

The Minor Prophets: A Survey
Tulsa Christian Fellowship
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INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

I. THE PLACE OF THE MINOR PROPHETS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections:

1. Law, or *Torah*
2. Prophets, or *Nbhi'im*
3. Writings, or *Kithubim* (or Greek *Hagiographa*)

The **Law** consisted of the Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

The **Prophets** consisted of two divisions:

- The four Former Prophets

Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings

- The four **Latter Prophets**

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel

The Twelve (The following were considered to be one book)

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Hosea | 5. Jonah | 9. Zephaniah |
| 2. Joel | 6. Micah | 10. Haggai |
| 3. Amos | 7. Nahum | 11. Zechariah |
| 4. Obadiah | 8. Habakkuk | 12. Malachi |

The **Writings** consisted of two divisions (11 books)

- The five Books of History

Daniel (In the arrangement in our Bibles we class Daniel as one of the prophets)
Ruth
Ezra/Nehemiah (considered one book)
Esther
Chronicles

- The six Books of Poetry

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Lamentations

II. THE ORDER AND DATES OF THE PROPHETS

Here is the chronological order of the prophets and the dates of their ministry (the capital letters indicate the order in the Protestant, Catholic and Hebrew Bibles [i.e., H=Hosea, J=Joel, etc.] the numbers below the initials signify their place in historical chronological order).¹

	H	J	A	O	J	M	N	H	Z	H	Z	M
	5	2	4	1	3	7	8	10	9	13	14	15
			Isaiah.		Jeremiah.		Ezekiel					
			6		11		12					
Dates B.C.	845					612		539			430	
			Assyrian dominance			Babylonian dominance					Persian dominance	

The minor prophets range from about 845 B.C. - 430 B.C.. This is about the same amount of time from Columbus' discovery of the New World to the beginning of the Twentieth Century (1492-1910).

In the following study, the minor prophets will be examined in their chronological order.

III. SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS RELATED TO THIS PERIOD:

1. Ninevah, capital of Assyria, fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C.
2. The first Babylonian Captivity began in 605 B.C.
3. The second Babylonian Captivity began in 597 B.C.
4. Babylon fell to the Persians on October 25, 539 B.C.
5. The Babylonian Captivity ended in 536 B.C.

Thus, by the Jewish method of reckoning (counting the beginning and ending year) the Babylonian Captivity lasted 70 years (#2 - #5 [605 BC - 536 BC]).

IV. DOMINANT RULERS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE PROPHETS

ASSYRIAN	BABYLONIAN	PERSIAN
Tiglath Pileser III	Nabapalassar	Cyrus
Shalmaneser V (IV)	Nebuchadnessar	-----
Sargon III (II)	Evil-Merodach	-----
Sennacherib	Nabridus	Darius I
Esarhaddon		Xerxes
Ashurbanipal		Artaxerxes

¹Their order in the Septuagint and most Eastern Orthodox Bibles is: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (the order of the first six was probably determined by length, except for Jonah, which is placed last among them because of its different character). Because the liturgical language of the Eastern Orthodox Churches is Greek, it is not surprising that these churches follow the Septuagint order, since the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew text.

V. THE COMPARATIVE SIZE OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

The Minor Prophets are not minor in the sense of being inferior (less inspired or less important). They are minor only in length and scope. They deal with very specific historical situations.

A. CHAPTER COMPARISON²

	H	J	A	O	J	M	N	H	Z	H	Z	M	
Chapters	14	3	9	1	4	7	3	3	3	2	14	4	= 67 Total Chapters

NOTE* In the current Hebrew text, Joel has four chapters and Malachi has three.

Isaiah.	Jeremiah.	Ezekiel.
66	52	48

B. COMPARISON BY NUMBER OF PAGES

In the Hebrew Bible the largest books are

1. Jeremiah 97 pages
2. Ezekiel 84 1/2 pages
3. Isaiah 77 pages
4. The Twelve 68 pages

Based on the number of pages, the entire collection of The Twelve is smaller than any of the Major Prophets, except Daniel.

VI. THE OFFICE OF PROPHET

A. OFFICE Versus FUNCTION

The office of the prophet was an official role occupied by a prophet who functioned as the revelator for the theocratic monarchy. Not all who prophesied, occupied the office of prophet. For example, in the Hebrew Bible, Daniel is not placed among the prophets (see section I, The Writings, above); he was used of God to prophesy, but he did not occupy the **office** of prophet.

B. THE MARKS OF A PROPHET

Although all of these traits are not present in every prophet, these are the traits that generally were manifested in a prophet.

1. A divine call (the account usually is recorded in Scripture)
2. Divine credentials (more for some than others)
3. A divine message (II Peter 1:20-21)
4. Any prophetic predictions given by the prophet do come to pass (Deut. 18:21-22)³
5. A Holy Character - (Holy but not perfect)
6. An active personality (usually stirring up antagonism and opposition)

² Scriptures originally were written without chapters and verses. The chapter divisions used today were developed by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury around 1227 AD. The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a rabbi named Nathan in 1448 AD. Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus) was the first to divide the New Testament into verses – around 1555. Estienne used Nathan's verse divisions for the Old Testament.

³ Even though the element of prediction occurs in most prophetic writing, the prophets primarily were preachers to their own age.

C. NAMES USED FOR THE PROPHETS

1. *Ro'eh* (רֹאֶה)"Seer" - This term is used in eleven verses in the Old Testament to describe the spiritual forerunners of the prophets. This word was used Biblically from c.1150 - c.700 B.C. The verb means, "to see."

Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer. (1 Samuel 9:9 NAS)

I Samuel 9:9, 11, 18, 19;
 II Samuel 15:27;
 I Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; 29:29;
 II Chronicles 16:7, 10;
 Isaiah 30:10

2. *Chozeh* (חֹזֵה)"Seer" or "Gazer" - This term is used twenty-two times in the Old Testament. *Chozeh* was used Biblically, c1000-c600 B.C. Here are some examples of the term's use in designating a recognized prophet:

II Samuel 24:11
 II Kings 17:13
 I Chronicles 21:9; 25:5; 29:29
 II Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 19:2; 29:25, 30; 33:18, 19; 35:15;
 Isaiah 29:10; 30:10
 Amos 7:12
 Obadiah 1:1
 Micah 3:7

NOTE: Both *Ro'eh* and *Chozeh*, place the emphasis upon the mode of receiving the truth.

3. *Nabhi*, (נָבִיא)"proclaimer" or "speaker," is used three hundred times in the Old Testament. The word probably comes from the old Semitic, *Naba*, "to utter, to proclaim, to speak." *Nabhi*, is used biblically from Genesis to Malachi (I Chronicles 29:29 contains all three of the terms, *Ro'eh*, *Chozeh*, *Nabhi*).

4. Other Old Testament terms used for the prophets are

- Watchman
- Servant of Yahweh
- Interpreter
- Man of God
- Messenger of Yahweh
- Man of the Spirit

5. In the New Testament and in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek terms are:⁴

- prophet: *prophetes* προφήτης
- prophecy: *propheteia* προφητεία
- to prophesy: *propheteuo* προφητεύω

Each of these Greek terms is based on the verb, φημί (*femi*) which conveys the concept of speaking or revealing what is on one's mind.

⁴ The English word, "prophet," is from the Greek term, *prophetes*.

Thus, both Old Testament and New Testament prophecy is speaking forth what one has been given from God. As noted earlier, some prophecy is predictive, but that is not the essential idea of prophecy. Much prophecy is exhortation, rebuking, or some other message that God has given the prophet to deliver to the chosen audience. The prophet is God's spokesman.

Not all prophets in the Bible were writing prophets. For example, neither Elijah nor Elisha left us a "book of the Bible."

VII. PROPHETIC RECEPTION AND DELIVERY OF THE WORD

The mode of receiving and communicating the messages from God vary all the way from trances, dreams, and the ecstatic state, to normal mental consciousness. Elisha, in the midst of a tumultuous encounter, asked for a minstrel that he might be in the atmosphere to receive prophecy (II Kings 3:15). There were many modes of receiving and giving prophecy, but all were equal in authority.

Personality never was surrendered as the prophet received his heavenly pronouncement. In no sense was the prophet passively open so that words flowed through him, without being colored by his own mind, background, and personality. This is illustrated in the classic poetic language of Isaiah, contrasted with the blunt, prosaic language of Micah.

VII. SERIOUS WARNING CONCERNING FALSE PROPHETS

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,² and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,'³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for Yahweh your God is testing you to find out if you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

⁴ *"You shall follow Yahweh your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.*

⁵ *"But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against Yahweh your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5 NAS)⁵*

VIII. PROPHETS OCCASIONALLY EXPERIENCED THEOPHANIES

There are many statements in Scripture that declare that no one has seen, or can see, God. Here are examples of such statements.

But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Exodus 33:20)

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18)

"Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. (John 6:46)

who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. (1 Timothy 6:16)

⁵ The New Testament also warns against false prophets: Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; II Thess. 2:9

Yet, even though God cannot be seen, theophanies were given to various prophets. A theophany is a vision in which some physical manifestation is given, which represents God. One of the most striking is recorded in Isaiah 6:1-4.

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

A very unusual theophany occurs in the first chapter of Ezekiel, in which he saw creatures, wheels, storms, etc., The vision moves to a climax as Ezekiel has a clear vision of God.

And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.²⁶ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man.²⁷ Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.²⁸ As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking. (Ezekiel 1:25-28)

IX. THE PROPHETIC PERFECT

The *prophetic perfect* is encountered in some of the prophetic writings. The prophetic perfect occurs when a prophet is transported to a time in the distant future and from that vantage point, he looks back on events that had not yet occurred in his lifetime. When this occurs, the prophecy is given as history, even though it still in the future.

Prophet → → → → → spiritually carried to the future → → → → → vantage point
 ↓
 Event ← ← ← ← ←

The greatest example of the prophet perfect is in Isaiah.

- The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah relate to God's judgment on Judah, Israel, and many surrounding nations at the time of Isaiah's writing.
- Chapters forty through sixty-six have very little to do with Isaiah's own time. These chapters are written from the vantage point of those in the Babylonian captivity -almost a century after Isaiah's lifetime.

X. EXEGETING OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

As Christian exegetes, we seek to understand the Old Testament prophetic statements in the light of the revelation given to us in the New Testament. The oft-heard axiom, "The Old is the New concealed, and the New is the Old revealed," is an important principle for the Christian who is seeking to unravel some of the difficult passages found in Old Testament prophetic writing. It is helpful to note the Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament, many of which apply obscure Old Testament prophetic statements to Christ – thus, they are labeled, *Messianic*. Some statements are not quoted in the New Testament, but the obvious reference is to something

that was confusing when given, but can be understood by those of us who live this side of the cross and Pentecost. We have the New Testament record of its fulfillment.

There are prophetic statements that are fulfilled in a dual manner, i.e., fulfilled both by some event in history, and also by some later fulfillment.

Prophetic writing is filled with figures of speech, antitypes, parabolic illustrations, hyperboles, and metaphors, as well as literal declarations. It is not always easy to determine whether or not a statement is to be taken literally, or to be understood as some other genre.

In prophetic visions and pronouncements, not every detail is relevant and thus does not need to be explained. This is similar to how one must exegete parables, in that most of a parable is a story that is making a point and the important thing is to understand the point – often the details of the story are window-dressing and not relevant to the truth being presented. Such is the case with prophetic visions and pronouncements - often, some of the details are just window-dressing, but the point can be discerned by noting the core truth contained in the prophecy. This clearly is seen in those instances in which Yahweh explains a prophetic vision and does not explain every detail, but only that which is relevant to the point being made.

It is important when studying the prophetic literature, that we admit to uncertainty when we are not able to determine with exactness how to exegete a passage. We should not become obsessed with making everything fit into some template or formula that is tidy and flawless. Some prophetic writings describe events that still are in our future, and we must be cautious about being dogmatic in how these portions are to be understood.

For an overview of the history of Israel, Judah, and their involvement with the surrounding nations during the ministry of the prophets, see ADDENDUM F.

OBADIAH

This is the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible. It contains 249 Hebrew words. In the KJV it contains 647 English words. The two shortest books of the entire Bible are II John, which contains 244 Greek words and 299 words in the KJV; and III John which contains 219 Greek words and 298 words in the KJV.

All of the prophetic books, with the exception of Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum, contain prophecies that are addressed to Israel or to Judah. Obadiah is addressed to Edom, whose citizens were descendants of Esau (rather than the Israelites who were descendants of Jacob). Jonah is a narrative about a prophetic theme involving the prophet. Nahum is a condemnation of Ninevah.

I. THE PROPHET OBADIAH

- A. THE MEANING OF HIS NAME: depending on the vowel points that one attaches to the consonants his name means, *Servant of Yahweh* or *Worshipper of Yahweh*,
- B. IDENTIFICATION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

There are thirteen Obadiahs in the Bible. The name is a very common one in Israel from the days of David to the close of the Old Testament. The author of the book cannot be identified with certainty. Tradition has him connected with Isaiah or as Ahaziah's captain, but any attempt to identify the author is mere speculation. Because of the context of the Book, we presume that he was a citizen of the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

II. THE DATE OF THE BOOK

- A. THE THEME GIVES US A CLUE: The prophecy of Obadiah denounces Edom because of its attitude toward Jerusalem during a recent pillage of the city by its enemies.
- B. THERE ARE FIVE SACKS OF JERUSALEM THAT ARE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE OCCASION THAT PRODUCED THIS PROPHECY.
 1. Shishak of Egypt (I Kings 14:25-26; II Chronicles 12:-12)
Edom was subject to Judah, during this period. A study of the history of this era clearly makes it apparent that this invasion does not fit the scene described in Obadiah.
 2. Philistines and Arabians (II Chron. 21:16-17)
There is much to commend this event as the background for *Obadiah*
 3. Jehoash of Israel (II Kings 14:8-14; II Chron 25:17-24)
Verse 11 in Obadiah would rule out this pillage as being the one referred to, because Jehoash was not a stranger nor a foreigner.
 4. Calamities in the reign of Ahaz (II Kings 16:6; II Chron. 28:6-8, 17-18)
These were only plunderings and raids. There was no conquering and pillaging as described in Obadiah.
 5. Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25; II Chron. 36:11)
This sack of Jerusalem resulted in the carrying away of Judean citizens into Babylonian exile. The Psalmist indicates that the Edomites did rejoice over the destruction of the city on this occasion (Psalms 137:7). However, if the Babylonians were responsible for the calamity that occasioned the prophecy of Obadiah, a natural assumption is that he would have mentioned them.

Events 2 and 5 are the best fit for the historical conditions described in Obadiah. Thus, either 845 B.C. or 545 B.C. would be the date. More liberal critics who do not allow for predictive prophecy choose the later date. Yet, even some of more conservative leanings also choose #5.

Several facts indicate that the best choice is the early date – 845 BC.

- The early position of Obadiah in all three canons (English, Hebrew, and Septuagint) favors the early date.
- Jeremiah often leaned on the utterances of earlier prophets and his prophecies against Edom are quite similar to those in Obadiah (Obadiah 1-8 compared with Jeremiah 49:7, 9, 10, 14-15)
- Another contributing factor is the state of Edom when Obadiah penned his prophecy. Obadiah describes Edom as a proud, strong nation. That description fits the period of #2 above. However, it was not true when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. Both historical documents and archaeology make it clear that Edom was in decline when the Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6th Century BC.⁶

In the Eighth Century BC, Arabian tribes began immigrating into Edom and they began to take over the country. The Edomites were forced to migrate into southern Judah. Sennacherib mentions the king of Edom who surrendered to him in 701 BC and from that time forward, for many years, Edom was a subject of Assyria. In time, they were subjugated to Babylon. Eventually, they became known as the Idumeans, from whom came the Herod family.

Because Edom is described in Obadiah as a proud nation when he delivered his prophecy (Obadiah 1:2), the somewhat impotent nation that existed in the time of the Babylonian captivity does not fit Obadiah's prophecy.

Thus the historical and archaeological record mitigate against the view that the sack of Jerusalem that occasioned the prophecy of Obadiah was that undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar.

III. EDMOM

- A. ITS LOCATION - Edom is a land immediately south of the Dead Sea, about 100 miles long and 50 miles wide (see ADDENDUM A).
- B. ITS TOPOGRAPHY - Within the land itself, there are some well watered plains. Surrounding the country are mountains with massive cliffs more than 700 feet high. These cliffs are virtually unscalable. The only entrance to the country from the North is a narrow ravine, about one mile in length and only wide enough for two horses, side by side. Its capital, Petra is one of the wonders of the world, with its buildings being carved into the pink colored, solid-rock cliffs. The iron and manganese give a purple hue to the mountains themselves. Petra is called, "The Rose-red City, half as old as time." As was true of the northern border of the country, Petra itself could be entered only through a very narrow ravine (ADDENDUM A)

⁶ Avraham Negev; Shimon Gibson. *Edom; Edomites. Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.* (New York and London: Continuum). 2001, pp. 149–150.

- C. ITS PEOPLE - The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. Thus, they were of the very same blood as the people of Israel, both being the offspring of Isaac and Rebekkah (Genesis 25:19ff). Since their land was such a fortress, they made raids on their neighbors and retreated to the safety of their land. A few Edomites could withstand a huge army in the ravine that was the only highway into their country from the north – from whence their enemies would have come, given the geographical location of Edom. Also, since Edom was the shortest route between Egypt and the other great civilizations of that period, the Edomites could extract huge tariffs from the caravans that passed through their country.
- D. EDOM AND ISRAEL - From the birth of Jacob and Esau onward (even before their birth - Genesis 25:22) there was conflict between the two. Note that when Israel was traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land, Edom would not give them passage through the land (Numbers 20:14-21; 21:4)

IV. THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Title 1a-1b

- A. The Arraignment of proud Edom 1c-9
- B. The Reason for the Denunciation 10-14
- C. The Judgment Expanded 15-16
- D. Triumphant Zion 17-21

EXEGETICAL NOTES

V 1a *The vision of Obadiah*

The title of the prophecy begins with the Hebrew term, *Hazon* (חֲזוֹן). Rendered as, *vision*, the term has the same root as the word for *seer* (*Chozeh* חֹזֶה), referenced in the introduction to this study (VI, C, 2).

A. THE ARRAIGNMENT OF PROUD EDOM 1c - 9

FOUR THINGS IN THIS PARAGRAPH CONTRIBUTED TO EDOM'S STRENGTH AND PRIDE

1. Their natural fortification v3
2. Their allies v6-7
3. Their worldly wisdom v8
4. Their violent men v9

v1 *Thus says Yahweh God concerning Edom--We have heard a report from Yahweh, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, "Arise and let us go against her for battle"*

Note the similar terminology in Jeremiah 49:2.

"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares Yahweh, "That I will cause a trumpet blast of war to be heard Against Rabbah of the sons of Ammon; And it will become a desolate heap, And her towns will be set on fire. Then Israel will take possession of his possessors," Says Yahweh.

God works through secondary causes. He stirred up nations against Edom by Divine Providence. He did not send a single individual around to all of the nations telling them to attack Edom (see II Chron. 21:16; I Chron. 5:26..."God stirred up").

v2 *Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. (KJV)*

Although more recent English translations (NAS, NIV, NLT) have rendered this as future tense –i.e., *I will make* – the Hebrew is past tense – *I have made* (as rendered in the KJV and Youngs Literal Translation).

This is an example of the *prophetic perfect*. Prophetic perfect is the use of a perfect tense of a verb when the situation spoken of has yet to come to pass. The Spirit takes the prophet into the future and from that vantage point he looks back, thus using language that pictures the future situation as present reality (see INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS, SECTION VIII).

Obadiah →→→→→ spiritually carried to the future →→→→→x
 ↓
 586 B.C. ←←←←←

At the time that Obadiah wrote his prophecy, Edom was not small among the heathen

v3 *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee (KJV).* Pride was the capital sin of Edom. The word *pride* comes from the word, that means *to boil* or *to seethe*.

...You who live in the clefts of the rock, In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?' (NAS)

This refers to the impregnable natural fortress of the country. By putting a few defenders among the cliffs, Edom was able to defeat vast armies.

v4 *"Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," declares Yahweh*

No exaltation of power can secure those whom God in His Honor is concerned to bring down.

v5 *If thieves came to you, If robbers by night-- O how you will be ruined!-- Would they not steal only until they had enough? If grape gatherers came to you, Would they not leave some gleanings?*

This refers to the thorough destruction of Edom. As contrasted to the behavior of thieves and grape gathers, Yahweh will leave nothing in Edom.

v6-7 *"O how Esau will be ransacked, And his hidden treasures searched out!"⁷ "All the men allied with you Will send you forth to the border, And the men at peace with you Will deceive you and overpower you. They who eat your bread Will set an ambush for you. (There is no understanding in him.)*

What could not be done by direct attack would be done with treachery. Familiar friends, those who ate Edom's bread, were to be traitors. The men of Edom are pictured as being herded as cattle to the border of the land. "None of understanding" - Edom is so overwhelmed that he is numb - in a state of shock.

v8 *"Will I not on that day," declares Yahweh, "Destroy wise men from Edom and understanding from the mountain of Esau?"*

The wisdom of Edom's men was proverbial. Job's wisest "friend" was Eliphaz, as Edomite from the town of Teman.⁷ One comment on Edom is the fact that the only

⁷ Job 2:11; 4:1-5:27; 42:7, 9

contribution that Edom made to civilization was the Herod family - a family of tremendous mental and creative power.

- v9 *"Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman, In order that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter. This refers to the destruction of Edom's great warriors.*

B. THE REASON FOR THE DENUNCIATION

When Jerusalem had been invaded and sacked, the Edomites displayed an inhuman spirit toward the people of Judah. While the marauders did their worst, the Edomites demonstrated fiendish delight in their kinsmen's calamity. They helped to catch fleeing Judeans, treated them cruelly, sold them as slaves, and shared in the loot obtained after the capture of the city.

They were guilty of the indictment of Proverbs 24:11-12.

Deliver those who are being taken away to death, And those who are staggering to slaughter, O hold them back. If you say, "See, we did not know this," Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?

- V10-11 *"Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever. "On the day that you stood aloof, On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gate And cast lots for Jerusalem-- You too were as one of them.*

Note that "Jacob," not "Israel," is used here. This points out more fully the blood relationship that existed between the nations.

You too were as one of them They did not attack Jacob, but they aided and abetted.

- V12-14 *"Do not gloat over your brother's day, The day of his misfortune. And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah In the day of their destruction; Yes, do not boast In the day of their distress. ¹³ "Do not enter the gate of My people In the day of their disaster. Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity In the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth In the day of their disaster. ¹⁴ "And do not stand at the fork of the road To cut down their fugitives; And do not imprison their survivors In the day of their distress.*

The KJV is a poor translation of these verses (*thou shouldst not*). The Hebrew here is a simple direct imperative: *gloat not, rejoice not, rejoice not, boat not, enter not*, etc.

C. JUDGMENT EXPANDED 15-16

- V15 *"For the day of Yahweh draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.*

The world may seem to be a runaway horse, then someone (God) appears on the scene and checks the horse. The Day of Yahweh ultimately refers to a day in which Jehovah will judge the heathen. There are Days of Yahweh all through history. All of these *Days* look forward to *The Great Day of Yahweh* in which final judgment is accomplished. Note that whether *A Day* or *THE Day*, Yahweh's Day always is presented as being near: *Behold I come quickly!* Both Pentecost and the final judgment are encompassed in Joel's classic passage (Joel 2:28-32).

