

# GPS

God's Plan of Salvation

## Bible Reading Plan July 2020

This month the GPS Reading Map will conclude our reading from the Old Testament; next month will pick up in the New! After more than half a year watching God work out the answer to sin (Gen 3) through the promises to Abraham (Gen 12) in His people, the Israelites we will be ready to see those promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior of the world. We haven't been able to read everything in the Old Testament but we will conclude our reading there with a taste of the prophets and the return from captivity in Ezra and Nehemiah. These are difficult times for the Jews and for God's promises. It doesn't seem like it would take much to sweep everything God has done off the page of history to be forgotten forever. We will see God's power and sovereignty simply doesn't allow that to happen. What a God we serve! Finishing with Malachi's look to the time of the New Testament we will then close the Old Testament and begin reading the Greatest Story Ever Told with the birth of Jesus. What a month of reading this will be!

### Week 1 - 2 Kings 23 24 25 Daniel 1 2



**2 Kings 23** continues the story of Josiah's reforms. He is an outstanding king who reminds us of what could have been if Judah had been faithful. **Verses 26-27** may sound unfair but reading the parallel account of Josiah's reforms in 2 Chronicles 34:32-33 reveals that Josiah forced the people to do right.

The reformation came because of his leadership, not because the people wanted to do right. Josiah is killed in a famous battle in 609 BC. **2 Kings 24** then shows, not surprisingly, the people returning to idolatry as soon as Josiah was gone. Despite the punishment of the Babylonians subjugating Judah they persisted in evildoing (verses 3-4, 9, 19), rebelling against Babylon and in believing Egypt would save them from Babylon (verse 7). The result was the enslavement of much of the population (verses 12-17) in 597 BC. 2 Kings 25 finishes the story of the kingdom of Judah. They rebelled again (against the express word of prophets like Jeremiah) and so in 586 BC the Babylonians arrived at Jerusalem determined to finally get this unruly little province under control. **2 Kings 25** records the end of the Jewish kingdom, capital and temple. Yet even as we wonder what happened to God's promises to the House of David, the chapter ends with a note of hope as Jehoiachin is given a place in captivity (verses 27-30). What will happen to God's people in captivity? The book of Daniel helps to answer that question. **Daniel 1** shows us what some of the young men taken in Nebuchadnezzar's first visit to Jerusalem (in 605 BC) were doing in Babylon: standing fast in faith for God. As we wonder if God has forgotten His people and His promises, **Daniel 2** shows us that God is at work in the kingdoms of men to establish a kingdom that will never end, the Kingdom of Christ. That kingdom will arrive, right on cue, during the time of the fourth empire (verses 40ff), the Roman Empire.



Daniel is one of the Bible's heroes, a true stellar man of God. Note the heavy emphasis in Daniel 2 on what God can and will do. Daniel has the opportunity to boost himself but instead credits God. How can this kind of humility help us be better disciples today?



The readings this week may sound somewhat gory and even depressing. *Don't shy away from reading them as a family!* Talk with your children about sin, and why God must punish it instead of just overlooking it. Discuss what it would be like to be Daniel, someone who was good during a time of evildoing, and how he suffered in captivity even though he was doing right. We must teach our children that being

a Christian doesn't exempt us from suffering, and that being lights in the world can be very difficult. More than anything, we must help our children understand the holiness and justice of God. The readings this week are ideal to assist us all in getting a better grasp of these fundamental concepts.

## Week 2 - Isaiah ☐ 11 ☐ 53 ☐ Joel 2 ☐ Jer 31 ☐ Amos 5



This week is Prophets Week. We will spend a little time sampling the messages of these great men of God who tried so desperately to turn Israel and Judah back to God while at the same time looking ahead to the glorious future that God would bring about through Jesus and His church. This week's readings are not in chronological order. They simply let us hear the voice of these great preachers of long ago. **Isaiah 11** provides an excellent place to see God's grand plan, not just for Israel, but all people. The Messiah (verses 1-5) shall bring peace to all who follow Him (verses 6-9) as all nations turn to Him (verses 10ff). The chapter ends with talk of a second exodus with the ten tribes coming home to God (verse 16). While not literal it does poetically depict the world turning to the Messiah which is what the Lord has intended from the beginning. **Isaiah 53** tells us more about the Messiah, in the famous Suffering Servant song. **Joel 2** is the text that Peter uses in the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2). It is a classic sermon, proclaiming impending and coming doom (verses 1-11), a call to repentance (verses 12-17), a time of blessing (verses 18-27) as the people must have been repenting, and then a glimpse of the time of the Messiah yet future when there would be an outpouring of revelation and awful judgment on those who do not choose to serve Him (verses 28-32). The language of judgment is used in the NT of the judgment upon Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. Peter preached from this text to warn of God's doom, resulting in people begging him to tell them how to "call on the name of the Lord" and be saved (verse 32). Acts 2:38 is his answer. **Jeremiah 31** is an incredible new covenant passage, looking forward to the better things that God would provide through Christ. Jeremiah is answering the question "Is God done with Judah now that they are in Babylonian captivity?" He tells the people of God there is hope for their future. The return from Babylon (the obvious application of Jeremiah's message) is a demonstration of the great act of redemption to come in the new covenant (verses 31-34). Note the emphasis on forgiveness at the end of verse 34. **Amos 5** gives us a little background into the sins of the Northern Kingdom and helps us see what matters to God. Amos highlights sins of social injustice and exploiting the poor (verses 7, 11, 12, 15), promises doom (verses 18-20, 25-27), rebukes fake religion (verses 21-23) and then summarizes what God wants from His people (verse 24).



