

# 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 covers Daniel 2 through Matthew 2 — spanning the first three installments of Israel’s fifth course of punishment and introducing the arrival of the fourth installment: the days of the Messiah. Across 8 lessons (with Lessons 57 and 58 each divided into two parts) Keith R. Blades traces God’s continued dealings with Israel through captivity and beyond. The block opens with God’s remarkable use of Daniel in Babylon: Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image revealing the succession of Gentile empires, the fiery furnace demonstrating God’s power to deliver, Daniel in the lions’ den, and the critical time-schedule revelations given to Daniel concerning the duration of the fifth course. The second installment is covered through the story of Esther, showing God’s preservation of His nation under Medo-Persian rule. The block then introduces the fourth installment with the birth of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ — emphasizing throughout that the Gospel accounts describe the continuation of God’s program with Israel, not the present dispensation of grace.

## Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Title — Scripture Reference
Lesson 57 Pt 1	Delivered from the Fiery Furnace (Part 1) — Daniel 2
Lesson 57 Pt 2	Delivered from the Fiery Furnace (Part 2) — Daniel 3
Lesson 58 Pt 1	Daniel in the Lion’s Den (Part 1) — Daniel 6
Lesson 58 Pt 2	Daniel in the Lion’s Den (Part 2) — Daniel 7–12
Lesson 59	Brave Queen Esther — Esther 1–4
Lesson 60	God Saves His People — Esther 5–9
Lesson 61	An Angel Visits Zacharias — Luke 1
Lesson 62	Birth of Jesus — Luke 1–2
Lesson 63	Visit of the Shepherds — Luke 2:8–38
Lesson 64	Star Leads the Wise Men to Jesus — Matthew 2

## Lesson Summaries

### L57a

#### **Delivered from the Fiery Furnace (Part 1)** *Daniel 2 •*

*Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Image and the Times of the Gentiles*

- God utilized Daniel's position in Nebuchadnezzar's government to reveal critical prophetic information — the first instance comes when the king has a troubling dream that none of his wise men can interpret, and Daniel is brought before him
- God reveals both the dream and its interpretation to Daniel: a great image with a head of gold (Babylon), chest and arms of silver (Medo-Persia), belly and thighs of brass (Greece), legs of iron (Rome), and feet of iron mixed with clay (the final form of Gentile dominion)

#### **The Times of the Gentiles**

- The dream image reveals the succession of Gentile empires that would dominate the earth during Israel's fifth course of punishment — this period is what the Lord Jesus Christ later calls "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24)
- A stone "cut out without hands" strikes the image on its feet and destroys it completely — the stone then becomes a great mountain filling the whole earth; this represents God's kingdom destroying all Gentile dominion and being established forever on this earth
- Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the God of Israel as "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings" and promotes Daniel to ruler over the whole province of Babylon — Daniel's three friends are also placed in positions of authority

### L57b

#### **Delivered from the Fiery Furnace (Part 2)** *Daniel 3 • Shadrach,*

*Meshach, and Abed-nego's Faith Under Fire*

- Nebuchadnezzar sets up a great golden image and commands all to bow down and worship it — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refuse because doing so would violate the Law's commands against idolatry; their faithfulness puts them in direct conflict with the most powerful man on earth
- The three declare to the king: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods" — they trust God whether He delivers them or not, demonstrating the highest quality of faith

#### **Deliverance and Foreshadow**

- Cast into a furnace heated seven times hotter than normal, not only are they unharmed but a fourth figure is seen in the fire — Nebuchadnezzar recognizes this as a divine being; God Himself was present with them in the midst of the fire
- This event foreshadows what the believing remnant of Israel will experience in the future tribulation period (the fifth installment of the fifth course of punishment) — they will face intense pressure to worship the beast's image (Rev. 13) and God will deliver the faithful through the fire of that tribulation
- Nebuchadnezzar again acknowledges the God of Israel and makes a decree that no one may speak against Him — the three are promoted; God's purpose for placing them in positions of authority is being fulfilled even in captivity

## L58a

### **Daniel in the Lion's Den (Part 1)** *Daniel 6 • Faithfulness Under the Medo-Persian Empire*

- By Daniel chapter 6 the Babylonian empire has been conquered by the Medes and Persians — exactly as the dream image foretold; the second Gentile empire (the chest and arms of silver) now rules, and Israel's captivity continues under new masters
- Daniel is now an elderly man but still occupies a position of high authority — king Darius plans to set Daniel over the whole realm; jealous officials conspire against Daniel by tricking Darius into signing an irrevocable decree that no one may pray to any god except the king for thirty days

