

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-45 Review of this Course

What a journey we have had! We have walked with the nation of Israel from their earliest days in the Promised Land to their return to a restored temple and rebuilt Jerusalem. The stories of Joshua followed the great deliverance from Egypt known as the Exodus, which means ‘the road out.’ The stories of Nehemiah and Ezra followed the second great deliverance—the return from exile in Babylon and Persia. Through Isaiah, the prophet, the LORD declared, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” (Isa 43:18-19).

Let’s review God’s design for the Chosen People. While the Hebrew tribes were still in Egypt, before the Exodus escape, God revealed his plan. This was what he intended to do. In an important passage in Exodus chapter 6, God revealed his promise-name, his covenant-name to Moses. His name is Yahweh, which means something like “he will do it,” or “he will make it happen.”

Here is the important passage: “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am Yahweh’” (Ex 6:6-8).

The placing of “I am Yahweh” at the beginning and end emphasized the importance of the enclosed words. You may want to memorize this paragraph, because the four elements it contains can be called “God’s design for his people.”

What are these four elements?

(1) “I will redeem you,” and “I will bring you out.” Redemption, salvation, deliverance. These three words are similar and refer to two kinds of deliverance that Israel needed: deliverance from slavery in Egypt and deliverance from guilt caused by their sin. We might call these two problems, external bondage and internal bondage.

(2) The second element is fellowship with God in a community of God-followers. “You will be my people and I will be your God.” God intended Israel to become a nation based on love of him and love of one another. Jesus reminded his hearers of the two greatest Old Testament commands: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Deut. 6:5), and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). (See Jesus’s words in Matt 22:37-40.)

(3) The third element is knowledge of God, “Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God.” Most peoples and tribes have had ideas about gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses varied from tribe to tribe and nation to nation. No tribe or nation could be sure their ideas were true. But here God promised Moses and the Israelites genuine knowledge of him. The word translated ‘knowledge’ means much more than ideas and guesses about God; it means experiences with God that are life-changing.

(4) The fourth element is land. God promised the Chosen People a land, and not just any land, but the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This area is sometimes called “Canaan” or “Palestine.” It borders the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Great Arabian Desert on the east.

You have learned that these elements were repeated to the Israelite people often in Old Testament times. Joshua and other leaders renewed the covenant between God and the people. Joshua’s final message to the tribes reminded them of their responsibilities. “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ... Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:14-15).

After the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were destroyed, survivors were taken into exile in Babylon. This was the ‘remnant’ that Isaiah and others wrote about. Through a prophet in Babylon named Ezekiel, the LORD affirmed the elements of his design in Ezekial 34. God had not given up on Israel; he was staying true to his plan. God would be with them, and they would be faithful to him.

Ezekiel used the word picture of shepherd and sheep. God promised to save his flock by sending a shepherd like David (Ezek 34:22-24). Here is the element of deliverance and *salvation*. Next, God promised security in the *Promised Land*: “I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops. The people will be secure in their land” (Ezek 34:26-27).

Israel will *know* the LORD: “They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them” (Ezek 34:27b). And, they will be a *community* based on love of God and love of one another: “Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign LORD. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God” (Ezek 30-31). Ezekial repeated all four elements, in a slightly different order.

During the periods of conquest, settlement, united and divided monarchy, exile, and return from exile, God’s plan was tested in a variety of ways. Individuals were faithful and faithless. The nation was loyal to the covenant and disloyal. Instead of deliverance, God brought punishment. Instead of freedom in their land, God brought captivity. It looked like God’s design was in shambles. But God was true to his promises. His love triumphed over his people’s sinfulness. He would send another shepherd, the great shepherd of the sheep—Jesus Messiah.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the name of the one true God is Yahweh, or LORD. He has a plan for Israel and for all the nations, and he is working his plan. Through Jesus Messiah, the servant of the LORD, “He will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth” (Isa 42:3-4).

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What are the four elements of “God’s design” for Israel? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “deliverance, community, knowledge of God, and land” you are correct.
2. What were the periods of Israel’s history covered in this course? [Pause]

A. If you said, “Conquest, settlement, united and divided monarchy, exile, and return from exile,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you review this course, think about how God remained faithful to his people. Try to recall each of the stories you have learned. Which stories stick in your mind the most? Tell someone else your favorite stories in your own words as you remember them.

Jesus must have been thinking about the passage in Ezekiel when he said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14-16).