A Very Simple Survey of the Old Testament

Block #8 — Lessons 57–64

Block #8 · Lessons 57–64 | Keith R. Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Block

Block #8 (Lessons 57–64) continues to follow the next 8 lessons in the Bible in Felt outline without alteration. Doctrinally, it covers Israel under the first three installments of the fifth course of punishment, and introduces the arrival of the fourth instalment — the days of the Messiah, as set forth in the Gospel accounts. The fifth course would be composed of 5 installments; the Babylonian captivity of Daniel's day was only the beginning. The fifth and final instalment hasn't come to pass yet: God has graciously interrupted His program with Israel and brought in this present 'dispensation of Gentile grace'. The program of God in the Gospel accounts is not what God is doing today; it is still His program with Israel. The great dispensational change comes in when the Lord Jesus Christ raises up Paul as a new apostle (Acts 9). Our doctrine today is found in the epistles of Paul — the apostle of us Gentiles.

www.enjoythebible.org

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L57	Delivered from the Fiery Furnace — Daniel 3
L58	Daniel in the Lions' Den — Daniel 6
L59	Brave Queen Esther — Esther 1–4
L60	God Saves His People — Esther 5–9
L61	An Angel Visits Zacharias — Luke 1
L62	The Birth of Jesus — Luke 1–2
L63	Visit of the Shepherds — Luke 2:8–38
L64	A Star Leads the Wise Men to Jesus — Matt. 2:1–12

Lesson Summaries

L57

Delivered from the Fiery Furnace *Daniel 3 • The first revelation of the fifth course (Daniel 2), and God's deliverance of His faithful servants (Daniel 3)*

Part One — The Dream of the Great Image (Daniel 2)

- This lesson is divided into two parts so that both Daniel 2 and 3 can be dealt with. Through Daniel God planned on giving Israel the understanding of just how long the fifth course would last — through five very special revelations.
- Nebuchadnezzar could not remember the dream, yet demanded that his wise men tell him both what the dream was and its interpretation. Daniel and his three companions prayed unto the LORD; that night God revealed it to Daniel.
- The king had seen a great image made up of different materials. A special stone smashed into the image in its feet; the wind blew it away like dust, and the stone grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.
- The image stood for five great Gentile empires in dominance over God's people until the end of the fifth course: Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon the head of gold, then silver breast and arms, brass belly and thighs, iron legs, and feet part iron and part clay.
- There would be no sixth or seventh: in the days of the kings of that fifth empire God would establish His own kingdom on this earth and give it to His people. Five Gentile empires would afflict Israel — but it would end.

Part Two — The Golden Image (Daniel 3)

- Designated the "head of gold", Nebuchadnezzar began to think even more greatly about himself. He "made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits" (3:1) — around 90 feet tall — undoubtedly designed to represent himself.
- Its dedication involved worshipping the image under penalty of death in the burning fiery furnace. Everyone complied except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. To them the king disdainfully added, "and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15).
- They knew their God was able to deliver them, if He wanted to; but even if not, they would obey God instead of the king — valuing obeying God more than their own personal welfare, even if it meant losing their lives.
- In a furnace seven times hotter than normal, the king saw four men walking about in the midst of the fire, unhurt; the fourth had the appearance of "the Son of God," or an angel. He called them "ye servants of the most high God".
- In the final instalment — commonly called the tribulation period, yet to come — the "Anti-Christ," or "man of sin," will have an image made unto himself and demand it be worshipped. God's past deliverance of His faithful servants will greatly encourage the faithful then.

L58

Daniel in the Lions' Den *Daniel 6 • Daniel's deliverance, and a survey of the remainder of the book of Daniel*

Part One — Daniel 6

- The fiery furnace deliverance was also a testimony for the future: in the "day of the LORD" the faithful remnant of Israel will be persecuted, and Hebrews 11 will direct them to those who "Quenched the violence of fire" and "stopped the mouths of lions."
- Under Darius the Mede, Daniel "was preferred above the presidents and princes" (6:3). Finding no fault, the jealous rulers used his faithfulness to "the

law of his God": a royal statute that for thirty days no one could ask any God or man for anything.

- Daniel, "his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem," still "kneeled upon his knees three times a day" (6:10). He knew that the thing of greater value was obeying God, and he left the outcome with God.
- Darius "was sore displeased with himself" but could not deliver Daniel, not fully persuaded God would. Daniel knew without a doubt: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths" (6:22); he was unhurt "because he believed in his God" (6:23).
- Darius decreed that men "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (6:26) — one of the factors behind the coming of the "wise men from the east" (Matthew 2): Persians, court astronomers, who had learned from what God set forth through His prophet Daniel.

