiah found in the Book of the Covenant was that the Passover was to be celebrated. This was the feast that was intended as a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. They were to remember the night the angel of death passed over the homes that had the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorposts. Only this time the celebration of the Passover did not mean that the Lord would pass over Judah with His judgments. Instead as Pharaoh Necho the king of Egypt went to fight the Assyrians King Josiah went out to battle against him. In this battle near Megiddo Josiah was killed. Now the same Egypt from whom the children of Israel had once been delivered, again ruled over Judah. The Passover that the people of Judah just celebrated did not save them. The blood of Passover lambs could not save them. Only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, could save Judah. Salvation for you and me too is only through the blood of our Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

# Questions

1. When did Josiah begin to seek the God of his father David? (II Chronicles 34:3)

2. Which idol had altars that Josiah broke down? (II Chronicles 34:4)

3. To whom had the Lord given the Book of the Law that Hilkiah found? (II Chronicles 34:14)

4. Before whom did King Josiah make a covenant to keep the commandments? (II Chronicles 34:31)

5. What feast had not been kept in Israel like this since the days of Samuel? (II Chronicles 35:18)

6. With what message did Necho king of Egypt warn Josiah? (II Chronicles 35:21)

7. From whose mouth did the message of Necho come? (II Chronicles 35:22)

8. Who mourned to show their love for Josiah at his death? (II Chronicles 35:24b)

# Lesson 3 Fading Light

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

Scripture: II Kings 24-25

**Memory Verse:** "For because of the anger of the Lord this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out of His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon." (II Kings 24:20)

**Lesson Truth:** God allowed the reign of David and the building of the temple in Jerusalem to be a light to his people. This light slowly faded in the captivity so it might reappear in the Christ.

## Lesson

It is heart-wrenching to learn of the decline and destruction of the kingdom of Judah. In the history of God's people, Israel reached its zenith under the rule of David. David not only governed an expanded country, but he also made provision for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. The light of God's favor to His people shone brightly in Jerusalem under David and Solomon. In today's lesson we learn how that light faded in Jerusalem. The kingdom of Judah was carried into captivity, just like the kingdom of Israel more than a century earlier. Still the Lord did not forget His covenant with David but preserved His faithful people even in captivity.

The Lord sent prophets to warn His people again and again. Still, they did not heed these warnings, so the decline and captivity of Judah occurred. The last four kings of Judah served more as governors for conquering kingdoms than they did as rulers in their own right. Pharaoh Necho captured Jehoahaz after only a reign of three months and placed Jehoiakim on the throne in Jerusalem. While Jehoiakim was king, Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon conquered the land of Judah. For three years Jehoiakim paid a heavy tribute to Babylon and then he decided to rebel. In response to this rebellion the king of Babylon sent bands of raiders to harass and plunder Judah.

Scripture indicates that it was the Lord who brought about the destruction of Judah. It says that: "He sent them (the raiding bands) against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken by His servants the prophets. 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" (II Kings 24: 2b-3). There is no doubt that the grace the Lord showed to His people in the glory of the house of David had ended. The old covenant was coming to an end.

Jehoiachin became a vassal king after his father Jehoiakim died. He was carried away captive to Babylon after reigning for only three months. He ruled with the same kind of disobedience as his father had ruled. Nebuchadnezzar took the king, the princes, and all the craftsmen, along with the treasures from the temple and the palace to Babylon. The light of the reign of David in Jerusalem was indeed fading. Still God's promise to David was certain, this light would shine again in Christ Jesus.

The last vassal king in Jerusalem was Zedekiah. He was the third son of Josiah to sit on the throne in Jerusalem. Zedekiah was like the vassal kings before him, and he too rebelled against the king of Babylon. This time, Nebuchadnezzar's patience ran out. He burned the palace, the temple, and all the houses of the rich and the powerful. Zedekiah tried to escape but was caught in the plains of Jericho after his own troops deserted him. He was treated with utter contempt. The Babylonians killed his sons as he watched. Then they seared the memory of this awful scene in his mind by gouging out his eyes. After this Zedekiah was carried off to Babylon and with him all the prominent people from Judah.

The final destruction of the people of Judah came after they forsook the counsel of Jeremiah to remain in the land. They decided they had to protect themselves rather than trust in the Lord, so they fled into Egypt and took Jeremiah with them. It seemed that this was the end of Judah. However, even in this dark hour, God gave a sign that He had not forgotten His promise to the house of David. The Lord brought a new king to the throne of Babylon who had Jehoiachin released from prison. This was only a sign that the Lord remembered David's house. The real fulfillment of His promise to the house of David came when the new covenant was revealed in Christ Jesus. This son of David's house came to deliver not only Israel and Judah, but also all those who believe from every tribe and nation.

