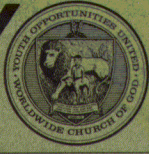


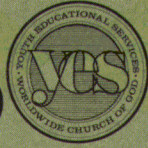
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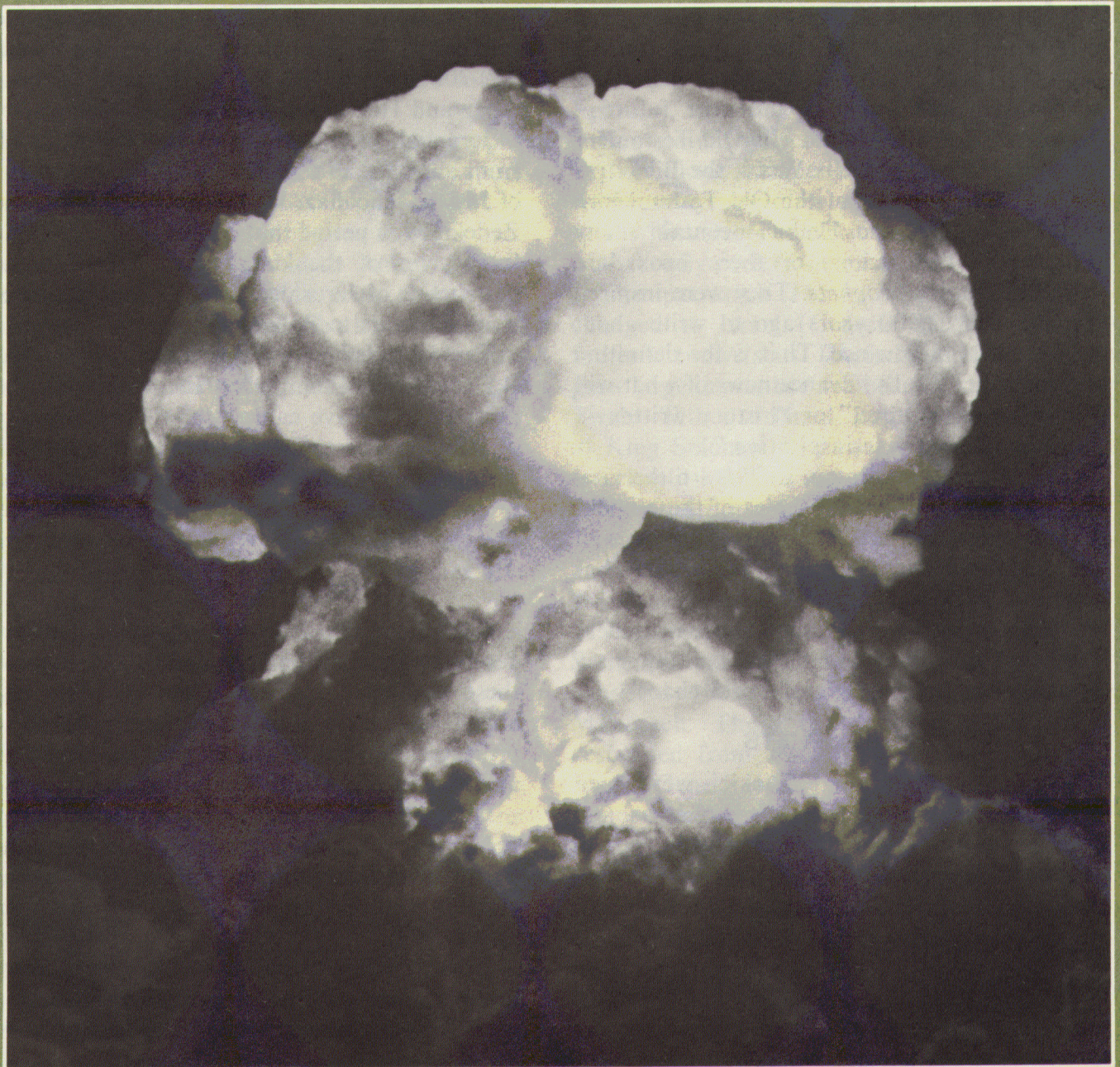
LEVEL 7

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 8



Key Prophecies of the Major Prophets

KEY PROPHECIES OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS

Have you ever wanted to know what will happen in the future? Have you wondered what life will be like ten, twenty or even fifty years from now?

