



Digging Deeper Answers to Questions

Jan/Feb 2023 Lamplighter

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It's been a few months since we offered a "Digging Deeper" section in the *Lamplighter*. Given that we have just finished our 44-episode series on "Jesus in the Old Testament" on our *Christ in Prophecy* television program, it seems fitting to revisit this feature.

The questions below focus on the latter portion of the Old Testament...

- 1) **T/F The Bible affirms that the Signs of Nature are difficult to observe.**
- 2) **What is a metanarrative and why is that word important to understanding the Old Testament?**
- 3) **Why are some prophetic books in the Old Testament referred to as "Minor Prophets"?**
- 4) **What direction did Jonah go when he was running from God's calling? Where did he go when he finally submitted and obeyed?**
→ **Bonus: What is the "Sign of Jonah"?**
- 5) **Nahum says that God is both jealous, avenging, and wrathful, but also slow to anger and a stronghold for those seeking refuge. Are those descriptions contradictory?**
- 6) **What did the LORD tell Amos would cause people to stagger from sea to sea and from north to the east?**
- 7) **T/F Ezekiel foretold that God would regather the Jewish people into their own land following their repentance and based on their merit.**

8) Which nations of the earth will the Lord bring to the valley of Jehoshaphat in order to judge them?

9) Where does Zechariah say the LORD will dwell, and what will that place be called?

10) What did Daniel do when he discerned that the time prophesied for the exile to be over was drawing near?



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Dig into God's Prophetic Word as you watch our weekly television program, *Christ in Prophecy!*

The following answers address the “Digging Deeper” questions posed in our January/February 2023 *Lamplighter*. Much more information regarding these and other prophetic topics can be found throughout the Lamb & Lion Ministries website: christinprophecy.org.

If you have additional questions or would like to engage in an online dialogue, contact our Internet Evangelist, Nathan Jones, at webminister@lamblion.com.

Question 1) T/F The Bible affirms that the Signs of Nature are difficult to observe.

False. The Bible asserts that the signs of nature are the most obvious signs. Explaining why “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” Paul said emphatically that “what is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since His

creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made” (Romans 1:18-19). Given that truth, the unrighteous are “without excuse.”

Stated another way, anyone who has gazed up at the stars, walked in a quiet forest, watched a sunrise or sunset, peered out from a lofty mountain, or held a newborn baby has *felt* a sense of awe at what God has made. Christians understand that sentiment is a reflection of our rightful attitude toward worshipping our Creator. Scoffers dismiss such attitudes and eventually stifle both the worship and the awe.

Paul spoke to that progression as well. In the end, when a person refuses to honor God or give Him thanks, their thinking becomes futile, and their heart grows dark. “Professing to be wise, they become fools” (Romans 1:22).

One thing to keep in mind: the wrath of God does not immediately fall upon those who reject Him or engage in unrighteousness. If it did, we would all be without hope, because it would have rightfully fallen on all of us before we trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Since the Flood, it has not fallen upon the wicked world in a global sense. Instead, God is exercising patience (or what we might call long-suffering)—“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

As some point, His patience will be exhausted and His wrath will be unleashed in righteous indignation. He will be a holy terror to those who have not embraced Jesus as their Blessed Hope.

Question 2) What is a metanarrative and why is that word important to understanding the Old Testament?

A metanarrative is an overarching structure that gives meaning to individual stories or experiences. The evangelical website **gotquestions.org** offers valuable insight when it describes a metanarrative as a “grand narrative [or an] overarching story or storyline that gives context, meaning, and purpose to all of life.” Sounds like an apt description of the entirety of God’s Word.

The problem with too many Sunday School presentations of “Bible stories” is that they are presented in isolation, with no cohesive context to understand the larger picture. As such, Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, and many more individual stories stand on their own.

Already Gone—Why Your Kids Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It, by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, documents the sad result of such disjointed teaching. Children exposed

to a multitude of Bible stories with no overarching understanding of how they fit into God's grand story (pointing to Jesus Christ and the Gospel) tend to fall away from the faith as they grow out of childhood. Tragically, young people who were faithfully brought to church but taught in this manner are *less likely* to identify as Christians in their 20s and 30s than their peers who did not hear the Gospel until college. In other words, kids exposed to isolated stories relegate them to the realm of fairy tales that have no bearing on their lives and are essentially inoculated against the faith by parents and teachers who didn't know better. Even before they succumb to indoctrination at liberal colleges, they were "already gone" from the Christian faith by their mid-teens.

