

SESSION 7

A PROMISED MESSIAH

SESSION AIMS

To consider the judgement of a holy and just God in the face of people's disobedience, and the promise of hope to come because of God's mercy.

BIBLE REFERENCE

2 KINGS 15–25, EZRA, NEHEMIAH,
ISAIAH THROUGH TO MALACHI

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

What has been your most challenging moment? Ask if anyone would like to share this with the rest of the group. If you have a large group, it may work well to have this discussion in smaller groups. Make sure at least one of the leaders has a story to share.

WEEK 6 RECAP

Last week we covered hundreds of years of Israelite history! The big moment arrived when they entered the land promised to their forefather Abraham many hundreds of years previously. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel then settled into the land given to them. But it didn't take long for them to forget all that God had done for them and taught them. Judges were raised up to restore peace and eventually the people cried out for a king to come and rule them. Saul ruled, then King David and then Solomon. It was under Solomon's rule that the Temple was built in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle, but it was also because Solomon took his eyes from God and allowed the worship of foreign gods, that God took most of the land of Israel (the northern kingdom of Israel) from Solomon's line. His son was left with the Southern Kingdom of Judah to fulfil the promises of God to David that a king would come from his family.

And so, as we heard last week, many kings of both Israel and Judah were raised up over the next few hundred years from 990BC. Elijah and Elisha were prophets during this time, bringing the Word of God to the people. Some kings followed God and "did what was right in his eyes" but most "did evil in the eyes of the Lord."

WHAT ARE WE COVERING THIS WEEK?

Today we're going to cover about 400 years' worth of history! There are 16 prophets whose writings and prophecies make up about a third of the Old Testament, so let's get going!

Being a prophet wasn't an easy task.

Ask the group: Q. What do you think was the role of a prophet in Bible times? We often think of prophets as people who tell the future. But prophets are people who hear from God and share it, whether past, present or future! Their main role was to call God's people back to him. Today, God can speak to all of us through the Bible and his Spirit but before we had the Bible and before Jesus came, God spoke through just a few chosen people.

We've seen the challenges Moses faced as God's messenger. The people didn't believe him, they ignored him, and they disobeyed God's word. But Moses knew that God wanted to rescue his people and uphold his covenant with them, and so he persevered. As we read the Old Testament, it's clear that the Israelites rarely listen to God's warnings through his prophets. Kings rose and kings fell, generations came and went, prophets brought the message of God's holiness and justice — the message of judgement and destruction if they didn't turn from their evil ways and turn back to God — and yet they still didn't listen. What is going to happen next? How will God respond?

WATCH THE EPISODE

GROUP WORK

Discuss: What do you think is the main message of the prophets? Can you spot the themes?

Judgement is on its way God warns because you haven't followed me and obeyed my commands. Destruction comes to the opponents of God's warnings when the people don't repent.

There is hope for those who listen and obey. The Saviour is on his way! Eternal life is promised.

Even though these prophets lived in different places and hundreds of years apart, they all basically have the same message, because all people have the same problem: we disobey God. So, the message was: "You've sinned. Now you're in trouble. Repent, turn from your sins, and turn back to God. And there is hope. A rescuer is coming."

Why did the people oppose God's message through the prophets? What does it look like to oppose God today?

They didn't believe what they heard, and they didn't want to believe what they heard. They didn't listen and obey.

We don't tend to respond well to a message of doom. Is it ever a good thing to tell the hard truth and to deliver a message of judgement? Is it a problem to not share the hard truth about God's judgement and only ever speak of God's love? Why? Why not?

PRAY TO CLOSE