#### **Daniel's Unwavering Faithfulness**

- Daniel knows about the decree but continues to pray to the LORD three times daily with his windows open toward Jerusalem — he will not compromise his faithfulness to God regardless of the consequences, just as he determined not to defile himself in Daniel 1
- Cast into the den of lions, God sends His angel to shut the lions' mouths and Daniel is delivered without any harm — Darius, recognizing the power of Israel's God, makes a decree that all should fear the God of Daniel
- Daniel's deliverance also foreshadows God's preservation of the faithful remnant in the future tribulation — and Daniel himself prospered in the reigns of both Darius and Cyrus, continuing to serve God's purpose throughout the Medo-Persian period

## L58b

### **Daniel in the Lion's Den (Part 2)** *Daniel 7–12 • Daniel's Revelations and the Time-Schedule for Israel*

- Beyond the remarkable events of his life, Daniel's most important role was as the prophet to whom God revealed the time-schedule for the fifth course of punishment — five major revelations are given in Daniel chapters 7–12
- Daniel's revelations provide Israel with critical information: the duration of the "times of the Gentiles," the succession of empires, the activities of the coming "little horn" (Antichrist), and the time when God would establish His kingdom on this earth

#### **The Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:24–27)**

- The most specific revelation is the "seventy weeks" (490 years) prophecy — Gabriel tells Daniel that 490 years are determined upon Israel to finish the transgression, make an end of sins, bring in everlasting righteousness, and anoint the most Holy
- The 490-year schedule would bring Israel from the captivity through the rebuilding of Jerusalem, to the coming of "Messiah the Prince," and ultimately to the establishment of the kingdom — this time-schedule is essential for understanding when the fourth installment of the fifth course (the days of Christ) would arrive
- Daniel's revelations gave the believing remnant of Israel the ability to know the times and be prepared for what God would do next — this is why the wise men in Matthew 2 could recognize the signs of the Messiah's birth: they were students of Daniel's prophecies

L59

### **Brave Queen Esther** *Esther 1–4 • God’s Preservation of Israel Under the Second Installment*

- The book of Esther takes place during the second installment of the fifth course of punishment — the Medo-Persian empire now rules, and Israel remains in captivity; notably, God’s name is never directly mentioned in the book, yet His providential hand is evident throughout
- King Ahasuerus deposes queen Vashti and searches for a replacement — God providentially arranges for Esther, a young Jewish woman raised by her cousin Mordecai, to be chosen as the new queen; she conceals her Jewish identity at Mordecai’s instruction

#### **Haman’s Plot Against All Israel**

- Haman, an Agagite (descended from Israel’s ancient enemy) rises to the highest position under the king — when Mordecai refuses to bow to him, Haman plots not merely to kill Mordecai but to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire Medo-Persian empire
- Haman’s plot represents one of Satan’s attempts to destroy the nation of Israel and thereby thwart God’s covenanted plan — if Israel is destroyed, God’s promises to Abraham and David cannot be fulfilled; this is the satanic motivation behind the genocidal scheme
- Mordecai appeals to Esther: “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14) — Esther determines to go before the king uninvited, risking her life: “if I perish, I perish”

L60

### **God Saves His People** *Esther 5–9 • Haman’s Downfall and Israel’s Deliverance*

- God providentially arranges events in a remarkable chain: the king cannot sleep and has the chronicles read to him, discovering that Mordecai had saved his life and was never rewarded — this sets in motion Haman’s humiliation
- Haman is forced to publicly honor the very man he planned to destroy — Esther then reveals Haman’s plot to the king at her banquet; Haman is hanged on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai (a principle of divine justice: the wicked falls into his own trap)

#### **Israel Preserved by God’s Providence**

- Because the king’s original decree cannot be reversed under Medo-Persian law, a second decree is issued allowing the Jews to defend themselves — the Jews prevail over all their enemies throughout the empire
- The feast of Purim is established to commemorate this great deliverance — what Satan intended to use for the destruction of Israel, God turned into a testimony of His providential preservation of His people even in captivity
- Though God’s name is not mentioned in the book, His hand is undeniable — He preserved the nation through whom His covenanted plan would be fulfilled; the line of the Messiah and the people to whom the kingdom was promised were kept safe under the fifth course of punishment

L61

### **An Angel Visits Zacharias** *Luke 1 • The 400-Year Silence Ends and the Fourth Installment Begins*

- Between the events of Ezra/Nehemiah and the opening of the Gospels, approximately 400 years of prophetic silence passed — this was the third installment of the fifth course of punishment; God sent no prophet and gave no new revelation to Israel during this entire period
- The silence is broken when the angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias the priest, announcing that his wife Elisabeth will bear a son, John — John will be the forerunner of the Messiah, fulfilling Malachi's prophecy of the messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord

#### The Gospel Accounts and Israel's Program

- A critical dispensational truth must be understood: the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John describe the continuation of God's program with Israel, not the dispensation of grace in which we live today — everything the Lord says, does, promises, and commands pertains to Israel's program
- The birth of John the Baptist signals the arrival of the fourth installment of the fifth course of punishment — God is resuming active dealings with Israel after 400 years of silence, preparing the way for the Messiah to come to His nation
- Zacharias is struck mute for his unbelief but later prophesies about John's role: to give knowledge of salvation unto God's people and to prepare them for the coming of the Lord — the long-awaited time revealed in Daniel's prophecies has now arrived

## L62

### Birth of Jesus *Luke 1–2 • Immanuel — God With Us in Fulfillment of the Covenants*

- The angel Gabriel is sent to Mary announcing she will conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear a Son — He shall be called “the Son of the Highest” and God shall give Him “the throne of his father David”; the Davidic Covenant is being fulfilled
- Jesus is born in Bethlehem, fulfilling Micah's prophecy (Micah 5:2) — the name “Jesus” (“Jehovah saves”) and “Immanuel” (“God with us”) declare that God Himself has come through David's line to be Israel's Redeemer and Saviour, just as the Davidic Covenant promised

#### The Covenants Coming Together

- In Christ's birth, the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants all converge — the “seed” of Abraham through whom all nations will be blessed, the Son of David who will reign on David's throne, and the One who will establish the new covenant with the house of Israel
- Mary's song (the Magnificat) celebrates God's faithfulness: “He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever” — everything is understood in light of God's covenant promises to Israel
- The humble circumstances of Christ's birth (a manger, not a palace) do not diminish the significance — God Himself has entered the world through Israel's royal line to accomplish what the Law contract could never accomplish: the redemption of His people

## L63

### Visit of the Shepherds *Luke 2:8–38 • Alerting Testimonies to Israel*

- The angel of the Lord appears to shepherds keeping watch over their flock by

night — “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”

- A multitude of the heavenly host praises God: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” — this is the announcement that Israel’s Messiah has arrived; the “peace on earth” pertains to the kingdom which He has come to establish

#### **Simeon and Anna’s Testimonies**

- Simeon, a righteous man in Jerusalem to whom the Holy Spirit revealed he would not die before seeing the Lord’s Christ, takes the infant Jesus in his arms — he declares Jesus to be God’s “salvation” prepared before all people, “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel”
- Simeon also prophesies that Jesus is “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” and that a sword shall pierce Mary’s own soul — foreshadowing the division Jesus would cause in the nation and the suffering connected to His redemptive work
- Anna the prophetess, a widow of great age who served God with fasting and prayer in the temple continually, likewise gives thanks and speaks of Him “to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” — alerting the faithful remnant that their Redeemer has come

#### **Star Leads the Wise Men to Jesus** *Matthew 2 • Daniel’s Influence and Herod’s Hostility*

- Wise men from the east come to Jerusalem asking “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east” — these men were likely from the region of Babylon/Persia, influenced by Daniel’s prophecies and the knowledge of Israel’s God that Daniel had established centuries earlier
- The wise men understood the times because of Daniel’s time-schedule — the 490-year prophecy of Daniel 9 told them when “Messiah the Prince” would come; the appearance of the special star confirmed the time had arrived

#### **Herod’s Murderous Response**

- King Herod is troubled by the report and inquires of the chief priests and scribes where Christ should be born — they correctly identify Bethlehem from Micah’s prophecy, yet neither they nor Herod respond positively; Herod plots to destroy the child
- The wise men find the young child (not a newborn — this visit occurred up to two years after the birth) and worship Him, presenting gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh — being warned by God in a dream, they depart without reporting back to Herod
- Herod slaughters all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and under — but God had already directed Joseph to take the family to Egypt, fulfilling Hosea 11:1 (“Out of Egypt have I called my son”); Satan’s attempt through Herod to destroy the Messiah fails just as Haman’s plot against the Jews had failed

L64

## Key Doctrinal Distinctions

### The Five Installments of the Fifth Course of Punishment

Block #8 introduces one of the most important frameworks for understanding Israel's history from Daniel's day onward: the fifth course of punishment is not a single event but consists of five successive installments. The first installment was the Babylonian captivity; the second was the Medo-Persian period (the time of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah); the third was the approximately 400-year silence between Malachi and the Gospels; the fourth installment is the days of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth as recorded in the Gospel accounts; and the fifth and final installment is the yet-future tribulation period ("the day of the LORD"). Understanding this structure is essential because it shows that the Gospel accounts do not describe a new program but are the continuation of Israel's fifth course of punishment under its fourth installment.