The Bible was not meant to be presented in this manner. Instead, it was meant to be taught and studied in its entirety—from Creation to Revelation. And, as gotquestions.org notes,

The Bible clearly teaches the existence of metanarrative. Paul writes, "[God] made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" ([Ephesians 1:9–10](#)). This passage speaks of a divine will, a purpose, a timetable, a fulfillment, and a unity. The Incarnation of Christ occurred "when the set time had fully come" ([Galatians 4:4](#)), again suggesting an overarching plan, a metanarrative. The entire book of Hebrews traces themes begun in the Old Testament to their fulfillment in Christ.

Repeatedly challenged by the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus answered one of their questions this way: "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures not the power of God... have you not read what was spoken to you by God..." ([Matthew 22:29-32](#)). He was referring specifically in that case to God's ordination of marriage, but the principle applies to all of God's Word.

To quote Peter, we would "do well to pay attention" to what God has given us ([2 Peter 1:19](#)).

Question 3) Why are some prophetic books in the Old Testament referred to as "Minor Prophets"?

Of the 17 books of prophecy in the Old Testament, 5 are considered "Major Prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel), while 12 are considered "Minor Prophets" (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

The distinction is generically made because the Minor Prophet books are shorter than the Major Prophet books. But there is a sense in which this is an arbitrary distinction. Daniel

only has 12 chapters, while Hosea and Zechariah have 14 each. Lamentations only has 5. And, although Daniel contains more verses and words than Hosea and Zechariah, both of them are longer by that count than Lamentations.

Another explanation is that the Major Prophets were written by men who served as prophets over a longer period of time or in a more significant manner. Even then, the breadth and impact of several of the Minor Prophets would suggest that their message is anything but minor in significance.

In the end, that is the bottom line for the Major and Minor Prophets. They all communicated what God commanded them to say. And, their prophecies are trustworthy and true—whether they have been fulfilled already or are awaiting fulfillment in the fulness of time.

This raises an important point for those of us who honor the Word of God. There is a misguided attitude that some parts of the Bible are more important (or applicable to our lives) than others. Some Christians will say, “well, I’m a New Testament Christian,” as if to suggest that the Old Testament has no relevance any longer. Others prioritize the “red letters,” as if the recorded words of Jesus are more significant than the rest of God’s Word inspired by the Holy Spirit (including many direct utterances from God contained throughout the Bible).

So, anyone who wants to understand God’s metanarrative—His overarching plan and story—must revere the entire Word of God. And, anyone who hope to gain insight to Bible prophecy must study all the prophets. From Amos to Zephaniah, they all communicate what God wants us to know.

Question 4) What direction did Jonah go when he was running from God’s calling? Where did he go when he finally submitted and obeyed?

Jonah’s life is a living parable. He was living a normal life endeavoring to serve the Lord in a normal way. But when God called him to a special task far outside his comfort zone, he refused.

As Jonah ran from God, his trajectory took him down, down, down. He went down to Joppa, down to a ship, and down into the hold to sleep. When a storm arose he was cast down into the sea, went down the gullet of a great fish, and was carried down to the depths of the sea (Jonah 1).

Only then—when Jonah had come to the end of himself—did he cry out to the LORD in his distress “from the depth of Sheol” (Jonah 2:2). God could have ignored Jonah’s prayer and simply found a more compliant prophet to fulfill His will. But God was gracious to Jonah and delivered him from an ignoble and watery grave.

Tellingly, Jonah's progression from that point was steadily up. He was vomited up onto dry land and went up to Nineveh. Even as He obeyed God, however, his heart was not right.

Jonah delivered the message God commanded. His "seeker-sensitive" message to the people of Nineveh was: "Y'all are gonna die." The Bible phrases it this way: "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). But when the people repented and God relented, Jonah was angry.

The man who had pleaded for mercy and a second chance was outraged that God would offer that same grace to the Ninevites. His anger was aroused again when a little worm—appointed by God to attack the plant God raised up to shade Jonah—did as God ordained. You might say Jonah was a slow learner.

How many of us justify our attitudes because we think God is satisfied with our grudging obedience?

→ **Bonus: What is the "Sign of Jonah"?**

Matthew and Luke record that Jesus responded to the scribes and teachers demanding a sign by saying, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39 and 16:4, Luke 11:29).