# Questions

1. What king of Babylon made Jehoiakim his vassal? (II Kings 24:1)

2. At whose command did the bands of raiders plunder Judah? (II Kings 24:3)

3. How old was Jehoiachin when he became king in Jerusalem? (II Kings 24:8)

4. Who came to besiege the city of Jerusalem when Jehoiachin was king? (II Kings 24:10)

 How many valiant men were brought to Babylon following the siege of Jerusalem? (II Kings 24:16)

6. For what reason was Judah and Jerusalem cast from the presence of the Lord? (II Kings 24:20)

7. What evil that happened to Israel years before, now happened to Judah? (II Kings 25:21)

8. Who did Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, release from prison? (II Kings 25:27)

# Lesson 4 A Kingdom Not of This World

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

Scripture: Daniel 1–2

**Memory Verse:** "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Daniel 2:44)

**Lesson Truth:** God gave the prophecy of the coming of the kingdom of Christ to the king of Babylon.

#### Lesson

Even after the house of David was carried into captivity, God showed that He had not forgotten His promise to David. He sent the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel to Babylon to bring the word of the Lord. At the same time, He sent Jeremiah to those who remained in Judah. Through these prophets God brought the message that He would establish a Kingdom that was not of this world. The unusual thing about this prophecy was that he gave it to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

Daniel and his three friends were carried to Babylon as captives after the first conquest of Jerusalem. They were among the group that Nebuchadnezzar selected to receive training to serve in the king's court. As part of their preparation to serve they were expected to eat the king's delicacies and drink the king's wine. Daniel and his friends objected to this diet because they believed these foods would defile them. As the spokesman for the four Jewish young men, Daniel asked the chief eunuch if he would allow them to eat only vegetables and drink only water. Because the chief eunuch was afraid that these young men would appear malnourished if they ate only vegetables, he denied their request.

Daniel then asked if he would agree to a ten-day trial. If after ten days of eating only vegetables, they appeared underfed they would eat the king's diet. The Lord moved the chief eunuch to agree to this test. Because Daniel and his friends had been faithful, God caused them to appear healthier than all the other young men in training. God not only made them appear strong and healthy, but He also gave them wisdom and knowledge in all the affairs of Babylon. In this way the Lord prepared a place for these young men in the court of Babylon. Through Daniel and his friends God would reveal Himself to the king of Babylon. It was for this purpose that God made them faithful to His covenant.

In the second year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing experience. He had a dream that seemed to be very important, but when he awoke, he could not remember the dream. He immediately called his wise men and demanded that they tell him his dream and the interpretation of the dream. The wise men protested that this was an unreasonable request. They asked the king to relate the dream and they would then interpret it. At this response the king became upset and promised that all the wise men of Babylon would be destroyed if they did not tell him his dream.

When the captain of the guard came to get Daniel to destroy him along with the wise men of Babylon, Daniel asked for a brief delay. He then asked his friends to join him in calling on the name of the Lord to make known the king's dream. God answered Daniel's prayer and revealed the dream and the interpretation to him. He then asked to be brought before the king so he could tell him his dream. The king asked Daniel if he was able to tell the dream and its meaning. Daniel testified that no person could relate the king's dream, but the God in heaven is the one who reveals secrets. God revealed the king's dream to Daniel in order to make known to Nebuchadnezzar what would happen in the future.

Daniel then told the king that in his dream he saw a huge image. This image had a head of gold. It had a chest and arms of silver, with a belly and thighs of bronze. It had legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. Then the king saw in his dream a stone cut from a mountain without hands that crushed the image and filled the whole earth. The dream foretold the coming of four great kingdoms on earth that would be crushed by the stone cut without hands. This Kingdom would never be destroyed. It would break in pieces and consume all the other kingdoms and would stand forever. God gave this amazing revelation to a pagan king. This revelation was the assurance that He did not forget His promise to David. He would establish the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the true son of David. The king believed the truth of this prophecy, but he did not believe in God as the only true God. What a joy it should be for us to know that God revealed the coming of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are part of that Kingdom, because the dream is certain, and the interpretation is sure.

# Questions

1. Who did the king of Babylon instruct to train young men from Israel to serve in the palace? (Daniel 1:3)

2. What were the young men in training to eat and drink? (Daniel 1:5)

3. What caused the chief eunuch to look at Daniel 's request with favor? (Daniel 1:9)

4. How long did Daniel ask the chief eunuch to test their diet? (Daniel 1:12)

5. What caused king Nebuchadnezzar to be so troubled that he could not sleep? (Daniel 2:1)

6. What was the king's response when his wise men insisted that he tell them his dream? (Daniel 2:12)

7. Whose mercies did Daniel and his friends seek so the king's dream would be revealed? (Daniel 2:18)

8. Describe the image king Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. (Daniel 2:31-33)

# Lesson 5 The Power of Grace in Babylon

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

#### Scripture: Daniel 3

**Memory Verse:** "Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!" (Daniel 3:28)

Lesson Truth: God showed the power of His grace to His servants as well as to the king of Babylon.

## Lesson

The people of Israel and Judah had been taken as captives to the land of Babylon. But even in Babylon God remembered His promise to David. He showed the power of His grace to the king of Babylon as well as to His faithful servants who would not bow to the image the king had set up.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had established a world empire. As he thought of the nations, he had conquered he was very proud of what he accomplished. He did not understand that God allowed him to build an empire and God could take his empire away. In his pride Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a huge statue that would represent the power of Babylon. He also decided that all the people from the nations he had conquered should bow down and worship this statue. The king decided to use music as a signal for the people to bow before the statue. He commanded that when they heard the sounds of musical instruments they should bow and acknowledge the power of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar would learn that no one has power unless God gives it to him.