### The Gospel Accounts Belong to Israel's Program, Not the Dispensation of Grace

Perhaps the single most important dispensational truth that Block #8 begins to drive home is that the four Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) describe the continuation of God's program and dealings with His nation Israel. Everything the Lord Jesus Christ says, does, promises, instructs, commands, and offers pertains to God's program with Israel. The present dispensation of grace was not brought in until God raised up Paul as a brand new apostle, as recorded in Acts 9. The doctrine, instructions, promises, and provisions which pertain to God's program with us today are found in the epistles of the apostle Paul — Romans through Philemon. Failing to recognize this distinction is the root cause of the vast majority of doctrinal confusion in Christianity today.

### Daniel's Time-Schedule and Its Significance

Daniel's five revelations in chapters 7–12 provided Israel with a divinely-given time-schedule for the duration of the fifth course of punishment and the establishment of God's kingdom. The seventy weeks (490 years) prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 is especially critical: it told Israel exactly when to expect "Messiah the Prince" and provided the framework by which the believing remnant could recognize the times. This is why the wise men in Matthew 2 could identify the time of the Messiah's birth — they were students of Daniel's prophecies from the Babylonian/Persian region where Daniel had established knowledge of Israel's God. The time-schedule also reveals that the fifth course of punishment was designed to have a definite endpoint: the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth.

### God's Providential Preservation Through the Installments

Throughout every installment of the fifth course of punishment, God preserved His nation and His covenanted plan. Under Babylonian captivity, He raised up Daniel and his three friends in positions of authority. Under the Medo-Persian empire, He providentially arranged for Esther to be queen at the very time when Haman's satanic plot threatened to destroy all Jews. During the 400-year silence, He preserved the line of the Messiah and the believing remnant. And in the fourth installment, He brought forth the Messiah Himself in fulfillment of all His covenant promises. Satan's repeated attempts to destroy Israel — through Haman, through Herod, through the corrupt religious system — all failed because God's covenanted purpose cannot be thwarted.

## Foreshadows of the Future Tribulation

Several events in Block #8 serve as foreshadows of what the believing remnant of Israel will face during the fifth and final installment of the fifth course of punishment — the future tribulation period. The fiery furnace of Daniel 3, where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the king’s image and were delivered through the fire, foreshadows the remnant’s refusal to worship the beast’s image in Revelation 13 and their deliverance through the tribulation. Daniel in the lions’ den similarly foreshadows God’s preservation of the faithful through seemingly impossible circumstances. These events were not merely historical; they were designed by God to provide encouragement and instruction for the future remnant.

## Key Scripture References

<b>Daniel 2:31–45</b>	Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image: five Gentile empires and the stone that destroys them — God’s kingdom fills the whole earth
<b>Luke 21:24</b>	“The times of the Gentiles” — the period of Gentile dominion revealed through Daniel’s dream image
<b>Daniel 3:17–18</b>	“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... but if not” — the faith of the three in the face of the fiery furnace
<b>Daniel 6:10</b>	Daniel prays three times daily toward Jerusalem despite the decree — unwavering faithfulness to the LORD
<b>Daniel 9:24–27</b>	The seventy weeks (490 years) prophecy: God’s time-schedule for Israel from captivity to the kingdom
<b>Esther 4:14</b>	“Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” — God’s providence in Esther’s position
<b>Esther 7:10</b>	Haman hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai — divine justice: the wicked falls into his own trap
<b>Luke 1:16–17</b>	John the Baptist’s ministry: to turn Israel back to the Lord and make ready a people prepared for Him
<b>Luke 1:32–33</b>	Gabriel’s announcement to Mary: God shall give Him the throne of His father David — the Davidic Covenant fulfilled
<b>Micah 5:2</b>	Bethlehem identified as the birthplace of Israel’s ruler — fulfilled in the birth of Jesus
<b>Luke 2:10–11</b>	“Good tidings of great joy... unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”
<b>Luke 2:30–32</b>	Simeon’s testimony: God’s salvation — a light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel
<b>Matthew 2:2</b>	Wise men from the east: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” — Daniel’s prophetic influence
<b>Hosea 11:1</b>	“Out of Egypt have I called my son” — fulfilled when Jesus was brought back from Egypt

**Romans 15:8**

Christ was “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers”

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