- V16 *"Because just as you drank on My holy mountain, All the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, And become as if they had never existed.*

The first drink (16a) refers to Edom's drinking wine and carousing in Jerusalem after the pillage. The second drink (16b) refers to God's cup of wrath, which the heathen will drink in the Day of Yahweh (see Jeremiah 25:15ff; Lamentations 4:20-21).

D. TRIUMPHANT ZION 17-21

V17 *"But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, And it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.*

This verse contains three ideas or concepts that reoccur frequently in the prophets:

1. Mt. Zion: The Church is antitypical Zion as is the City of God - Hebrews 12:22
2. The Remnant: *Those that escape... it shall be holy* - a moral transformation will characterize the remnant.
3. Restoration: The House of Jacob shall possess its possessions.

V18 *"Then the house of Jacob will be a fire And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau will be as stubble. And they will set them on fire and consume them, So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau," For Yahweh has spoken.*

Jacob - the Southern Kingdom

Joseph - the Northern Kingdom

The Northern Kingdom (Israel) never did return as a nation. The Samaritans were a mongrel race that resulted from the sexual activity and marriages between the Northern survivors of the invasion, and their Gentile captors. After the Judeans returned from Babylonian captivity, the rest of the world spoke of any descendants of Jacob (both those of the North and those of the South) as "Jews." Note that this verse speaks of the restoration of the Jews, but the utter destruction of Edom (Note Amos 9:12 - there will be Edomites in the Messianic Kingdom).

V19-20 *Then those of the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau, And those of the Shephelah the Philistine plain; Also, they will possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, And Benjamin will possess Gilead.²⁰ And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel, Who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad Will possess the cities of the Negev.*

Although the particulars may be confusing, the important meaning of these verses is that the remnant of Judah and Israel will possess the land of their enemies -representing the universal triumph of God's chosen people.

V21 *The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion To judge the mountain of Esau, And the kingdom will be Yahweh's.*

All of the judges, who were raised up prior to the Hebrew monarch, as well as Zerubbabel who was the civil leader whom God gave to the people when they returned from Babylonian captivity, are spoken of as deliverers and saviors (Judges 2:16; 3:9, 15,31; Nehemiah 9:27).

The closing phrase is the ultimate truth declared by Obadiah. *And the kingdom will be Yahweh's.*

JOEL

In the centuries before the cross revealed God's love as a motive for repentance, Joel argued for repentance as effectively and as eloquently as any man could have argued. The book contains 73 verses. There are three chapters in English, four in traditional Hebrew.

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A. THE DATE OF THE BOOK

1. Joel has had more dates suggested for its historical setting than any other book, except Isaiah. They range from 900 BC to the Fourth Century BC.
2. There are two periods that are most probable.
 - a. The minority of Joash, King of Judah (II Kings 11-12; II Chronicles 22-23).
 - b. The post-exilic period.

The most probable date for the writing of this prophecy falls between 835-817 BC, during the childhood of Joash, the boy-king of Judah. This is the preferred date for several reasons.

- One is its position in the Hebrew canon. It is between Hosea and Amos, which are Eighth and Ninth Century BC prophets.
- Because of the unusual language used in both of their writings, it is assumed that Amos quoted from Joel.

And Yahweh roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. (Joel 3:16)

And he said, "Yahweh roars from Zion, And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up." (Amos 1:2)

- During the period of Joash's minority, the troublesome nations were the same as those pictured in Joel: the Edomites, the Egyptians, the Philistines, and the Phoenicians⁸ (Joel 3:4, 19)
- The troublemakers of the later period were the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Syrians.
- During the early years of Joash's monarchy, the High Priest Jehoida was leading in the restored worship of Jehovah and the refurbishing of the Temple (see information below).

B. THE HISTORICAL EVENTS LEADING TO THE PROPHECY

Jehu, anointed by Elisha to be the King of Israel, was given the divinely appointed task of eliminating the house of Ahab and the eradication of Baalism (II Kings 9:1-0). Ahab had introduced into Israel, calf worship, along with other idolatrous practices.

After being anointed king, Jehu proceeded immediately to the rough and cruel work that he had been commissioned to complete (II Kings 9-10). Ahab already had been slain in a battle with Ben-Hadad II, of Damascus (I Kings 22:34-40).

In fulfilling his commission, Jehu slew:

- Jehoram, Ahab's successor as King of Israel (also known as Joram);
- Jezebel (who had been widowed since the death of Ahab);
- Ahaziah, King of Judah (Ahab's son-in-law);
- Ahab's 70 sons;
- the brothers of Ahaziah;

⁸ Tyre and Sidon are Phoenician cities

- the priests of Baal; etc.

Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was the widow of Jehoram of Judah (see C below) and the mother of Ahaziah of Judah. When Jehu killed Ahaziah, his mother, Athaliah, claimed the throne. This was the only time that someone other than one of David's descendants ruled in Judah; she also was the only woman to sit upon the Judean throne. Following in the footsteps of her mother, Jezebel, Athaliah was fanatically devoted to Baalism. In an effort to destroy the "Seed of David," she killed her own grandchildren.

Only one of her grandchildren, Joash, was saved from this massacre. Joash's aunt, Jehosheba (probably one of Athaliah's daughters), was the wife of the High Priest, Jehoida. She stole the child and she and her husband, Jehoida, hid him in the temple for six years. When Joash was seven years old, the High Priest, Jehoida, revealed that Joash was alive and declared that he should be the King, resulting in a revolt against Athaliah. Athaliah quickly moved to put down the rebellion but she was defeated, captured, and executed.⁹ Jehoida, as High Priest, then declared Joash to be King of Judah. Because Joash was but a boy, Jehoida was the real ruler, until his death.

The occasion for the prophecy of Joel was a severe plague of locusts, sent by God against Judah because of the nation's apostasy. After the death of Athaliah, Jehoida, during Joash's childhood, led in the restoration of the worship of Jehovah. It was during these early days of Joash's childhood reign that the locust plague occurred – spurring the nation into deep repentance for the apostasy that had developed during Athaliah's reign.

C. THE IMMEDIATE SUCCESSION OF THE THRONE OF JUDAH

1. Jehoshaphat
2. Jehoram (Note: there were two Jehorams who were contemporaries. One was the King of Israel, who, as noted above, was slain by Jehu. Jehoram, King of Judah, was Jehoshaphat's eldest son and the husband of Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. (Ahab's foreign policy was alliance by marriage). Jehoram of Judah, no doubt influenced by Athaliah, sank into gross idolatry, and brought upon himself and his kingdom the anger of Jehovah. He died a painful death from a fearful malady, and was refused a place in the sepulchre of the kings.¹⁰ This occurred during the period of Obadiah's prophetic ministry.
3. Ahaziah (son of Jehoram and Athaliah) - slain by Jehu
4. Athaliah - She usurped the throne after the death of her son, Ahaziah, and was executed as noted above.
5. Joash grandson of Jehoram and Athaliah - the High Priest, Jehoida, was the true ruler during Joash's childhood.
6. Amaziah I (son of Joash)

II. THE PROPHET JOEL

- A. HIS NAME- **Joel** means *Yahweh is God*. **Elijah** means *God is Yahweh*. They are the same name with the terms reversed.
- B. There are many Joels in the Bible (the name occurs 14 times in the Old Testament) but the prophet cannot be identified with any of them.

⁹ II Kings 11:1-20; II Chronicles 22:2 – 23:21

¹⁰ II Chronicles 21:8-20

EXEGETICAL NOTES

TITLE 1:1 - *The Word of Yahweh that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel*

This opening statement calls to mind Peter's pronouncement that God is the source of genuine prophecy

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.¹¹

I. A CALL TO FULL REPENTANCE 1:2-2:17

V2-5 *Hear this, O elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days Or in your fathers' days? ³Tell your sons about it, And let your sons tell their sons, And their sons the next generation.*

⁴ *What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.*

Awake, drunkards, and weep; And wail, all you wine drinkers, On account of the sweet wine That is cut off from your mouth.

The land is completely stripped by the locusts. Joel pleads with the old men's memory, *Have you seen anything like this?*

- The four different names used for the locusts in verse 4 are indicative of the severity of the plague.
- Some, without any justification, other than their presupposition, argue that these four names, Palmerworm, Locust, Cankerworm, and Caterpillar (KJV), refer to four armies that God would use against the nations.¹²
 1. Assyrian-Babylonian: Palmerworm
 2. Medo-Persian: Locust
 3. Greek - Cankerworm
 4. Roman - Caterpillar
- Another view, without any justification, selects other armies as those represented by the

¹¹ II Peter 1:20-21 The term rendered, *interpretation*, is ἐπίλυσις (*epilysis*) which carries the idea of unloosing something. The metaphorical use of the term in this passage means that no prophet was a good student of the times, as is a good news commentator, deducing certain things as a result of his analysis. Peter declared that prophets recorded only what the Holy Spirit revealed to them. The prophets were not the sons of Issachar who understood the times (I Chronicles 12:32)

¹² The terms quoted here are the terms, as rendered in the KJV and Youngs Literal Translation. More recent versions have rendered these terms as, *gnawing locust, swarming locust, creeping locust, and stripping locust* (NAS); *locust swarm, great locusts, young locusts, other locusts* (NIV); *cutting locusts, swarming locusts, hopping locusts, stripping locusts* (NLT). Most Hebrew lexicons understand these terms as referring to some kind of locust, probably in different stages of development, yet admit to some ambiguity (for a discussion of these terms see, C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 10, The Minor Prophets (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, pgs. 180-182

locusts' names. Joel 2:20 is the basis for these views. According to this understanding, *northern armies* refers to *armies of men*; or, *northern armies* refers to the Assyrians.

- Some argue that the verse 4 terms refer to different stages of the development of a locust.
- There are between 80 and 90 different types of locusts. So, if one would press for four kinds of locusts because of four names, a problem is encountered when trying to decide which locust is indicated by each name.
- The only sound exegesis of this passage is to understand it as a plague of locusts, without trying to define, specifically, the type of locust.

V5 The drunkards have no wine because of the plague and drought.

V6 *For a nation has invaded my land, Mighty and without number; Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, And it has the fangs of a lioness.*

Nation refers to the tremendous army of locusts.

V7 *It has made my vine a waste, And my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away; Their branches have become white.*

The locusts completely strip all vegetation and devour life.

V8-10 *Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the bridegroom of her youth.*⁹ *The grain offering and the libation are cut off From the house of Yahweh. The priests mourn, The ministers of Yahweh.*¹⁰ *The field is ruined, The land mourns, For the grain is ruined, The new wine dries up, Fresh oil fails.*

The Temple offering is cut off and this is viewed as a calamity.

Verse 8 has been the subject of much discussion.

Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the bridegroom of her youth.

How could one be a virgin and yet a widow?

- The RSV and the NAS try to solve the problem by the reading, *virgin---for the bridegroom of her youth.*
- The KJV, ASV, NIV, and NLT render the term, *husband.*

The Hebrew word translated, *virgin*, is not *almah* (which can be understood either as referring to a young woman or to a virgin) but *bethulah*. *Bethulah*, is used 50 times in the Old Testament and is translated 47 times in the Septuagint by the Greek word *parthenos*, meaning, *virgin*.

What is pictured is a young virgin, betrothed, whose *husband* died before the marriage was consummated.

V11-12 *Be ashamed, O farmers, Wail, O vinedressers, For the wheat and the barley; Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.*¹² *The vine dries up, And the fig tree fails; The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, All the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up From the sons of men.*

Wailing and despair are produced by the total destruction of all of the crops

V13-14 *Gird yourselves with sackcloth, And lament, O priests; Wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God, For the grain offering and the libation Are withheld from the house of your God.*¹⁴ *Consecrate a fast, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land To the house of*

Yahweh your God, And cry out to Yahweh.

The ministers of the altar and the priests are exhorted to consecrate a fast and to go to extreme expressions of remorse and pleading with God to bring relief.

V15 *Alas for the day! For the day of Yahweh is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

This verse is expanded in Chapter 2

V16 *Has not food been cut off before our eyes, Gladness and joy from the house of our God?*

They can see the plague with their eyes. This argues for the historicity of the subject.

V19-20 *To Thee, O Yahweh, I cry; For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.²⁰ Even the beasts of the field pant for Thee; For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.*

Fire devoured the pastures – to what does this refer?

- a. Blazing sun during the drought?
- b. Fire used to destroy the locusts?
- c. The sound of locusts eating fields (similar to the crackling fire?)

2:1-11 *Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of Yahweh is coming; Surely it is near,*

² *A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.*

³ *A fire consumes before them, And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.*

⁴ *Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.* ⁵ *With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.* ⁶ *Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.* ⁷ *They run like mighty men; They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths.* ⁸ *They do not crowd each other; They march everyone in his path. When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks.*

⁹ *They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.* ¹⁰ *Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness.*

¹¹ *And Yahweh utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of Yahweh is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?*

These verses further describe the severity of the situation.

The locusts are described as a *great people*. They moved like a mighty army. In literature, there is frequent mention of the locust's head resembling a horse's head. The locusts devour not only the vegetation, but also all textiles, garments, window shades, etc. In their hordes, they eclipse the sun. Their bodies fill up deep wells.

Locusts travel in groups that cover a square mile, devouring everything in their path. They have been known to devour the face of a baby before the mother can drive them off. One plague, reported in 1889, recorded a swarm 48 miles square (2300 square miles) and a half-mile deep. The number of locusts in this swarm was estimated to be

24,420,000,000, and it blocked off the sun over a section of the Mediterranean Sea.

Another swarm, recorded in South Africa a few years ago, covered an area of 1600-1800 square miles. This swarm covered the terrain so completely, that the river could not be seen.

A plague over Cyprus had locusts one-foot deep in the road. A swarm reported in India is described as having blocked off the sun so that tombs 200 yards distant could not be seen and no shadow was cast by anything.

In 1915, a temporary law was passed in Palestine, requiring all males from 16 - 65 years of age, to gather eleven pounds of locust eggs each day and deliver them to appointed officials.

Many other examples of such incidents could be given.

V12-17 Here is a further call to repentance. This is one of the grandest calls to repentance found in the Bible. (Note: verse 1 - the alarm calling for battle; verse 15 - the alarm calling for the people to assemble for repentance).

"Yet even now," declares Yahweh, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping, and mourning; ¹³ And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to Yahweh your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil. ¹⁴ Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him, Even a grain offering and a libation For Yahweh your God?

¹⁵ *Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, ¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber.*

¹⁷ *Let the priests, Yahweh's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Thy people, O Yahweh, And do not make Thine inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"*

- The call is to full hearted repentance. The repentance called for is not merely remorse, but reformation. No sham repentance is acceptable – *rend your heart and not your garments*. The repentance called for is more than just the forsaking of a sinful habit.
- Nothing is more important than this assembly called for corporate repentance. Even the bridegroom and the bride are called away from their nuptials, and all children, even the nursing infants, are called to the solemn assembly.
- Note that these verses describe God as being gracious, ready to forgive when the obstacles are removed.
- If the people repent, perhaps God will *relent of the evil*. God is a free being dealing with free beings.
- Man can choose right or wrong. God does not change, thus any change in the relationship must be the action of man.
- One of the tragedies of sin is that though forgiveness is obtained, often the consequences must still be suffered.
- Hoping for relief, the priests are exhorted to make a passionate plea to God to not

allow the surrounding nations to mock Israel by saying – *where is their God?*

II. YAHWEH BLESSES HIS PEOPLE 2:18-29

V18-20 In these verses:

1. The repentance of the people is implied;
2. Jehovah has pity as repentance has taken place and so the plague was removed.

Then Yahweh will be zealous for His land, And will have pity on His people.

"But I will remove the northern army far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things."

Those who want to make the locusts figurative, instead of an actual plague, argue that locusts do not enter Palestine from the north, but always come from the south. Thus, they would interpret the *northern army* as being an army of human invaders, coinciding with the prophecy of Jeremiah 1:13-15. However, in the great Palestinian locust plague of 1915, the swarm entered the land from the northeast.

- The East Sea is the Dead Sea; the West Sea (or utmost sea) is the Mediterranean.
- Jerome, writing about such a plague that he witnessed, said that the winds arose and drove the locusts to the east and west. The locusts fell on the shores of the Dead Sea and shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The putrefaction of dead locusts filled the air with a stench that sickened man and beast.

V21-27 *Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, For Yahweh has done great things.²² Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.²³ So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in Yahweh your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before.²⁴ And the threshing floors will be full of grain, And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.²⁵ "Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.²⁶ "And you shall have plenty to eat and be satisfied, And praise the name of Yahweh your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame.²⁷ "Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that I am Yahweh your God And there is no other; And My people will never be put to shame.*

- In the Old Testament, especially in the prophets, physical blessings are a type of spiritual blessing. Physical punishment in the Old Testament, especially in the prophets, is a type of spiritual punishment (Note I Kings 17 & 18 - the drought in the time of Elijah, for example). God is willing to restore abundance to a repentant Israel.
- *My people* are those who repented.

V28-29 *"And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.²⁹ "And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

Miraculous gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are promised. (Note: in the Hebrew Bible, this is the beginning of Chapter 3). Throughout the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, the Holy Spirit was active. However, in neither of these dispensations was the Holy Spirit bestowed as He was to be given in the days of the Messiah.¹³

The Jewish people held on to this promise, and through all of the years of their struggles, they looked forward to its fulfillment. Thus, on Pentecost, AD 30, Peter could say... *but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel,*¹⁴ and all who heard him understood the significance of his pronouncement – no doubt with initial joy, until he indicted them for the murder of Jesus.

The prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2), *began* to be fulfilled on that particular day. However, the prophecy still has yet to be completely fulfilled.

*'And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.'*²⁰ *'The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of Yahweh shall come. (Acts 2:19-20)*

Even as the Judeans, throughout the centuries, looked forward to the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, we continue, throughout the centuries, to look forward to the fulfillment of the rest of the prophetic promise.

III. THE DAY OF JEHOVAH 2:30- 3:21

V30-31 The great and terrible day of Yahweh.

*"And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke."*³¹ *"The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes."*

This must refer to the Judgment Day. Yet, Scripture often uses such language metaphorically (for example, Isaiah 13:9-10, speaking of great political upheavals, uses terminology similar that of Joel). It does seem probable that these verses in Joel refer to the events prophesied in Matthew 24-25 and II Peter 3.

V32 *"And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As Yahweh has said, Even among the survivors whom Yahweh calls."*

This verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:12-13 and he quotes it as if it applied to both Jews and Gentiles.

*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him;*¹³ *for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Both Jews and Gentiles are pictured in Scripture as being in the company of the redeemed: Isaiah 2:2; 11:10; Amos 9:11-15; Acts 15:13-17; Acts 9:11-15; Hosea 1:10-11; Romans 9:25-26; Jeremiah 1:33; I Peter 1:1-2; Galatians 3:25ff.

¹³ Under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, the Holy Spirit anointed special individuals for ministry, i.e., kings and prophets. Under the New Covenant, all who are spiritually born into the Kingdom of God receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38, etc.)

¹⁴ Acts 2:16

In quoting this passage Paul uses the term, *Lord*, thus quoting the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament, which was the common version used in Paul's day). Joel uses the Hebrew term, *Yahweh*. To Joel, calling upon the name of *Yahweh* called to mind the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Because of statements that Jesus made about Himself, it is obvious that He was/is included in the term, *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* is derived from the term, *to be*.¹⁵ Thus, when Jesus said, *Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am*,¹⁶ the Jews understood Him to be saying that He was God, and they tried to stone Him.¹⁷

To Christians, calling upon *the name of the Lord* usually refers to calling upon only one member of the Godhead - the Son. Yet, since Paul is quoting Joel, it would seem that Romans 10:13 is more inclusive of the Godhead than most Christians realize. The implication of Paul's quote is that when we call upon *the name of the Lord*, we are calling upon the entire Godhead, for such is the significance of *Yahweh*.

Another interesting observation is that Joel uses the expression, *Day of Yahweh*, for Judgment Day; whereas noting the context in which Paul quotes this verse, it is apparent that he is using it to refer to the Christian Dispensation, i.e., the age in which Gospel is preached (Romans 10:9-15).

Paul's citation of Joel in this manner, and other matters (some of which will be noted below) indicate that this portion of Joel has Messianic implications.

3:1-16 Judgment is executed

V1-8 *"For behold, in those days and at that time, When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will gather all the nations, And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have*

¹⁵ Technically called the *Tetragrammaton*, meaning four letters. The name consisted of four consonants (English letters YHWH; Hebrew letters יהוה) and never was pronounced, for fear of taking the name in vain (Exodus 20:7). The Tetragrammaton occurs 5,410 times in the Bible: Genesis 153 times, Exodus 364, Leviticus 285, Numbers 387, Deuteronomy 230 (total in Torah 1,419); Joshua 170, Judges 158, Samuel 423, Kings 467, Isaiah 367, Jeremiah 555, Ezekiel 211, Minor Prophets 345 (total in Prophets 2,696); Psalms 645, Proverbs 87, Job 31, Ruth 16, Lamentations 32, Daniel 7, Ezra-Nehemiah 31, Chronicles 446 (total in Hagiographa 1,295).

Because Jews were scattered among the nations and were speaking the languages of the countries in which they lived, Hebrew was spoken less and less and reading it was difficult for those of the diaspora. To correct this problem, c. 600 AD, Jewish scribes in Tiberias (known as the Masoretes) began to add vowel points to Hebrew words. Since no one knew the exact pronunciation, they added the vowel points from the Hebrew word, for *Lord* – *Adonai*. However, because the Hebrew does not easily transfer to English pronunciation, *Adonai* does not transfer directly to how the Tetragrammaton is pronounced in English (the two closest possibilities are *Yehovah*, or, since Gesenius (1786-1842), *Yahweh*).

¹⁶ John 8:58

¹⁷ John 8:59

*divided up My land.*³ *"They have also cast lots for My people, traded a boy for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.*⁴ *"Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you rendering Me a recompense? But if you do recompense Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense on your head.*⁵ *"Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples,*⁶ *and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,*⁷ *behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense on your head.*⁸ *"Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation," for Yahweh has spoken.*

Valley of Jehoshaphat (*Valley of the Judgment of Yahweh* -The Hebrew term, *Jehoshaphat*, means, *Yahweh is Judge*). Now called the Valley of Cedron, both Moslems and Orthodox Jews want to be buried there because they think that this is where the Judgment will take place.

Moses had foretold that Israel would be driven out from their land and be dispersed among the heathen (Leviticus 26:33ff; Deuteronomy 28:36ff). This was to be punishment for forsaking Jehovah. Joel speaks of this circumstance in past tense, although the fulfillment of this described dispersion was not fulfilled until centuries later under the Babylonians and Romans. At least a portion of this section must be understood as prophetic perfect.

Verse 3 describes the terrible treatment that Israel would experience when this dispersion became reality.

When the successors of Alexander the great (the Ptolemaeans and Seleucidae) fought to possess Palestine, thousands of Jews were sold as prisoners of war.

In his expedition against the Maccabaeans, the Syrian commander Nicanor, anticipating a great victory, traveled among the commercial towns of the Mediterranean and sold in advance Jews that he had yet to conquer and capture. The sale price was ninety Jews for one talent. Therefore, 1000 Syrian slavers accompanied his army, carrying fetters with which they planned to bond the enslaved Jews.¹⁸

After the Roman conquest and destruction of Jerusalem, Titus disposed of the prisoners (97,000 Jewish prisoners) in the following manner:

- Those under seventeen years of age were publicly sold
- Of the remainder, many were executed immediately
- Others were sent away to work in Egyptian mines
- Some were kept to fight beasts in the amphitheatres of all of the chief cities
- The tallest and most handsome were kept for the triumphal procession in Rome

Following the Second Jewish/Roman War (132 – 136 AD), the victorious Roman Emperor, Hadrian, sold Jewish captives for a very low price. For example, four Jews were sold in the slave market for a measure of barley.