When the king commanded that everyone in his kingdom must bow to his huge statue, he forgot that he had devout men of God in his kingdom. Three men who served as governors would not bow in worship to any image. As servants of the God of heaven, they remained standing while everyone else bowed. Immediately some Chaldeans reported this to the king. Because they were envious of these three men of God, they were eager to see the king's punishment carried out against them. The king had decreed that anyone who did not bow to his image when they heard the sound of music would be thrown into a fiery furnace. He quickly brought in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be questioned. He warned them that if they failed to bow when they heard the music, they would be burned in the furnace.

The three men answered that they did not need the warning, and they did not need another chance. They testified that since they were servants of the Most High God, they would never bow down to an image. They said they were committed to worship only the God of grace, the God of Israel. They also reminded the king that their God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. They believed God would deliver them if it was necessary to demonstrate His honor in this way. Yet they were also ready to die in the furnace if God would show His honor in some other way.

The response of the three men of God made the king furious. He ordered his soldiers to make the furnace seven times hotter than usual. He then commanded them to bind the three men and throw them into this exceedingly hot fire. The fire was so intense that the soldiers who threw them into

the flames were consumed. In his anger the king watched to see the destruction of the men who dared to defy his command. Imagine how horrified he was when instead of seeing three men perish in the fire, he saw four men walk around in the flames unharmed. When his officials assured him that only three men were thrown into the fire, the king knew that God sent His Angel to protect His servants. The power of God's grace was not only demonstrated to His servants but also to the king of Babylon.

Now Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for the miracle of His deliverance. God preserved the three men who faithfully professed His name and refused to bow to another god. The king recognized the power of God's grace and made a decree that no one in the kingdom of Babylon might speak anything against this God. He declared that no other God could deliver His servants in this way. The power of God's grace was shown in Babylon. That grace is also ours in Christ Jesus our Lord!

# Questions

1. What was the size of the image Nebuchadnezzar made? (Daniel 3:1)

2. What were the satraps, the administrators, and other officials invited to attend? (Daniel 3:3)

3. What did the people do when they heard the sound of the musical instruments? (Daniel 3:7)

Who were brought before Nebuchadnezzar because they did not bow to the image? (Daniel 3:13)

5. What question did Nebuchadnezzar ask the men brought into his presence? (Daniel 3:14)

6. In his anger, what did the king command should be done with the heat of the furnace? (Daniel 3:19)

7. What happened to the men who took up God's servants to cast them into the fire? (Daniel 3:22)

8. What decree did Nebuchadnezzar make concerning the God of the three friends? (Daniel 3:29)

# Lesson 6 The Sovereignty of Israel's God

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

Scripture: Daniel 4

**Memory Verse:** "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down." (Daniel 4:37)

**Lesson Truth:** God's authority over the whole earth was evident when He showed the King of Babylon His grace in Christ Jesus.

## Lesson

The lesson from Daniel chapter four shows us God's sovereign rule over every kingdom on earth. In His grace He sent a dream to warn proud Nebuchadnezzar that he would be humbled. When the judgments that were foretold in his dream were fulfilled, the king of Babylon acknowledged that God was the supreme ruler of the earth. He acknowledged that the God of Israel was sovereign.

In Daniel 4, God inspired Daniel to write a proclamation made by Nebuchadnezzar. In his speech the king of Babylon told about a troubling dream he had and the interpretation God gave him through the prophet Daniel. The king dreamed he saw a huge tree that filled the whole earth. The animals found shelter underneath this tree and the birds lived in its branches. The tree was so fruitful that it provided for everyone.

The king then saw in his dream that a heavenly being came and cried aloud that the tree should be cut down and its branches and fruit should be scattered. Then a strange thing happened. What had been a plant in the dream now became a human creature. The heavenly being said this creature coming from the tree stump should be bound with a band of iron and bronze. The creature should graze in the grass and be wet with the morning dew. The king said the things predicted in the dream were sure to happen because it came from the holy ones.

Nebuchadnezzar immediately sent for his wise men and asked them to tell him the meaning of his dream. Not one of his Babylonian wise men was able to tell the king the meaning. Their minds were closed to truth of God's revelation. Once again, the king called for Daniel who had made known the meaning of the king's first dream. When the king told Daniel the dream the Spirit of the Lord gave him the interpretation. At first, he was filled with fear at the meaning of the dream and said to the king that he wished it referred to his enemies. Unfortunately, the judgment in the dream was for the king.

The huge tree in the dream represented Nebuchadnezzar. It was under his protection that the animals and birds had found rest. But the tree was to be chopped down and so also would the king be brought down. He would be covered with the dew in the open fields and would eat grass like an animal until seven times passed over him. Daniel begged the king to put away his pride and become humble so that God would extend his prosperity. He urged the king to remember the poor and the oppressed. In this warning the king was given a glimpse of what the reign of Christ Jesus would be like. Christ Jesus did submit to God in everything, and He did remember the poor and the oppressed.

