need in his own life and that of his people for repentance and renewal (22:8-20).

 How the Book of the Law was lost is uncertain, but the idolatry and sin of the reigns of Manasseh and Amon are far more logical if they purposefully removed the book from public worship or in some other way weakened its emphasis and influence over the people. In a powerful, public display, Josiah renewed the covenant described in the Book (22:3) and removed all the pagan, idolatrous material in the Temple and the land (23:4-24). Despite the revival, God did not remove the penalty for the sin of the previous kings. Was Josiah’s revival a waste? Of course not! Being right with God is the condition for which He has made us. We find more joy and peace when we walk with Him in storms that we ever could by walking without Him in relative peace. Without Him, there is no true peace at all.

 Thank God for His Spirit and His Word which stir and direct revival and provide peace.

Saturday, August 5, 2017—Obadiah; Jeremiah 1-2

 Talking about other people is a hobby for some. Gossip flows easily from their lips, and lies and slander can easily become join the content. Obadiah boldly talks about Edom.

 In a unique twist, God uses the prophet Obadiah to speak solely about Edom, the neighbors and Israel and common descendants from Abraham. Many of the prophets addressed God’s people and their neighbors, but Obadiah has Edom as its solitary subject. In talking about them, God never gossips, lies, or slanders, but He does make clear He has noted their behavior and will punish them accordingly.

 What had they done to receive God’s attention and impending doom? Their pride was going to lead to their destruction (1:3). Like few others, Edom knew the history of Israel and should have been sympathetic to them in their time of weakness. Instead, Edom responded to the sacking of Jerusalem by standing idly by while others joined in (1:10-14). God was speaking to Edom and encouraging His people. Injustice will not stand. Pride leads to a great fall.

 In contrast to Edom’s pride is Jeremiah’s humility. God called him to a ministry which spanned decades and yielded very little measurable fruit. Many people listened. Few repented. When God called Jeremiah, he had no confidence in himself (1:6), so God told him He would give him words and courage (1:7). Detractors and rebels would not overcome him (1:19).

 God talked about the scandalous behavior of His people (2:11-12), things even pagans did not do. What would He say about you? Pray for renewed awe and obedience.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 31

Sunday, July 30, 2017—Micah 5-7

 God works in unusual ways to demonstrate His remarkable wisdom, strength, and sovereignty. He has been at work from the beginning of time to bring about His desired will, so He can work through the devastation of sin and the disaster of poor choices to accomplish what He has planned. For example, Micah calls the troops to marshal themselves though they will fall to a more powerful ruler (5:1). God, however, is going to raise up a new leader, one who origins are from ancient times, who will be born in Bethlehem and be the peace of His people (5:2-5). Only God could use a baby with eternal roots to overcome a present problem in the future.

 God will not simply be installing another ruler to provide earthly leadership and exert military might. He “will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me” (5:15) by removing idols and tools used to divide the hearts and minds of people away from Him. He will provide the Way for knowing Him fully and worshiping Him alone.

 He makes His case before Israel like a lawyer presenting his facts to a jury (6:1-5). He has been faithful, and He wants the same from His people. To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly is His clear call to them (6:8). Only He can plead their case and provide their righteousness (7:9). Thank God for being unlike any other (7:18). He pardons sins and delights to show mercy.

Monday, July 31, 2017—Nahum 1-3

 While most prophets wrote to God’s people about a particular subject pertaining directly to them, Nahum wrote his prophecy about Nineveh specifically. He begins with a statement that many would find surprising or uncomfortable. “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. [He] takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies” (1:2). The jealousy, wrath, and vengeance of God are not subjects most people want to consider, yet they are fully part of His character and privilege. Nahum follows immediately with the reminder that God is slow to anger (1:3), but He will in time punish the guilty.

 Nahum also knows this: “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him” (1:7). While most prophets addressed God’s people with these same truths, Nahum directs these toward Nineveh. Not unlike Jonah, Nahum presents the reality of God’s willingness to acknowledge repentance and provide His presence to the Gentiles, but they will find no relief as long as they are His enemies. Their idolatry will end, and their yoke over Israel will crumble. The once mighty nation will have no one to mourn her (3:7). In fact, many will celebrate her fall (3:19). Her endless cruelty had made her the object of hatred.