¹⁸ See I Maccabees 3:41; II Maccabees 8:11,25; Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12:7,3)

However, this history cannot exhaust what Joel describes; it must point to a yet to be realized event (or events). For example, the actions described in Verses 4-8 had not become reality when Joel penned his prophecy, nor have they become fully achieved to our present date.

Another factor pointing to something other than a literal understanding of this scene is the size of the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kedron). This valley could not contain the nations called to assemble there (verse 2). This, then, must be a figure of a judgment yet to come.

Keil and Delitzsch state,

“The people and inheritance of Jehovah are not merely the Old Testament Israel as such, but the church of the Lord of both the old and new covenants, upon which the Spirit of God is poured out; and the judgment which Jehovah will hold upon the nations, on account of the injuries inflicted upon His people, is the last general judgment upon the nations, which will embrace not merely the heathen Romans and other heathen enemies of the people of God, both within and without the earthly limits of the church of the Lord, including even carnally-minded Jews, Mohammedans, and nominal Christians who are heathens at heart.”¹⁹

V9-13 *Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!* ¹⁰ *Beat your plowshares into swords, And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."* ¹¹ *Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there.*

Bring down, O Yahweh, Thy mighty ones. ¹² *Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations.* ¹³ *Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.*

Yahweh ironically challenges the nations to prepare for war.

The nations are summoned to their doom - they are summoned to prepare for a display of strength against Yahweh. Note: Joel seems to interrupt God in verse 11b, as he sees all of the might of nations gathering. He says to God, *Bring down, O Yahweh, Thy mighty ones.* As the nations are gathered, the harvest of destruction is to begin.

V14-16a *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision.* ¹⁵ *The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness.* ¹⁶ *And Yahweh roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble.*

This is the judgment scene. Note that the language of verse 15 echoes that of 2:30-31, which Peter quoted on Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21)

Multitudes, tumultuous crowds

Decision - God's decision of judgment upon the wicked

The three accompaniments:

1. The first accompaniment to the judgment is addressed to the eye (moon, stars, sun);

¹⁹ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, The Minor Prophets*, Volume 10, Book I (Peabody, Mass, Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, page 222

2. The second accompaniment is addressed to the ear (roar, voice);
3. The third accompaniment is addressed to the total being (heaven and earth shake).

Joel presents the scene of judgment, but does not go on to describe the horrors of hell. Yet, the three accompaniments strike terror into the hearts of the masses (I Thessalonians 4:16; Amos 1:2)

V16b-21 *But Yahweh is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, And strangers will pass through it no more.¹⁸ And it will come about in that day That the mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of Yahweh, To water the valley of Shittim.¹⁹ Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood.²⁰ But Judah will be inhabited forever, And Jerusalem for all generations.²¹ And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For Yahweh dwells in Zion.*

The People of Yahweh will be glorified. Yahweh is a terror and destruction to the wicked, but a refuge and stronghold to the righteous.

V17b-18 Here is a hyperbolic description - not to be taken literally. Physical blessings in abundance and fertility are figures that represent spiritual blessings.

Shittim - Jewish campground east of Jordan (Num. 25:1; Josh. 2:3; 3:1)

Many passages of Scripture speak of different aspects of the City of God, For example:

- Zechariah 14:20-21 - No sinners there (Rev. 21:27; II Peter 3:13)
- Ezekiel 47:12 - A fountain/river (Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1)

V19 In this passage, as elsewhere, Egypt and Edom represent the enemies of God (Amos 9:12; Isaiah 19:24-25).

V20 Judah and Jerusalem are terms that embrace the true people of God and the Holy City of Revelation 21.

V21 God will hold the innocent as being innocent, even though they have been condemned by the world. (I Corinthians 4:5 - in many instances, earthly judgments will be reversed).

FOR YAHWEH DWELLS IN ZION - The most wonderful Character of Heaven will be the presence of Yahweh. This thought, often repeated in the prophets, is beautifully presented in Revelation Chapters 21 & 22:²⁰

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,⁴ and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no

²⁰ Revelation 21:1-4, 23-24; 22:3-4

longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.²⁴ And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.

And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him;⁴ and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

JONAH

Jonah, son of Amittai, was from the Galilean community of Gath-hepher (II Kings 14:25), which was about four miles north of Nazareth. His name means, *dove*.

Although the exact year of the authorship of the book cannot be determined, the period about which it was written is very certain. Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel (II Kings 14:23-25). Therefore, we know that Jonah prophesied c790 BC.

Jonah was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom, Israel. During the years of his ministry, Israel was in a time of prosperity, ease, and peace, even though the Assyrians under the rule of Adad-Nirari (810-783 BC) dominated the area and regularly exacted tribute from Israel. The immediate neighbors of Israel were in a time of weakness.

Every Israelite had a hatred for the powerful Assyrians. Jonah, with his patriotic hatred for the Assyrians, found it difficult to obey God's command to go and prophesy in Nineveh, the Assyrian capitol. He especially did not want to deliver a message that would result in Nineveh's repentance and salvation.

Yahweh was Israel's God, and Jonah wanted Him to be Nineveh's enemy (Assyria was the forceful nation that finally destroyed Jonah's homeland). So, when God said, "Go east, young man," Jonah promptly went west.

An easy outline of the book:

CHAPTER ONE - Disobedience, Running from God

CHAPTER TWO - Prayer, Running to God

CHAPTER THREE - Preaching, Running with God

CHAPTER FOUR - Complaints, Running ahead of God

EXEGETICAL NOTES

1:1-3 The Commission and Response:

V1 *The word of Yahweh came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying,*

The same comment that was made concerning the opening verse of Joel is appropriate here: This opening statement calls to mind Peter's pronouncement that God is the source of genuine prophecy

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.²¹

²¹ II Peter 1:20-21 The term rendered, *interpretation*, is ἐπίλυσις (*epilysis*) which carries the idea of unloosing something. The metaphorical use of the term in this passage means that no prophet was a good student of the times, as is a good news commentator, deducing certain things as a result of his analysis. Peter declared that prophets recorded only what the Holy Spirit revealed to them.

V2 *Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.*

The phrase, *their wickedness has come up before Me*, is reminiscent both of God's indictment of Cain and the conversation that the Angel of Jehovah had with Abraham concerning Sodom and Gomorrah.

And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. (Genesis 4:10)

And Yahweh said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know." (Genesis 18:20-21)

Note that the story is not focused on Nineveh, but on Jonah. We are reminded of Mark 16:15-16. *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."*¹⁶ *"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

V3 *But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.*

God said, "Go east," to Nineveh, but Jonah bought a ticket to Tarshish and went west. To go east to Nineveh, would have been a long overland walk. To go to Joppa and the Mediterranean shore, would have been a much shorter walk.

Although there is some uncertainty, Tarshish probably was the name of a city in Spain²² (Tradition states that his fare for a ticket to Tarshish was 4000 Gold Denarii).

The statement that Jonah *rose up to flee from the presence of Yahweh*, does not mean that Jonah did not know of God's omnipresence, i.e. that he believed that he could escape from God's presence by getting out of Palestine.

The true understanding of Jonah's action is of a prophet who is trying to resign from the ministry. Note the words of Elijah in I Kings 17:1 *As Yahweh the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand...* Elijah's words convey the correct concept of what it means to be a minister of Yahweh. Jonah was fleeing from his position as God's messenger.

Observe this contrast between Elijah's conduct and Jonah's attitude:

- Elijah was jealous **for** God i.e. no false God should receive reverence and worship;
- Jonah was jealous **of** God i.e., Yahweh was the God of the Israelites and it was not right for Yahweh to extend mercy to the Assyrians (4:1-2).

Jonah's adventure took place during the era in which, the Phoenicians were the significant maritime empire. Ezekiel 27 describes the sailors, vessels, and the various ports which the Phoenicians visited in their wide-ranging maritime commerce. Tarshish and Judah are included in the catalogue.²³ This leads us to conclude that the ship and the sailors probably were from Phoenicia.

²² Tarshish is mentioned 25 times in the Old Testament

²³ Ezekiel 27:12, 17,25,

1:4-16 God sends a storm.

V4 *And Yahweh hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.*

The Hebrew term used to describe God's causing the storm is a rather violent term, meaning to *hurl*²⁴. Some of the English translations do not convey the violence of this term.

The older Jewish commentaries said that the storm was confined to the immediate area surrounding the ship as an unmistakable sign of Divine Wrath. This, of course, cannot be proven.

V5-6 *Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep. ⁶ So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."*

The fact that Jonah was asleep in the midst of the great storm probably was a result of his being exhausted. Having made a hurried journey from Galilee to Joppa, he must have been physically spent. Certainly, because of the motivation for his actions, he would have been mentally fatigued and emotionally drained.

Mariners and *shipmasters/pilots* are terms found in Ezekiel 27:27-29, in the lament over Tyrus -Phoenicia's major port.

The sailors cried out to each of their Gods and, in an effort to keep the ship buoyant, they began to cast their cargo overboard. The shipmaster rebuked Jonah for being asleep and not crying out to his god.

Although the sailors did not know, fully, the significance of the trip, we learn from verse 10 that Jonah had told them some of his story.

V7-8 *And each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"*

God's hand is upon this casting of lots. We read elsewhere in Scripture of this method's being used to determine Divine things. (Acts 1:26; I Samuel 10:20; 14:42; Joshua 7:14).

V9-11 *And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."¹⁰ Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh, because he had told them.*

Our sympathies are drawn to these heathen seamen. They were experienced sailors, who no doubt, had faced many storms, but this storm was unusually violent. In fear, they sought deliverance. When Jonah told them his story, they were bewildered and asked him, "How could you do this?"

²⁴ טָרַף (tel)

V12 *And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you."*

Perhaps there is a prophetic implication to these words. How could Jonah know that the sea would be calm if he were cast forth? Note that he did not commit suicide by jumping overboard. One wonders if the sea would have calmed if they would have let him jump, instead of throwing him into the sea.

V13 *However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them.*

The fact that the mariners did their best to continue in the storm and to avoid casting Jonah overboard, attests to their character and their respect for life.

V14-15 *Then they called on Yahweh and said, "We earnestly pray, O Yahweh, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O Yahweh, hast done as Thou hast pleased." So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.*

They had cried out to their false gods, to no avail (V 5). They acknowledged the hand of Yahweh and only when all else had failed did they cast Jonah out of the ship,.

V16 *Then the men feared Yahweh greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.*

When the mariners saw the sea had become calm, they prayed to Jonah's God. Although they did not have a full understanding of the true faith, they responded to the light which they had. They did accept the evidence and acted as best as they could. Their sacrifice and vow was a response that reflected the manner in which they worshipped their heathen Gods.

God could have handled Jonah's rebellion in some other manner, but through the method that was used, the heathen sailors were converted. Perhaps they became "Yahweh missionaries" for the rest of their lives.

1:17-2:10 Jonah is supernaturally preserved.

V17 *And Yahweh appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.*

There is no indication that God created a special fish. The word, *prepare* (KJV), *appointed* (NAS), *provided* (NIV) is the same word that is used in 4:5-8 (vine, worm, wind), literally meaning, *to count*, or *to appoint*.

The word translated, *fish*,²⁵ means *fish* or *sea monster*. This could have been a whale or a fish (a fish is cold blooded while a whale is warm blooded). The fish could have been a large shark or a whale, or some other large fish. Men and animals have been swallowed by whales.

For many years, Bible teachers have repeated the story of an event that reputedly occurred in 1891. According to this story, a whaling vessel, *The Star of the East*, lost a seaman overboard. He was swallowed by a whale and was rescued days later when the whale was harpooned. The story has been widely repeated by a number of conservative Christian writers, including Bernard Ramm, Harry Rimmer and the creationist Henry

²⁵ דָּג (dag)

Morris; and also in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on Jonah and the IVP Bible Dictionary. Here is the story.

*The whaling ship **Star of the East** was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, searching for whales, which were very scarce. One morning the lookout sighted a whale about three miles away on the starboard quarter. Two boats were manned. In a short time one of the boats was near enough to enable the harpooner to send a spear into the whale, which proved to be an exceedingly large one The whale ... beat about with its tail in the maddest fashion. The boats attempted to get beyond the reach of the animal, which was apparently in its death agonies, and one of them succeeded, but the other was less fortunate. The whale struck it with his nose and upset it. The men were thrown into the water, and before the crew of the other boat could pick them up, one man drowned and James Bartley had disappeared. When the whale became quiet from exhaustion the waters were searched for Bartley, but [he] could not be found; and, under the impression that he had been struck by the whale's tail and sunk to the bottom, the survivors rowed back to the ship. The whale was dead, and in a few hours the great body was lying by the ship's side, and the men were busy with axes and spades cutting through the flesh to secure the fat. They worked all day and part of the night. They resumed operations the next forenoon, and were soon down to the stomach The workmen were startled while laboring to clear it ... to discover something doubled up in it that gave spasmodic signs of life. The vast pouch was ... cut open, and inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid out on the deck and treated to a bath of sea water, which soon revived him*

During the brief sojourn in the whale's belly, Bartley's skin, where it was exposed to the action of the gastric juices, underwent a striking change. His face and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness, and the skin was wrinkled giving the man the appearance of having been parboiled

The whaling captains say that they never remember a parallel case to this before. They say that it frequently happens that men are swallowed by whales who become infuriated by pain of the harpoon and attack the boats, but they have never known a man to go through the ordeal that Bartley did and come out alive.

One of the reports said that Bartley had been treated at a London hospital for the effects of the whale's gastric juices on his skin.

Although this is an intriguing story, it turns out that it seems that it is just that – a sailor's tall tale. Edward B. Davis, Ph.D, is a professor of science and history at Messiah College in Grantham, Penn. Davis is a Christian, strongly committed to the validity of Scripture. He is a consulting editor for the American Scientific Affiliation's Journal, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, a journal dedicated to providing Christians a scientific basis for their faith. In 1991, Davis began searching for documentation to validate this story.²⁶

Davis traveled to many places to investigate this story, including two visits to England. On one trip to England, he investigated the hospital records of all of the hospitals in London that had existed in the 1890's – no record of such a patient could be found in the relevant records.

²⁶ I first encountered this story in 1956, in a class on the minor prophets at Cincinnati Bible Seminary, where it was presented as fact. Dr. Davis' did not publish his research until 1991.

He made an inquiry to the Maritime History Archive at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the Lloyd's Register is now kept. Their records showed three vessels under British registry bearing the name *Star of the East* that could have been in service in 1891: a 734-ton barque, and two other boats, each of the latter being less than 20 tons, and thus could not possibly have been whalers.,

The crew agreement of the barque showed that in February 1891, the ship was en route from London to Wellington via New York. The agreement lists every member of the crew, including a few who signed on in Wellington and deserted just six days later in Lyttelton. No James Bartley is listed, nor is anyone of similar name, either for the entire voyage or any part of it.

He also learned that whaling in the Falkland Islands did not commence until 1909.

Davis found an article in the 1906 *Expository Times* in which a reader named Williams reported that he had inquired of Mrs. John Killam, wife of the captain of the *Star of the East*, concerning the Bartley story. Mrs. Killam stated flatly, "There is not one word of truth in the whale story. I was with my husband all the years he was in the *Star of the East*. There was never a man lost overboard while my husband was in her. The sailor has told a great sea yarn." (For Davis' full and rather lengthy report on his extensive research, see <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1991/PSCF12-91Davis.html>).

Be that as it may, it is now recognized that the tale of sailor Bartley's being swallowed by a whale is just a big fish story. However, this should not in any way cause us to discount the biblical record of Jonah's experience. As Davis commented in his article,

"Before going further, I want to clarify an important point. just because this story turned out to be bogus does not mean that the Biblical story of Jonah is not true. Most of us have heard claims that someone saw Elvis Presley at the local mall. Just because we don't believe these silly reports does not mean that we doubt the resurrection [of Christ]."²⁷

Our Lord Jesus confirmed the historicity of this account by stating, *for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*²⁸

2:1-9 The psalm of Jonah

This poem, written after the experience (notice it is in past tense), describes Jonah's crying out to God in repentance while in the fish's belly. It is a confession that the preacher needs the same grace as his hearers. Jonah came to realize that he needed the grace which he was withholding from the Assyrians.

One of the bottom line lessons of the experience is – God expects obedience.

*Then Jonah prayed to Yahweh his God from the stomach of the fish,² and he said,
"I called out of my distress to Yahweh, And He answered me.*

I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice.

³ *"For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me.*

²⁷ Edward Davis <http://www.reasons.org/articles/a-modern-jonah>

²⁸ Matthew 12:40 and referencing this again as a sign to His generation in Matthew 16:4 and Luke 12:29ff

⁴ "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless, I will look again toward Thy holy temple.'

⁵ "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶ "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever,

But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O Yahweh my God.

⁷ "While I was fainting away, I remembered Yahweh; And my prayer came to Thee, Into Thy holy temple.

⁸ "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, ⁹ But I will sacrifice to Thee With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from Yahweh."

V10 *Then Yahweh commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.*

The miracle was the timing of the arrival of the fish and the place and timing of Jonah's being cast upon the beach.

Scripture does not tell us the location of the beach onto which Jonah was cast. It probably was on a Palestinian shoreline from whence Jonah would have walked back to his hometown.

Scripture also is silent concerning the length of time that passed between Jonah's being cast upon the shore and his second commissioning to go to Nineveh.

3:1-4 Jonah's second commissioning

Now the word of Yahweh came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. ⁴ Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Some questions come to mind as we encounter the next chapter in the story of Jonah.

- Who found Jonah on the beach and how long did he remain at home before the second commission?
- Did the story of his experience somehow precede him to Nineveh and when he preached, did the people know what had happened to him?
- Could he have been a sign to the Ninevites if no one knew about his experience?

We do not know the answers to these questions, but from Luke's record of Jesus' statement, one might conclude that the Ninevites knew of Jonah's experience and that his preaching also was a sign.

And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation, ... The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ..."²⁹

The three days journey probably refers to the circumference of the city. It is estimated to have been about 38 miles, during Jonah's era. Strabo said that in his day, Nineveh was

²⁹ Luke 11:29-30, 32

the size of Babylon, which would be 50 miles in circumference.³⁰ Years later, Sennacherib built walls around the inner city. These walls were 7 miles in circumference. Jonah probably strolled through the area and preached as he went.

V4 *Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."*

This is a conditional prophecy. Nineveh was threatened with doom in order to save her (note Revelation 2:1-6... the Ephesian church is given a choice... repent or perish).

3:5-9 This is a very unusual act of repentance

Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

⁶ *When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes.* ⁷ *And he issued a proclamation and it said,*

"In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. ⁸ *"But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.* ⁹ *"Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?"*

Forcing animals to fast (V 7-8) is so unusual, that this report is one thing that lends credibility to the book – no other record of making animals fast is known in literature. No comment is made as to whether or not it is appropriate to make animals fast.

V10 *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

God's purpose in sending Jonah was accomplished.

4:1-11 Jonah and God have a revealing encounter

V1-2 In his complaint, Jonah gave a marvelous description of the God whom we worship.

But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. And he prayed to Yahweh and said, "Please Yahweh, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

V3-5 *"Therefore now, O Yahweh, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."⁴ And Yahweh said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"⁵ Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.*

³⁰ Strabo, (born c. 64 BC, died after 21 AD), was a Greek geographer and historian whose *Geography* is the only extant work covering the whole range of peoples and countries known to both Greeks and Romans during the reign of Augustus (27 BC –14 AD).

Did God tell Jonah that He was going to spare the city and this is what prompted the complaint? Whatever prompted his complaint, Jonah went out of town and sat down to see if the city would repent, fully - or if the city would fall short of God's conditions.

Had the 40 days (3:4) been completed at the time of this episode?

- If the book is in chronological order, the days had passed. Jonah may have felt that God might not have been pleased with the degree of repentance and thus, would destroy the city anyway (that's what Jonah hoped).
- If chapters 3 & 4 are topical, the picture presented is of Jonah's preaching during the early part of the 40 days. After seeing some signs of repentance, he went out and sat down until the 40 days had passed, waiting to see what God would do.

There is no way to know whether the chapters are topical or chronological.

V6-8 *So Yahweh God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.⁷ But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered.⁸ And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."*

God prepared (KJV) appointed (NAS) provided (NIV) - see comment on 1:17. Supernaturally accelerated growth may be described.

V9 *Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death."*

Jonah's attitude (here and in verse 3) is reminiscent of Elijah (I Kings 19:4).

V10-11 *Then Yahweh said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. And should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"*

The prophet's narrow mindedness is rebuked and God's mercy is justified. Jonah's attitude is similar to the attitude of the Jews in Jesus' day (Acts 13:42ff; 22:21ff; etc).

In national calamities, the innocent usually perish with the wicked.

If God had destroyed Nineveh, more than 120,000 little boys and girls would have been destroyed (the population must have been about 700,000, since children historically comprise 1/5 of a city's population). God is concerned about children (Matthew 18:10).

This also is one of the strongest passages indicating that God is concerned about dumb brutes (see similar statements in Proverbs 12:10; Psalm 50:10-11; 36:6; 145:15; 104:10-14; Job 38:39-41; Exodus 23:4-5; Deut. 22:1-4; 25:4).

These final words are among the most amazing closings in all of literature.

In closing, we note that even though Jonah wrote this book, at the instigation of the Holy Spirit,³¹ Jonah was writing a confession.

³¹ II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20

AMOS

Amos wrote during the period called “The Golden Age of Hebrew Prophecy.” The grand quartet of this period consists of two from the north (Israel) and two from the south (Judah).

North:

Amos c. 760 BC

Hosea c. 755-725 BC

South:

Isaiah c. 740-698 BC

Micah 738-698 BC

BACKGROUND:

The Kingdom of Israel under Saul, David, and Solomon lasted 120 years (each of these three reigned 40 years: Acts 13:21; II Samuel 5:4; I Kings 11:42). At the death of Solomon, the Kingdom was divided.

- Ten tribes, under Jeroboam I, formed the Northern Kingdom, which became known as *Israel*.
- The Southern Kingdom, known as *Judah*, consisted of two tribes: Judah and Benjamin.

Thus, it is important when speaking of Israel to indicate whether one is speaking of the Kingdom of Israel before the division, or the Northern Kingdom, after the division.

Jeroboam I founder of the Northern Kingdom, did not want his people to go to Jerusalem (capital of the Southern Kingdom) to celebrate the religious feasts dictated under the Law of Moses. He was afraid that if his people began traveling to Judah for the religious activities, they would be drawn back into a relationship with Judah, thus threatening the survival of his kingdom.

To prevent this, under the ruse that it would be too far for the people to travel to Jerusalem to worship, he instituted Calf Worship (I Kings 12:27-33 records his motivation and his actions). Calf Worship first was introduced to Israel at the bottom of Sinai, when Aaron made the Golden Calf (Exodus 32). Calf Worship was common in Egypt.

Jeroboam ordained a non-Levitical priesthood, ordained a feast similar to the Feast of Tabernacles, to be held “in the month that he devised in his heart” (I Kings 12:33).

Jeroboam (and probably Aaron) intended for Calf Worship to be a means of worshipping Yahweh. The idea behind Calf Worship is that a bull calf represents power and so the calf statue reminded people of the power of Yahweh. This, of course was in direct violation of the prohibition given in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4-5). Jeroboam boldly created substitutes for God’s clear commandments concerning the where, hows, and whats of worship.