Jeremiah 31:20 is a startling statement of God's love for His people. Despite all their evildoing, He still yearned for them and wanted them to do right. What a statement of God's steadfast love! How does that remake your thinking about God? What does Amos' message do to your thinking about how to treat your fellow man? Amos says our relationships with others directly affects our relationship with God. Do you get that?



Reading the prophets isn't easy with kids. The key this week is to get them to ask the questions the people were asking back then. Why is God punishing us if we are His special people? Is God done with us, and we'll just fade away into oblivion here in Babylon? How can God rescue His people from sin? You may wish to read choice segments of these prophet passages this week, but if you can focus your family on how God is speaking to the needs of those people and answering them with hope for a better future (and a call to repent) these messages can be meaningful.

## Week 3 - Ezra ☐ 1 ☐ 3 ☐ 6 Nehemiah ☐ 1 ☐ 2



Ezra returns us to the story of God's people. They are in captivity, their capital is in ruins, and the Temple has been burned to the ground. The situation is hopeless ... unless God does something! In **Ezra 1** He does, and the return from captivity begins (approximately 539 BC). Ezra 2 numbers and names these returnees. In **Ezra 3** they begin the work on the Temple, but it is halted for 16-17 years by opposition from various groups around Jerusalem (Ezra 4 summarizes those efforts). Ezra 5 finds the rebuilding work beginning anew, and it is completed in **Ezra 6**. Chronologically, the book of Esther occurs in Persia after Ezra 6. We now

turn to **Nehemiah 1**. There we find Jerusalem's walls are still broken down. **Nehemiah 2** tells of Nehemiah going to Jerusalem and rallying the people to rebuild. These events occurred around 445 BC.



We need to focus on the rebuilding of the Temple this week. **Ezra 3:12-13** tells us that the new Temple was no match for what Solomon had built. Further, it took longer to rebuild it, as the Jews were poor and militarily weak and so their neighbors could easily hamper their progress. Here's the point: what happens when we give our lives to sin? We may lose great and grand things (as Israel lost Solomon's wonderful Temple), find that what we finally rebuild is never as good, and that rebuilding is hard and difficult. God is at work in Ezra but it is clear God's people are paying a price for their disobedience!



Let's talk about going home this week. Many of our kids have no concept of living anywhere else but what is now their home. Talk about being taken to Babylon, away from your home and familiar surroundings. Some of these kids were born in captivity, and had only heard stories of the Promised Land. How excited would you be to finally go home? Would you want to help rebuild God's Temple? Make an effort to put your children in the story. Note again the opposition that God's people constantly faced. When we live right, the devil won't like it and will send someone to make life miserable for us. If we have read our Bibles, we will expect such!

#### Week 4 - Nehemiah 4 6 8 13 Malachi 4



Nehemiah gets everyone involved in the work of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls (Neh 3). That work comes under attack in **Nehemiah 4** but Nehemiah will not stop. **Nehemiah 6** records the completion of the work, in only 52 days! **Nehemiah 8** tells the story of the great water gate revival, as Ezra reads the law to the people and they vow to return to God completely and with a whole heart. **Nehemiah 13** closes the Old Testament era with disturbing news about a laxity with God's law already creeping back into the Jews. Nehemiah has been away (verse 6) but he returns and starts setting things right with a vengeance. **Malachi 4** is the last word in the Old Testament, warning of judgement to come (verse 1) but urging the people to remember the Law of God and watch for a coming prophet (verses 4-6). This is God's last word to His people for 400 years!



How is **Nehemiah 13** possible after all that Judah has gone through for their sin? Why do people habitually return to sin? Think about what contributed to Judah's failure here and how that speaks to our lives and tendencies today



**Nehemiah 8** is an excellent place to teach some lessons about worship. Point out the people's reverence for God's word (verse 3b). Note the emphasis on teaching so people could understand the Law (verse 8). Finally, note the joy that came when people heard God's word and obeyed it (verses 9-18). Talk about how we should act in the worship assembly when God's law is being read and taught. Can we be joyful today like they were in Nehemiah's day?