At first the warning of a coming judgment impressed the king. But soon he forgot and went back to glorifying himself. About a year later as he was walking about the royal palace at Babylon, he boasted about his power saying, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for my honor and majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Before he finished speaking a voice from heaven declared that the kingdom was taken from him. At once he began to act like an animal and he was driven from any contact with humans. Just as the dream had predicted he roamed in the fields eating grass and was covered with the dew of the morning. This king who thought he had developed so much power on his own did not even have control of his own mind.

Nebuchadnezzar remained in this animal-like state until seven periods of time passed. More importantly he remained in that state until he became humble. The first thing the king said when his understanding returned to him was that he blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever. The king acknowledged that the God of heaven is the supreme ruler of the earth. He knew that God was sovereign. What a comfort to know that God ruled the kings of the earth and made the world ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Questions

1. Who worked signs and wonders for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon? (Daniel 4:2)

2. How long is the kingdom of the One who shows signs and wonders? (Daniel 4:3)

3. Who was at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace when he saw a dream? (Daniel 4:4)

4. What were the magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans not able to make known to the king? (Daniel 4:7)

5. What was the heart of the king going to be changed into? (Daniel 4:16)

6. After the tree was cut down what was to be left to indicate the kingdom was assured? (Daniel 4:26)

7. What advice did Daniel give the king so his prosperity might be lengthened? (Daniel 4:27)

8. What gruesome things happened to the king to change his appearance? (Daniel 4:33)

# Lesson 7 Like a Potter's Vessel

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

#### Scripture: Daniel 5

**Memory Verse:** "And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified." (Daniel 5:23)

Lesson Truth: God showed His grace by destroying His enemies who profaned the temple vessels.

#### Lesson

In Psalm 2, we read that nations that speak against the Lord and against His Anointed will be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. The story of King Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall is a story about a nation that was dashed to pieces when it profaned the name to the Lord. God in His grace removed this nation so that the hope of the coming Redeemer would continue in another nation.

The events of this story took place during the reign of Belshazzar the last king of the great empire of Babylon. During the reign of Belshazzar, the Persians conquered a large part of Babylon. Still this proud king thought he could resist the Persians and continue to rule. In his arrogance he arranged a great feast where he showed off by drinking wine before his invited guests. Then when he was intoxicated, he showed even greater arrogance by commanding that the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem be brought to his feast. He would show his guests that the God of heaven could not intimidate him. His guests were invited to drink wine from the sacred vessels of the temple. God could not tolerate such activity that profaned His Holy Name. Judgment would come on the kingdom of Babylon.

As the king and his lords were desecrating the sacred vessels from the temple, suddenly a hand appeared on the wall. The hand wrote a message that the king and his guests could not read. However, it made the king tremble with such fear that his knees knocked. Immediately he called for his astrologers and magicians not only to read the message on the wall, but he also wanted them to tell him what it meant. He felt deep inside that it was a message of judgment, so he was filled with horror. He felt the horror of all those who do not know the God of the covenant. He soon learned that his astrologers and magicians could not read the message, so he was greatly troubled.

Without the grace of the Lord in their hearts, the king and his lords were overpowered with fear. When the queen learned of the king's fear she went to the feast and reminded the king that there was a man in the kingdom who had the Spirit of the Holy God. The prophet Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of his dreams and he could tell the meaning of the writing on the wall. The king wasted no time to send for Daniel and offered him great gifts if he would read the writing. Daniel came as the king requested but he refused the king's gifts. Daniel then reminded the king that God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar when he lifted up his heart in pride. Great King Nebuchadnezzar had been made to roam the fields like an animal until he was ready to honor the God of heaven. King Belshazzar knew that Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled; yet he defied the God of the covenant. Now a judgment against his kingdom was recorded in the words written on the wall.

After this pronouncement of judgment Daniel told the king that the words were: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. They meant numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided. The Babylonian kingdom had been weighed in the balance and it was found unfit to remain a kingdom. God in His grace would give the Babylonian kingdom to the Medes and Persians. God did this so that there would always be a kingdom in which the hope of the coming of the Christ would live.

The king honored Daniel as he promised and dressed him in purple but that did not delay the fulfillment of judgment against the kingdom of Babylon. That very night the Persians made a surprise attack and Belshazzar was killed. The kingdom of Babylon had come to an end just as predicted in Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image with a head of gold. God upheld His covenant and destroyed those who had nothing left of His Spirit. He would now use the kingdoms of Persia, Greece, and Rome to keep the world safe until the coming of Christ Jesus.

# Questions

1. Who were invited to Belshazzar's great feast? (Daniel 5:1)

2. From where did the vessels used to drink wine come? (Daniel 5:3)

3. What part of a man did the king and his lords see on the wall? (Daniel 5:5)

4. How did the king show his fear when he saw the writing on the wall? (Daniel 5:6)

5. What gifts did the king promise to anyone who could read the writing on the wall? (Daniel 5:7)

6. What was in Daniel that caused the queen to remember him? (Daniel 5:11a)

7. What things had the king heard about Daniel? (Daniel 5:14)

8. Against whom had King Belshazzar lifted his heart? (Daniel 5:23)

# Lesson 8 Worshiping the Name of the Lord

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

Scripture: Daniel 6

**Memory Verse:** "Then Daniel said to the king, 'O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have no wrong before you." (Daniel 6:21-22)

Lesson Truth: God kept Daniel alive in the lions' den, so that the worship of His name would continue.