Amos does not mention calf worship, as does Hosea, but he goes much deeper. Passages such as Amos 3:14; 4:4-5; 5:4 strike at the elements and the heart involved in calf worship. The message of Amos echoes the words of Jesus, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments*,³² and the frequent Scriptural warning about the error of keeping commandments and traditions of men rather than the pure doctrines of Christ.³³

Jeroboam established two worship centers: Bethel and Dan. Bethel became the main center of Yahweh Calf Worship.

The prophecy of Amos was delivered on the site of the worship center in Bethel.

³² John 14:15

³³ Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:22; Titus 1:14;

HISTORICAL SETTING

In the mid-Nineteenth Century, Assyrian rulers had shown a growing interest in Palestine. Israel and other small states banded together to stem the tide of Assyrian invasion. The Battle of Karkar (854 BC) took place when the Palestinian coalition withstood the Assyrians. The Assyrian Empire had been in a period of decline for several years, but was beginning to regain strength at the time of this battle. The battle was indecisive and so Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian King, returned to Assyria.

With the Assyrians not strong enough to press into Palestine, Syria became the dominant power in the region. Syria's king, Hazael, taking advantage of Assyria's weakness and Israel's inability to defend itself, gave harsh treatment to the various nations that occupied the area. It was at this time that Jehu became King of Israel.

Jehu became King of Israel in 842 BC. God told Jehu that his dynasty would last four generations (II Kings 10:30) and this is exactly the length of his dynasty (II Kings 15:11-12).

When Adadnirari III became King of Assyria (ruled 811-783 BC), he launched a vigorous campaign against Syria, smashing the Syrian empire. However, the Assyrians still were not strong enough to occupy Palestine and dominate the small nations of the region. Thus, the Israelites were free to expand their borders and to prosper. From 805 BC until 740 BC, Israel enjoyed peace and prosperity.

It was during this time of prosperity that Jeroboam II became the King of Israel. Jeroboam II was the third king in the Jehu dynasty (reigned 41 years, 790/789-749/748 BC). He was the King of Israel when Amos prophesied.

When Jeroboam II came to the throne of Israel he began a vigorous building program. He extended the nation's borders to its broadest limits. It would be difficult to exaggerate the success of Jeroboam II's military exploits.

In the south, in Judah, Uzziah also was enjoying a time of great expansion. Prosperity, constant victory and peace characterized the period. No one dreamed of any problem from any quarter. Isaiah and Micah were young men in the south, when Amos prophesied in the north. Hosea was but a youth in the north, at this time. The great old preacher, Jonah, may still have been alive when Amos began his ministry. Amos also probably knew Elisha.

AMOS AND HIS PROPHECY

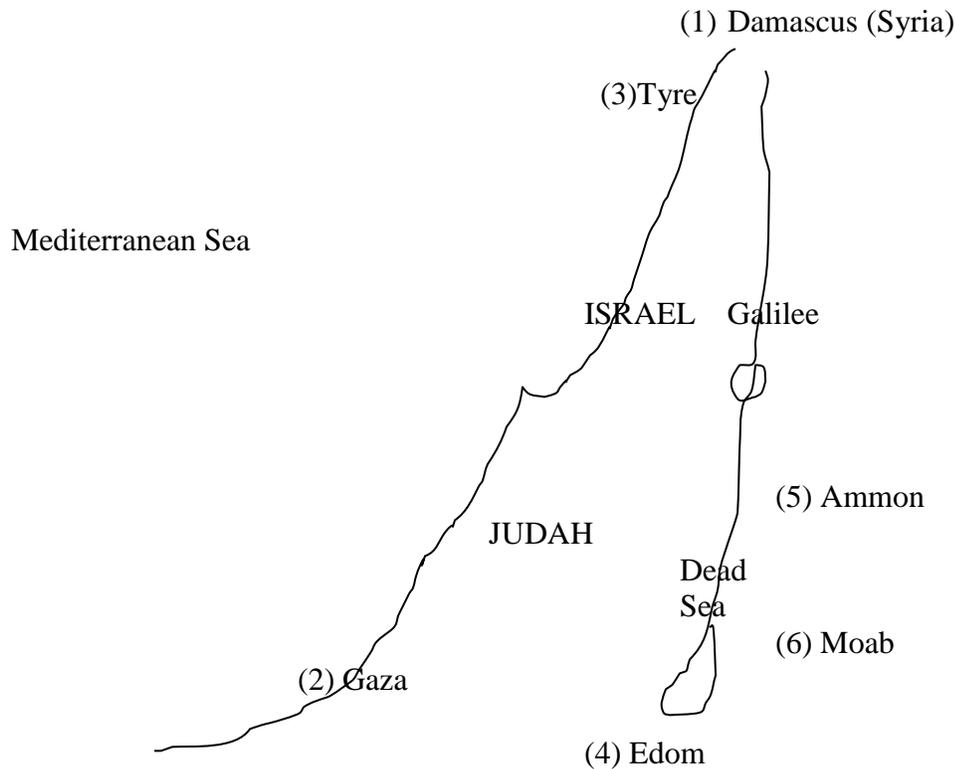
Amos was a citizen of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. He was a native of Tekoah, a small village south of Jerusalem. Tekoah was surrounded by limestone hills and wilderness. The Dead Sea, eighteen miles away and four thousand feet below the village, was visible from Tekoah. God called Amos from tending sheep in Tekoah to become a prophetic messenger to Israel. He was directed by God to travel to Bethel and to deliver a sermon to people who thought that they had no need to hear preaching.

The people of Israel were outwardly religious. The religious shrines were busy. There was a lot of conversation about longing for the "Day of Yahweh". Even so, religion made little difference in how the people lived their lives. The rich nobles took the lead in religious matters, while at the same time they were cruel and calloused toward the suffering of the poor. Brazen idolatry, swearing, stealing, injustice, oppression, robbery, adultery, and murder were common in the morally rotten society.

Amos sermon had a clever introduction. As Amos began his sermon, he denounced the surrounding nations. The people of Bethel were drawn into enthusiastic approval, as this they heard their rivals being denounced by a prophet of God. One can almost hear the loud *amens*

burst from the crowd as Amos proceeds in his denunciation. Suddenly, in a Nathan like maneuver (II Samuel 12:1-7), Amos blasted Israel. No doubt at this moment, the *amens* stopped and one could have heard a pin drop. Amaziah, the king's priest, immediately tried to withstand Amos. It was a classic encounter. The priest was bold because he was backed by the king; the prophet was bold because he was speaking for God. Finally, with no regard for God's claim on the sanctuary or the nation, Amaziah drove Amos away with the statement, *the king's sanctuary it is*. To the official mind, this was the most important fact, rather than the fact that God had sent a messenger.

Here are the nations mentioned in Amos's sermon and the order in which he denounced them:



AMOS: EXEGETICAL NOTES

A. Superscription: V1

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoa, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Which he saw, is the Hebrew word, *haza*, meaning, *to see*. This is the Hebrew verb commonly used to represent what is presented to a prophet's mind, whether by vision or by Divine oracle (see INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS, VI, C, 2).

If we knew the year of the earthquake, we could date the book with precise accuracy. However, the exact year is not known. It must have been quite an earthquake, since it is mentioned 200 years later in Zechariah 14:5. Josephus mentions this earthquake 850 years later (Josephus dates the earthquake approximately at 765 BC).

The word, *herdsman* (KJV), *shepherders* (NAS), is the translation of a Hebrew word that indicates the type of sheep being herded (גֹּזֵל *goqad*). This type of sheep is a very ugly sheep, but one well known for the quality of its wool.

Note that Amos begins his book humbly. He presents the truth about himself, that he is a herdsman – one of the lowest occupations of society.

B. Preface V2

And he said, "Yahweh roars from Zion, And from Jerusalem He utters His voice; And the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn, And the summit of Carmel dries up."³⁴

Note the same warning in Joel 3:16. In Joel, the statement is in the heart of the book, having to do with the final consummation. In Amos, the description is of a nearer disaster.

In prophecy, *Zion*, always is the seat of the priest/king.

The Power of God suggested in this preface should strike terror in the hearts of the surrounding nations.

I. THE APPROACHING JUDGMENT 1:3-2:16

Thus saith Yahweh, is the introduction to each of the condemnations (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6)

- Each of the condemnations also begins with the expressions, *For three transgressions...for four* (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4).
- This is not a sum to be added ($3 + 4 = 7$). This is an Hebraism which, by ascending enumeration, means an undetermined number.

A. Judgment upon the surrounding nations 1:3-2:3

1. Upon Damascus 1:3-5, Damascus was condemned for its brutality against its enemies.

Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp

³⁴ Mount Carmel is a mountain range in northern Israel, extending from the Mediterranean sea toward the southeast.

iron.⁴ "So I will send fire upon the house of Hazael, And it will consume the citadels of Ben-hadad.⁵ "I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, And cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, And him who holds the scepter, from Beth-eden; So the people of Aram will go exiled to Kir," Says Yahweh.

2. Upon Gaza 1:6-8, Gaza was condemned for merciless deportation of slaves. *Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they deported an entire population To deliver it up to Edom.⁷ "So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza, And it will consume her citadels.⁸ "I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And him who holds the scepter, from Ashkelon; I will even unleash My power upon Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines will perish," Says Yahweh God.*
3. Upon Tyre 1:9-10 Tyre was condemned for similar sins and for breaking a brotherly covenant (could this refer to the covenant between Solomon and Hiram?) *Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Tyre and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they delivered up an entire population to Edom And did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.¹⁰ "So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre, And it will consume her citadels."*
4. Upon Edom 1:11-12 Edom was condemned for mercilessness toward brothers (see Obadiah) *Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, And he maintained his fury forever.¹² "So I will send fire upon Teman, And it will consume the citadels of Bozrah."*
5. Upon Ammon 1:13-15 Ammon was condemned for brutality in war *Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of the sons of Ammon and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead In order to enlarge their borders.¹⁴ "So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah, And it will consume her citadels Amid war cries on the day of battle And a storm on the day of tempest.¹⁵ "Their king will go into exile, He and his princes together," says Yahweh.*
6. Upon Moab 2:1-3 Moab was condemned for senseless insult toward the dead. *Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.² "So I will send fire upon Moab, And it will consume the citadels of Kerioth; And Moab will die amid tumult, With war cries and the sound of a trumpet.³ "I will also cut off the judge from her midst, And slay all her princes with him," says Yahweh.*

NOTE: There are certain standards that govern the treatment of captives in war. All of the above condemnations touch upon this subject in one manner or another. The sins described in this passage continue to be sins that prevail among the nations. Amos wrote 750 years before Christ. If those heathen nations, centuries before Christ, with no written revelation and limited knowledge stand condemned before God, where will the nations of today stand in judgment.

B. The Guilt and Punishment of Judah 2:4-5

Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they rejected the law of Yahweh And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, Those after which their fathers walked. So I will send fire upon Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem."

Note that there is nothing like this in reference to the heathen nations. Judah had Divine Revelation and stood condemned for its rejection.

Lies could refer to idols (Jeremiah 23:13-15)

The destruction prophesied in verse 5 did come to Judah (see Jeremiah 17:27; II Kings 25:8-9; Numbers 21:28; Deuteronomy 31:22).

C. The Guilt and Punishment of Israel 2:6-16 (This is the thesis of the book)

The charge of wickedness V6-8

Thus says Yahweh, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals. ⁷ "These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name. ⁸ "And on garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals. This possibly refers to creditors who sold debtors into slavery for a song.

dust of the earth on the head of the poor could mean that the poor were driven into mourning. Putting dust on one's head was a means of expressing great sorrow. It also could mean that greedy people begrudged the poor man the dust that he used in mourning. The general meaning is clear: the rich were eager to take spoils from the poor.

Note the gross immorality packed into verse 7! A man and his son having sexual intercourse with the same woman.

And on garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

According to the Law, clothes taken in pledge on a loan were to be returned at sundown³⁵

The sins of Israel listed are:

1. Inhumanity	4. Debauchery	7. (in the following verses) Base Ingratitude
2. Idolatry	5. Cruelty	8. Rejection of Divine Revelation
3. Gross Immorality	6. Perversion of Justice	

V9-12 These four verses point out Israel's ingratitude and God's futile effort to save the nation.

"Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height was like the height of cedars And he was strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below. ¹⁰ "And it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And I led you in the wilderness forty years That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite. ¹¹

³⁵ Deuteronomy 24:10-13

"Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?" declares Yahweh. ¹² "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'

V9 Yahweh destroyed the Amorites for Israel

V10 In the Hebrew, the *I* is emphatic – i.e. **I AM THE ONE**

V11-12 *Nazarite* (see Numbers 6). One of the consistent activities of evil men is to seek to corrupt professors of godliness and preachers of righteousness. When one draws a spiritual leader into sin, he has salvaged the consciences of sinners. In some forms of idolatry, there is religious sanction for sin.

V13-16 Judgment is coming and no one will be able to stand against it.

"Behold, I am weighted down beneath you As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves. ¹⁴ "Flight will perish from the swift, And the stalwart will not strengthen his power, Nor the mighty man save his life. ¹⁵ "He who grasps the bow will not stand his ground, The swift of foot will not escape, Nor will he who rides the horse save his life. ¹⁶ "Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day," declares Yahweh.

II. THE TERRIBLE JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL DEVELOPED 3:1-6:4

(There are five addresses here. The first three begin with *Hear the word*; the last two begin with, *Woe*)

A. The First Address (favored Israel is sentenced) 3:1-15

1. The responsibility of privilege 3:1-2

Hear this word which Yahweh has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt, ² "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities."

This primarily is spoken against the ruling classes. *Hear...word* – great preaching is needed, but the art of listening also must be developed. This comment fits both Judah and Israel, but this particular address is to Israel.

V2 Israel was the priestly nation, the chosen people. God blessed Israel because he loved all people. Israel misunderstood and became self-centered and introverted. Israel was blessed as no other nation, thus, she experienced the peril of privilege. Privilege without responsibility is unknown to God (Luke 12:48).

2. The authority and efficacy of prophecy 3:3-8

Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment? ⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? ⁵ Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? ⁶ If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not Yahweh done it? ⁷ Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets. ⁸ A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

V3 The King James rendering *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*) has caused much misunderstanding. Based on this rendering some have argued that if one man is an infidel and the other a Christian then they cannot unite in any sort of endeavor.

The context sheds a different light on this verse. In all of the verses of this passage, Amos uses the argument of cause and effect (verses 4-6).

- *Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?*
- *Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?*
- *Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?*
- *Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?*
- *If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?*
- *If a calamity occurs in a city has not Yahweh done it?*

The idea contained in verse 3 is, *Unless two have made an appointment, how shall they walk together* (as rendered more accurately in the NAS, NIV, NLT, etc). *i.e.*, a man meets his wife downtown because they have agreed to meet at a certain place and at a specific time.

V7-8 Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets. ⁸ A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

God reveals His eternal purposes through His prophets. A prophet speaks because God has given him the word (Jeremiah 20:9). The reason for Amos' preaching at Bethel was because God had commanded him to do so. Also, the word given to a prophet is a sure word. When God pronounces doom, doom will come to pass unless there is repentance. Because of this, a prophet dare not keep silent.

3. Surrounding nations are summoned 3:9-10

Proclaim on the citadels in Ashdod and on the citadels in the land of Egypt and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria and see the great tumults within her and the oppressions in her midst. ¹⁰ "But they do not know how to do what is right," declares Yahweh, "these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels."

Samaria is the Capital of Israel. Samaria also is another name for the portion of Palestine occupied by the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is located on a long, marvelous plateau. In this prophetic picture, the heathen nations are summoned to gather upon the surrounding mountains to watch Samaria, because Samaria has sinned and *they do not know how to do right*. This is a terrible indictment on a people that has had the Word of God. The prophetic picture could be seen in our day by picturing the community of sinners being asked to gather together to observe the sinfulness of the local church.

4. The Sentence 3:11-15

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "An enemy, even one surrounding the land, will pull down your strength from you And your citadels will be looted." ¹² Thus says Yahweh, "Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away-- With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch! ¹³ "Hear and testify against the house of Jacob," Declares Yahweh God, the God of hosts. ¹⁴ "For on the day that I punish Israel's transgressions, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; The horns of the altar will be cut off, And they will fall to the ground. ¹⁵ "I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house; The houses of ivory will also perish and the great houses will come to an end," Declares Yahweh.

V12a *Two legs or a piece of an ear* – a remnant will be saved

V12b *The corner of a bed* – in the orient, a couch runs to three corners. The place of honor is the corner opposite the door. Samaria (Israel) a country of honor and blessing, was going to be almost devoured.

V14 Bethel was the greatly adorned religious capital of the Northern Kingdom.

V15 During this period, it was the custom to have a summer home, or palace, and a winter house, or palace. *Houses of ivory* – see I Kings 22:39.

The Northern Kingdom was destroyed in 722-721 BC.

B. Second Address (the heartless and unheeding will be punished) 4:1-13

1. The heartless *cows of Bashan* are doomed V1-3

*Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, "Bring now, that we may drink!"*² *The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, "Behold, the days are coming upon you When they will take you away with meat hooks, And the last of you with fish hooks."*³ *"You will go out through breaches in the walls, Each one straight before her, And you will be cast to Harmon," declares Yahweh.*

V1 Even though the word, *cows*, is feminine, the Hebrew nouns in this verse are a mixture of feminine and masculine. So, when Amos begins by saying, *Hear this word, you cows*, he could be addressing women who have taken on manly qualities or he could be addressing men who have lost their masculinity. Because of this ambiguity, it could be both or either. If it refers to women, the women are making such financial demands on their husbands that the husbands began to steal in order to fulfill their wives' demands. Whether men or women, the idea is that God is condemning them.

V2 God can swear by no other than Himself. They would be taken as easily as one takes a helpless hooked fish.

V3 The King James reads, *and you shall cast them into the palace*. The word translated, *palace*, is a "hapaxlegomenon," meaning a word that is used only once in literature. Because of this, no one is certain as to its meaning. The KJV translators rendered the word, *palace*, because they couldn't figure out what the word meant. It probably is the name of some place or city that we cannot identify. In the Jewish *Targum*, the word is taken to mean Armenia. Some think that it means *dung hill*. Another scholar thinks that it means the Arabic harems into which the Israelite women will be forced to join. The NAS and the NIV do not try to translate the verse. They just phonetically reproduce in English the Hebrew word, *Harmon*. It is not important to determine the meaning of the word, because the point is that they are going into captivity.

2. Ironic call to worship 4:4-5

*"Enter Bethel and transgress; In Gilgal multiply transgression! Bring your sacrifices every morning, Your tithes every three days."*⁵ *"Offer a thank offering also from that which is leavened, And proclaim freewill offerings, make them known. For so you love to do, you sons of Israel," Declares the Lord God.*

Amos is exaggerating, speaking irony, mocking the fallacy of pseudo worship. These words are a criticism of punctilious worship which does not involve the heart. These people appreciated magnificently the offerings which they brought to God. Their attitude was that God should be congratulated for having them as worshippers.

V4 *Transgress*³⁶ is one of the many biblical words for sin. The basic meaning of the Hebrew term is *to revolt* or *to rebel*. It is a very intense word.

Gilgal was east of Bethel. It was the first encampment of the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 5:1-9)

V5 *Leaven* probably refers to their following the Canaanite practice of offering luscious leavened bread in their worship, thinking that it is a better offering than unleavened. God had ordained otherwise (Leviticus 2:11; 7:13; 23:17; Exodus 23:18) [Note: contemporary Christianity often displays the same liberty that Yahweh condemned in this passage, such as substituting sprinkling for immersion, or perhaps using leavened bread at communion. Query: is this distinction important for Twentieth Century Christians?].

Proclaim freewill offerings, make them known – they brought ostentatious gifts to God, but they did it for show.

For so you love to do – it pleased the Israelites, but it did not please God.

This brings to mind the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. ¹¹ "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. ¹² 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴ "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14 NAS)

4. Divine chastisements unheeded 4:6-11

"But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities And lack of bread in all your places, Yet you have not returned to Me," declares Yahweh. ⁷ "And furthermore, I withheld the rain from you While there were still three months until harvest. Then I would send rain on one city And on another city I would not send rain; One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up. ⁸ "So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares Yahweh. ⁹ "I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares Yahweh. ¹⁰ "I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares Yahweh. ¹¹ "I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares Yahweh.

5. Call to repentance 4:12

"Therefore, thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I shall do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

Prepare to meet God in judgment. Judgment on the nation has been pronounced, but there is hope for individuals.

³⁶ פָּשַׁע (pshs)

5. Doxology – The nature of the God Whom they are going to meet 4:13

For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are his thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness And treads on the high places of the earth, Yahweh, God of hosts is His name.

Formed – the word is used in the sense of a woodworker or an ironworker, or a potter.

Create – This word does not normally mean to create from nothing. Only in the Bible, when referring to God, does the word carry the idea of creating from nothing.

His thought – refers to man's thought, not God's thought.³⁷ God is revealing man's thought to man.

Treadeth the earth Psalm 104:3; Job 9:8; 22:14.

Suddenly Amos runs out of language to describe God and he just breaks off, here.

C. Third Address (this is a funeral dirge, followed by pleadings, rebukes, and threats) 5:1-17

1. Funeral dirge 5:1-3

Hear this word which I take up for you as a dirge, O house of Israel.² She has fallen, she will not rise again-- The virgin Israel. She lies neglected on her land; There is none to raise her up.³ For thus says the Lord God, "The city which goes forth a thousand strong Will have a hundred left, And the one which goes forth a hundred strong Will have ten left to the house of Israel."

V2 *Virgin* – God had watched over Israel as parents watch over their maiden daughter. The destruction predicted is viewed as if it already had happened.

V3 This represents the remnant.

2. Exhortation to repentance 5:4-7

For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel, "Seek Me that you may live.⁵ "But do not resort to Bethel, And do not come to Gilgal, Nor cross over to Beersheba; For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity, And Bethel will come to trouble.⁶ "Seek Yahweh that you may live, Lest He break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph, And it consume with none to quench it for Bethel,⁷ For those who turn justice into wormwood And cast righteousness down to the earth."

3. Doxology – Again, Amos describes God 5:8-9

He who made the Pleiades and Orion And changes deep darkness into morning, Who also darkens day into night, Who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the surface of the earth, Yahweh is His name.⁹ It is He who flashes forth with destruction upon the strong, So that destruction comes upon the fortress.

Deep darkness, when used metaphorically, means great evil. However, this is best taken literally, because Amos is speaking of a phenomenon of nature.

³⁷ This excellent comment from Keil & Delitzsch: "He who maketh to man (מה־שִׁחֹהוּ) what man thinketh, not what God thinketh, since שִׁחֹהוּ is not applicable to God, and is only used ironically of Baal in I Kings 18:27. The thought is this: God is the searcher of the heart (Jer. 17:10; Psalms 139:2) and reveals to men by the prophets the state of their heart, since he judges not only the outward actions, but the inmost emotions of the heart (cf. Heb. 4:12)." C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Volume 10, Minor Prophets (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers) 1989, pgs. 276-277

4. The moral depravity of Israel 5:10-13

They hate him who reproveth in the gate, And they abhor him who speaks with integrity.¹¹ Therefore, because you impose heavy rent on the poor And exact a tribute of grain from them, Though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, Yet you will not live in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine.¹² For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, You who distress the righteous and accept bribes, And turn aside the poor in the gate.¹³ Therefore, at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.

V13 the time is so evil that even speaking of it would be useless

5. Gracious exhortation to repentance 5:14-15

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus may Yahweh God of hosts be with you, Just as you have said!¹⁵ Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps Yahweh God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

V 14 *Just as you have said* – in spite of their wickedness, they still felt that God was with them. They are called to repent, so that this saying will become reality.