In this lesson, you will learn about important events that will occur in the near future—events which God inspired His Old Testament prophets to record in His Word, the Bible.

Three of the books of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—contain many prophecies. The writers of these books are called the *major prophets*. They were inspired by God over 2,500 years ago to write about world events in advance. That is the definition of prophecy: “God’s advance news of what will happen in the future,” or “history written in advance under divine inspiration.”

As we study this lesson, we’ll learn the vital key that unlocks the prophecies of these books to our understanding. We’ll also discover that the descendants of ancient Israel exist as separate nations today! We will also learn about catastrophic events soon to occur to these and other nations, and about the exciting, *good news* on beyond this time of world chaos!

THE PROPHETS

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were men called by God to warn the nations of Israel and Judah of severe punishment, if they refused to repent of their sins and obey the true God.

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Bible prophecy gives God’s advance news of the use of nuclear weapons in modern warfare.

Courtesy U.S. Air Force

The prophet Isaiah had a vision (revelation from God) concerning Judah and Jerusalem and the spiritual condition of the nation. He prophesied for over forty years from about 740-700 B.C., in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Jeremiah prophesied to the nation of Judah from about 625 to 585 B.C., during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah—a period that covered the last tragic forty years of the kingdom of Judah to the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of its inhabitants to Babylon.

Ezekiel prophesied from about 592 to 572 B.C. God called him to be His prophet while a prisoner in a slave camp near the ancient city of Babylon. His prophecies deal primarily with the nation of Israel. But as we will see, his prophecies were intended for their modern-day descendants!

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Let’s take a look into the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel to see what God inspired these prophets to write about the years just ahead. Using the Bible as a time machine to project us into the future, let’s take a brief look at just part of what is prophesied to occur.

Our time machine brings us into a prison camp. It is very large. Armed guards patrol the barbed wire fences surrounding it. The guards, clad in unfamiliar uniforms, are stern in appearance.

In a clearing between several large dirty buildings are two women huddled around a fire. One of them is stirring a large cauldron of

boiling soup. A long line of thin, sickly prisoners trudge slowly by as the other woman pours soup into a metal cup held by each prisoner.

These tired and weak prisoners have worked all day in the prison workshop, where they were mistreated by cruel guards. For months they have worked in the same clothing, eaten thin and tasteless soup and rested only a few hours each night.

As we take a closer look, we begin to recognize some of these people. They are Americans, Britons, Canadians, Australians, South Africans and other English-speaking peoples. Then we learn that there are many other prison camps like this one!

But how could this be? How could people from such powerful countries have ended up in prison camps?

Our time machine now moves us across an ocean to the shores of North America. The United States and Canada look completely different! The major cities of both countries are laid waste! The big cities of other countries such as Britain, Australia and South Africa are desolate also.

Instead of cities full of homes, humming factories and freeways, there is nothing but *rubble!* And the city suburbs, formally filled with friendly neighborhoods, have been charred by fire. The green trees, grass and bushes are all burned up!

What could possibly have happened? Are these scenes from some science fiction movie? Unfortunately not!

The major prophets recorded these and other future events in vivid detail. And they *will happen* because God's Word is true. Thankfully, however, this is only part of the story. There is also much *good news* beyond this terrible time of death and destruction!

THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS PROPHECY TO OUR UNDERSTANDING

The book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters, Jeremiah 52 and Ezekiel 48. In none of these

chapters will you find the United States or Britain ever mentioned by name.