One aspect of Jonah's experience represented a prophetic type of Jesus' demise. The Lord explained the metaphor himself: "...for just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Skeptics scoff at the account of a man living for three days and three nights in the belly of a fish or a whale or what the NASB calls a "sea monster"—just as they scoff at the impossibility of a man lying dead in the grave for three days and three nights and then emerging to live again. But the Word of God presents both accounts as factually true and testified by numerous eyewitnesses.

Clearly, Jonah was not a very laudable personal prophetic type of the Messiah. He was reluctantly obedient whereas Jesus always heeded the will of the Father. As with Joseph or Moses or David or any other mere mortal, prophetic types only offer foreshadows of Christ. In each case, we have to be careful not to paint with too broad a brush. Instead, we must focus on the aspect of their character or life experience that did point to the coming Son of Man.

In this case, Luke explains that Jonah's very presence became a testimony to the Ninevites. We can assume that his skin was bleached (as others swallowed by sea creatures) and that word of his miraculous deliverance from death is what made him a *physical* "sign to the Ninevites"—just as Jesus became a sign to the generation that rejected Him (Luke 11:30). That truth was the crux of Paul's message (1 Corinthians

15:3-8). As he wrote to the church in Corinth, “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:13-19). “But now Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

At Lamb & Lion Ministries, we believe that Jesus Christ was literally in the grave for three days and three nights—meaning that He was not crucified on Friday afternoon and raised again Saturday night. Exploring that implication requires much more space, but extensive articles can be found at the Christinprophecy.org website.

Question 5) Nahum says that God is both jealous, avenging, and wrathful, but also slow to anger and a stronghold for those seeking refuge. Are those descriptions contradictory?

Not in the least—unless our concept of God is skewed or misguided.

The Bible is clear that God’s holy attributes include unfathomable mercy and righteous indignation. He is gracious and loving but also virtuously jealous—meaning that He showers His people with lovingkindness, but He will not share His glory with another so-called god—or any other usurper. That is why idolatry is such an offense to Him.

There are two reasons it is hard for human beings to reconcile the character of God. One is due to our own moral limitations. Another is due to our own spiritual misguidedness.

In one sense, it is hard to reconcile God’s mercy and His wrath, His grace and His jealousy. That is because it is impossible for any of us to manifest those attributes in perfect righteousness. I may be provoked to indignation, but I often cannot keep my anger from bleeding over into unrighteous thoughts or acts. Similarly, jealousy might be appropriate in certain situations, but our jealousy gives way to covetousness or centers on the perceived insults and slights inflicted on our person. Since we are no more special than any other person, we have a very limited claim on righteous jealousy. But God, being God, has every right to receive glory and honor and worship.

The other reason people recoil at the full character of God described in Scripture is because they prefer to worship a god of their own making. Like a finicky eater choosing from a buffet, they pick out God’s attributes that are to their liking—and reject the ones they find distasteful. We’ve all heard someone say, “My god would never...” and then express disgust at something God has clearly done in the past. (My use of an un-capitalized “god” the last sentence is intentional, because anyone who says “My god would never...” and then contradicts the documented nature and personality of the true and living God is worshipping a false god.)

A nuanced version of this spiritual myopia is the suggestion that God may have been wrathful in the Old Testament, but He reformed His interaction with humanity beginning in the New Testament and now has forsworn wrath altogether. That idea is a lie from hell that is ensnaring millions.

Scripture says clearly that God is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He did not change between the Old and New Testament because God does not change (Malachi 3:6).

This truth is demonstrated in the Old Testament by His determination to show grace to the wicked city of Nineveh. Jonah was extremely displeased by God’s mercy, complaining, “I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity” (Jonah 4:2). Yet, in the New Testament we are told that God warned the church at Thyatira that if the woman Jezebel did not repent of her immorality, He would “throw her on a bed of sickness and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation,” and that He would “kill her children with pestilence” (Revelation 2:22-23).

Clearly, God’s ways are above our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), and His ability to balance attributes that cannot coexist in us perfectly and righteously is beyond doubt. What is our rightful response? To worship Him with all our heart, mind, and strength!

Question 6) What did the LORD tell Amos would cause people to stagger from sea to sea and from north to the east?

Amos writes:

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.”