Part Two — The Five Revelations of Daniel

- God gave Daniel five distinct revelations: the first in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chapter 2), then chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10–12, each building on the others. From the first, Israel could know the Babylonian captivity was only the first instalment; four other installments would follow.
- Chapter 7: four great beasts arose out of the sea. On the fourth a "little horn" came up and spoke great things; God destroyed this last terrible beast, and "*one* like the Son of man" was given the rulership of the earth.
- Chapter 8 names the empires: the Medo-Persian would follow Babylon, then the Grecian; the fourth would contain a four-fold breakup of the former Grecian empire; and the fifth and final empire would be headed up by that "little horn".
- Chapter 9: beyond Jeremiah's 70 years, the remaining installments would require "seventy sevens" or another 490 years — the Messiah "cut off" after 483, then the last 7 years of that last and terrible prince; then God would "bring in everlasting righteousness".
- The last 7 years were ready to click in when Stephen was stoned. But God "did something completely unexpected and not prophesied about": the Lord raised up Paul, and God stopped Israel's time-schedule. Those last 7 years await the end of this present "mystery" dispensation.

L59

Brave Queen Esther *Esther 1–4 • The fifth course continued, as God readied Himself to go silent to His people*

The Medo-Persian Empire

- The Babylonian suffering was only the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles." The next empire was the Medo-Persian, just as God had foretold Daniel. Though the Jews were allowed to go back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, they still suffered many things.
- Ezra and Nehemiah focus on those back in the land; Esther on the Jews still scattered, just before God went silent. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were His final prophets before almost 400 years of silence; Esther ends the historical record until the Gospel accounts.
- God's name, along with "LORD," does not appear in Esther. With God readying Himself to go silent, He testifies to this and prepares for that time by not making reference to Himself at all.

Vashti and Esther (chapters 1–2)

- The empire ruled “from India even unto Ethiopia” (1:1), and Israel was scattered throughout it. When the king, “merry with wine” (1:10), commanded that queen Vashti be brought, she refused, and a royal commandment deposed her.
- Esther, a Jew, was brought up by a relative named Mordecai, who took her “for his own daughter” (2:7). Mordecai, like Daniel, had been carried away captive by the Babylonians, and was still living when the second instalment was underway.
- Knowing the fifth course had afflictions in store for the Jews, Mordecai charged Esther not to declare who she was. The king “loved Esther above all the women” (2:17) and made her queen. Mordecai exposed a plot against the king, but went unrecognized.

Haman the Agagite (chapters 3–4)

- Haman was “the son of Hammedatha the Agagite” (3:1) — an Amalekite, of the first of the nations Satan used to oppose Israel after Egypt. God had said He would “utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven”, so Mordecai would not bow.
- Haman set his mind upon destroying all the Jews — “the Jews’ enemy” (3:10) — but he was only Satan’s tool. God’s protective care would still not allow His nation to be destroyed; this He provided for by having Esther installed as queen.
- Uncalled for, going in to the king meant death unless he held out his golden sceptre. But was she come to the kingdom “for *such* a time as this?” (4:14). After three days of fasting she would go in: “if I perish, I perish” (4:16).

L60

God Saves His People *Esther 5–9 • God would not forsake His people, even when the fifth course called for Him to go silent*

Esther Before the King (chapter 5)

- Esther came in her royal apparel — the symbol of the king’s own former acceptance of her — and “she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre” (5:2).
- This parallel applies to Israel according to God’s program: in the day when God’s “Jehovah-ness” and grace has given her full acceptance, Israel will function as His royal bride. Her only hope: her King making her acceptable unto Himself by His own love and grace.
- We saved Gentiles can also appreciate it: through the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ God has made us acceptable, “accepted in the beloved”. That was a “mystery” and “hid in God” in times past, so Esther’s situation is not a type of us.
- The king would grant “to the half of the kingdom” (5:3), but Esther proposed a banquet, then one more. Just as God will take Satan in his own craftiness in the last days, so Esther was taking Haman in his own craftiness and pride.
- Seeing Mordecai still refusing to reverence him, Haman had gallows built. Yet God was not forsaking His people, as He would not throughout the 400 years of silence, nor in the final instalment, when Satan through the “man of sin” would endeavor to eliminate Israel.

