

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #14 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026**

**Discovering the Bible**

**January 13 & 14, 2026**

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**Review – The Wisdom**

1. The Wisdom literature of the Old Testament provides inspired and helpful information to help people live their daily lives
2. How to be happy, what to do about suffering and pain, whether or not there is any meaning or purpose to life: these are the topics that Wisdom considers
3. Similar wisdom is present in other faith and cultural traditions, providing a point of connection between Israel and other peoples

**The Visions**

4. General Thoughts
  - a. All people dream about and plan for the future
  - b. From Abraham and the vision of becoming a great nation, to Moses and the dream of freedom and life in a homeland, to David and the hope of peace and prosperity for the people of Israel, the Old Testament is shot through and through with “the visions”
  - c. When things are going well, visions are happy and good. And when things are *not* going well, then vision become perhaps even more important and compelling.
  - d. The visionary writings of the Old Testament are an indispensable part of the message of scripture as a whole
  - e. When interpreting the visions it is necessary to understand the historical background from which they sprang
5. Joel 2:1-3, 10-17 and 2:23-32
  - a. Joel was likely a priest or servant in the Temple from about 400-350 BC, after the exiles’ return from Babylon and before Greek and then Roman domination of Israel
  - b. *“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near...”* (v1)
  - c. The Day of the Lord
    - i. A common theme in both OT and NT
    - ii. Sometimes pictured as a day of blessing and peace, and sometimes as a day of punishment and judgment
  - d. Here, the Day is about devastation and judgment that is coming to Israel
  - e. Beyond this, however, is promise of blessing from God
  - f. *“Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.”* (v13b)
  - g. Joel calls for repentance and hope that Israel will be spared and restored
  - h. He envisions that Israel will be restored
  - i. *“O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication...”* (v23a)
  - j. Crops will produce, people will worship and know God, and all who truly repent and call on God will be saved
6. Zephaniah 3:1-13
  - a. Zephaniah lived during the reign of King Josiah, 640-649 BC, and it is suggested that he was of royal descent since he did not denounce the king
  - b. Zephaniah also spoke of the Day of the Lord as part of his call for the people of Israel to repent and return to true faith and practice of the Lord’s ways
  - c. He takes on the corruption and false faith of the leaders of Israel in Jerusalem
  - d. *“Ah, soiled, defiled, oppressing city! It has listened to no voice; it has accepted no correction. It has not trusted in the Lord; it has not drawn near to its God.”* (v1-2)
  - e. He envisions a time when the people will indeed turn back to God
  - f. *“At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, my scattered ones, shall bring my offering.”* (v9-10)

- g. The peoples' repentance will be both:
    - i. Something that they themselves do
    - ii. A gift from God
  - h. The renewal of Israel will extend beyond the borders of the Holy Land proper, indicating that God's plan (God's vision!) includes *all* peoples
7. Zechariah 12:6-10 and 14:1-9
- a. Zechariah worked from 520 BC onward, was a contemporary of Haggai, and focused on rebuilding the Temple, restoring the faith of the people, and the onset of a messianic age
  - b. "On that day the Lord will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem...I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (12:8&9, selected)
  - c. "And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem..." (12:10a)
  - d. The decimated city, now being repopulated by returning Exiles, will once again flourish
  - e. But, there will be trouble, too, before the final victory of God
  - f. "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses looted and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile..." (14:2)
  - g. "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will become king over all the earth..." (14:8-9)
  - h. For all of Jerusalem's suffering (and there was plenty of it), still, God is faithful, and the nation will survive, and one day (the Day of the Lord), all will be well
8. Malachi 2:17 – 3:5 and 4:1-6
- a. Malachi lived probably around 500-450 BC, just before the reforms of Ezra
  - b. The nation still struggles, but Malachi's vision is of a restored Israel, so he encourages the people to remain faithful to God and to their practice of God's ways
  - c. "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." (3:1a)
  - d. "But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap..." (3:2)
  - e. Here the message is that the Lord will surely return, which is Good News...
  - f. And...But...when the Lord does indeed come, all the wickedness (in thought and practice) of the people will be judged, destroyed, and purified
  - g. This is some of the biblical language employed by Handel in "Messiah"
  - h. "See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble..." – (4:1a) more judgment!
  - i. And then...hope... -- "But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings." (4:2a)
  - j. And then also, a vision of what will come when the Lord appears on "that day" – "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day...He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse." (4:5-6)
    - i. Quoted in Luke 1:17 – Angel Gabriel's message to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist

### Questions for Your Life Today

- A. *In our modern world where do you see evidence of people's unfaithfulness to God and refusal to follow the righteous ways of God?*
- B. *Where, in history, do you see that God's judgment eventually befalls corrupt and unholy peoples, groups, and nations? Or does it?*
- C. *According to the Visionaries, the prophets, true faithfulness was not merely about words and worship: it was about actions of love, compassion, justice, and blessing for all people. How does your life manifest such actions today?*
- D. *How do these visions help you deal with pessimism, resignation, and discouragement? In your own life? In the life of the world around you?*
- E. *What is the controlling vision of your life?*

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