How, then, can we know that the scenes just depicted from the prophecies of these prophets involve these countries?

The *vital key* that unlocks prophecy to our understanding is knowledge of the astonishing *identity* of the American and British peoples in Biblical prophecies. God has revealed this key to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God.

In his book, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, Mr. Armstrong explains that the United States and Britain have actually descended from the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, which at one time were part of the ancient nation of Israel. The United States and Britain, along with certain other nations in the world today, are often collectively referred to as the "house of Israel" in Biblical prophecies. Let's briefly review their history.

The patriarch Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28), was the father of twelve sons. The families of these sons grew large in number and became known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Later, after the death of King Solomon, the twelve-tribed nation of Israel split into two separate nations.

The southern nation, with its capital at Jerusalem, became known as the house of Judah. And the people of the house of Judah became known as Jews.

The northern nation, with its capital at Samaria, was called the house of Israel. It consisted of ten tribes, headed by Ephraim and Manasseh. These two leading tribes were descended from Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob (Genesis 46:20).

Because of the sins of Sabbath-breaking and idolatry, God allowed the nation of Israel (the northern ten tribes) to be conquered by the Assyrians. The Assyrians conquered these tribes in the years 721-718 B.C. and took them captive from the land of Palestine to Assyria. But not until God had warned them by His servants the prophets, as II Kings 17:22-23 shows:



by Ramona Karels

About 130 years after the ten-tribed nation of Israel had been taken captive, the nation of Judah went into captivity. This occurred in stages, during the years 604-585 B.C. when the Babylonian army, under King Nebuchadnezzar, invaded and conquered the nation. These people, the Jews, were later allowed to return to Palestine, where many of their descendants live even to this very day. They are of the house of Judah, *not* the house of "Israel," as the name of the modern Jewish state implies.

THE SABBATH COVENANT—A SPECIAL SIGN OF IDENTIFICATION

In the days of Moses, God made a special, eternally binding *covenant* (agreement) with the children of Israel (Exodus 31:12-17). Read verses 12-13 and fill in the blanks: "And the _____ spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of _____, saying, Verily my _____ ye _____: for it is a _____ between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may _____ that I am the LORD that doth _____ you."

God commanded the Israelites to keep His Sabbaths. The seventh day Sabbath is a *sign* identifying the Creator God. The Sabbath,

Now notice verse 13: “But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments . . . and my sabbaths they greatly polluted.”

Then God pleaded with their children, a generation later: “But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me . . . they *polluted my sabbaths* . . . and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols” (verses 18-21, 24).

So, generations later, God finally scattered the people of Israel in captivity as punishment for their sins, primarily Sabbath-breaking and idolatry.

EZEKIEL’S MESSAGE FOR THE MODERN-DAY HOUSE OF ISRAEL

The prophet Ezekiel was commissioned by God to go to the house of Israel with an important message. “Go speak unto the house of Israel,” said God (Ezekiel 3:1). And again: “Go, get thee unto the house of Israel” (verse 4).

But when Ezekiel received the message from God, he was one of the many Jews who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and deported to Babylonia. Ezekiel was in a slave camp by the River Chebar, near the ancient city of Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1). He was far from the area where the northern ten tribes of the house of Israel had been taken captive about *130 years earlier*, and still farther from where many of the Israelites had since migrated.

Ezekiel never took that message to the house of Israel. He couldn’t. He was a prisoner.

Thus the message God gave to Ezekiel is a prophecy intended primarily for the *modern-*

day house of Israel—especially the British and American peoples today!

Do You Remember?

1. What books of the Bible are called the major prophets? _____, _____, _____.
2. What is the vital key that unlocks Bible prophecy to our understanding? _____
_____.
3. For what two major sins did God punish the house of Israel? _____
_____.
4. When was the house of Israel taken into captivity by the Assyrians? _____.
5. How long after the house of Israel went into captivity was the house of Judah taken captive? _____.
6. Whom did God use to conquer the house of Judah? _____.
7. To whom were the prophecies of Ezekiel primarily addressed? _____
_____.