# Lesson

The lesson today tells about an attempt of the governors of the Medo-Persian empire to forbid the worship of the God of heaven. They wanted to forbid the worship of God in order to trap Daniel so they could destroy him. By closing the mouths of the lions, the, Lord not only saved Daniel, but He also maintained the worship of His name on the earth.

The story from Daniel 6 is not only the story about Daniel in the lions' den, but also about an attempt by the Persian governors to do away with the worship of the Lord. The Babylonians had destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, the place of worship that the Lord had established. Still, God's faithful people in captivity continued to worship God in prayer. Not only did the governors want to destroy Daniel, but they also wanted to destroy the worship of the Lord.

King Darius devised a great plan for governing the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. He appointed one hundred twenty governors to govern areas of the kingdom. In addition, he appointed three of these governors as supervisors to whom the others would give an account. Daniel was one of these three supervisors. Because Daniel was especially attentive to his duties, the king thought about putting him in charge of the whole kingdom. Daniel's success made the other governors jealous, so they decided they would find a way to discredit him. The only problem was that they could not find any fault in Daniel so they could accuse him. They finally agreed that the only way they could trap him was to create a law that would forbid him to worship the Lord. In order to get such a law passed the governors appealed to the king's pride. They asked him to make a law that for thirty days no one could pray to any being except to the king. They also got the king to agree to throw anyone who broke this law into the den of lions. They were confident that Daniel would break this law and be destroyed, because he always prayed to God three times each day. Could these governors do away with the worship of the Lord?

Daniel was aware of the new law and the penalty for those who did not obey this law. He also knew that this law was not just, and that the command to worship the Lord was greater than the law of the king. So Daniel went to his upper room and with the window open toward Jerusalem, he prayed three times each day as usual. Of course, the governors immediately went to the king to report that Daniel broke the new law. They also reminded the king that this was a law of the Medes and Persians that could not be changed. The king was greatly troubled and tried to find a way to rescue Daniel.

The king realized that he could not change the law, so he commanded his soldiers to cast Daniel into the den of lions. He then shared his hope that the God Daniel served would deliver him from

the lions. It was impossible for the king to rest or eat the whole night. He paced the floor wondering if the God that Daniel served was able to deliver him. Early in the morning he rushed out to the lions' den and called for Daniel, asking him if the God he served was able to keep him safe. Then Daniel gave this testimony to the grace and power of the Lord when he said: "My God 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 6:22).

After the king commanded that Daniel be taken out of the lions' den, he instructed his soldiers to cast the governors and their families into the den of lions. This time the carnivorous nature of the lions was not stopped and those who accused Daniel were torn apart before their bodies reached the ground. The king then issued a decree that everyone in his kingdom had to tremble before the God of Daniel. He also confessed that Daniel's God is the living God and that His Kingdom will never be destroyed. It is likely that this was not a true conversion on the part of the king, yet the name of the Lord was honored throughout the empire of the Medes and Persians. By saving Daniel, God preserved the worship of the Lord's name on the earth!

# Questions

1. Why did the governors want to find some fault in Daniel? (Daniel 6:3-4)

2. With what fault were the governors able to charge Daniel? (Daniel 6:4)

3. The only possible charge against Daniel concerned what law that Daniel followed? (Daniel 6:5)

4. What penalty did the governors want for anyone who violated the king's decree? (Daniel 6:7)

5. What was remarkable about the law of the Medes and Persians? (Daniel 6:8)

6. What happened to Daniel because he continued to pray to the Lord each day? (Daniel 6:16)

7. According to what the king believed, who could deliver Daniel from the lions? (Daniel 6:16)

8. What decree did the king make to his whole kingdom concerning Daniel's God? (Daniel 6:26)

## 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:** "And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord: 'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.' Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." (Ezra 3:11)

**Lesson Truth:** The building of the temple by the returning exiles pointed to the time when the Spirit of Christ would live in the hearts of God's people.

#### Lesson

It all happened just like God's word said it would. Isaiah the prophet told about God using Cyrus as a servant to make sure the temple of the Lord was rebuilt in Jerusalem. Jeremiah had prophesied that God's people would return from exile after seventy years. The first six chapters of the book of Ezra tell about the first return of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

God's people had been in captivity in Babylon nearly seventy years. The Babylonian empire had been conquered by the Medes and Persians, and Cyrus was the Persian king. In his first year as king, Cyrus issued a proclamation that any Jews who wanted return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of the Lord, could do so. Not only could they return to Jerusalem, but they would also be supplied with gifts of gold, silver, and other produce to pay the expenses. Cyrus also acknowledged that it was the Lord God of heaven who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth. And it was the God of heaven who commanded him to rebuild the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem.