Haman’s Destruction (chapters 6–9)

- “On that night could not the king sleep” (6:1) — not mere coincidence; God worked “behind the scenes”. Learning that nothing had been done to reward

Mordecai, the king had Haman himself honor Mordecai.

- Esther exposed Haman's plot (7:1–6), and he was hung on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. So would the LORD take Satan in his own craftiness — twice: once with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and once more yet to come.
- Haman's plot was still not overcome, so Esther further petitioned the king. Mordecai wrote the royal order granting the Jews the right to defend themselves against their enemies, and this they did (chapter 9).
- What Israel experienced in Esther's day will serve as a testimony to them in the last days of the fifth course, when they face their "adversary and enemy" to the extreme and look for the LORD's complete and final destruction of him.

L61

An Angel Visits Zacharias *Luke 1 • The Gospel accounts are the continuation of God's program with Israel after the 400 year time of silence*

The 400 Year Time of Silence

- Not long after Esther, God brought in a great time of silence — no prophets or angelic visitations. The fifth course called for it. It lasted from the end of Malachi's days until He raised up John the Baptist: about 400 years.
- We know what to think of the books of the Apocrypha, written during that time and claimed to be the word of God: since God said He would be silent, anyone setting things forth as the word of God can be denounced as false.
- The blank page between Malachi and Matthew is not a page of division; by its 'blank-ness' it represents the 400 year silence. Publishers often print "The New Testament" there, making people think God's new program with us today begins with Matthew.
- Paul's "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15) divides between the revelation of the mystery revealed to Paul — his epistles, for this present dispensation of Gentile grace — and the rest of God's word, pertaining to God's program with Israel.

The Special Messenger

- Through Malachi God told Israel to expect His "messenger" (Malachi 3:1), and through Isaiah the "voice" in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3), who would end the silence and announce the coming of Christ. We know from the Gospels he was John the Baptist.
- Zacharias and Elisabeth "were both righteous before God" (1:6) but had no child. In the temple the angel Gabriel appeared, and Zacharias "was troubled, and fear fell upon him" (1:12): no such thing had happened in Israel for such a very long time.
- Their son would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17) — just what Isaiah and Malachi had said of the "voice" and the special "messenger". He would be "the prophet of the Highest" (1:76); there had been no prophet since Malachi.
- For his unbelief Zacharias was made dumb until John was born. When Elisabeth conceived, God was readying Himself to end the 400 year time of silence, and preparing to bring His program with His nation into its final stages.

Zacharias' Prophecy

- Filled with the Holy Ghost, Zacharias declared that God "hath visited and redeemed his people" — the climactic stage in Israel's program getting ready

to dawn, spoken “by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began” (1:70).

- But what God revealed to Paul was completely different: “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25). This dispensation of Gentile grace is certainly not the issue back at this time.

L62

The Birth of Jesus *Luke 1–2 • God Himself becoming one of them, in the line of David, to be everything Israel needs Him to be*

Israel’s Only Hope

- Israel’s only hope was for God Himself to make them His kingdom of priests and holy nation. Instead they entered into a Law contract, which called for God to give them just what their works deserved, learning their need of God’s grace the hard way.
- The five courses of Leviticus 26 came upon Israel after the days of Joshua; Judges through Esther described their arrival up to the beginning installments of the fifth. In the Gospel accounts the final installments of that fifth course came upon the nation.
- John the Baptist was the announcer of the Messiah and the first herald of the “gospel of the kingdom”. To deliver Israel, God would become one of them: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help” (Hosea 13:9).

IMMANUEL

- Isaiah foretold a virgin’s son, “and shall call his name Immanuel” (7:14), and “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given” (9:6). He would be IMMANUEL — ‘God with us’ — God Himself come unto them in the line of David.
- The Messiah — ‘Anointed One’ — would be Israel’s God, Adonai Jehovah, becoming one of them in David’s line to be their Redeemer, King, and the rest of what they needed God to be for them.

Gabriel, Mary, and Joseph

- Six months later Gabriel was sent to a virgin of David’s line espoused to Joseph, also of David’s line: “thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (1:31); “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee” (1:35).
- ‘Jesus’ means ‘Jehovah the Saviour’, and ‘Christ’ refers to the anointed one promised in the Davidic covenant. To Joseph the angel said, “thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).
- Through Micah God told the very city — Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). By a decree of Caesar Augustus Joseph and Mary went there, and she “laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).
- With this God had taken upon Himself the flesh of David. The final two installments of the fifth course would soon be able to come to pass, in which would transpire God’s functioning for Israel as their Redeemer, Deliverer, Avenger, King, and Blesser.