THE U.S. AND BRITAIN TO BE PUNISHED

The United States and Great Britain began rapidly growing into great national powers at the beginning of the 19th Century. These two nations became the richest and most powerful the world had ever seen. But such wealth and power were not accidental.

They came about as a result of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because of Abraham’s faithfulness and obedience to God, God promised to *greatly bless* him and his descendants. God later reconfirmed these promises to his son Isaac, and then to his grandson Jacob.

Recall that Joseph was one of Jacob’s sons. It was upon Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that the patriarch Israel (Jacob) placed his name, and to whom the birthright promises of national greatness and wealth were



God fulfilled His promises to obedient Abraham by greatly blessing his modern-day descendants.

bestowed (Genesis 48). And as a careful study of history shows, the modern-day descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh—formerly the leading tribes of the house of Israel—are Britain and the United States today.

Although greatly blessed materially, the people of the United States and Britain have not acknowledged God as the source of their blessings. They have not been grateful. Instead of thanking God, they have rejected Him and His law. The same is true of the descendants of the other tribes of Israel.

In describing the people of ancient Israel and Judah, the prophet Ezekiel foretold of *their descendants today*: “Then said he [God] unto me, The _____ of the house of _____ and _____ is _____, and the land is _____ of _____, and the city full of _____: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not. And as for me also, mine eye _____, neither will I have _____, but I will _____ upon their head” (Ezekiel 9:9-10).

The northern ten tribes of Israel went into captivity and lost their identity because of idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. And prophecy shows that the United States, Britain and other descendants of the tribes of Israel will soon suffer a much worse captivity and punishment because of these and other terrible sins. Modern-day Judah (the state of Israel) will also be punished.

PROPHETS ACT OUT THE FUTURE

As we have learned, God used His servants, the prophets, to warn the houses of Israel and Judah of coming punishment. A number of times He had His prophets perform unusual tasks to get the people’s attention and to emphasize the importance of His warning messages. Let’s notice a few of the strange things God required Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel to do.

In Ezekiel 5:1-2 we read of the prophecy of thirds: “And thou, son of man, _____ thee a _____, take thee a _____, and cause it to _____ upon thine _____ and upon thy _____: then take thee _____ to weigh, and _____ the hair.

“Thou shalt _____ with _____ a _____ part in the midst of the _____, when the days of the _____ are fulfilled: and thou shalt take

a _____ part, and _____ about it with a _____: and a _____ part thou shalt _____ in the wind; and I will draw out a _____ after them.”

Ezekiel’s actions were to picture what would happen to the descendants of the tribes of Israel, especially the United States and Britain, *in the very near future*. According to the interpretation of the prophecy of thirds in verse 12, one third of the people will die of famine and disease. Another third will perish in a military attack. The remaining third will be taken captive as slaves into all parts of the earth.

There will be *no escape* for those who continue to rebel against God and trample His law. There will be no place of refuge or safety—no hiding place from the punishment of God. “He that is _____ off shall _____ of the _____; and he that is _____ shall _____ by the _____; and he that _____ and is _____ shall die by the _____: thus will I _____ my _____ upon them” (Ezekiel 6:12).

Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel not only prophesied the future of Israel and Judah, they also foretold what would happen to many other nations. Most of these nations are referred to in the Bible by their ancient names, though a few have retained their original names to this day. A number of these prophecies concern Assyria or modern Germany (Isaiah 14:25), Egypt and Ethiopia (Isaiah 19 and 20), and other nations. (Read in Isaiah 20:2-4 what God required Isaiah to do in prophesying against the nations of Egypt and Ethiopia.)

Let’s notice another unusual task God commanded Ezekiel to perform. God told him to lie on his left side for _____ days, and then to lie on his right side for _____ days (Ezekiel 4:4-6). This was to impress on the prophet Ezekiel, and those who saw him, the seriousness of Israel’s and Judah’s years of rebellion against God’s rule and His law.