This passage was directed at Judah and Israel. The Jews in both kingdoms were experiencing an unusual period of peace and prosperity. But instead of thanking God they had strayed far from Him, tolerating injustice and reveling in their wickedness. God’s indictment was stark: “they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals... a man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane My holy name” (Amos 2:6-7).

Amos was joined by many who similarly warned the people that they were inciting God’s righteous indignation. God put it to Jeremiah this way: “the LORD has sent to you all His

servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened or inclined your ear to hear. ‘Yet you have not listened to Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.’” (Jeremiah 25:4, 7).

Although God was longsuffering, calling His people time and time again to repent and turn back to Him, His holiness could not forever tolerate their spiritual adultery. So, in short order they would be cast aside and driven into exile. In their desperation, the masses would then cry out for a word from the Lord, but He would subject them to a period of silence—even as He preserved the Jewish people as He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Even after restoring the Jewish people to the Promised Land, there came another time when prolonged failure to heed the Word of the Lord led to a period of silence. Once the canon of the Old Testament was completed by Malachi, the Lord did not add to His Word for over 400 years. The darkness that descended on the land is demonstrated in the oppression of the Roman Empire and the corruption of the priesthood. The famine for hearing the words of the LORD caused many to stumble.

The same principle is at work today.

In some despotic societies, the Word of God is banned. People stagger to and fro in spiritual darkness, prevented by their own leaders from hearing the words of the Lord.

Our own nation is more like Judah and Israel. Blessed with prosperity, America is not manifesting heartfelt gratitude. Instead, our society is straying grievously from the Lord. We flaunt our wickedness and “give hearty approval” to those who invent and practice evil (Romans 1:28-32). The average American home contains 4.3 Bibles, but biblical literacy in America is at an all-time low. Sadly, the famine for hearing the Word of the Lord is practically self-imposed.

But in a sense, it always has been.

Question 7) T/F Ezekiel foretold that God would regather the Jewish people into their own land following their repentance and based on their merit.

False. Many people have a drastic misconception about the promises of God. They believe that God either “helps those who help themselves” or those whose behavior merits His blessing.

To be clear, there are inherent blessings for those who “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11). Like the provision for those who obey the first commandment (and honor their father and mother), it leads to conditions that promote well-being and long life on the earth (Ephesians 6:3).

But, the entire message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that God’s blessing is not for those who somehow attain moral and spiritual perfection through good works. Instead, it is for those who realize their inadequacy and rely instead on the completed work of Christ.

With regard to the Jews, the Lord revealed His plan with crystal clarity to Ezekiel: “ ‘I am not doing this for your sake,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!’ ” (Ezekiel 36:32). What was He planning to do for their sake? He promised to take them from the nations, gather them from all the lands, and bring them into their own land (Ezekiel 36:24)—something we have witnessed miraculously come to pass in just the past century! In the end, He has promised to “save them from all [their] uncleanness” (Ezekiel 36:29).

If not for their sake (in fact, if done *in spite of* their faithlessness), why would God keep His promises to the Jews? He told them: “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went” (Ezekiel 36:22).

God will keep all His promises—not because the recipient of those promises (the Jews, Christians, me, you) is faithful, but because He is God and always faithful. Anything less would run counter to His holy character—making Him a promise-breaker and liar.

That is why it is so dangerous to suggest that God will not keep His promises—to the Jews or anyone else. Those who callously misappropriate God’s promises to the Jewish people (often attempting to claim them for themselves) would make Him a liar to the very people He made those promises to. That is akin to using the Name of God in vain, emptying it of meaning and honor. To deny God’s truthfulness or faithfulness is to disparage His character.

Paul said it best: “let God be found true, though every man be found a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Question 8) Which nations of the earth will the Lord bring to the valley of Jehoshaphat in order to judge them?

God revealed to the prophet Joel: “...in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land” (Joel 3:1-2).

Many people want to read their own nation into Scripture in a more favorable light. Many American Christians will assert, “surely America will stand with Israel.” My answer is always, “All” means all.

Every nation will come against the Lord and His Anointed (Psalm 2:2). Following the Rapture, when the Church is snatched up in the twinkling of an eye, the world will quickly devolve into chaos and then embrace the Antichrist when he emerges. The hatred and bitterness we are witnessing today will grow exponentially—and those who shake their fists at the Almighty during the Tribulation will all join forces to oppose Him.

Collectively, they will comprise the “multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!” (Joel 3:14).

