

# Illustrated Bible Life

## Come Into the Light

**M**any of us find it difficult to read the Prophets. The history of the monarchy in Israel is one of mostly bad kings who led the people away from the God of Israel and into worship of the foreign deities of the peoples surrounding them. The people seemed unable to trust fully in the God of their ancestors, in spite of the stories of God's faithfulness throughout their history. The exodus from Egypt must have seemed so long ago, and so unrelated to their present circumstances.

The more they strayed from worshipping God, the more they took on the sinful characteristics of the people in the nations around them. Idol worship came with all kinds of evil practices: temple prostitution and the murder of babies in order to sacrifice them to these false gods were two of the worst of these practices (e.g., 1 Kings 11:5; Ps. 106:37-38; Hos. 4:14). These were indicative of the lack of love and justice that permeated their dealings not only with the disenfranchised—the poor, the widows, orphans, and foreigners—but with each other as well.

Perhaps one of the greatest sins was their apathy toward discerning between right and wrong: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20). This is a theme we see repeatedly in the prophets, that the people had lost their passion for justice and truth, and had replaced it with a willingness to do whatever they could get away with in order to better their own lot in life. Most of all, they projected this attitude onto God, claiming that God was setting the example in preferring the wicked to the righteous (e.g., Ps. 73; Mal. 3:13-15). What they failed to understand was that God was not turning a blind eye to evil; one day, an accounting would come.

One cannot read the Prophets and not see the evil that was going on in Israel at this time. Yet there is another theme that winds its way through these books: God is at work to redeem His people. That is the subject of our studies for this quarter. Our God is a God who has always offered grace and hope to His people. God is calling to each of us to come out of the darkness and into His light to receive the hope of His salvation.