The return of the exiles came about just as King Cyrus commanded. The leaders from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah lead the group of returning exiles. A few members from the other tribes also joined them, so that once again they were the twelve tribes of Israel when they returned to Canaan. It was the Word and Spirit of the Lord who moved the exiles to return. Once again, the power of God's grace was evident among His people. The citizens of Cyrus's kingdom also followed his command to give gifts to the Jews who were returning to Jerusalem. They gave gold and silver as well as livestock and other precious things. The return of God's people was truly the fulfillment of word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah the prophet.

King Cyrus also honored the God of heaven when he gave the vessels from the temple to Zerubbabel to take back to Jerusalem. The king wanted the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple to be restored to their original service. What a joy among the people as they returned to rebuild the temple of the Lord. The first thing Jeshua and Zerubbabel did when they arrived in Jerusalem was to build an altar to God to offer burnt offerings as written in the Law of Moses. Zerubbabel hoped for a complete restoration of the communion between God and His people. But the old covenant was not restored. The people would have to look forward to the new covenant in which God's people enjoy full communion with the Father through the Christ and His Spirit.

After the people built the altar and offered burnt offerings, they began the work of building the temple. They gave money and supplies to the builders and instructed them to lay the foundation

for the new temple. When the foundation was laid there were two marked reactions. Most of the people, led by the priests and Levites, shouted for joy and praised the Lord that the temple was being rebuilt. But the people who remembered Solomon's temple wept. They wept because they knew this temple would never reach the glory of Solomon's temple. This was a lack of faith on the part of the people who wept because they did not put their hope in the glory that would be revealed in Christ Jesus.

When the building began, the people from the area also offered to help. These people were Samaritans, a mixed race of Jews who had married gentiles. The leaders rejected their offer to help because they did not keep the Lord's covenant. These Samaritans then decided to hinder the work on the temple in any way they could. The people became so disheartened by the resistance of the Samaritans that the work on the temple stopped for almost fourteen years. The Lord then sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to warn the people to do the work of the Lord on the temple or suffer the consequences. They also encouraged the people to remember that the Lord was with them with the Word of His covenant and with His Spirit. In addition, they were encouraged when the search ordered by King Darius uncovered the decree of Cyrus that commanded the rebuilding of the temple. Darius even called on the name of God to destroy anyone who tried to hinder the building of the temple. The temple building was completed because the Lord favored His people. If only they would look forward to the coming of the Christ, the One in whom God would give His full favor to His people!

# Questions

According to Cyrus king of Persia, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth? (Ezra 1:2)

The fathers of which two tribes decided to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple? (Ezra 1:5)

3. How many men beside the servants returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple? (Ezra 2:64)

4. What special thing did the leaders of the return want to do according to the Law of Moses? (Ezra 3:2)

5. What offer did the enemies of Judah make concerning the building of the temple? (Ezra 4:12)

6. What did the people of the land do when their help was refused? (Ezra 4:3-5)

7. What prophets did the Lord send to encourage the people to continue building the temple? (Ezra 5:1-2)

8. What did King Darius find when he made a search in the archives of Babylon? (Ezra 6:1-3)

# Lesson 10 The Law Reinstated

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

Scripture: Ezra 7–10

**Memory Verse:** "O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!"

(Ezra 9:15)

Lesson Truth: Ezra urged the people to live righteously in obedience to the law.

# Lesson

The children of Israel had been in captivity for seventy years just as the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied. The captivity was now over and many of God's people returned to the Land of Promise in two major groups. Zerubbabel and Jeshua led the first group and Ezra led the second group some seventy-eight years later. Ezra was a priest and a scribe, one who feared the Lord. He returned to the Promised Land to urge the people to live righteously by living in obedience to the Law.

The return of the exiles from Babylon after seventy years is a striking event. It is striking because the return of God's people was clearly directed by God. Before the first group returned, King Cyrus made an official proclamation urging God's people to return to build the temple. Cyrus did exactly what Iasiah prophesied more than a hundred years earlier. In the second return God directed Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, to not only allow God's people to go, but also to support them with gifts.

God moved Ezra the priest to go to Jerusalem and the Promised Land. The first group of returning exiles had built the new temple so the worship of God could be restored. Their leaders, Zerubbabel and Jeshua were no longer living, and the people forgot the law of God. Now God called Ezra to lead a group of returning exiles and to teach the people to live in obedience to the Law. God also caused the heart of Artaxerxes, the present king of Persia, to encourage this return. Artaxerxes gave Ezra a letter that described his support for this return. He promised silver, gold, and produce as well as military help to bring Ezra and the returnees to Jerusalem.

Ezra urged both priests and Levites to accompany his group as they returned to Jerusalem. He wanted these priests and Levites to help him reinstate the righteousness of the Law of God. When Ezra and his group of exiles returned to Jerusalem, God made the people in Jerusalem receptive to them. They accepted Ezra as their leader as someone sent by God. As he served as the leader in Jerusalem, officials came to him and told him about a serious rejection of God's Law. The people rejected God's law when they married pagan wives. God's Law clearly forbade this practice, yet they did it anyway.