You are either a citizen of heaven—already eternally aligned with the Lord Jesus Christ, or you are a full-fledged citizen of the world. If you have not yet decided, the truth is that you are part of the “all” in opposition to Jesus Christ—and will be judged accordingly.

Climb out of the valley of decision today. Put your faith in Jesus Christ and ascend the mountain of the Lord!

Question 9) Where does Zechariah say the LORD will dwell, and what will that place be called?

Many Christians assume that they will live in heaven forever and ever. Such a misunderstanding is, well, understandable.

That is because we are promised that when we die we go immediately to be “with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). That would seem (quite literally) to be the end of the story. But wait—there’s more!

The Lord revealed to Zechariah that He is coming to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:2-8). He will reign from the throne of His father, David, from Mount Zion.

John was allowed to see the new heaven and new earth that God will form after He has burned away the final stain of corruption and rebellion on this old earth. And, he described in some detail the dimensions and splendor of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21). He also provides this wonderful detail: “the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Revelation 21:23).

The same God who split the darkness with His almighty Word, declaring, “Let there be light,” will provide constant illumination for His city and His people—who will dwell with Him forever and ever.

What will the city be called in that day? Ezekiel tells us it will be “Yahweh Shammah”—The LORD is there.

So, is that heaven? Without getting caught up in semantics, wherever Jesus is where I want to be. Call it what you want, it will be—just like our great God and Savior—Wonderful!!

Question 10) What did Daniel do when he discerned that the time prophesied for the exile to be over was drawing near?

Daniel is the only man in the Bible with a fairly extensive biography who seems to lack any manifest faults. (Clearly, that does not include Jesus, the sinless God-Man.)

He was one of the “choice young men” carried off into Babylonian exile and forced to serve a pagan king. He served faithfully, demonstrating his wisdom and gift for prophetic discernment on multiple occasions. The Lord gave him the ability to interpret dreams—and blessed him with visions of his own. Daniel maintained his integrity even as he served an idol-worshipping king.

Daniel was also a student of God’s Word. He testified that he understood from the prophet Jeremiah’s writings that Jerusalem would lie desolate for seventy years. He realized that span of time was almost complete—just as many of us sense that the time of Jesus’ return is drawing near.

You can imagine the excitement Daniel would have felt. The thought that his people would be able to return to the Promised Land must have made his heart ache to go home—and hopeful that he would live to see the fulfillment of that blessed promise. But he did something striking.

Daniel “gave [his] attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes” (Daniel 9:3). Those are not the emblems of rejoicing, but the indicators of mourning. Was Daniel mourning?

No, instead, Daniel was *confessing* and seeking forgiveness on behalf of his people. The man who was without major personal flaws took it upon himself to intercede for his wayward nation—apologizing for the sins of those who had gone before him. Six times (the imperfect number for man) throughout his heartbreaking prayer in Daniel 9:4-19, he took responsibility for sins he did not personally commit—understanding that he was part of the collective nation God’s judgment had been poured out upon. Only then did Gabriel appear to bring an answer to Daniel and give him even more insight into the coming of the Messiah and the end times.

As someone who longs for the Lord’s appearing and is full of anticipation and excitement about all that awaits those of us for whom the promises of God are “Yes and Amen,” I am convicted by Daniel’s example. It is too easy to rationalize that I am not responsible for the shortcomings dragging our nation down to destruction. But if Christians were willing to come before God with contrite hearts on behalf of their land (instead of simply expecting God’s blessing to flow because “we’re a Christian nation”), what impact would that have on our wayward nation?

Perhaps it is time to get serious about coming before Him as David did—with a broken and contrite heart. And not just once, but ongoingly on behalf of the fallen world around us.

In his intercessory prayer and heart attitude, Daniel foreshadowed Jesus Christ. Our Messiah took on all the sins of the world although He was blameless. We cannot bear another's sin, but we can reflect the contrite heart of the godly prophet who discerned the fulfillment of God's prophetic promise was drawing near.

Finally, in full understanding of the nature of grace (described in response to Question 7 above), Daniel appealed to the character of God that gave him reason to hope. Deliverance from captivity in Babylon was assured not because God's people were deserving, but because of His great compassion and “for [His] own sake” (Daniel 9:18-19).

Christians are saved—and given *blessed assurance*—not because they are deserving or better than anyone destined for destruction, but because of His great compassion and for His own sake.