6. Announcement of doom 5:16-17

Therefore, thus says Yahweh God of hosts, Yahweh, "There is wailing in all the plazas, And in all the streets they say, 'Alas! Alas!' They also call the farmer to mourning And professional mourners to lamentation.¹⁷ "And in all the vineyards there is wailing, Because I shall pass through the midst of you," says Yahweh.

D. Fourth Address (the darkness of the Day of Yahweh for the conceited and blind sinners) 5:18-27

1. Terrifying pronouncement of woe V18-20

Alas, you who are longing for the day of Yahweh, For what purpose will the day of Yahweh be to you? It will be darkness and not light;¹⁹ As when a man flees from a lion, And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, And a snake bites him.²⁰ Will not the day of Yahweh be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

They thought that they were right with God. Sin cuts the optic nerve of the soul. They were eager for the Day of Yahweh, not realizing that for them, it was a day of darkness.

2. Hypocritical worship rejected V21-27

V 21-24 This is one of the classical passages against ceremonialism.

"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies.²² "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.²³ "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.²⁴ But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

V 25-27 During the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites not only worshipped Yahweh, but also took with them their idols, representing other gods. Thus, they were not fully trusting Yahweh, but also relying on their false gods. This was a precursor to their offering sacrifices to various Baalim when they entered the promised land – just in case Yahweh was not sufficient to fulfill their needs (Stephen quoted this passage in his sermon before the Jewish leaders - Acts 7:42-43).

"Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel?²⁶ "You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves.²⁷ "Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," says Yahweh, whose name is the God of hosts.

E. Fifth Address (woe upon the recklessly confident, the irreligious rich, the proud, and the incorrigible) 6:1-14

1. Reckless wantonness V1-6

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes.² Go over to Calneh and look, And go from there to Hamath the great, Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, or is their territory greater than yours?³ Do you put off the day of calamity, and would you bring near the seat of violence?⁴ Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,⁵ who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves,⁶ Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.

V1 *Those at ease in Zion* refers to the recklessly confident

V3 some try to close their eyes and pretend that Judgment Day does not exist.

V3b The more they sin, the closer comes judgment.

V4-6 The night life of people and their lives of luxury are described. Note that their depravity was so deep that they could sin and sleep like a baby.

NOTE: Some have tried to use this section as an argument against the use of musical instruments in worship. The problem here is not the instrument. The problem is the wicked use to which the instruments were put.

2. The terrible punishment V7-11

V7-8 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.⁸ Yahweh God has sworn by Himself, Yahweh God of hosts has declared: "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And I detest his citadels; Therefore, I will deliver up the city and all it contains."

The leaders were

- First in station
- First in wantonness
- First in ignominy

Note that the prophets first tell why punishment is coming, then describe the punishment.

V9-10 *And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.*¹⁰ *Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out his bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" And that one will say, "No one." Then he will answer, "Keep quiet. For the name of Yahweh is not to be mentioned."*¹¹ *For behold, Yahweh is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.*

Normally, the Jews buried their dead. However, the conditions were going to be so severe, that they would have to cremate (The NAS renders the word, *undertaker*, which obscures the meaning. The NIV *relative who is to burn the bodies*, and the KJV *he that burneth him*, more accurately render the Hebrew). There would be ten men in one house and nine would be dead. The punishment would be extremely severe and the air charged with fear of Yahweh.

V10c *keep quiet*...is the language of despondency

3. The foolish incorrigibility 6:12-14

*Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison, And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood,*¹³ *You who rejoice in Lodebar, and say, "Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?"*¹⁴ *"For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel," declares Yahweh God of hosts, "And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah."*

Their breaking of the moral laws was as foolish as trying to plow a rock. Man cannot break physical laws, they will break him. Attempting to break moral laws produces the same spiritual result.

V13 *Karnaim* (NAS and NIV) literally means *horns* (KJV). In the Old Testament, a horn is a symbol of power. The political power would be a thing of naught when God called the nation to judgment.

V14 The nation that would be raised up against them was Assyria. This would happen two or three decades after Amos delivered this prophecy.

III. SYMBOLIC PREDICTIONS OF YAHWEH'S JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL

(two sections, below, D and F, do not fit this heading. However, they are included under this heading since that is where they occur in the book). 7:1-9:10

Note that in this section, God gives Amos five visions (A, B, C, D, & G)

A. The vision of the locusts 7:1-3

This is a vision, not a fact of history as it is in Joel. As Amos receives this vision, he intercedes for Israel and God gives respite.

*Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king's mowing.*² *And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said, "Lord God, please pardon! How can Jacob stand, For he is small?"*³ *Yahweh changed His mind about this. "It shall not be," said Yahweh.*

B. The vision of fire 7:4-6

Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, the Lord God was calling to contend with them by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land.⁵ Then I said, "Lord God, please stop! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?"⁶ Yahweh changed His mind about this. "This too shall not be," said the Lord God.

Fire is a biblical symbol for judgment. Again, Amos intercedes and respite is given.

C. The vision of the plumb line 7:7-9

Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall, with a plumb line in His hand.⁸ And Yahweh said to me, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then Yahweh said, "Behold I am about to put a plumb line In the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.⁹ "The high places of Isaac will be desolated And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then shall I rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

1. This is a symbol of God's standard as the measure of justice. In the Church, Scripture must be our plumb line. God gives no respite in this vision.
2. The experience of the Israelites followed the pattern of the visions.
 - II Kings 15:19-20 respite given
 - II Kings 15:29 respite given
 - II Kings 17:5 no respite given
3. Verse 9 gives the three-fold pattern of the coming destruction:
 - Captivity (desolate house because the people are carried away)
 - Sanctuaries destroyed
 - House of Jeroboam destroyed

D. The prophet Amos at Bethel 7:10-17

Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent word to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words.¹¹ "For thus Amos says, 'Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.'"

¹² *Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah, and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!"¹³ "But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence."*

¹⁴ *Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.¹⁵ "But Yahweh took me from following the flock and Yahweh said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'*

¹⁶ *"And now hear the word of Yahweh: you are saying, 'You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.'¹⁷ "Therefore, thus says Yahweh, 'Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a measuring line, and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.'"*

V10 indicates that Amos was making some progress. Of course, Amaziah made a false report to the king. Amos was not conspiring and plotting.

V11 Amaziah continues to mix truth and error. Amos had not said that Jeroboam would perish by the sword, but that the house of Jeroboam would perish in this manner.

Jeroboam died a natural death. The only truth that Amaziah had in his report was that of the captivity.

V12-13 Amaziah orders Amos to go home and to not prophesy in Bethel because it is *the King's sanctuary* (we would not be out of line to add to his words, *and not God's*)

V14 Amos was not just a humble man who discovered the Will of God. Amos became a prophet when God commissioned him. We need to realize that Amos is not speaking disparagingly of the sons of prophets. He merely is telling of his unusual call.

V15 *my people Israel* is the language of love

V16-17 This is a prophecy against Amaziah and his family, as well as against Israel. Note that Amos uses almost the very same language against Amaziah that Amaziah had charged Amos with using against the king.

Polluted land – the worship carried on in Palestine could not be conducted outside of that sanctified land.

E. The vision of the basket of summer fruit 8:1-3

Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit. ² And He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then Yahweh said to me, "The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer. ³ "The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day," declares the Lord God. "Many will be the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence." (Amos 8:1-3 NAS)

V1 The season of ripening is past. Now is the time of harvest.

V2 No more respite – this is the end

V3 The many corpses will cause a hush and a horror to all. God is going to bring destruction. It is inevitable.

F. The people again severely rebuked and a famine of the Word of God is threatened 8:4-14

1. The ungodly merchants 8:4-7

Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, ⁵ saying, "When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain, And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, ⁶ So as to buy the helpless for money And the needy for a pair of sandals, And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" ⁷ Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.

These men had not gone so far that they stopped attending worship services, but they had their coats on before the final song was finished. They were so eager to get back to their business that they couldn't worship properly. Note the three ways in which their greed grew:

- Making a small ephah (a unit of measure in business; they were cheating their customers)
- Making a shekel great (Before money was coined, one paid by weight of gold, silver, etc. The standard of weight in Palestine was the shekel. The dishonest merchants tinkered with their scales so that buyers had to pay more silver to balance the scale).
- Selling refuse with the wheat. This was like putting good apples on top of a basket of bad apples.

2. A figurative description of coming judgment 8:8-10

"Because of this will not the land quake And everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, And it will be tossed about, And subside like

the Nile of Egypt. ⁹ "And it will come about in that day," declares the Lord God, "That I shall make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight.¹⁰ "Then I shall turn your festivals into mourning And all your songs into lamentation; And I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins And baldness on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day.

3. Some terrible effects of the impending doom 8:11-14

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord God, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of Yahweh.¹² "And people will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of Yahweh, But they will not find it.¹³ "In that day the beautiful virgins And the young men will faint from thirst.¹⁴ "As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, Who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,' They will fall and not rise again."

Throughout the ages, God had sent marvelous prophets to the people. As a whole, they had been rejected. A man may live in health and have no interest in God's Word until his health breaks and he stares death in the face. So it would be in Israel. Even the stamina of the young people would be affected by thirst for God's Word.

The sin of Samaria was calf worship (Hosea 8:6; II Kings 12:28-29)

Dan...Bersheeba were sites of idolatry.

They shall fall and never rise again This thought is frequent in Amos and it came to pass when the Assyrians carried the Israelites into exile, from which, as a nation, they never returned.

4. The vision of Yahweh, standing (together with the application) 9:1-15

The Vision 9:1-4 *I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said,*

"Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, And break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; They will not have a fugitive who will flee, Or a refugee who will escape.

² *"Though they dig into Sheol, From there shall My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down.³ "And though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.⁴ "And though they go into captivity before their enemies, From there I will command the sword that it slay them, And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good."*

In the vision, God probably was seen standing at the shrine at Bethel.

Amos' prophecy emphasizes that no one will be able to get away from God

V3 *serpent* In this verse, this is not a figure for Satan. It is a reminder of the omnipresence of God – they cannot escape Him (Psalm 139; Deuteronomy 28:63ff).

V4 misery would accompany them into captivity.

5. Doxology 9:5-6 This is Amos' third doxological passage (4:13; 5:8-9)

And the Lord God of hosts, The One who touches the land so that it melts, And all those who dwell in it mourn, And all of it rises up like the Nile And subsides like the Nile of Egypt; ⁶The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens, And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the face of the earth, Yahweh is His name.

V6 upper chambers in the heavens remind us of Paul's term *third heaven* (II Corinthians 12:1-2), and Moses, *heavens of heavens* (Deuteronomy 10:14). These are concepts that are mentioned in the Bible but are not fully grasped by any man.

Amos' doxologies picture the type of God with whom rebellious Israel has to deal. Again, Amos' vocabulary fails him and so he simply says, *Yahweh is His Name*.

6. Paradoxes of Israel 9:7-10

"Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?" declares Yahweh. "Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" ⁸"Behold, the eyes of Yahweh God are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," Declares Yahweh. ⁹"For behold, I am commanding, And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations As grain is shaken in a sieve, But not a kernel will fall to the ground. ¹⁰"All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, Those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us.'

God is sovereign and He has directed the events that have been Israel's history and will continue to do so.

V7 Israel was God's chosen nation, but the Israelites had become like the heathen. We are reminded of Paul's admonition in II Timothy 2:19, *Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."*

God declares that He controlled the migration of the nations (Acts 17:26)

V9 Sifting, sifting, and yet, the remnant will be saved. As we have noted often in this study, Paul anticipates the salvation of a Jewish remnant before the coming of the Lord. (Romans 11).

7. The promise of glorious restoration 9:11-15

"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹²That they may possess the remnant of Edom And all the nations who are called by My name," Declares Yahweh who does this. ¹³"Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵"I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says Yahweh your God.

V11 Tabernacle language, rather than Temple language is used here. After the captivity, no king sat upon the throne (see Isaiah 11:1).

In a literal understanding of these verses,

- the return from Babylonian captivity could be the fulfillment, were it not for the fact that the Jews were *rooted out from their land* by the Romans in the First and Second Centuries;
- the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 could be the fulfillment, but even this does not fully fulfill all that is contained in these verses.

James, in his speech given at the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15: 12-18, presents this prophecy as being Messianic, referring to the Church, which is the antitypical Kingdom of David.³⁸

*And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.*¹³ *And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me."*¹⁴ *"Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name."*¹⁵ *"And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,"*¹⁶ *'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it,*¹⁷ *In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'*¹⁸ *Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.*³⁹

James' understanding of this passage is in harmony with Romans 11, which points to the Christianization of the Jews, not to the nationalization. If a Jew looks to Amos 9 as a promise to him, it must be realized that the promise applies only through submission to Christ: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*⁴⁰

V13 This is a beautiful hyperbolic description of nature, typifying the spiritual blessings in the Messianic Kingdom.

V14 *restore the captivity* is biblical language referring to a change in fortune (Job 42:10).

NOTE: Beginning with this final passage of Amos, the Eighth Century prophets foresaw and predicted the coming of the Church and the Messianic Kingdom.

³⁸ The portion of James' speech recorded in Acts 15:16-17 is a paraphrase of the Septuagint.

³⁹ In recent decades, there has been a worship movement that declares that restoring the tabernacle of David means restoring 24/7 worship, as took place in the tent that David erected (I Chronicles 16). This ignores the sense that James places on this terminology. He is equating the tabernacle of David with the establishment of the Church, the "tent" in which will dwell both Gentiles and Jews.

⁴⁰ Romans 1:16

HOSEA

The name, *Hosea*, means "Salvation." The name is spelled in various ways in English Bibles (*Osee, Osea, Hoshea, Hosea*). In addition to the prophet, Hosea, there are many other men in the Bible who are named Hosea. One of the most prominent is Joshua who originally was named *Hosea*. Moses is recorded in Numbers 13:16 as having changed this courageous man's name from *Hosea* ("Salvation") to *Joshua*, which means, "God is Salvation."

The only reference to Hosea's call is in Hosea 1:2. His father's name was Be'eri. Although it cannot be established with certainty, his family probably lived in the Northern Kingdom, where Hosea's prophetic ministry took place. This probability is increased by:

- the peculiar style of his language, which in the original occasionally has an Aramaean style;⁴¹
- by his intimate and accurate knowledge of the circumstances and localities of Israel;
- his calling the Kingdom of Israel, "the land" 1:2; and the king of Israel as "our king" 7:5.

The wicked conditions encountered by Amos, a generation earlier, had grown to larger proportions by the time of Hosea's ministry. Israel had not listened to Amos and the nation's leaders continued to view themselves as strong and invulnerable, even though the people were gripped by fear and uncertainty.

The rulers set poor examples for the people. The courts were corrupt. Judges became prosperous through their receiving of bribes and their imposition of excessive fees. The populace as a whole had become hardened and criminal. Bloodshed, highway robbery, and organized vice were visible on every hand. The priests were at the head of organized gangs.

Family life had gone to pieces. False worship and foreign cults had broken down the standard of morality and faithfulness. Drunkenness, with all of its attendant evils, was fast breaking down the home life and debauching the minds of the people.

By their example, the priests led the people into duplicity. Even though they lived lives of immorality the people crowded into the sanctuary to worship with reckless abandon. There was no fear of God in the sanctuary. Religion had become ritual and made no high demands.

Emulating some of the pagan religions, so called, *Holy Women*, were kept at the central sanctuaries as temple prostitutes.⁴² Husbands would go out into sinful debauchery only to encounter their wives and daughters engaged in the same behavior. The nation had reached the bottom of the pit.

In the prophecy that God spoke through Hosea, God pictures Himself as a husband, a true lover, looking upon a people that has spurned His love and turned their collective back upon the marriage vow. The whole prophecy is a cry of anguish.

The opening verses give us the period of Hosea's ministry. Based on the dates of the kings named, his prophetic ministry lasted 60 or 65 years.

- 27-30 years during the reign of Uzziah
- 31 years during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz
- 1-3 years under Hezekiah

The approximate dates of his ministry are 790-725 B.C. The exact date of the beginning of his ministry cannot be established.

⁴¹ See Keil & Delitzsch, page 11

⁴² See ADDUNDUM B

Jeroboam II (the king who reigned when Amos prophesied) died a natural death. After the death of Jeroboam II, the prophecy of Amos began to be fulfilled (*The high places of Isaac will be desolated And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then shall I rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.*" (Amos 7:9). Zechariah, Jeroboam's son, was murdered within six months after mounting the throne. His assassin, Shallum, after only one month as king, was killed by Menahem. During Menahem's reign, the Assyrians had come to power and forced Menahem to pay an enormous tribute to avoid Israel's being invaded.

Menahem died a natural death. His son, Pekahiah, after ruling for two years, was murdered by Pekah. Pekah ruled for twenty years and was killed by Hoshea (not the prophet). Hoshea became a puppet king for Assyria. One year, evidently planning to revolt, he failed to send the required tribute to Assyria. So, Shalmaneser, the Assyrian ruler, came to Samaria (Israel's capitol), imprisoned Hoshea, and carried the inhabitants into captivity. The Assyrians repopulated the area with conquered people from other nations (these were the ancestors of the Samaritans whom we encounter in the New Testament). The account of this period is found in II Kings 15-17.

One thing that becomes apparent in a study of Hosea is that much of it is Messianic. The writers of the New Testament frequently quote Hosea, or use language similar to it, in describing Christ, the character of the New Covenant, and the ultimate fulfillment in heaven. This is a book that clearly demonstrates the adage, describing the relationship between the Old and New Covenants, "The Old is the New concealed and the New is the Old revealed."

EXEGETICAL NOTES

HEADING 1:1-2a *The word of Yahweh which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.*² *When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea...*

Note that even though Hosea's prophecy relates to the North, he lists the kings of Judah that reigned during his prophetic ministry. These are the same kings that reigned during Isaiah's Judean ministry (Isaiah 1:1)

Hosea lists only Jeroboam as being king in Israel, during this period. However, as noted above, the time span bracketed by verse one would include the reigns of seven kings of Israel: Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hosea (not the prophet). Hosea probably did not list those after Jeroboam II because this was a time of anarchy and many of the reigns were quite brief. It seems that Hosea did not recognize the kings after Jeroboam as having been chosen by God.

A. HOSEA'S WIFE AND CHILDREN 1:2b-9

v2b *Yahweh said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry, and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking Yahweh."*

The Hebrew term describing the woman that Hosea was to marry (זְנוּנִים *zenunim*), is plural and means, *fornications*. English versions of the Bible have rendered the term by several different English words:

- King James Version *a wife of whoredoms*
- Young's Literal Translation *a woman of whoredoms*
- American Standard Version *a wife of whoredom*
- English Standard Version *a wife of whoredom*

- New American Standard & Revised Standard Version *a wife of harlotry*
- New International Version *take to yourself an adulterous wife*
- New Living Translation *marry a prostitute*

The NIV and NLT renderings of this term are unfortunate. Such a rendering displays an obvious interpretation rather than employing a term that allows the exegete to determine the meaning of the expression⁴³ (note that the other versions use terms which require the exegete to make the decision about what is being communicated).

A lexical argument against the NIV and NLT rendering is that there is an Hebrew term for *committing adultery* (פְּנִינָה *nap*). There also are Hebrew words for *prostitute*

- זֹנָה *zonah* refers to an ordinary prostitute
- קְדֵשׁ *kadesh* is the term for a temple prostitute, male or female

The Hebrew text uses neither the word for adultery nor the word for prostitute, but, rather the term for fornication.

The same is true of the Septuagint. The Greek term for fornication is πορνεία, whereas the term for adultery is μοιχεύω. The Greek term for prostitute is πόρνη. The Septuagint renders the term in this verse with the term for fornication, not the term for adultery, nor does it use the term for prostitute.

Thus the command was not to *marry a prostitute*, but *a woman of whoredoms (harlotry)*. If Yahweh was commanding Hosea to marry a prostitute, why didn't He say so, instead of using the unusual and ambiguous term – *a woman of whoredoms*?

Israel was a spiritually adulterous people. Therefore, if Hosea married a girl from the north, he would have married a girl of whoredoms, i.e. a citizen of a spiritually adulterous nation. Throughout Scripture, idolatry often is spoken of as spiritual adultery (examples: Deut. 31:16; II Kings 9:22Ps 70:27; Jeremiah. 2:13; Ezek. 23:3; etc.). To interpret this verse as meaning that God told Hosea to go and marry a whore, just so that he would have a sermon illustration, raises serious moral and ethical problems.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the unusual language concerning the birth of his children – *children of whoredoms (or harlotry)* is befitting children who were born as Israelites – the whorish nation.

NOTE: To say that the Nation of Israel was apostate does not mean that every Israelite was apostate. Hosea, for instance, was righteous. There always was a remnant.

⁴³ The Dynamic Equivalency and Functional Equivalency “translation style” requires interpretation before the text can be rendered. For some receptor languages, this is necessary since the receptor language does not have adequate vocabulary for rendering the terms in a more literal fashion. For this reason, Wycliffe and SIL consistently use the DE and FE style of rendering Scripture into various receptor languages.

⁴⁴ Kiel and Delitzsch seek to resolve this problem by arguing for the probability that no actual marriage took place (i.e. “not actually and outwardly performed” page 28), but that this was an inward experience, which took place in his own spiritual intuition (page 36)

V3 *So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*

- No details are given about the courtship. There is no indication that God commanded him to marry a stranger or one whom he did not love.
- Some argue that this son, Jezreel, was illegitimate, but that seems to be presented only because the person arguing this position has some point to make. There is nothing in this passage to indicate that he was illegitimate.

V4 *And Yahweh said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel."⁴⁵*

Jezreel - the name means, *God shall sow* or *God will scatter*. It can mean "to scatter," as one scatters seed in planting; or it can mean "sow to increase," as one causes an increase by sowing seed. In this verse, it means "to scatter."

Note that the fall of the Northern Kingdom is tied to the fall of the Jehu dynasty. The last king of the Jehu dynasty was Zechariah (see verse 1 comment above).

God had commended Jehu for fulfilling his commission so admirably in obliterating the family of Ahab (II Kings 10:30-31). However, the very sin that motivated God to commission Jehu to exterminate the family of Ahab, was continued in the family of Jehu itself (II Kings 10:29, 31). Jezreel was the city in which the wicked family of Ahab lived, so God said that He will *visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*.⁴⁶

V5 *"And it will come about on that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."*

This could refer to a single battle or it could be a figurative expression of coming justice.⁴⁷

V6 *Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I should ever forgive them."*

Again, there is no hint of illegitimacy here. The name, *Loruhamah* means "hath obtained no more mercy."

V7 *"But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by Yahweh their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen."*

Even though the final and total downfall of Israel has been set, Judah will be saved, but not by military power.

⁴⁵ The naming of children to reflect a prophetic truth also is found in Isaiah's children, *Shear-jashub* (Isaiah 7:3), meaning, *the remnant shall return*, indicating a coming invasion which would scatter the people, but a remnant would return; and *Mahershalalhashbaz* (Isaiah 8:3), meaning, *he speeds to the spoil, he hastens to the prey*, which was a prophecy of the coming Assyrian invasion.

⁴⁶ Note the bloody death of Jezebel in Jezreel (II Kings 9)

⁴⁷ The Valley of Jezreel is a large fertile plain south of Galilee (also known as the Plain of Esdraelon). It is between Galilee and the portion of Israel that later became Samaria. Megiddo is in a portion of the valley and many eschatologists believe that the final battle between good and evil will be fought here (*Armageddon* [Rev. 16:16 more correctly, *HarMagedon*] is based on the term, *Megiddo*).

V8-9 *When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And Yahweh said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God."*

A second son is born. *Loammai* means, "Not my people" (no kin to me).