God also had a strange task for the prophet Jeremiah. God told him to take off his girdle (undergarment) and bury it. After many days, God told Jeremiah to dig it up. Notice in Jeremiah 13:7 the condition in which he found it: “The _____ was _____ [ruined], it was _____ for _____.” What did this symbolize? Notice verse 9: “After this _____ will I _____ the _____ of _____, and the great _____ of _____.”

God was showing that He would punish the house of Judah for its sins!

THE PURPOSE FOR THIS PUNISHMENT

Notice again why God will allow the modern-day descendants of Israel to be punished. Turn to Ezekiel 5:6 (second half): “For they have _____ and my _____, they have not _____ in them.” Then continuing in Ezekiel 6:11: “Alas for all the evil _____ of the house of Israel! for they shall fall.”

The modern descendants of all the tribes of ancient Israel have refused to obey God. They have turned their backs on the commandments of God. They have refused to live according to God’s *law* which produces peace and prosperity in the lives of those who keep it.

As a result, they will be severely punished. This time of great punishment is called the *great tribulation* in Matthew 24:21. In Jeremiah 30:7, God inspired His servant to prophesy of this time: “Alas! for that day is _____, so that _____ is like it: it is even the _____ of _____.”

Notice in Ezekiel 6:6 how God describes the condition of their once-great cities during this time of trouble: “In all your _____ the _____ shall be _____, and the high places shall be _____.”

Sounds like nuclear destruction, doesn’t it?



Cities will be "laid waste"—totally destroyed—during the great tribulation.

This could never have happened until the discovery of the hydrogen bomb!

God will send this punishment upon the modern-day descendants of Israel not because He hates them but because of His great love for His people. "For whom the _____ he _____" (Hebrews 12:6).

Although this punishment will be difficult to endure, it will produce good results in the end, as Hebrews 12:11 shows: "Now no _____ for the _____ seemeth to be _____, but _____: nevertheless afterward it _____ the _____ fruit of _____ unto them which are _____ thereby."

After this correction or chastening, those left of the nations of Israel will turn to God and begin to reap the blessings of obedience to Him!

DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY AT CHRIST'S RETURN

When the modern-day descendants of

ancient Israel repent, they will cry out to God for deliverance (Psalm 126:4). He will hear their repentant prayers and will send Jesus Christ to the earth to deliver them from captivity.

At Christ's return, there will be a great battle between Christ and the nations that will be holding the people of Israel as slaves (Zechariah 14:12; Revelation 17:14; 19:19). Jesus Christ will win that battle and begin His rule on earth. He will then free the people of Israel and Judah from their captivity (Jeremiah 30:10).

Notice what Isaiah 11:11 says about this time of deliverance: "And it shall _____ in _____, that the Lord shall set his _____ again the _____ time to _____ the _____ of his people, which shall be left, from _____, and from _____, and from Pathros . . . and from the islands of the sea."

God will greatly bless those who survive the captivity and live on into the World Tomorrow (Jeremiah 23:3). There will be joy and singing when God brings His people to the land of their ancient ancestors (Isaiah 51:11).

The prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel give us a glimpse of what the wonderful World Tomorrow will be like. It will be a time of peace, not just for Israel and Judah, but for Egypt, Assyria and the entire world because the Government of God will have been established over the nations! All nations will become submissive and obedient to Christ (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Speaking of the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ, Isaiah declared, "The earth shall be full of the *knowledge of the LORD*, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). During the Millennium, God will teach mankind His laws that produce happiness, joy and great abundance.

The devastated cities will be rebuilt and inhabited (Ezekiel 36:33-35). And people will

be happy in these cities (Jeremiah 33:10-14). Young children will be able to play in the streets unsupervised, without fear of being hurt or kidnapped.

Everyone will enjoy good health. People will no longer suffer from the diseases that are so common in today's society (Isaiah 35:3-6; Jeremiah 30:17).

