

Journey: Witnesses Book - Bible Summaries

3. Leviticus

Theme: Holiness

Author: Moses

Date: 15th century B.C.

Verse: *Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.* Leviticus 20:7-8

One of the 12 tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi, was set aside to be priests in God's tabernacle. Holiness is the theme and key word of this book - it appears 87 times. Major topics include offerings, consecration and cleansing, atonement, relationships of God's people, instructions and warnings. In addition to the Ten Commandments, there were more than 600 other laws, governing almost every aspect of life. Many of these laws are revealed in Leviticus, including instructions on food, social relations, feasts, purity, the Sabbath and blasphemy. Near the end of the book, in Chapter 26, the Lord reminds the Israelites about the blessings they will receive if they obey and the punishments they will suffer if they don't. But, again, God knew the outcome and reminded them of His unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

8. Ruth

Theme: Beginning of the messianic family of David

Author: Unknown

Date: 11th century B.C.

Verse: *But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.* Ruth 1:16

After the Jewish man, Elimelech, died in the land of Moab, his wife, Naomi, wanted to return to her homeland in Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, chose to return with her to live with and

be part of God's people, no matter what the cost (1:16-17). She presented herself to Boaz, a relative of Naomi, and he righteously accepted his role as her kinsman-redeemer, which included the duties of redeeming the ancestral lands of a deceased relative and marrying his widow. Because of Ruth's choice and her marriage to Boaz, she became one of the ancestors of King David, whose lineage eventually leads to the Messiah Himself. Boaz, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, is a type (a real event that is also an illustration of a deeper truth) of Christ, the great Kinsman-Redeemer, who will redeem the nation of Israel and its land and bring the people into rest in the kingdom.

23. Isaiah

Theme: Israel and the coming Messiah

Author: Isaiah

Date: 8th century B.C.

Verse: *After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities* Isaiah 53:11

This book of prophecy was written by one of the greatest Hebrew prophets. Isaiah was called by God to prophesy to Judah during the reign of kings Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah. He urged the people to turn back to God and stop worshiping idols, and he warned them what would happen if they didn't. But even while he was saying this, he knew the people wouldn't respond. *Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And He answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken"* (6:11-12).

Isaiah's prophecies foretold the fate of Judah and the nations who stood against God's people. In many cases, these prophecies have a dual fulfillment - referring to the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities, and to the future judgment of the world

upon Christ's second coming at the end of the tribulation.

After proclaiming the holiness and justice of God and His judgments on those who don't obey Him in the first 39 chapters, Isaiah turns to a message of hope. He prophesies a day when the Messiah would come and suffer and then come again to reign over the nation in glory. In order to understand Isaiah, we must understand that all his predictions revolve around Christ's two comings. Christ came the first time as the suffering, rejected Messiah to die for the sins of the people (Isaiah 53). At His second coming to earth, when Christ will set up His kingdom, Israel will be regathered to Palestine from its worldwide dispersion and will see fulfillment of the promised messianic kingdom.

27. Daniel

Theme: Rise and fall of kingdoms

Author: Daniel

Date: 6th century B.C.

Verse: *He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.* Daniel 2:21

Daniel, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon, lived during the reign of four kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. The first six chapters of his book contain the familiar accounts of his refusal to eat the king's food, the fiery furnace and the lions' den, while Chapters 7 through 12 contain prophecies revealed to Daniel in the form of dreams and visions. Those prophecies that have already been fulfilled (such as those in Daniel 8 and 11) have had a literal fulfillment. Because of this, we can know for sure that the prophecies that haven't yet been fulfilled will also be fulfilled literally.

One of Daniel's prophecies, that of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9, was God's revelation that Israel's punishment would last for 70 sevens (the actual meaning of the Hebrew word translated *weeks* - and here referring to 70 periods of seven years, or 490 years in total). The angel Gabriel indicated that the 490 years would be divided. The first 483 years began when Artaxerxes issued a decree to Nehemiah allowing him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and ended on the day that Jesus Christ

rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The remaining seven years will take place during the still-future tribulation when God's wrath will be poured out on earth and only a remnant of Israel will be saved. Those who are alive on earth during the tribulation will recognize the working of God because of Daniel's vision.