L63

Visit of the Shepherds *Luke 2:8–38 • God’s alerting testimonies to Israel through the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna*

- The Lord's ministry would not begin until He was "about thirty years of age" and was manifested to Israel through John the Baptist (Luke 3). For this reason God records very little about the Lord's growing up.
- At His birth God honored a group of shepherds, Simeon, and Anna; about two years later, Gentile "wise men". Not widespread public announcements, these were enough to alert a Jew who knew his Bible, and ought to have driven Israel to the Scriptures.

The Shepherds

- Shepherds "keeping watch over their flock by night" (2:8) were the first honored with the news, and were "sore afraid": God had been silent about 400 years, and the last angelic visitations to Israel were with the judgments that began the fifth course.
- Gabriel's appearance was not for judgment: his "good tidings of great joy" (2:10) were that their Christ was born, fulfilling God's covenant with David, as Isaiah 9:6–7 and Micah 5:2 had said; good tidings to "all people" when salvation went out through saved Israel.
- The angels' 'peace on earth' (2:14) would not come at that time: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke 12:51). It comes only after the Lord's day of judgment and His kingdom.
- The shepherds found the babe and made it known; "all they that heard *it* wondered" (2:18) — they didn't know what to make of it. They needed to check it out with the Scriptures; the opportunity was there, and they had been put on alert.

Simeon and Anna in the Temple

- Jesus' circumcision, Mary's purification, the presentation in the temple, and the sacrifice testify that the Law is still in effect; Jesus was "made under the law" (Galatians 4). The present dispensation, with us not under the law, is not the program of the Gospel accounts.
- Simeon, "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel" (2:25), blessed God in the temple: "mine eyes have seen thy salvation" — "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" — in fulfillment of Isaiah 42 and 49.
- Anna, a prophetess "of a great age" (2:36), "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (2:38). Where the Law's 'two, or three witnesses' ought to mean the most, God alerted His people: Israel's long awaited redemption was nigh.

L64

A Star Leads the Wise Men to Jesus *Matt. 2:1–12 • The final alerting testimony, brought before the leaders of Israel*

- This final alerting testimony came through Gentiles who had been paying attention to God's program with Israel, and God had it come before the religious leaders of Israel, so that they would have to deal with it.

Tradition vs. What Matthew 2 Says

- Nativity scenes picture the wise men with the shepherds on the night of His birth, but they came about two years later: Herod "enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared" (2:7) and slew the children "from two years old and under" (2:16).
- In Luke 2 He is a "babe"; in Matthew 2 a "young child", in a "house" and not a

"manger". Tradition says three wise men because of the three gifts, but the number is not told — in all probability there were more than three.

- Tradition errs on the date too: the dating factors given by Luke point to the last days of September; December 25 has to do with the time of the Holy Ghost coming upon Mary for the conception of Jesus.

Who the Wise Men Were

- They were Gentiles — Chaldean/Persian wise men, or astronomers. Through Nebuchadnezzar's influence his wise men had been ordered to honor Daniel's God; those who came to Jerusalem were the followers of what had begun in Daniel's days.
- God honored their looking for "Messiah the Prince" with a sign in the heavens, "his star in the east" (2:2), making them aware of just when He was born. Teaching them involved the Messiah as the star out of Jacob, from Balaam's day.

The Response in Jerusalem

- They expected all Jerusalem rejoicing, but did not find it. "When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (2:3): they preferred Herod reigning over them — Satan's policy of evil to God's program for them.
- Herod "demanded of them where Christ should be born" (2:4). The chief priests and scribes correctly quoted Micah 5:2 — but this appears to be all they did with it. Israel's leaders were conspicuously silent, testifying all the more to their poor spiritual condition.
- Herod's plot was part of Satan's attempts to keep God from utilizing Israel: Christ had come to be Israel's Redeemer, Deliverer, Avenger, King and Blesser. God foiled it by warning the wise men in a dream, and told Joseph to "flee into Egypt".
- Herod's anger at being "mocked of the wise men" was as much Satan's own. The sufferings of the "times of the Gentiles" continued; the nation's comfort would only be found in their Messiah — now born, though they were generally ignorant of it.