B. PROMISE OF GLORIOUS RESTORATION 1:10-2:1

V10 *Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And it will come about that, in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."*

The nation of God shall become as the sand of the sea. The figure of sowing for increase is pictured here, contrasted with sowing to scatter as in verse 4.

V11 *And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.*

After Judah returned from Babylonian exile, members of the no longer existing nation of Israel drifted back into the region. Judah and portions of the Northern Kingdom experienced an amalgamation and the people became known as "Jews." Galilee had been a portion of the ten-tribe nation of Israel that had been carried off by the Assyrians, never to be reborn. After the Judeans returned from exile, Galilee became a part of the reconstituted nation – with Samaria geographically between Galilee and Judea (see ADDENDUM C).

Verse 11 has Messianic implications and points to the Kingdom of Christ.

- *appoint for themselves one leader* - after the return from Babylon, Zerubbabel was the royal head (not king) of the group. In Haggai 2:20ff, Zerubbabel is used in a Messianic statement.
- How *appoint?* - is He "elected" by us? Not at all. Note Deut. 17:15 *you shall surely set a king over you whom Yahweh your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves...* Yahweh will choose him and it is the faithful follower's role to acknowledge Him as Yahweh's choice. Ultimately, this points to the Messiah - we will submit ourselves to Him (by responding to the Gospel).
- Romans 9:24-26, prophesying the redemption of both Jews and Gentiles, quotes Hosea 1:10; 2:23. *even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"*²⁶ *"And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."* (these verses stand in opposition to the Dispensational Parenthesis Church Theory)⁴⁸
- The ultimate fulfillment of one head is pictured in 3:5 *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days.* This is Christ; as Peter stated in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:25-33), David their King was in a tomb..

⁴⁸ According to Parenthesis Dispensationalists, Jesus offered the kingdom to Israel, but Israel rejected the offer. As a result, Israel has been temporarily set aside. God instituted a new program, ushering in the church age, which has been a "parenthesis," which began with the Triumphal Entry. The parenthesis will end when God's purposes for the church are over and Israel is restored back to its original place. (see <http://calvinistguy.blogspot.com/2010/03/examining-dispensational-parenthesis.html>)

- Great will be the day of Jezreel - first to scatter, now to increase. This echoes the promise to Abraham and its ultimate fulfillment (Genesis 22:17; 32:12; I Kings 4:20). The sowing to increase does not stop with the return from exile: *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* (Galatians 3:27-29).

2:1 Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah."

The names are changed: *Loammi* is changed to *Ammi* - "My People." *Loruhama* is changed to *Ruhamah* – "She has obtained compassion."

There is a cycle of judgment and mercy in these chapters. The reason that we Gentiles can be Christians goes back to the reason for the name changes - God's mercy and patience. I Peter 2:9-10 has Hosea as its background, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

C. THE APPLICATION OF SYMBOLIC NAMES 2:2-23

I will go after my lovers - spiritual adultery is the watchword of this chapter.

V2-5 *Contend with your mother, contend, For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; And let her put away her harlotry from her face, And her adultery from between her breasts, Lest I strip her naked And expose her as on the day when she was born. I will also make her like a wilderness, Make her like desert land, And slay her with thirst. Also, I will have no compassion on her children, Because they are children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, "I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."*

The unfaithfulness of Israel is pictured. In these verses, God no longer speaks of Hosea and Gomer, but speaks of Himself and Israel. She who had been betrothed to Jehovah had played the harlot and had produced offspring that were not the offspring of Jehovah.

V6-13 Yahweh declares the consequences that He will impose on adulterous Israel:

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, "I will go back to my first husband, For it was better for me then than now!" For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal.

Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax Given to cover her nakedness. And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths, And all her festal assemblies. And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, "These are my wages Which my lovers have given me." And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. And I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares Yahweh.

"These verses give us a tragic picture of an ignorant, senseless, misguided wife, who blindly resolves to follow the lure of lovers who promise to satisfy her low appetites.

Israel had remained outwardly loyal to Yahweh, but had sought to bring some magic touch to her field, her orchard, her flock, and her herds, by looking to the local Baals. She was willing to sell herself for mere material rewards.⁴⁹

God wants her to understand that these Canaanite lovers are utterly helpless to give her the gifts for which she follows them. God has the control of the corn, the flax, the wool, and all such material things."⁵⁰

V8 *For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal.*

This was not mere intellectual deception. The Israelites had a theoretical knowledge of God, but not an experiential one.

V9-13 *"Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax Given to cover her nakedness. And then I will uncover her lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will rescue her out of My hand. I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths, And all her festal assemblies. And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. And I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares Yahweh*

All of the blessings that Yahweh has bestowed on adulterous Israel, which Israelites had attributed to the blessings received from their false gods, will be removed and the land will be desolate.

14-20 **Outside of the cross, these verses are the most effective picture of God's love to be found in the Bible.**

V14-15 *"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness, And speak kindly to her. Then I will give her her vineyards from there, And the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.*

Here is a transition from threat to promise (Isaiah 10:20ff; Jeremiah. 16:14ff; 30:16; Ezek. 39:25ff). God's wife had become a hardened adulteress, but Yahweh would seek to woo her back from her adulterous lovers.

Wilderness - It was in the Wilderness of Sinai that God and Israel had become united. Since then, Israel had committed spiritual adultery again and again. God would take Israel back to her honeymoon grounds and woo her seeking to win back the hardened adulteress.

V15 *Achor* (Joshua 7:26) - this relates to the story of Achan, where the valley of trembling became a door of hope.

⁴⁹ This is the sin that Jeremiah rebukes in Jeremiah 1:16; 2:13

⁵⁰ Kyle M. Yates, *Preaching from the Prophets* (New York, Harper Brothers) 1942, page 70

V16-20 "And it will come about in that day," declares Yahweh, "That you will call Me Ishi, and will no longer call Me Baali. "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Yahweh.

V16-17 *That day* - when she will repent and respond to His wooing.

- "My husband" (Heb. *Ishi*)
- "My Lord"(Heb. *Baali*)

Baal was a legitimate term to use for a husband, but *Baal* had become a term with evil connotations. There is intimacy in the term, *ishi*, than is implied in *baali*. So, *in that day*, the term *Baal* will not be used. (II Samuel 11:26 - "Uriah, her *ishi* was dead... mourned for her *baal*.")

V18 "In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety.

This verse brings to mind the Messianic promise of Isaiah 11:6-9 and Ezekiel 34:25, in which a time of peace is described in which neither man nor beast will be threatened by predator animals.

This is a hyperbolic figure of peace, for knowledge of Yahweh wouldn't keep a lion from being carnivorous. This clearly is a Messianic figure of speech (Isaiah 2:2ff; Micah 4:2-3). Will there be a time this side of the return of Jesus when there will be knowledge and peace? Who knows! Even so, consummation in heaven is what is anticipated in this passage.

V19-20 "And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Yahweh.

betroth - used three times. Note the words used in this passage: righteousness, justice, loving kindness, mercies, faithfulness. Once again, we encounter terminology that reflects the character of the New Covenant.

know Yahweh, as a groom knows the bride at the consummation of the marriage, as contrasted with mere intellectual knowledge.

V21-23 "And it will come about in that day that I will respond," declares Yahweh. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine, and to the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. ²³And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'Thou art my God!'"

Jezreel here displays the meaning, *God shall sow to increase*.

The names of the children are changed (Note: the prefix *lo* is the Hebrew negative).

Loruhama is changed to *Ruhama* – receive compassion

Loammi is changed to *Ammi* – my people

Note that Paul and Peter quote verse 23, applying it to both Gentiles and Jews.

As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" (Romans 9:25)

for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:10)

The manner in which these apostles quote this verse leads to the conclusion that this passage ultimately refers to the Messianic Kingdom.

- The passage began its fulfillment at the return from captivity,
- another step toward fulfillment at Pentecost,
- but will be completed only at the Second Coming of Christ.

D. CHAPTER THREE: THE CRUCIAL CHAPTER IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK

The major interpretative question of this book is the relationship between Hosea and Gomer.

The views on this question fall into four categories.

1. NO MARRIAGE WAS CONSUMMATED.

Interpreters who take this view argue their position for two reasons:

- a. God would not tell a man to marry a brazen harlot, just to provide an illustration for a prophecy.
- b. God would not tell a man to marry without love.

This view would include all of the allegorical views, which contend that the book is not historical, but allegorical (i.e., that the marriage and birth of children constitute a parable or an allegory [possibly a dream or a vision] and do not record any actual event).

Others, considering the account to be historical, contend that Hosea never consummated the marriage with Gomer.

2. HOSEA IS LOOKING BACK ON HIS MARRIAGE TO A HARLOT AND CONCLUDES THAT GOD MUST HAVE HAD A HAND IN IT.

This view considers Hosea 1:2 to be a prolepsis. The reasoning put forth for this view is that God would not rob Hosea of his freedom by ordering him to marry an harlot.

Therefore, his marriage to Gomer was Hosea's own deliberate choice. He did not know about Gomer's tendency to sin, but after they were married, he discovered her sinful desires. He found her to be an adulterer before the birth of Jezreel. He got stung, but was made a prophet through the experience. As he looked back, he saw God's hand in Gomer's actions.

3. GOMER WAS CHASTE AT THE TIME OF THE MARRIAGE, BUT BECAME AN ADULTERER, PROBABLY AFTER THE BIRTH OF JEZREEL.

This is the most commonly held view.

4. GOMER NEVER WAS UNFAITHFUL.

The advocates of this view point out that the land committed whoredom (1:2) and so those of the Northern Kingdom were called, *Children of Whoredom*. It would be out of character for God to tell Hosea to marry one of the temple prostitutes. Since adultery is a

serious and shameful charge to bring against any woman, we should not sully the character of Gomer without more conclusive evidence.

Those who hold views (1), (2), and (3), view the woman of Chapter Three as being Gomer. She left her husband, delighted in her whoredom and the gifts that it brought to her. Then, after the men were through with her, she was placed upon the slave auction block. Hosea was sent by God to buy her back. His love had not waned. Some would argue that Hosea remarried Gomer; others would argue that he did not.

The advocates of view (4) consider the woman of Chapter Three to be someone other than Gomer. God had Hosea buy this woman and isolate her from sexual contact (3:3). This was an illustration of God's dealing with Israel. By isolating the woman, Hosea kept her from returning to her former life, as God was going to do with Israel.

The question of Gomer's faithfulness cannot be decided with absolute certainty. However, the message of the book does not depend upon resolving this question. The two lessons of the book are **REPENTANCE** and **FORGIVENESS**.

V1-2 *Then Yahweh said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." ²So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.*

There is nothing here to indicate that this is Gomer. Hosea bought this woman for the price of a slave (Exodus 21:32 - If a slave were killed by an ox, the owner of the ox was to pay 30 pieces of silver). Hosea bought this woman for 15 pieces of silver and goods.

Neither is there anything in this verse to indicate that God told Hosea to marry an harlot. The love spoken here is not necessarily romantic love. Two terms used in the passage are significant.

- The term rendered, *husband* (New American Standard Version) and *friend* (King James Version, Young's Literal Translation)⁵¹ is (רֵעַ *reah*). This term most commonly is used to signify a friend, a companion, a fellow.⁵² Keil and Delitzsch argue that since the term is used in Exodus 20:17-18; 22:25, in reference to a wife, that it should be understood as reference to a husband or a paramour in this verse,⁵³ but because the term has a wider range of meaning, in my opinion (JWG) their argument seems to be a bit specious.
- The Hebrew term translated *love* (אָהַב *ahav*), can signify almost any sort of love. Of special interest is the Greek term used in the Septuagint to render the Hebrew in this verse. The Greek term for romantic love is *eros* (ἔρως). The Septuagint, in its rendering of this verse, uses the term, *agapao* (ἀγαπάω), the kind of love that we are

⁵¹ Both the NIV and the NLT clearly are interpreting this verse, rather than translating the Hebrew. *Go show your love to your wife again* (NIV) and *Go and love your wife again* (NLT) clearly are interpretations of what the NIV and NLT translators understood the passage to be saying, rather than what the terms literally translated, say.

⁵² Brown, Driver, & Riggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1973, page 945

⁵³ Keil & Delitzsch, page 67

to have for all mankind, especially our brothers and sisters in the church. All of us are to love the sinner, including destitute women, but not as a wife is loved.

V3 *Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you."*

The woman is to be bought out of bondage and she is to remain under Hosea's discipline. Whether the woman is Gomer or someone else, she is to be kept in isolation. No man is to be a husband to her. She is to be sexually inactive. Isolation may bring repentance. Whether or not the woman repented is not known.

V4 *For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols.*

God applied to Israel the lesson of the isolation of the woman. Israel was to be deprived of her false Gods as well as any revelation from Jehovah. She would have neither legitimate nor illegitimate means of inquiring of God. This verse prophesies the same condition and period as Amos 8:11-14.

V5 *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days.*

This verse, goes beyond the return from Babylon and the return of some of the scattered Israelites. As noted earlier, this is Messianic (referring to Christ). Peter's Pentecost sermon declares that David was a typical figure for Christ (Acts 2:25-32). On Pentecost, there were thousands of Jews who could trace their lineage back to ancestors who received these and other prophecies.

Parallel passages are Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24.

- *'But they shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. (Jeremiah 30:9)*
- *"Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. (Ezekiel 34:23)*
- *"And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. (Ezekiel 37:24)*

THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

It is almost impossible to outline *Hosea*. This especially is true of the final eleven chapters. One of the issues is the long career he had as a prophet, and that the final eleven chapters do not seem to be a record of consecutive prophetic experiences, but somewhat of a summary of those messages received over six decades. Beginning with Chapter 4 transitions of theme are hard to detect because they are submerged in the emotional tone of the book. It is easier to note the recurring themes of the book, rather than attempting an exegetical commentary. Below we cite recurring themes.

I. THE CHARACTER OF YAHWEH

A. The fierceness of Yahweh - few sections of Scripture present God's fierceness as vividly as does Hosea.

- 2:2-13 fierce retribution against an unfaithful life.
- 5:14 God likens Himself to a wild beast
- 8:13 Because there is no faith, repentance, or love in their worship, but only empty ceremonialism, God pledges to send them into captivity (Egypt is a figure of captivity).
- 13:7, 8, 13 This is reminiscent of the *wrath of the Lamb* in Revelation 6:16ff.

B. The cause of God's fierceness.

- 13:16 Rebellion of Israel
- 2:5 Spiritual adultery
- 4:2 Gross Immorality
- 4:11 Reason destroyed through debauchery
- 5:4 Habitual sin prevented repentance
- 7:8-11 Heathen customs were adopted and moral compromise resulted. *A cake not turned*, one side baked and one side doughy, refers to half-heartedness. This is the charge made against the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14ff. God is a violent opponent to lukewarmness.

In Hosea 7:9, the Israelites are described as being so morally weak that they could not see their own dangerous state. *Grey hairs ...yet knoweth it not*. Many people have gray hairs but do not realize that the signs of age have come upon them. An old Arab proverb says, *Thy gray hairs are publishers of thy death*.

- 10:2 A Divided heart

C. The tenderness of Jehovah - One of the problems of spiritual leadership is knowing when to be fierce and when to be tender and in what spirit to manifest each of these.

- 2:14-20 God's most expressive picture of love, outside of Calvary.
- 11:1-3 Yahweh was like a father who taught a little boy to walk and then, when the boy grew up, he did not recognize his father. Matthew 2:13 is the ultimate fulfillment of verse 1.
- 11:4 *drawn with bands of love* - This indicates a marvelous condescension. *take off the yoke* - when the day was hot and the yoke galling, the tender farmer lifts off the yoke and refreshes the oxen.
- 11:8 God's anguish over the need to punish His people. Admak and Zeboim were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23). In this soliloquy, we are bought to

contemplate the fact that a people could not have sinned against God more than Israel, yet God cannot bear to give them up.

- D. Both tenderness and fierceness are embraced in holy love.** There is no contradiction between love and fierceness. God's love is holy. Wrath and mercy are two aspects of holy love. This is the apologetic for hell.
- E. Love's way.** Hosea 11:9-11; 6:1-2; 10:12; 14:4-5, 9. Love found a way of redemption. Hosea does not dwell on the subject of Calvary, but the cross still is in the heart of idea of redemption. In Hosea, the cross is implicit, not explicit. For example, the cross is not mentioned in the parable of the prodigal son, but the parable of the prodigal is not the whole Gospel.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF YAHWEH

A. Suggestive passages

2:8 *"For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal.*

4:1, 6 *Listen to the word of Yahweh, O sons of Israel, For Yahweh has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land... My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

5:4 *Their deeds will not allow them To return to their God. For a spirit of harlotry is within them, And they do not know Yahweh.*

6:6 *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* This verse is the climax of the book - Psalm 51:17 expresses the same thought; Jesus quoted this verse in a rebuke of the Pharisees (Matt. 12:7)

8:2 *They cry out to Me, "My God, we of Israel know Thee!"* Not actual knowledge, but a knowledge that one might have of a famous person of whom he had read or seen from a distance.

2:20 *And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Yahweh.*

B. Definition of "knowing God"⁵⁴

- *Knowledge of God* is more than a mere intellectual knowledge.
- God becomes the supreme object of life and its ruling power.
- John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*
- *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."*⁷ *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."*⁸ *Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."*⁹ *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:6-9)*

⁵⁴ Three Greek terms are used in Scripture for knowing God: εἶδον - factual knowledge; γινώσκω - experiential knowledge; ἐπίγνωσις - full or accurate knowledge

- Saving faith, knowledge, and love all involve the intimate association with, and the subjection of one's life to the supreme object - GOD. The New Testament passages that speak of the Holy Spirit as the first taste of heaven are important to this issue (2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14)

III. THE NATURE OF SIN - The main characterization of sin in Hosea is that sin is *WHOREDOM, SPIRITUAL ADULTERY AGAINST GOD*. Hosea presents the essence of sin as being the betrayal of love.

A. Some comments on sin, found in Hosea

2:2ff	Sin is harlotry
4:9	Sin is contagious
4:11	Sin cuts the optic nerve of the soul
5:3	Sin is defilement
7:1	Sin is wickedness
7:11	Sin is silly
7:14	Sin is rebellion against God
8:1	Sin is transgression of law
8:7	Sin digs its own grave
8:12	Sin is neglect of God's Law
8:14	Sin is neglect of God
10:2	A divided heart is sin
11:7	Backsliding is sin

B. New Testament verses proclaim the same idea.

James 4:4; Rev. 2:4ff - God demands our first love.

2 Corinthians 11:1ff - The Christian is espoused to Christ.

IV. THE NATURE OF GRACE Note: God loved Israel enough to destroy her.

Hesedh - kindness, pity, mercy, godliness, good deeds, all are appropriate translations of this Hebrew word. Here are some relevant passages:

2:19 *"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion*

4:1 *Listen to the word of Yahweh, O sons of Israel, For Yahweh has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.*

6:4 *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early.*

6:6 *For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

10:12 *Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek Yahweh Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.*

12:6 *Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.*

V. THE MESSIANIC HOPE

These verses present the hope that Jahweh presented to His people. Many of them are quoted in the New Testament or they present truths that are in harmony with New Testament statements concerning the Messianic Kingdom

- 1:10-11 *Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And it will come about that, in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."*¹¹ *And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves one leader, And they will go up from the land, For great will be the day of Jezreel.*
- 2:19-23 *"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion,"*²⁰ *And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Yahweh.*²¹ *"And it will come about in that day that I will respond," declares Yahweh. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,"*²² *And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine, and to the oil, And they will respond to Jezreel.*²³ *"And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'Thou art my God!'"*
- 3:5 *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days.*
- 6:1-3 *"Come, let us return to Yahweh. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us."*² *"He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day That we may live before Him."*³ *"So let us know, let us press on to know Yahweh. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth."* (6:1-3 is tied to the last two verses of Chapter 5. The break in the chapter should be between verses 3 & 4 of Chapter 6).
6:2 is not a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. The expression does not fit the New Testament language and it never is quoted in the New Testament. This is poetic language conveying the thought that God is eager to forgive, quickly.
- 10:12 *Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek Yahweh Until He comes to rain righteousness on you. Kindness (hesedh) will break up the fallow ground.*
Fallow ground is ground that lies idle during growing season. It is hard and will not receive the seed until it is plowed up.
- 13:14 *Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.* (I Corinthians 15:55)
This verse can be either a verse of hope or a verse of doom. It does come in a *doom passage*. Verse 15 is a verse of doom. Even so, Paul uses verse 14 as a prophecy of the resurrection.
- Chapter 14 - This chapter described Israel's repentance and Yahweh's pardon, along with Messianic imagery (Psalm 25:10 - the context for Psalm 25 is a condition almost identical to Hosea 14).
V2 *So will we render the calves of our lips* is quoted in Hebrews 13:15 as the *sacrifice of praise*.

V3 *"Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, 'Our god,' To the work of our hands; For in Thee the orphan finds mercy."*

In this verse are noted two sins against the Theocracy:

1. Idolatry
2. trusting in the power of man

Note that Jeremiah 1:16 & 2:13 address the same sins

V4-9 Yahweh's answer to them is expressed in beautiful imagery.

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree, And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon. Those who live in his shadow Will again raise grain, And they will blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon. O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; From Me comes your fruit. ⁹ Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of Yahweh are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them.

V9 is the epilogue to the book and it over-reaches all dispensational lines.

*Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of Yahweh are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.*

MICAH

Micah, Isaiah, and Hosea were contemporaries. Since both Isaiah and Micah prophesied in the Southern Kingdom (Judah), and since the themes in Micah also were treated in Isaiah, it is possible that these two servants of God had a close personal relationship. Isaiah was a man of the city. Micah was a man of the country.

Micah's home was Moresheth-gath, located about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. The busy highway from Egypt to Jerusalem went through this area.

All that we know about his call is found in 1:1. One thing we do know about Micah is that he was certain that he was called of God as a prophet (3:8). Also, Jeremiah acknowledges him as a prophet and quotes his prophecy (Jeremiah 26:18). To most Christians, Micah is best known for his prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah (5:2).

The name, *Micah*, is an abbreviated form of the longer name, *Micaiah*, meaning, *Who is like Yahweh?*

We do not know the exact dates of his ministry, the opening verse of the book places his ministry between the years 738 and 698 B.C. As described in the introduction to Hosea, the period was one of turmoil, strife, change, and growth.

In 745 B.C. the Assyrian monarch, Tiglath Pileser II, began the reconquest of the region. By 738 B.C., Assyria had invaded and exacted tribute from both Syria and Israel. Rezin (king of Syria) and Pekah (king of Israel) sought to unite the western nations into a coalition against Assyria. They were depending upon Egypt to help them.

Judah's king, Jotham, refused to be drawn into their scheme. In the midst of this controversy, Jotham died and was succeeded by his son, Ahaz.

Pekah and Rezin, assuming that the new king of Judah would not be able to resist them, attacked Jerusalem. Initially, they were successful, capturing and sacking Jerusalem. Ahaz sent word to Tiglath Pileser, asking him to come to Judah's aid. The Assyrian gladly complied. In 732 B.C., Damascus and all of Israel fell before the Assyrians. With this dominance of the area by the Assyrians, Ahaz was forced to become a puppet of Assyria.

In 722 B.C., the Assyrian ruler, Shalmaneser V, captured and destroyed Israel's capitol. The Israelites were removed from their land and resettled in foreign nations. Captives from other nations were brought into Israel to repopulate that country.

Sargon II became the new ruler of Syria immediately after the fall of Israel. Several nations of the West tried to cast off the Assyrian yoke in 720 B.C., but this revolt proved fruitless. Ahaz did not participate, choosing to remain loyal to Assyria.