When Ezra heard this report, he was so grieved that he tore his clothes and pulled hair from his head and beard. He thought about the horror of the judgment that would come because of this sin. Then Ezra acted as Christ would act on behalf of the people. He took this sin of the people upon himself. After the evening sacrifice he kneeled before the Lord in a prayer of confession and penitence. He 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." He also confessed that God had allowed His people to return from captivity so they could be restored and start anew. But instead of renewal they had sinned again by taking pagan wives which was contrary to God's Law.

Ezra's confession of guilt had an effect on the people. They not only saw their sin, but they also saw a ray of hope. They understood that Ezra touched the depths of God's mercy when he was completely crushed by the sins of the people. It was only because the Spirit of Christ was in him that Ezra could touch the depths of God's mercy. The people responded by saying they would break with their sins. Ezra then asked them to appear in Jerusalem in three days. When they appeared, he said if they were serious about breaking with their sins, they had to put away their pagan wives. Because they trembled before the power of the Word of the Lord, they agreed to send away the pagan wives and their children. What a grief this caused when families were broken up. The righteousness of the Law had to be reinstated so God's people could again be a holy, consecrated people.

The covenant God made with His people was still limited to Israel. Other nations were not yet allowed to share in that covenant. This should have made God's people long for the coming of the promised Messiah. Christ Jesus would break down this dividing wall of separation so other nations would also be able to share in God's covenant. We know that Christ Jesus came for that purpose!

# Questions

1. What was Ezra's occupation? (Ezra 7:6)

2. Why was Ezra successful in his journey to Jerusalem? (Ezra 7:9)

3. What did the king of Persia give to Ezra to indicate his support for his return to Jerusalem? (Ezra 7:11)

4. According to Ezra's prayer how high had their guilt become? (Ezra 9:6)

5. What did Ezra believe the people had forsaken? (Ezra 9:10)

6. How do we know that Ezra was grieved because of the sins of the people? (Ezra 10:1)

7. For what two reasons were the people trembling when they came to Jerusalem? (Ezra 10:9)

8. Of what transgression were the people guilty? (Ezra 10:10)

# Lesson 11 A Witness

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

Scripture: Esther 1–10

**Memory Verse:** "For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen." (Esther 10:3)

Lesson Truth: Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther were witnesses to God's name in Persia.

## Lesson

God's hand of providence and protection is evident in the book of Esther. Both Esther and Mordecai served as witnesses to God's name when the wicked Haman devised a plot to destroy God's people. Many of the people from Israel and Judah were comfortable in the land of their captivity and were disobedient in not wanting to rebuild God's house in Jerusalem. In spite of this disobedience the Lord provided Mordecai as a deliverer when Haman plotted to destroy them.

The story of the book of Esther is about the remarkable way that directed the affairs of a pagan nation in order to save His people from destruction. The story begins with King Ahasuerus calling a huge feast for the nobles of his kingdom, which was followed by a seven-day feast for the people. At the seven-day feast the king became drunk. In his drunken pride he decided he wanted to show off his beautiful queen, Vashti, to the nobles of his kingdom. Because Vashti knew the king was drunk, she refused to parade before him. This made the king furious and with the advice of his wisemen, he deposed Queen Vashti. He then decided to search for a new queen by recruiting girls to his harem. The king planned to select a queen from his harem after they had been conditioned. Cousin Mordecai who raised Esther as his own daughter after her parents died, brought Esther to the king's court to join the harem. When the days of conditioning were completed the king chose Esther to be his queen. This was the means God used to bring Esther to the king's court.

We understand how God used Esther to save His people when we learn of Haman's wicked plot to destroy the Jews. It happened after Haman was promoted to the second ruler in the kingdom. Because of his rank all the people bowed down when Haman appeared, except Mordecai, Esther's cousin. Because he served the Lord, he would not bow to a person. This made Haman very angry, and he decided he had to destroy Mordecai. His hatred was so intense that he wasn't content to destroy Mordecai alone; he made a plan to destroy all the Jews. When Mordecai learned of this plan, he called on Esther to intervene. He asked her to go to the king uninvited to beg for the lives of her people. Esther knew the court rule that anyone who came to the king uninvited would be put to death unless the king held out his golden scepter. When she shared this with Mordecai, he reminded her that the Lord might have brought her to the king's court for just this purpose. Mordecai told Esther that he was confident that if she did not go in to the king; God would deliver His people in another way but she would not be spared. Esther then agreed to go in to the king uninvited, with the attitude, if I perish, I perish!

Esther did approach the king, and the king held out the golden scepter and spared her life. When he asked her to state her request, she requested that the king and Haman come to her banquet. Following this request Haman built huge gallows on which he would hang Mordecai, The providence of God is again evident when the king could not sleep at night. Because he could not sleep the king asked to review the court records. As he reviewed the court records, he found a record of Mordecai exposing a plot to murder the king. He inquired if Mordecai had been honored for this heroic deed. When he was advised that no honor had been given to Mordecai, the king inquired who was in his outer court. It happened that Haman was there to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared. The king brought Haman in and inquired what should be done to the man the king wanted to honor. Because Haman thought that he was the one the king wanted to honor he was lavish in his suggestion for this honor. The beginning of Haman's downfall came when he was instructed to honor Mordecai according to his suggestions.