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

The Fifth Course of Punishment — Five Installments

The Babylonian captivity was only the first instalment; four other installments would follow. Four of the five have run their course: this Block looks at the remainder of the first (Daniel's day), the second (Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah), notes the third, and the events which brought in the fourth — the births of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. The fifth and final instalment — the time during which God would completely, and for the last time, judge His nation — awaits the resumption of God's program with Israel after this present 'mystery dispensation' is over. There would be five Gentile empires in all: Babylon, then the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, a four-fold breakup of the former Grecian empire, and a fifth headed up by that "little horn" (Lesson 58).

"Seventy Sevens" — Stopped Short of the Last 7 Years

In Daniel 9 the exact time-schedule is given: another 490 years. Of these, 483 were fulfilled when, as the Gospel accounts record, the Messiah was "cut off." Instead of bringing in those last 7 years, God did something not prophesied about: the Lord Jesus Christ raised up Paul and sent him to us Gentiles with the message about God holding back His day of wrath and bringing in a dispensation of His grace. In Keith's words: "When God did this He stopped Israel's time-schedule and temporarily set aside His program and dealings with them." Those last 7 years will take place after God ends this present "mystery" dispensation; the fifth revelation (Daniel 10–12) gives graphic information about them.

The 400 Year Time of Silence

God went silent for almost 400 years as part of Israel's chastisement under the fifth course. In Esther He prepares for that time by not making reference to Himself — yet His protective care would not allow His nation to be destroyed. When Elisabeth conceived, just as Gabriel had said, God was readying Himself to end the silence (Lesson 61). God resumes speaking to Israel when He raises up John the Baptist: the silence of God was "soon to be broken by the crying of the 'voice in the wilderness.'" (Lesson 64).

The Gospel Accounts — Still God's Program with Israel

Everything the Lord says, does, promises, instructs, commands, and offers in the Gospel accounts pertains to God's program with Israel; this present dispensation was not brought in until He raised up Paul as a brand new apostle (Acts 9). Zacharias spoke of what God had said "by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began"; what God revealed to Paul was the mystery, "kept secret since the world began". A main contributing factor to misusing the Gospel accounts is that so few Christians understand what God was doing in the Old Testament; understanding Genesis through Malachi, they would see God's program with Israel continuing in the Gospels.

Esther — A Parallel, Not a Type of Us

Esther's acceptance with the king applies to Israel according to God's program; we in this dispensation of grace can likewise appreciate it. But because God's dealings with us were a "mystery" and "hid in God" in times past, Esther's situation is not a type of us.

Key Scripture References

Exodus 17	Amalek — God would "utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven"
Esther 4:14–16	Mordecai's "for *such* a time as this?" and Esther's "if I perish, I perish"
Esther 5:2–3	Esther's acceptance with the king — a parallel for Israel, not a type of us
Isaiah 9:6–7	"unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" — fulfilled in Bethlehem
Isaiah 40:1–3	The "voice" in the wilderness — the special messenger, John the Baptist

Daniel 2:31–45	The great image: five great Gentile empires until the end of the fifth course
Daniel 3	The golden image and the fiery furnace — repeated in the final instalment
Daniel 6:25–27	Darius' decree — one of the factors behind the coming of the wise men
Daniel 8	The empires named: Medo-Persia, Greece, a four-fold breakup, and the "little horn"
Daniel 9:24–27	"seventy sevens" — another 490 years; the last 7 not yet
Hosea 13:9	"but in me *is* thine help" — God Himself would help Israel
Micah 5:2	Bethlehem — the city which would bring forth the Messiah
Malachi 3:1	"Behold, I will send my messenger" — the announcer of their Messiah
Matthew 2:1–12	The wise men — the final alerting testimony; "all Jerusalem" troubled
Luke 1:67–79	Zacharias' prophecy — what God spoke "by the mouth of his holy prophets"
Luke 2:8–14	"good tidings of great joy"; peace on earth only after the Lord's day of judgment
Luke 2:25–32, 36–38	Simeon and Anna — testimony in the temple to Israel's redemption
Romans 16:25	The mystery "kept secret since the world began" — revealed to Paul
II Timothy 2:15	"rightly dividing the word of truth" — Paul's epistles vs. the rest of God's word
Hebrews 11:32–34	Israel's saints in the "day of the LORD" directed to the three and to Daniel