In the World Tomorrow there will be great prosperity and abundance. There will be great rejoicing. No longer will people suffer from hunger or die from malnutrition. Notice what Isaiah 35:1 says about the deserts: "The desert shall rejoice, and _____." Thus, there will be a superabundance of food for all people everywhere to enjoy! (Jeremiah 31:12; Amos 9:13.)

God will even change the natures of wild animals, as we find in Isaiah 11:6: "The

_____ also shall _____ with the _____, and the _____ shall lie down with the _____; and the _____ and the young _____ and the _____ together; and a little _____ shall lead them."

PROPHECY OF THE SAVIOR

Along with the prophecies of war, captivity and world peace, God inspired a special prophetic message to be written. In Isaiah 7:14 we read: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a _____; Behold, a _____ shall _____, and bear a _____, and shall call his name _____."

This was a prophecy about the first coming of Jesus Christ. In order for God to bring about the many wonderful things He has planned for mankind in the Millennium and beyond, a Savior had to first come.

Man has sinned greatly against his Creator. Sin exacts a terrible penalty. Not only does it cause unhappiness, it also carries with it the penalty of eternal death—unless repented of (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:23).

Jesus Christ (the "Word" of John 1:1) came to earth to pay the penalty of the sins of all mankind. His willingness to do this shows His great love for humanity.

God inspired the prophet Isaiah to foretell the brutal death of our Savior. Notice Isaiah 52:14: "As many were _____ [astonished] at thee; his _____ [appearance] was so _____ more than any _____, and his _____ more than the _____ of men."

In Isaiah 53:3 we find a further description of the way our Savior would be treated: "He is _____ and rejected of _____; a _____ of _____, and _____ with _____: and we _____ as it were our _____ from _____; he was _____, and we _____ him not."

The gruesome sacrifice of Christ shows that



The devastated cities will be rebuilt after Jesus Christ returns to earth.

God takes sin very seriously. Some may think that sending people into slavery is cruel punishment for breaking God's commandments. But God wants us all to learn the grave consequences of sin, and that the ultimate penalty of sin is *eternal death*. The second member of the very God Family became a human being to pay that penalty for us!

In future lessons you will learn more about the prophecies concerning Christ and the penalty He willingly paid for the sins of mankind. Because of Jesus Christ, all who have ever lived, including the people of ancient Israel, will have had an opportunity to experience the glorious future foretold in Isaiah chapters 2, 4, 11, 65 and elsewhere.

YOU CAN ESCAPE THE COMING CAPTIVITY!

As we have seen in this lesson, the major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—deal mainly with prophecies of war and captivity. But, just as Noah and his family were divinely protected from the Flood that erased all life from the face of the earth, God promises to spare all those who individually turn from their sins and live God's way of life.

Those who yield to God's will by trusting and obeying Him can be *spared* the corrective punishment that will come in the days just ahead! Let's notice an important characteristic of those who will be spared from these frightful calamities.

God gave the prophet Ezekiel a vision (recorded in chapter 9) regarding the fall of the ancient city Jerusalem, which is a *type* of the fall of the modern-day houses of Israel and Judah. In the vision Ezekiel saw six men bearing weapons of slaughter in their hands. Another man held a writing implement. God instructed the man with the writing implement to go through the midst of Jerusalem and, "_____ a _____ upon the _____ of the _____ that _____ and that _____ for _____ the _____ that be

_____ in the midst thereof" (verse 4).

To the six armed men God instructed: "Go ye after him [the man with the writing implement] through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity... but come not near any man upon whom is the mark" (verses 5-6).

In this passage, Ezekiel is showing that those who "sigh and cry" (lament) over the abominations (terrible sins) of the world *will be protected!*

You personally can escape God's correction upon this world! If you heed God's warning and are sincerely trying to obey Him and honor your parents to the best of your ability, you will be spared. For God is aware of young people as well as adults. He can see your earnest desire to please Him and obey His law. As Solomon, king of Israel, wrote in Proverbs 20:11: "Even a _____ is _____ by his _____, whether his _____ be _____, and whether it be _____."

