

Knowing God: As the Father (Week 2)

Devotional Series—January, 2010

DAY 8—MESOPOTAMIA: NOAH'S NAUGHTY NEIGHBORS

Read Genesis 6; Luke 17:26-27; briefly scan Genesis 7-9

The story of Noah is similar to other occasions when God spelled out his message through signs, wonders and miracles. The catastrophic event of the flood served to teach many things (severity of sin, God's power, etc.). God also revealed what he wanted in mankind when he chose Noah out of a generation that was so completely corrupt. But more than all of that, the story revealed God's fatherly heart about establishing a covenant with a remnant community in the midst of a fallen world.

What were the sins that grieved God? Do you stand out in the world like Noah did?

DAY 9—BABYLON: TEMPTERS TO THE EAST

Read Genesis 11:1-9; Jeremiah 25:1-13, 51:24-26.

For Further Reading: Jeremiah 50:1-4, 17-19, 51:49-58

Babylon represented pride, independence, self-glory, worldliness and temptations for Israel. God allowed Babylon to be a thorn for Israel, and to even conquer his people. At other times, God planned retribution for Babylon for the trouble they brought to Israel. When the people of Israel sought God as their father, Babylon was not a threat to them.

What does Babylon symbolize in the New Testament? Today? What is illustrated about God in a study of Babylon?

DAY 10—ISRAEL: CHILDREN OF THE ONLY GOD

Read Exodus 3:13-15; Isaiah 42:1-7

God's chosen people were constantly threatened by neighboring nations. Sometimes, Israel fought their neighbors; at other times, they showed mercy to aliens and taught them about God. In all, it is apparent that God wanted Gentile nations to envy his people so that those nations would turn to him.

Are there any examples in Scripture of a Gentile being held up in a positive way? What is illustrated in a study of Israel that indicates how God seeks to be the adoptive father of the Gentiles?

DAY 11—EGYPT & ASSYRIA: THE BULLY AND THE RIVAL

Read Ezekiel 29, 30:13; 2 Kings 17:24-41

The nations of Egypt and Assyria were southern and northern adversaries. Both nations would be a snare for the Jews, but for different reasons. For Israel, Assyria represented rivalry and Egypt depicted exploitation. God was able to use Israel's enemies for his purposes, and then later punish these nations. Though he frowned on such nations, he was able to envision some of the descendants from evil Assyria and oppressive Egypt coming into his fold. This fact should temper any view about how God was unreasonable in his treatment of certain nations.

What does this study reveal about God as a father to the people of Israel?

If you were a missionary to Egypt, how would you explain severe statements about that nation in a loving and helpful way?

DAY 12—THE EARTH'S KINGS: PAWNS OF THE VICTOR

Read Daniel 7

There have only been four world empires in which one nation ruled the majority of its neighboring nations. In chronological order, they are the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires. The span of these empires is from the sixth century BC to the late fifth century after Christ. God predicted the historical sequence of these kingdoms, and they all served his purposes.

Consider the good spiritual outcomes that have resulted from national events such as wars, power struggles and collapses of empires in our time. What are some?

If God predicts the big things (nation overtaking nation), what does that say about God's ability to maneuver the smaller details of our lives?

DAY 13—THE WORLD'S MOST ENDURING BOOK: THE BIBLE

Read Jeremiah 36

King Jehoiakim despised the law of God, so much so that he took a scribe's knife and sliced off pieces of a scroll received from Jeremiah and threw them into a firepot. As you know, that was not the end of the story. Jehoiakim's actions provoked a response from God. There have often been serious efforts to stamp out Judaism, eliminate the Bible and refute the existence of God. Each attempt failed.

What are some examples that are not so obvious in which people deny God's word?

DAY 14—HOPE FOR JUDAH: ISAIAH'S ASTONISHING PRECISION

Read Isaiah 7, 9, 52:13-53:11

God continued to deal with Israel by preparing it to be the place where he dwelled as their everlasting father (Isaiah 9:6). He even encouraged those who longed for deliverance by giving details of his imminent arrival. A copy of Isaiah in scroll form, measuring seventeen feet, was found intact among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. It was buried around the first century, no later than 70 AD, but possibly much earlier. It is one of many indicators that large numbers of people in Israel waited for the redeemer proclaimed by Isaiah.

If God was exact in his advance depiction of Christ's life and sufferings, what does that say about your life and sufferings? The answer is in the idea of purpose. Consider key events in your life that indirectly led to you becoming a Christian.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION—WEEK TWO

1. Was there anything refreshing that you learned about the fatherhood of God that stayed with you this week?
2. As a group, make a list of things that God does for his own people?
3. How important is it that you stand out from those around you? How does one make sure that they stand out?
4. After learning about how God used and viewed Israel's neighbors, how should you view your circumstances?
5. What are some truths in Scripture that you would like to ignore (like Jehoiakim did) if you could? Why?
6. What can be learned about fatherhood from the seven lessons?