When Hezekiah became king in Judah, he began a reform of the nation. One of his first acts was the removal of the Assyrian altar that Ahaz had set up in 732 B.C.

Hezekiah began to look to Egypt for help. In 715 B.C., Judah, Edom, and Moab, relying on Egypt, revolted and refused to send tribute to Sargon.

In response, Sargon came against this western coalition. Full details are not known about this invasion, but in some manner Jerusalem was spared in the onslaught.

Sennacherib came to the Assyrian throne in 705 B.C. Thinking that the young and inexperienced Sennacherib would not be able to control his empire, almost every nation, including Judah, rebelled. In 701 B.C., Sennacherib, with a huge army, smashed nation after nation. Jehovah delivered Jerusalem, miraculously, during this invasion (II Chron. 32; Isaiah 36). This period is reported in II Kings 15:17 - 20:21; and in II Chron. 26:31.

It was during these stormy days that Isaiah and Micah were preaching in Judah.

Social conditions in Judah, at this time, were similar to those addressed by Amos and Hosea in Israel. The judges were venal, the priests were immoral and corrupt, prophets were hirelings, and the nobles took particular delight in fleecing the poor.

A scornful, reckless, type of religion prevailed, during this period. The people did not want any type of preaching except that which permitted them to live their lives without any embarrassment. Soothsaying and witchcraft were prevalent. Priests and prophets were more concerned with luxury than ministry. They were professionals and were willing to make war on those who interfered with their profession (3:5).

The book is a collection of Micah's sermons and addresses that he delivered over the years. They are arranged logically to carry forward a general theme of judgment and pardon. There are three collections:

Chapters 1 & 2	The doom of Samaria and Jerusalem.
Chapters 3, 4, 5	The sins of the prophets and leaders.
Chapters 6 & 7	Yahweh's great controversy with Israel and the ultimate outcome.

In each of the above collections, the addresses begin with judgment and conclude with promise.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE OF MICAH

INTRODUCTION 1:1

I. THE FIRST COLLECTION OF ADDRESSES: THE PROMISED DOOM OF SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM WITH A PROMISE OF RESTORATION 1:2-2:13

A. THE TWO CAPITOLS MUST BE DESTROYED 1:2-16

1. The Destruction of Samaria 1:2-7

V2 *Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains, And let Yahweh God be a witness against you, Yahweh from His holy temple.*

The prophet pictures Yahweh as being thoroughly aroused over His peoples' departure from righteousness. God is not asleep. He sits in judgment upon those who have caused so much agony and grief among their fellow men.

V3-4 *For behold, Yahweh is coming forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. ⁴The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place.*

God's person is so awesome that when He comes from His throne in judgment, no part of the creation can endure His touch.

V5 *All this is for the rebellion of Jacob And for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?*

All of this is happening because of the sins of idolatry and oppression that are centered in the capitol cities of Samaria and Jerusalem (northern and southern kingdoms).

V6-7 *For I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the open country, Planting places for a vineyard. I will pour her stones down into the valley, And will lay bare her foundations.⁷ All of her idols will be smashed, All of her earnings will be burned with fire, And all of her images I will make desolate, For she collected them from a harlot's earnings, And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.*

This pronouncement of the fall and utter destruction of Samaria took place in 722 B.C., during the invasion of the Assyrians under Shalmaneser V. Paralleling the theme of Hosea, idolatry is spoken of as prostitution. All of the temples and ornate symbols of idol worship were financed by the offerings of idolaters. Their false Gods are pictured as hiring themselves out to the worshippers. They bestow their favors on those who pay, as a prostitute bestows sexual favors on those who pay. **YAHWEH IS NOT FOR HIRE!**

2. The destruction of Jerusalem 1:8-16

V8 *Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked; I must make a lament like the jackals And a mourning like the ostriches.*

The "I" in this verse is Micah.

V9-15 *For her wound is incurable, For it has come to Judah; It has reached the gate of my people, Even to Jerusalem.*

¹⁰ *Tell it not in Gath, Weep not at all. At Beth-le-aphrah roll yourself in the dust.¹¹ Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir, in shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of Zaanana does not escape. The lamentation of Bethzelem: "He will take from you its support."¹² For the inhabitant of Maroth Becomes weak waiting for good, Because a calamity has come down from Yahweh To the gate of Jerusalem.*

¹³ *Harness the chariot to the team of horses, O inhabitant of Lachish-- She was the beginning of sin To the daughter of Zion-- Because in you were found the rebellious acts of Israel.¹⁴ Therefore, you will give parting gifts on behalf of Moresheth-gath;*

The houses of Achzib will become a deception To the kings of Israel.¹⁵ Moreover, I will bring on you The one who takes possession, O inhabitant of Mareshah. The glory of Israel will enter Adullam.

Micah bewails the conquest of Jerusalem and surrounding villages. The names of the villages are listed in general geographical order, from northeast to southwest. In describing the Babylonian invasion, Micah lets the literal meaning of each town's name suggest an aspect of the invasions:⁵⁵

Grovel in the dust at Dust Town (Beth-le-Aphrah)

There go the people of Fair Town (Saphir), in shameful nakedness.

The inhabitant of Outlet City (Zaanana) has no escape.

The foundations of Removal Town (Beth-ezel) are taken away.

The inhabitant of Bitter Town (Maroth) waits vainly for good.

Harness your steeds and away, O Horse Town (Lachish).

You must part with Possession Town (Moresheth).

And kings of Israel are deceived at Deceitful Town (Achzib).

The invader will inherit Hereditary City (Mareshah).

Israel's nobility will flee to caves of Refuge Town (Adullam).

⁵⁵ As paraphrased by Irving L. Jensen, *Minor Prophets of Judah* (Moody Publishers) 1976

V16 *Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, Because of the children of your delight; Extend your baldness like the eagle, For they will go from you into exile.*

This is a cry of sorrow over the predicted Babylonian victory in Jerusalem and the carrying away of Jews into captivity. Micah was touched in special way as he contemplated the plight of the children.

B. CAUSES OF JUDGEMENT 2:1-11

V1-2 *Woe to those who scheme iniquity, Who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, For it is in the power of their hands. ²They covet fields and then seize them, and houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.*

This prophetic word pictures selfish men of power, lying awake at night working out pernicious plans to plunder the poor, defenseless peasants. This is reminiscent of the incident of Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21; II Kings 9:21-26). These men were guilty of covetousness and greed which led to land-grabbing, eviction, and slavery.

V3-5 *Therefore, thus says Yahweh, "Behold, I am planning against this family a calamity from which you cannot remove your necks; And you will not walk haughtily, For it will be an evil time.*

⁴ *"On that day they will take up against you a taunt And utter a bitter lamentation and say, 'We are completely destroyed! He exchanges the portion of my people; How He removes it from me! To the apostate He apportions our fields.'* ⁵ *"Therefore, you will have no one stretching a measuring line For you by lot in the assembly of Yahweh.*

God promises to reward them evil for evil. He will evict them, deprive them of the entire land of Israel, and see them go into slavery. Here will be a literal "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" punishment. The injunctions of Deuteronomy 32 and Romans 12:19 come to mind.

V6 *'Do not speak out,' so they speak out. But if they do not speak out concerning these things, Reproaches will not be turned back.*

Do not speak out - The people do not want a preacher or prophet to rebuke them or to deliver the truth of God. Such preaching of harsh truths is "unsophisticated and shameful." Yet, if the prophets do not speak out, there is no hope of repentance and the resulting deliverance.

V7-10 *"Is it being said, O house of Jacob: 'Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?' Do not My words do good To the one walking uprightly?*

⁸ *Recently My people have arisen as an enemy—*

You strip the robe off the garment, From unsuspecting passers-by, from those returned from war.

⁹ *"The women of My people you evict, Each one from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever.*

¹⁰ *"Arise and go, For this is no place of rest Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction, A painful destruction.*

God does not want to deliver such a harsh message, but the cruel and merciless lives of the people demand it. Only exile will cure them of this evil.

V11 *If a man walking after wind and falsehood had told lies and said, 'I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,' He would be spokesman to this people*

As in V6, a picture of the kind of preacher they liked-- one that spoke of the joy of hedonism.

C. A PROMISE OF RESTORATION 2:12-13

V12 *"I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture, they will be noisy with men.*

There will be a restoration of a remnant that will include survivors from both Israel and Judah. This is the same message found in Hosea 1:11, etc. The implication of the final statement (*Like a flock in the midst of its pasture, they will be noisy with men*) is that the remnant will be sizeable

V13 *The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And Yahweh at their head.*

Yahweh is a merciful God who bestows undeserved favor upon repentant people. This verse reminds us of Psalm 23, as they are restored to their land.

-This verse is Messianic. In one of its fulfillments, it refers to the spiritual kernel of the nation that would survive God's judgment and become the seed of the new people of God (Romans 9:27; 11:5).

-Note that Micah describes a regathering (V12) before a triumphal march (V13).

-The "I" of V12 is the "Breaker" of V13. The Breaker is the "Breachmaker"... one who opens the breach and makes a way through (Hebrews 9:12, etc.).

II. SECOND COLLECTION OF ADDRESSES: THE SINS OF THE PROPHETS AND THE LEADERS, FOLLOWED BY A PICTURE OF EXALTATION AFTER DEVASTATION 3:1-5:15.

A. THE RULERS AND PROPHETS ARE CORRUPT AND GODLESS 3:1-12

(Note that the same pattern is repeated in each of three paragraphs V1-4, V5-8, V9-12; i.e., the sins of the leaders/the coming judgment.

V1-4 *And I said, "Hear now, heads of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice?"*

² *"You who hate good and love evil, Who tear off their skin from them And their flesh from their bones, ³ And who eat the flesh of my people, Strip off their skin from them, Break their bones, And chop them up as for the pot And as meat in a kettle."*

⁴ *Then they will cry out to Yahweh, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, Because they have practiced evil deeds.*

The leaders of Israel are pictured as cannibals at a feast, devouring the poor.

Judgment- When the leaders plead for help in the coming calamity, God will look the other way.

V5-7 *Thus says Yahweh concerning the prophets Who lead my people astray;*

When they have something to bite with their teeth, they cry, "Peace," But against him who puts nothing in their mouths, They declare holy war.

⁶ *Therefore it will be night for you-- without vision, And darkness for you-- without divination. The sun will go down on the prophets, And the day will become dark over them. ⁷The seers will be ashamed and the diviners will be embarrassed. Indeed, they will all cover their mouths Because there is no answer from God.*

The prophets bring the divine word to those who can pay. They plot against those who can't pay; they prophesy for hire.

In retribution for their abuse, God will take away their visions and their ability to prophesy so that they will be put to shame.

V8 *On the other hand I am filled with power-- With the Spirit of Yahweh—And with justice and courage To make known to Jacob his rebellious act, Even to Israel his sin.*

Micah declares that he is filled with God's power and Spirit because he fearlessly delivers the message.

V9-12 *Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob And rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And twist everything that is straight,¹⁰ Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice.*

¹¹ *Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on Yahweh saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."*

¹² *Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.*

The leaders - both secular and sacred - are greedy and use every opportunity, legal and illegal, to gain wealth. They say, "We are special, God won't let anything happen to us."

As retribution, Jerusalem will be destroyed. The site will be lowed like a field and the Temple area will be overgrown with brush.

B. A MESSIANIC PICTURE OF RESTORATION AND GLORY 4:1 - 5:15

1. The Messianic Kingdom 4:1-8

These verses should be read in conjunction with Isaiah 2:1-4. The Messianic Kingdom (sometimes called the *Millennial Kingdom*) will be a glorious kingdom with Christ as King. Most of the descriptions of this kingdom are in Old Testament passages like this one. Note description of the kingdom with respect to what is said about:

- Yahweh
- Jerusalem
- Israel
- Gentile nations

And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of Yahweh Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it.² And many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths."

For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.³ And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations.

Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war.⁴ And each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make them afraid, For the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has spoken.

⁵ *Though all the peoples walk Each in the name of his god, As for us, we will walk In the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever.*

⁶ *"In that day," declares Yahweh, "I will assemble the lame, And gather the outcasts, Even those whom I have afflicted.⁷ "I will make the lame a remnant, And the outcasts a strong nation, And Yahweh will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever.⁸ "And as for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come-- Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*

2. Babylonian Captivity and deliverance 4:9-5:1

"Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished, That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?"¹⁰ "Writhe and labor to give birth, Daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth, for now you will go out of the city, Dwell in the field, And go to Babylon.

There you will be rescued; There Yahweh will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.¹¹ "And now many nations have been assembled against you Who say, 'Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.'¹² "But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh, And they do not understand His purpose;

For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.¹³ "Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, For your horn I will make iron And your hoofs I will make bronze, That you may pulverize many peoples, That you may devote to Yahweh their unjust gain And their wealth to Yahweh of all the earth. "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.

In this prophecy, years before Babylon was a great world power, God gave His program for Judah. It included (1) anguish, (2) suffering, (3) punishment, (4) Babylonian captivity, (5) return, (6) a new kingdom of redeemed souls, (7) evangelization of the world through the holy remnant.

God never is in a hurry. In spite of sin, captivity, and suffering, He marches relentlessly toward the goal that motivated Him first to create and then to redeem man.

3. The First Advent 5:2-3

These are the best known verses of Micah because they are quoted so often at Christmas time.

" But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."³ Therefore, He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel.

Little Bethlehem, the home of David, is to be signally honored in the coming of the Anointed One.

4. The Messianic Kingdom 5:4-15

Looking carefully at this passage, one has to conclude that it speaks of a time still to come:

V 5-7 *And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.⁵ And this One will be our peace.*

When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.⁶ And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, The land of Nimrod at its entrances;

And He will deliver us from the Assyrian When he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.⁷ Then the remnant of Jacob Will be among many peoples Like dew from Yahweh, like showers on vegetation which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of men.

This passage is an example of a mixture of literal fulfillment, hyperbolic figures, as well as having Messianic elements. For example, many understand, *He will be great to the ends of the earth and this one will be our Peace*, as a description of Christ.

Assyrian" in V5 & 6 poses a problem in interpretation. Is this a reference to Assyria **before** or **after** Christ's advent in Bethlehem? Some feel that since Assyria was Israel's most feared enemy at this time, that Micah uses the Assyrian to typify Israel's enemies in the last days.

V 8-9 *And the remnant of Jacob Will be among the nations, among many peoples Like a lion among the beasts of the forest, Like a young lion among flocks of sheep, Which, if he passes through, Tramples down and tears, And there is none to rescue .⁹Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, And all your enemies will be cut off.*

The remnant of Jacob (saved Israel) shall be as a lion among the beasts.

Passages such as this one, imply that God has a purpose for Israel in the end-times. Yet, much of this could be Messianic imagery, describing the total victory and authority of the Messianic Kingdom. A person's eschatological template (for those who have one) will influence one's interpretation of this passage.

III. THIRD COLLECTION OF ADDRESSES: Jehovah's Great Controversy with Israel and its outcome. Chapters 6 & 7

A. CONTROVERSY ANNOUNCED 6:1-2.

Hear now what Yahweh is saying, "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, And let the hills hear your voice."² "Listen, you mountains, to the indictment of Yahweh, And you enduring foundations of the earth, Because Yahweh has a case against His people; Even with Israel He will dispute.

Even nature is called upon to witness God's lawsuit against His people.

B. YAHWEH'S CHARGE 6:3-5.

"My people, what have I done to you, And how have I wearied you? Answer Me."⁴ "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt And ransomed you from the house of slavery, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."⁵ "My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled And what Balaam son of Beor answered him, And from Shittim to Gilgal, In order that you might know the righteous acts of Yahweh."

God speaks of the special mercies that He has showered upon them.

C. THE PEOPLE'S QUESTION 6:6-7.

With what shall I come to Yahweh And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?⁷ Does Yahweh take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

They inquire what religious exercises God wants from them - what ritual will please Him.

D. THE PROPHET'S ANSWER 6:8.

He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

This verse and 5:1-2 are the best-known verses of Micah. It echoes Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

God desires a true ritual, a true worship, a true morality, that will result in true behavior. This is not substituting morality for religion. Outward conduct is essential, but it must be the result of inner character.

E. YAHWEH'S INDICTMENT 6:9-16.

V9-12 *The voice of Yahweh will call to the city-- And it is sound wisdom to fear Thy name: "Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?¹⁰ Is there yet a man in the wicked house, along with treasures of wickedness, and a short measure that is cursed?¹¹ Can I justify wicked scales and a*

bag of deceptive weights? ¹²For the rich men of the city are full of violence, Her residents speak lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

It is impossible to be pure while participating in the delights of sin. These verses recognize the difficulty in turning away from sin. Most want to get by with a shallow repentance, but God calls for a total turning away from sin. He demands that His people turn away from sin's paraphernalia and the wealth gained through sin. (Matthew 5:29-30; Luke 19:8-9).

V13-16 *"So also I will make you sick, striking you down, Desolating you because of your sins.*

¹⁴ *"You will eat, but you will not be satisfied, and your vileness will be in your midst. You will try to remove for safekeeping, but you will not preserve anything, And what you do preserve I will give to the sword. ¹⁵"You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.*

¹⁶ *"The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; And in their devices you walk. Therefore, I will give you up for destruction and your inhabitants for derision, And you will bear the reproach of My people."*

These verses speak of judgment. God will take away those things that their hearts crave. They will not be able to satisfy fleshly lusts; they won't be able to save money; their crops will fail; what little they do have will be taken by an enemy. Again - "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" judgment is pictured.

E. A CONFESSION 7:1-6.

Woe is me! For I am Like the fruit pickers and the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, or a first-ripe fig which I crave.

² *The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; Each of them hunts the other with a net. ³ Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, and a great man speaks the desire of his soul; So they weave it together. ⁴ The best of them is like a briar, The most upright like a thorn hedge.*

The day when you post a watchman, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur.

⁵ *Do not trust in a neighbor; Do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom Guard your lips. ⁶ For son treats father contemptuously, Daughter rises up against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household.*

Israel is pictured as acknowledging the depravity of her people.

Note that Our Lord quoted portions of these verses: Matthew 10:21; Luke 12:53; Mark 10:36, which leads to the conclusion that there is a Messianic element in this section.

F. A BELIEVER'S HOPE 7:7-13.

But as for me, I will watch expectantly for Yahweh; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

⁸ *Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; Though I dwell in darkness, Yahweh is a light for me. ⁹ I will bear the indignation of Yahweh because I have sinned against Him, Until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, And I will see His righteousness.*

¹⁰ *Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is Yahweh your God?" My eyes will look on her; At that time, she will be trampled down, Like mire of the streets.*

¹¹ *It will be a day for building your walls. On that day will your boundary be extended. ¹² It will*

be a day when they will come to you From Assyria and the cities of Egypt, From Egypt even to the Euphrates, Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.¹³ And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants, On account of the fruit of their deeds.

The prophet acknowledges what God must do to purge the nation before filling it with blessings. He trusts God and willingly submits to the fires of purging.

G. THE PROPHET'S PRAYERS 7:14.

Shepherd Thy people with Thy scepter, the flock of Thy possession which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old.

Micah pleads with God to restore Israel and to provide for her needs.

H. YAHWEH'S ANSWER 7:15-17.

"As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles."¹⁶ Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will put their hand on their mouth, their ears will be deaf.¹⁷ They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To Yahweh our God they will come in dread, and they will be afraid before Thee.

God promises to bring back the nation. He will demonstrate His relationship with Israel through miracles.

J. THE PROPHET'S TESTIMONY 7:18-20

Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, Which Thou didst swear to our forefathers from the days of old.

Note that this closing paragraph begins with a play on the meaning of the prophet's name (*Micaiah*, meaning, *Who is like Yahweh?*). In the opinion of many, this is one of the most exquisite passages in the whole Bible. The emphasis of these verses is God's mercy and the absoluteness of His forgiveness. We are reminded of James 2:13c "Mercy is victorious over judgment."

PROPHECIES IN MICAH THAT HAVE BEEN FULFILLED

1. The fall of Samaria 722 B.C. (1:6-7)
2. The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib 702-701 B.C. (1:9-16)
3. The fall of Jerusalem 586 B.C. (3:12; 7:13)
4. The exile in Babylon 586 B.C. (4:10)
5. The return from Babylon 520 B.C. (4:1-7, 13; 7:11, 14-17)
6. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem 4-3 B.C. (5:2)

MICAH IS QUOTED DIRECTLY IN OTHER BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

1. The elders of Judah (Micah 3:12) in Jeremiah 26:18
2. Wise Men (Micah 5:2) in Matthew 2:5-6
3. Jesus (Micah 7:6) in Matthew 10:21; Matthew 10:35-36; Luke 12:53; Mark 10:36

There are several passages in the Bible that are so similar to Micah that they appear to be paraphrases or have Micah as their background.

NAHUM

Nahum is a prophecy directed against Ninevah. The name, *Nahum*, is shortened form of Nehemiah, and means *Consolation* or *Comforter*. It is interesting to note that God chose a man named *Comforter* to deliver a prophecy that has been called a *Hymn of Hate*.

Nahum is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, unless he is the Nahum of Luke 3:25. He tells us (1:1) that his home is Elkosh. The location of this town is unknown to us today.

The book was written between 663 BC and 612 BC. We know this to be true because Nahum reports the fall of Thebes⁵⁶ as history (3:8-10) which occurred in 663 BC, and then foretells the fall of Nineveh, which occurred in 612 BC.

As was true of Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, the world power during Nahum's lifetime was Assyria. Assyria's capitol was Nineveh, which had been established by Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-11). Its walls were 100 feet high, wide enough for three chariots to drive abreast on top of them, and seven and one-half miles in circumference. It also boasted 1200 defense towers. Outside of the walls the city was surrounded by moats that were 140 feet wide and 60 feet deep. The city presented a formidable front to any invader.

Esarhaddon, who ruled Assyria from 681-669 BC, built a great kingdom. He even conquered Egypt and made it a part of his empire. He was succeeded by his son, Assurbanipal, who ruled 669-626 BC. Assurbanipal was a great builder of palaces and libraries. At his death, the Assyrian power was tested by the Babylonian, Nabopolassar. Nineveh held out for a few years under the reigns of Ashuretililani, Shinsharishkin, and Ashuruballit II. Nineveh finally was conquered in 612 BC by a confederation of Medes, Scythians, and Babylonians.

When Nineveh finally was conquered, its destruction was so complete that when Alexander the Great passed the site in 331 BC, did not notice it. No trace of the city was found until 1842, when the archaeologists, Layard and Botta discovered the location and were able to confirm what ancient records had said about the city's size and fortifications.

About one hundred years before the ministry of Nahum, God had sent Jonah to Nineveh. Even though Nineveh had repented under the preaching of Jonah, the Ninevites quickly returned to their cruel ways. Ashurbanipal's gruesome behavior is an example of Assyrian cruelty. On one occasion, he feasted with the head of a defeated Chaldean monarch hanging above him. On another occasion, he forced a prince to wear around his neck the bloody head of his king. He frequently witnessed the skinning alive of captives.

As noted in our earlier studies, Assyria captured Israel's capitol, Samaria, in 722 BC and the Northern Kingdom went out of existence.

Judah (the Southern Kingdom) continued to exist as a kingdom until 586 BC. The kings who ruled in Judah during this period were Hezekiah (a godly man), Manasseh (an idolater), Amon (an idolater), Josiah (a Godly man), Jehoachim (an idolater), and Zedekiah (an ungodly man).

⁵⁶ Thebes is the Greek name for Noamon (3:8) which was the capitol of Egypt.