Other prophecies concern the evil Gentile nations, Alexander the Great and the wars between nations in the years between Daniel's life and the birth of Jesus Christ. Near the end of the book, God tells Daniel: *Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand (12:10).*

28. Hosea

Theme: Apostasy of Israel

Author: Hosea

Date: 8th century B.C.

Verse: *I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.* Hosea 2:19

Hosea prophesied in Israel at about the same time as Amos did, beginning in the reign of Jeroboam II and continuing through the period of the last six

kings. The book covers about 40 years. God instructed this prophet to marry Gomer, a prostitute who continued her ways after their marriage. Hosea likened her unfaithfulness to Israel's unfaithfulness to God and warned them of God's wrath. He even gave his children names that symbolized the coming judgment. But although people are unfaithful, God never is. Hosea demonstrated this by purchasing Gomer back after she had left him to pursue her profession - God will one day do the same for Israel.

30. Amos

Theme: Ultimate universal rule of David

Author: Amos

Date: 8th century B.C.

Verse: *But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!* Amos 5:24

Amos was a farmer from the country south of Jerusalem during the reign of King Uzziah, about 755 B.C. He raised sheep and grew figs until he was called by God as a prophet. Although he was from Judah, his message was for the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam II. The nation was enjoying prosperity and was, for the moment, at peace. But Amos warned the people: *... I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts (5:12)*. He warned of coming destruction (which took place about 30 years later when the inhabitants were carried into the Assyrian captivity). But he also ended with hope, looking forward to a still-future time when Jesus Christ will reign over Israel in the land God gave them.

34. Nahum

Theme: Nineveh's doom
Author: Nahum
Date: 7th century B.C.

Verse: *The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him.* Nahum 1:7

The book of Nahum was written around 660 B.C. Little is known about its author except that he lived in a Galilean village. Nahum is the sequel to the book of Jonah. The people of Nineveh had repented when Jonah preached to them, and God's judgment was delayed for more than 100 years. In the book of Nahum, however, the Ninevites were again disobeying God. They had invaded and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and were throwing their weight around. Nineveh was a huge fortress with walls 100 feet (30.5 m) high, thick enough for three chariots to ride side-by-side on the top. It seemed impregnable. Nahum relayed a message: *"I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty (3:5a)*. He warned that God's judgment was approaching in the form of a flood and fire. In 612 B.C., the Tigris River overflowed and destroyed part of the wall. The Babylonian army entered through the gap and destroyed the city so

thoroughly that for centuries (until 1842), nobody knew where it had stood.

35. Habakkuk

Theme: Impending judgment - the Babylonian invasion
Author: Habakkuk
Date: 7th century B.C.

Verse: *See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright- but the righteous will live by his faith.* Habakkuk 2:4

Nothing is known about the prophet Habakkuk except what his book reveals. Habakkuk was confused

- how long could God put off punishing sinners? When God explained that Babylon was about to bring the punishment (which places Habakkuk some-where around 600 B.C.), the prophet is even more confused - Babylon was even more wicked than Judah! God give him encouragement: *the righteous will live by his faith (2:4b)*. The name *Habakkuk* means "one who embraces." This is appropriate because, at the very end of the book, the prophet embraces God in the midst of calamity. *Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior (3:17-18)*.

39. Malachi

Theme: Rebukes and prediction
Author: Malachi
Date: 5th century B.C.

Verse: *Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?'* Malachi 3:7

The prophet Malachi wrote this book after the Israelites had returned from captivity in Babylon. The temple and city of Jerusalem had been rebuilt and was once again the center of worship for the

people. But God wasn't happy about the way the people were worshiping. Malachi rebukes both the priests and the Jewish people for their sins. He does this with a six-part message delivered in a series of questions:

1. How has God loved Israel?
2. How have the priests honored God?
3. How were the people breaking faith with each other?
4. How had God been patient with Israel?
5. How had the people robbed God?
6. How would God remember those who were faithful to Him?

Malachi's many predictions include the judgment of the tribulation, the establishment of Messiah's kingdom (the millennium), and the first and second comings of Christ to earth. God, through Malachi, summed up His message (4:4-6) with a final call to remember His law and a reminder that the Judge was coming. Israel didn't get the message, and they didn't hear from God again for the next 400 years.