 Thank God for reminders of the ultimate destiny of those who reject Him and who trouble His children. Praise Him for transforming you from an enemy to His child.

Tuesday, August 1, 2017—2 Kings 20-21

 Prayer changes things. Most often, prayer changes the one praying because the pray-er allows the time with God to align his heart, mind, and will with God Himself. The Psalmist described this in Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Spending time with God and enjoying Him causes the follower to long for and pray for His will and way. He naturally delights in giving those things.

 Prayer can change God as well. Of course, He is unchangeable in nature, yet He can respond to the change in people with a change in His stated plans. Hezekiah is an example. God told Isaiah to tell Hezekiah his days were short, and Hezekiah prayed with deep sorrow. God heard his prayer and gave him a powerful sign of His change of plans (20:11).

 God granted an extension of life and peace for Hezekiah, but He told him the future would not be as peaceful. The Babylonians would one day exert power and bring great misery to God’s people. Before that, however, trouble brewed from within as Manasseh took the throne after Hezekiah’s death. He did more evil than possibly any other king of Judah, practicing idolatry and rebuilding high places Hezekiah had destroyed. Scripture says he did more evil than the pagan nations around him (21:9).

 Thank God for His willingness to hear our prayers and respond to repentant, contrite hearts. Pray for a life which daily seeks Him and walks in His ways from beginning to end.

Wednesday, August 2, 2017—Zephaniah 1-3

 Judah was experiencing trouble outside and inside. The threat of foreign forces invading was ever-present, and they had endured their most wicked king, Manasseh, for 55 years. His son had similarly reigned, but only for two years because he was assassinated. During the reign of Josiah, a much different ruler, God spoke through Zephaniah.

 Despite the reforms Josiah was seeking for his people, God had the same message for them He had been giving through other prophets. He was going to work harshly against the sin of His people (1:2-14). There remained many who worshiped idols and who believed God would do nothing to punish their misbehavior. He was slow to anger and abounding in love to warn them so frequently and to wait so patiently, but one day the warnings and patience would end.

 No amount of persuasion or possessions would allow them to avoid the consequences. The answer was true transformation—repentant hearts leading to submissive lives. “Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger” (2:3). God was going to judge His people and the nations in order to turn the attention to Himself. “The Lord will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land” (2:11).

 Praise God for His righteousness (3:5). Pray for meekness and humility to trust in and serve Him (3:12).

Thursday, August 3, 2017—Habakkuk 1-3

 “Did you see that?” a child will ask a parent after a sibling has done something unjust. “How can you miss that call?” an angry fan yells at an official. Frustration and anger come quickly when we see injustice and wonder why those who are in charge seemingly do nothing about it.

 Habakkuk complained of injustice and violence and wondered how long God was going to allow them to flourish. Making the matter worse, God said, “You haven’t seen anything yet!” He was about to allow the pagan Babylonians to sweep across the landscape and wreak havoc. “You won’t believe what will happen,” God said (1:5). Habakkuk asked what anyone would. “Why?” When life doesn’t make sense, this is the one-word question that most easily and repetitively arises. “You’re too pure for this, God. Why would you allow this?” (1:13).

 God’s answer is one of profound wisdom and great vision. He knows the wickedness of Babylon, and He is using their thirst for violence to mete out the punishment so many people rightfully deserve. Babylon, however, will not escape. They, too, will face the very punishment they themselves are going to deliver. God is all-wise. God is all-seeing. He will not allow them to sin without paying the price (2:2-19).

 Knowing God was wise and just, Habakkuk prayed. “Even if everything falls apart and I have nothing left, I will rejoice in Yahweh, my Savior. He gives me strength and enables me to carry on” (3:17-19). Trust Him despite difficulty and make that your prayer as well.

Friday, August 4, 2017—2 Kings 22-25

 Josiah became king at eight years of age after two wicked kings had ruled for a combined 57 years. If someone ever faced overwhelming, insurmountable odds, eight-year-old Josiah was that one, yet Scripture says he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh (22:2). Though the text says he did not turn to the right or left, it was not until he was 26 that Josiah learned his high priest had discovered the Book of the Law and the great