God promises protection from the coming great tribulation to the members of His Church and their children. His Church is composed of people who keep His commandments and love one another. In fact, the present era of God's Church is called Philadelphia, which means

COMPLETE THE WORD OR PHRASE

Use all the letters of the alphabet, except "x," to complete the following words or phrases. Use each letter only once. After filling in the blanks, write a short paragraph about each subject on a separate sheet of paper.

S__bbath is a si__n

Ma__or __roph__ts

Pr__phec__ o__ hi__s

E__e__iel

I __ill __a__e t__ee fro__ afar (Jer. 30:10)

Ja__o__ shal__ return, and shall be __n rest, a__d be __iet (Jer. 30:10)

“brotherly love.” This era of God’s Church keeps God’s Word and does not deny His name (Revelation 3:8).

Read God’s promise of protection to the Philadelphia era of His Church in Revelation 3:10: “Because _____ hast kept the _____ of my _____, I also will _____ thee from the _____ of _____ [the great tribulation], which shall come upon all the _____, to _____ them that _____ upon the _____.”

Britain and America and other descendants of ancient Israel will not be the only nations to suffer God’s corrective punishment. The rest of the world will be punished with the plagues during the “day of the Lord” because all mankind has rejected God and His ways. But the modern-day houses of Israel and Judah will be the first to receive correction—and later be the first to be delivered (Ezekiel 36:7-11).

In the end, all the news is *good!* All nations will eventually learn the lesson God is teaching—that His way of life is the *only* way that produces peace and prosperity! The end result will be the utopian World Tomorrow—with global peace and abundance for all!

Do You Remember?

1. Why did God have some of His prophets perform unusual tasks _____
_____.
2. In the prophecy of thirds, what does each third represent? _____, _____,
_____.
3. Why are the United States and Britain powerful nations today? _____
_____.
4. What is prophesied to occur to the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel?

_____.
5. Why will God punish these nations?

_____.
6. What will Jesus Christ do after returning

to the earth? _____
_____.

7. What will conditions be like in the Millennium? _____
_____.
8. What must young people be doing in order to receive God’s protection from the coming great tribulation? _____
_____.
9. What is the principle discussed in Proverbs 20:11? _____
_____.
10. What is God’s promise to those in the Philadelphia era of His Church? _____
_____.

BREAK THE CODE

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_____, _____
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D3SP3R2T3LY W4CK3D: WH5

_____?”
C2N KN5W 4T?” (Jeremiah 17:9.)
(CODE: A-2, E-3, I-4, O-5, U-6)

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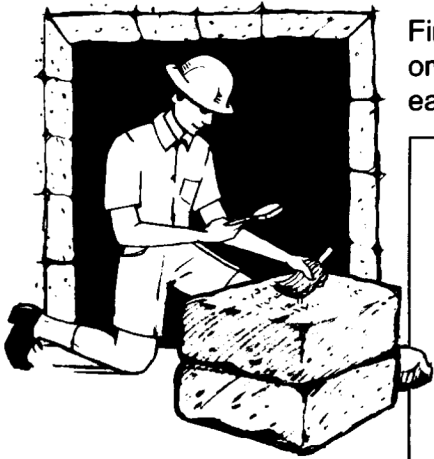
(The letters of each word are scrambled)

EDITOR IN CHIEF: **Herbert W. Armstrong**

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contents of this publication.

BIBLE MEMORY Micah 4:1-5

WORD SEARCH



Find the words listed below in the word search puzzle. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write a short paragraph about each of these words.

ETHIOPIA
SAVIOR
SIGN
BABYLON
JUDAH
JEREMIAH
ISRAEL
EGYPT
EZEKIEL
GIRDLE
ASSYRIA
ISAIAH