After a second banquet for the king and Haman, Esther begged the king for her life and the life of her people. She also told the king it was Haman who had plotted to destroy her people. At this the king was very angry. He was also provoked that Haman threw himself on Esther's couch to beg for his life. Just at that time his attendants told him about the gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai. The king commanded that Haman be hung on the gallows he had built. The Jews were allowed to fight for their lives and were spared in a miraculous way. Following their deliverance Mordecai was promoted to the second ruler in the kingdom. The Jews kept the feast of Purim in thankfulness for God's grace.

# Questions

1. Who was king of the 127 provinces of Persia when Vashti was queen? (Esther 1:1)

2. What was the decree the king sent out concerning queen Vashti? (Esther 1:19)

3. Who brought up Esther as his own daughter and placed her in the king's harem? (Esther 2:7-8)

4. Who did Haman want to destroy because of his hatred of Mordecai? (Esther 3:5-6)

5. What was Mordecai's response to Haman's wicked plot? (Esther 4:1)

6. What was the law that made Esther afraid to go into the presence of the king uninvited? (Esther 4:11)

7. What made the king search the records so he became aware of Mordecai's good deed? (Esther 6:1-2)

8. What holiday did the Jews use to celebrate their deliverance from Haman's plot? (Esther 9:26)

## 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:** "You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You." (Nehemiah 9:6)

**Lesson Truth:** The rebuilding of Jerusalem was temporary, yet it pointed to the building of the Kingdom of God.

## Lesson

Nehemiah was the leader of third return of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. Not only did he rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but he also worked tirelessly to help God's people remember what their true purpose was. Nehemiah enlisted the help of Ezra to read the law and to reestablish Israel's basic institutions. In order to stop the spiritual and moral decline of God's people Nehemiah and Ezra brought drastic reforms involving their religious and political life. Nehemiah knew that if the Promised Messiah was to come from God's people their spiritual decline had to be reversed.

Nehemiah was a man of high position in the court of Artaxerxes the king of Persia. He was the trusted cupbearer to the king. This was an office of great responsibility for the safety of the king. Although he had a responsible office, Nehemiah remained faithful to the Lord and to God's people. He made it a point to inquire about God's people in Jerusalem and Israel whenever he had the opportunity. When he received a report of the terrible conditions of walls of Jerusalem and the spiritual decline; he determined to ask the king if he could go back to his country to rebuild and instruct. Before Nehemiah asked the king if could return, he spent time in prayer, remembering the promises the Lord made to His people and asking for guidance. One day when he appeared downcast as he served the king, he was given the opportunity to make his request. The king asked him why he was so sad. In response he shared with the king the conditions in Jerusalem and asked if he could return to build the walls. The Lord touched the king's heart so that he sent Nehemiah with letters of support to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.

When Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem, he first inspected the walls. He then shared with the city officials the terrible condition of the walls and his purpose for coming. The Lord also made Nehemiah's words effective in making the hearts of the people receptive to his plan. They sensed that God's grace was turning to them again. In response to God's grace, they were ready to begin rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah then assigned everyone, no matter what rank. to build the wall in their section of the city. As they began building, they soon learned of the hatred of their enemies and of their plans to disrupt the work. It became necessary for the builders to work with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. The workers worked day and night, encouraged by Nehemiah who was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

Now it became necessary for Nehemiah to help the people respect each other. The rich had to be willing to share with the poor so that no one had to sell their sons and daughters in order to pay

the tax to the king of Persia. The Spirit of God again caused the words of Nehemiah to grip the hearts of the people and they made a vow that they would share.

After the walls were rebuilt the people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of tabernacles. At this feast Ezra read the law to God's people. They were so touched when they heard the law that they began to weep and cry out in anguish over their sins. Ezra and the Levites told the people not to cry at the feast, but rather to enjoy the Lord's favor. Then people enjoyed the feast, confessed their sins, and renewed the covenant with the Lord. They promised to walk in the ways of the Lord.

In spite of the trouble they had with their enemies, they finished building the wall in fifty-two days. Nehemiah then arranged a dedication ceremony with choirs and sacrifices of thanksgiving. There was reason to rejoice because once again there was safety within the walls of Jerusalem. He also brought about great reforms among the people in ejecting unfaithful strangers from the temple and by insisting that God's people separate themselves from foreign wives. God surely used Nehemiah to restore the city of Jerusalem. However, God did much more than restore the city; He also restored the people. In helping the people to be faithful He prepared them for the coming of the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus.

# Questions

1. According to the report of Hanani, what were the conditions in Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 1:3)

2. What was Nehemiah's reaction to this report? (Nehemiah 1:4)

3. What reason did Nehemiah give to the king for being sad? (Nehemiah 2:3)

4. What request did Nehemiah make from the king? (Nehemiah 2:5)

5. Who conspired against Nehemiah when the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt? (Nehemiah 6:1)

6. For what reason were God's people servants and slaves in the land of Canaan? (Nehemiah 9:36-37)

7. When the covenant was renewed what did the people promise they would not do? (Nehemiah 10:30)

8. How was it possible that the wall of Jerusalem could be rebuilt in fifty-two days? (Nehemiah 6:15-16)