Nahum prophesied sometime during the period bracketed by the reigns of Manasseh, Amon and Josiah. When Nahum wrote, Assyria already had invaded Palestine twice:

- 722 BC - conquest of Israel by Sargon II
- 701 BC - invasion of Judah by Sennacherib

The theme of the book is Jehovah's holiness and goodness, which caused Him to bring judgment upon sinful Nineveh, and to spare Judah.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION: *The oracle⁵⁷ of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.*

I. A SUBLIME PICTURE OF GOD 1:2-8

V 2-5 *A jealous and avenging God is Yahweh; Yahweh is avenging and wrathful. Yahweh takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. ³Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power, And Yahweh will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. ⁴He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither. ⁵Mountains quake because of Him, And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it.*

The vengeance of God is pictured in this paragraph. God is slow to anger, but when He is aroused, His power is incredible.

Note the similarity to Micah 1:2-4

V6 *Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, And the rocks are broken up by Him.*

V7 *Yahweh is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.*

This verse elaborates the message of verse 2c *He reserves wrath for His enemies.* Note Paul's application of this verse in II Timothy 2:19 *Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."*

V8 *But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies into darkness.*

A prediction of the fate of Nineveh, exactly what happened - *a complete end of its site* (see comment above concerning Alexander the Great).

⁵⁷ In the KJV and related versions, the verse reads, *the burden of Ninevah.* The Hebrew term *masah*, frequently used in the sense of *burden*, is used in the prophetic books to mean, *judgment.* Thus, the idea of judgment occurs immediately in the opening verse of this book.

II. NINEVEH IS TO FALL AND JUDAH IS TO BE PROTECTED 1:9-2:2

In this section, Nahum alternates back and forth between the two subjects of judgment and deliverance as well as alternating between speaking to Nineveh and Judah. Note that god assumes full responsibility for the destruction of Nineveh.

A. Nineveh addressed 1:9-12b

V9 *Whatever you devise against Yahweh, He will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice.*

Nineveh is pictured as scheming of ways to defeat Yahweh. Yahweh will strike one blow and Nineveh won't get up to fight again.

V10 *Like tangled thorns, and like those who are drunken with their drink, they are consumed as stubble completely withered.*

The drunken Ninevites are pictured as being tossed into the flames like a bundle of tangled thorns.

V11 *From you has gone forth One who plotted evil against Yahweh a wicked counselor.*

This seems to be a reference to the king of Assyria (see 3:18).

V12a *Thus says Yahweh, "Though they are at full strength and likewise many, Even so, they will be cut off and pass away."*

The size of an army is no defense against Yahweh. This reminds us of Sennacherib's siege against Jerusalem and the death of the great Assyrian army (II Kings 18:13-19:37).

B. Judah addressed 1:12b-13

Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. ¹³So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you, And I will tear off your shackles."

Judah is promised relief from Assyria. Judah's punishment has been sufficient.

C. Nineveh addressed 1:14

Yahweh has issued a command concerning you: "Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image from the house of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are contemptible."

This may be addressed to the Assyrian king, promising the utter destruction of his family. God says, "I'll bury you!" Note the expressive language -- "You are contemptible"

D. Judah addressed 1:15

Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; Pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely.

Messengers bringing news of Assyria's defeat are pictured as running to Judah urging the nation to celebrate and worship Jehovah. Note that Paul accommodates this verse in reference to those who preach the Gospel (Romans 10:15)

E. Nineveh addressed 2:1

The one who scatters has come up against you. Man the fortress, watch the road; Strengthen your back, summon all your strength.

Nineveh sarcastically is called to prepare for a siege.

F. Judah addressed 2:2

For Yahweh will restore the splendor of Jacob Like the splendor of Israel, Even though devastators have devastated them And destroyed their vine branches.

III. THE FALL OF NINEVEH 2:3-13

V3 The description of the mighty army that will attack Nineveh.

The shields of his mighty men are colored red, The warriors are dressed in scarlet, The chariots are enveloped in flashing steel When he is prepared to march, And the cypress spears are brandished.

V4-5 The confusion in the city as defenders rush to their posts.

The chariots race madly in the streets, They rush wildly in the squares, Their appearance is like torches, They dash to and fro like lightning flashes.⁵ He remembers his nobles; They stumble in their march, They hurry to her wall, And the mantelet is set up.

V6 *The gates of the rivers are opened, And the palace is dissolved.*

All is in vain. The enemy enters the city through the river gates.

V7 *And it is fixed: She is stripped, she is carried away, And her handmaids are moaning like the sound of doves, Beating on their breasts.*

This may be a reference to a queen, or the feminine form of the Hebrew verb could be referring to the city of Ninevah.

V8 *Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days, Now they are fleeing; "Stop, stop," But no one turns back.*

Nineveh is like a leaking pool. The defenders of the city trickle out of the city and do not heed the plea for them to return.

V9-10 *Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! For there is no limit to the treasure-- Wealth from every kind of desirable object.¹⁰ She is emptied! Yes, she is desolate and waste! Hearts are melting and knees knocking! Also, anguish is in the whole body, And all their faces are grown pale!*

Nineveh's great treasures will be plundered.

V11-12 *Where is the den of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions, Where the lion, lioness, and lion's cub prowled, with nothing to disturb them?¹² The lion tore enough for his cubs, killed enough for his lionesses, and filled his lairs with prey And his dens with torn flesh.*

The powerful nation is filled with trembling. Formerly, Nineveh had plundered others. Now she is plundered.

V13 *"Behold, I am against you," declares Yahweh of hosts. "I will burn up her chariots in smoke, a sword will devour your young lions, I will cut off your prey from the land, and no longer will the voice of your messengers be heard."*

Nineveh is destroyed, and her young men are killed. Never again will Nineveh be a world power.

IV. THE CAUSES OF NINEVEH'S DESTRUCTION 3:1-19

Here is a picture of the horror and cruelty of the city:

V1 A city full of blood; full of lies; full of rape; full of plunder from her victims.

Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; Her prey never departs.

V4 Nineveh is pictured as a beautiful prostitute enticing nations to idolatry.

All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the charming one, the mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries.

V5-6 God will expose the adultery of Nineveh.

"Behold, I am against you," declares Yahweh of hosts; "And I will lift up your skirts over your face, and show to the nations your nakedness And to the kingdoms your disgrace. ⁶ "I will throw filth on you and make you vile, And set you up as a spectacle.

V11 In despair, the inhabitants of the city will try to escape the horror by becoming drunk.

You too will become drunk,

V16 A city that made merchandise of other's suffering

You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven--

Note these verses that spell out the city's destruction

V2-3 The enemy's chariots and the bodies of Nineveh's defenders will fill the streets.

The noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of the wheel, Galloping horses, And bounding chariots! ³ Horsemen charging, Swords flashing, spears gleaming, many slain, a mass of corpses, and countless dead bodies-- They stumble over the dead bodies!

V7 God will destroy utterly the city.

"And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, 'Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?' Where will I seek comforters for you?"

V8-10 The Assyrians had conquered Noamon (Thebes) about half a century before this prophecy. God says that what Assyria did to Noamon will be done to Nineveh.

Are you better than No-amon, which was situated by the waters of the Nile, With water surrounding her, Whose rampart was the sea, Whose wall consisted of the sea?⁹ Ethiopia was her might, And Egypt too, without limits. Put and Lubim were among her helpers.¹⁰ Yet she became an exile, she went into captivity; Also her small children were dashed to pieces At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound with fetters.

V11-13 Again, a promise that Nineveh will be unable to stand against the invaders.

You will be hidden. You too will search for a refuge from the enemy.¹² All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit-- When shaken, they fall into the eater's mouth.¹³ Behold, your people are women in your midst! The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies; Fire consumes your gate bars.

V14-15 In the midst of preparation for the siege, Nineveh will be attacked. Regardless of the number of Assyrians, they will not be enough to defend the city.

Draw for yourself water for the siege! Strengthen your fortifications! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Take hold of the brick mold!¹⁵ There fire will consume you, The sword will cut you down; It will consume you as the locust does. Multiply yourself like the creeping locust, Multiply yourself like the swarming locust.

V16-17 All leaders will flee the city and become fugitives in the wilderness.

The creeping locust strips and flies away.¹⁷ Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust. Your marshals are like hordes of grasshoppers Settling in the stone walls on a cold day. The sun rises and they flee, And the place where they are is not known.

V18-19 All the people who are left will scatter and there will be no leader to regather them. The nation never will rise again, and no one will care because all nations have suffered under Assyrian cruelty.

Your shepherds are sleeping, O king of Assyria; Your nobles are lying down. Your people are scattered on the mountains, and there is no one to regather them.¹⁹ There is no relief for your breakdown, your wound is incurable. All who hear about you Will clap their hands over you,

THE OVERRIDING MESSAGE OF NAHUM: THERE IS A LIMIT TO THE PATIENCE OF GOD!

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was called as a prophet to Judah. The name, *Zephaniah*, means *hidden by Yahweh or protected by Yahweh*.

Zephaniah lived in an age of decay and dissolution in the midst of a rapidly changing world. The established world powers were on the decline and savage hordes of Scythians, pouring down from the plains of the region now occupied by southern Russia, threw fear into the hearts of all of the people of Palestine. These cruel, bloodthirsty ruffians swept west and south all the way to Egypt. Assyria at this time was rapidly losing power in the world. The armies of the Medes, the Scythians, and the Babylonians caused a mighty upheaval in the world.

Josiah was Judah's king, during Zephaniah's ministry. Josiah came to the throne following the death of Manasseh and the short reign and death of Amon. During the reign of Manasseh, the nation was converted to heathenism, foreign fashions, practices, worship, and behavior. The pure worship of Yahweh had been banned. No prophets had been allowed to speak of the deep things of God.

Thirteen kings had ruled in Judah, between the time of the division of the Kingdom and Zephaniah's prophetic ministry. Six of these had been evil kings:

- Jehoshaphat
- Jehoram (evil)
- Ahaziah (evil)
- Athaliah (evil)
- Joash
- Amaziah
- Uzziah
- Jotham
- Ahaz (evil)
- Hezekiah
- Manasseh (evil) - the longest reign - 50 years
- Amon (evil)
- Josiah

Zephaniah pictures Jerusalem's people as being unteachable, the rulers as predatory, the courts as merciless, the prophets as traitors, and the priests as profane.

Young king Josiah set out to clean up the temple and to turn the people back to the worship of Yahweh. It was during the repairing of the temple that a copy of the book of Deuteronomy was discovered. Josiah had the book read in the hearing of the people. He removed the idols of the land and outwardly accomplished a great reform (Read II Chronicles 34-35; II Kings 22-23).

Zephaniah probably wrote his book prior to Josiah's reforms, since some of the things that Zephaniah condemns were corrected by Josiah. Suggested dates for his ministry are 636 B.C. to 623 B.C.

It is almost certain that the Hezekiah of Zephaniah 1:1 is the Judean King Hezekiah. Only one other person in the Old Testament has a similar name - Jehizkiah the Ephraimite in II Chronicles 28:12. Thus, it seems that the prophet was the great-great-grandson of good king Hezekiah. If this assessment is correct, Zephaniah was the only prophet of royal blood and he and King Josiah were related (Josiah either would have been Zephaniah's uncle or a distant cousin). We are not told the name of Zephaniah's home, although it is presumed to be Jerusalem.

Zephaniah prophesied both the final destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C see ADDENDUM E.) and the restoration of God's chosen nation (beginning 536 B.C.) The full measure of the restoration predicted by Zephaniah is yet to be fulfilled.

EXEGETICAL NOTES

INTRODUCTION 1:1

The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah...

Again, I Peter 1:20-21 is confirmed, it is the *Word of Yahweh which came unto Zephaniah*.

I. THE DAY OF YAHWEH'S WRATH

No human being can comprehend, fully, the awfulness of the coming Day of Yahweh's Wrath.

A. YAHWEH'S JUDGMENT ON JUDAH 1:2-2:3

1:2-3 God's judgment upon Judah is thorough

"I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth," declares Yahweh. ³"I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, and the ruins along with the wicked; And I will cut off man from the face of the earth," declares Yahweh.

Prior to announcing judgment on Judah, Yahweh pronounces judgment on the whole earth. This is the beginning of the theme that occurs throughout the book, i.e. that judgment is the way to repentance and the goal of the judgment/repentance is the conversion of all nations to Yahweh. This becomes more apparent in Chapter Two and in Chapter 3:9ff.⁵⁸ Note that God will consume man and beast, fowl and fish, and the *ruins*. The term, *ruins*, can be rendered as *stumbling blocks*, which generally is understood to refer to idols.

The pronouncement of judgment on the whole earth sharpens the following threat of judgement on Judah and Jerusalem; since he will punish the whole world, he will punish the apostasy of Judah even more. This is in keeping with the principle elucidated by Jesus, *And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:47-48)*

1:4-6 The cause of judgment is sin

V4 *"So I will stretch out My hand against Judah And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, And the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.*

The sin of Canaanite nature worship was conducted by worshipping the many Baalim. (see Judges 2:11-13; 6:28-32). The *remnant of Baal* refers to the traces of Baal worship that remained in Judah, after Josiah's reformation efforts. The KJV term, *Chemarim*, is a phoenic anglicization of the Hebrew and it refers to an order of idolatrous priesthood that burned incense upon knolls surrounding Jerusalem (rendered as *idolatrous priests* in the NAS). This was an act of worship and honor to the Baalim (II Kings 23:5; Hosea 10:5).

⁵⁸ Some have argued that the phrase, *the earth* (rendered, *land*, in the KJV), refers to Canaan, the land of the Jews. This is based on a narrow interpretative stance and is quite strained, given the usual use of the Hebrew terms.

V5 *"And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven, and those who bow down and swear to Yahweh and yet swear by Milcom,*

Host of heaven - those guilty of astrological worship were to be punished.

Swear by Yahweh...swear by Malcham refers to those who worshipped both Yahweh and false gods (Joshua 23:7).

V6 *And those who have turned back from following Yahweh, and those who have not sought Yahweh or inquired of Him.*

Backsliders is a modern term for this first mentioned group (Isaiah 1:4). *Those that have not sought Yahweh...* refers to people who live their lives without taking God into account (see verse 12 below). They do not ask *What is God's will?*

1:7-13 *The Day of Yahweh is the day of God's wrath. Three groups will be punished.*

V7 *Be silent before the Lord Yahweh! For the day of Yahweh is near, For Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests.*

As Zephaniah began to declare the punishment, he called for silence before Yahweh (Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13; Rev. 8:1). The prospect of what was to be seen was so awesome and terrible, that respectful silence was the only appropriate attitude. God had prepared a great sacrifice and had invited the executioners to be His guests and to come and kill.

V8 Group One: The royalty and leaders in Judah, along with all who had a strong desire for foreign gods and foreign ways will be punished. *"Then it will come about on the day of Yahweh's sacrifice, That I will punish the princes, the king's sons, and all who clothe themselves with foreign garments."*⁵⁹

King Josiah is not named. Josiah walked in the ways of the Lord and because of his piety he was not going to live to see the execution of the judgment (II Kings 22:19-20; II Chronicles 34:27-28)

V9 Group Two: The second group to be punished consists of those who rob and kill in order to fill their master's houses. Different English versions render this verse with different terminology, thus presenting different understandings of the verse.

In the same day, also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. (King James Version)

And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold, who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit. (New American Standard Version)

I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit. (New International Version)

I will punish those who participate in pagan worship ceremonies, and those who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. (New Living Translation)

In the Hebrew text, there is no word for temple. The Hebrew reads, literally, *I am attending to all who leap over the threshold in that day.*

⁵⁹ Yahweh had specified the attire that His people were to wear, which would distinguish them from other nations (Numbers 15:38-39). The ignoring of this commandment and the copying the attire of surrounding nations was a manifestation of their desiring to say to the world, "we are no different from you..."

The Greek of the Septuagint reads literally, *and I will avenge upon all openly upon the thresholds in that day those filling the house of lord the god of them of ungodliness and guile.*

Three points of view explain these differences.

- Some interpret this verse to refer to I Samuel 5:5, which indicates that the custom of the priests of Dagon was to leap over the threshold of the temple of that idol. Thus, the reference is to those who have adopted this custom in coming into the Temple of Jehovah, or to those who worship some idol.
- Some interpreters are influenced by the Septuagint, which adds the term *the god of them*, thus interpreting the Hebrew as referencing those who rob and steal in order to supply things to the temples of their false gods.
- The third understanding is that since the word, *temple*, is absent in the original Hebrew text, that the reference is to those who violently rush into houses to steal in order to present goods to the king, or to some other master.

Given the context and the original Hebrew text, in my opinion (JWG), the third view is the most tenable view. This is one of those rare instances in which the King James Version is a superior rendering of the text.

Vs10-13 Group Three: The merchants and people of wealth will be slain. God is pictured as searching out the dark corners of Jerusalem as He discovers and punishes the third group - those who say that God isn't going to (or isn't able to) do anything. The King James, translating the Hebrew literally, speaks of those who *settle on their lees*. *Lees* are the dregs that settle in wine. To *settle on one's lees* is a figure of speech meaning to become complacent. The New American Standard departs from Formal Equivalency here, and renders the expression according to Dynamic Equivalency principles, as, *stagnant in spirit*.

And on that day, declares Yahweh, there will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, and a loud crash from the hills.

¹¹*Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar, for all the people of Canaan will be silenced; all who weigh out silver will be cut off.* ¹²*And it will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, "'Yahweh will not do good or evil!"*

¹³*Moreover, their wealth will become plunder, and their houses desolate; Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but not drink their wine.*

The invaders would come upon Jerusalem from the north. The Fish Gate was at the northern edge of the city. The enemy then would advance to the second quarter and finally press to the kill in the center of Jerusalem.

1:14-18 Many descriptions of divine judgment

Near is the great day of Yahweh, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of Yahweh! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. ¹⁵*A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,* ¹⁶*A day of trumpet and battle cry, Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers.* ¹⁷*And I will bring distress on men, So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against Yahweh; And their blood will be poured out like dust, And their flesh like dung.* ¹⁸*Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of Yahweh's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.*

Only one reference to the cause of Divine Judgment is given in this section: *They have sinned against Yahweh* (verse 17).

This section of wrath begins and ends with the same thought:

V14 *The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly* (KJV)
Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly (NAS)

V18 *for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.* (KJV)
For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. (NAS)⁶⁰

2:1-3 Judah is urged to repent before it is too late

V1 Judah is called a *Shameless Nation*, and is called to come together before Yahweh
Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame,

V2 Deliverance was possible

Before the decree takes effect-- The day passes like the chaff-- Before the burning anger of Yahweh comes upon you, Before the day of Yahweh's anger comes upon you.

V3 Judah is told how to repent.

Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of Yahweh's anger.

Those who have kept God's ordinances are to:

- Seek God (beg God) on behalf of the nation
- Seek righteousness
- Seek humility (submission to Yahweh's control)

B. YAHWEH'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS 2:4-3:7⁶¹

2:4-15 The nations and the causes for judgment

From Jerusalem, Zephaniah's view moved from the west (Philistia) to the east (Moab and Ammon) to the south (Ethiopia) to the north (Assyria).

V4-7 Philistia, which had persecuted the Jews from the time of the Judges, would find the Jews occupying their land.

For Gaza will be abandoned, And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon, And Ekron will be uprooted.⁵ Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of Yahweh is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will destroy you, So that there will be no inhabitant.⁶ So the seacoast will be pastures, With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.⁷ And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For Yahweh their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

⁶⁰ The KJV rendering of verse 18, *speedy riddance*, is another instance in which the KJV is the preferred rendering (also the NIV – *he shall make a sudden end*). The Hebrew term in verse 18 is the niphal participle of the verb, בָּהַל (bahal), which, in this form, usually means, *hasten*.

⁶¹ This section reflects the truth expressed in Isaiah 45; 5-6, 18.

V8-11 For centuries, Moab and Ammon had, *taunted and become arrogant*, against the Jews. Therefore, God will wipe them out and the remnant of Israel will spoil and occupy Moab and Ammon.

"I have heard the taunting of Moab And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And become arrogant against their territory. ⁹ "Therefore, as I live," declares Yahweh of hosts, The God of Israel, "Surely Moab will be like Sodom, And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah-- A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, And the remainder of My nation will inherit them." ¹⁰ This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of Yahweh of hosts. ¹¹ Yahweh will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.

V12-15 Ethiopia and Assyria will know slaughter. Assyria's capitol, Ninevah, will become a desolate area where wild beasts dwell.

"You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword." ¹³ And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness. ¹⁴ And flocks will lie down in her midst, all beasts which range in herds; Both the pelican and the hedgehog Will lodge in the tops of her pillars; Birds will sing in the window, Desolation will be on the threshold; For He has laid bare the cedar work. ¹⁵ This is the exultant city Which dwells securely, who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." How she has become a desolation, A resting place for beasts! Everyone who passes by her will hiss and wave his hand in contempt.

NOTE: None of the above prophecies have been fulfilled completely, except the one against Nineveh. All of the others, even though partially fulfilled, await end-time events for completion.

3:1-5 Judgment on Judah's capitol city in the light of judgment on the nation

Note the recurring theme in this and the next sections, *Yahweh is in the midst* 3:5, 15, 17.

Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, The tyrannical city! ² She heeded no voice; She accepted no instruction. She did not trust in Yahweh; She did not draw near to her God. ³ Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her judges are wolves at evening; They leave nothing for the morning. ⁴ Her prophets are reckless, treacherous men; Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law. ⁵ Yahweh is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.

In these verses, Yahweh describes the causes for judgment

- *rebellious and defiled, The tyrannical city!*
- *She heeded no voice; She accepted no instruction.*
- *She did not trust in Yahweh;*
- *She did not draw near to her God.*
- *Her princes within her are roaring lions,*
- *Her judges are wolves at evening; They leave nothing for the morning.*
- *Her prophets are reckless, treacherous men;*
- *Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law.*

V5 Yahweh is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.

3:6-7 Judgment on the nation's cities

God pictures Himself as punishing the cities, but they continue to do evil, from dawn to dusk.

"I have cut off nations; Their corner towers are in ruins. I have made their streets desolate, With no one passing by; Their cities are laid waste, Without a man, without an inhabitant.⁷ "I said, 'Surely you will revere Me, Accept instruction.' So her dwelling will not be cut off According to all that I have appointed concerning her. But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.

III. THE DAY OF YAHWEH'S JOY 3:8-20

One of the wonderful truths of the Gospel is God's genuine joy in fellowshipping with redeemed sinners. Note that the response to 2:1-3 makes possible 3:8-20.

3:8 Prior to the day of Yahweh's joy, all of the earth will be devoured by God's avenging zeal

"Therefore, wait for Me," declares Yahweh, "For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

This verse brings to mind, II Peter 3:7-13

But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Prophecies of the Day of Yahweh refer, ultimately to a period of time at the end of the age, when God's final judgments will fall upon unbelieving sinners and also, when believing Israel will be delivered and blessed. We are helped in our understanding of this term when we recall that even when the New testament writers referred to *that Day*, it still was future (example: I Thessalonians 5:2; II Thess. 2:2; II Peter 3:10). The phrase occurs more than thirty times in the Old Testament, always referring to a necessary purge before righteousness will reign.

Similar phrases are found in the New Testament:

- Day of Christ - Philippians 1:10; 2:16
- Day of our Lord Jesus Christ - I Cor. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14;
- Day of the Lord - I Cor. 5:5⁶²
- Day of Christ Jesus - Philippians 1:6

⁶² Some versions read, *the Lord Jesus*, but most early manuscripts omit the term, *Jesus*.

This day of Christ will be inaugurated at the coming of Jesus to catch up His saints. The Day of Christ will occur before the Day of Yahweh.

3:9-13 A purified people

This passage must be applied to Christians as well as to the remnant of believing Israel. Yet, even though it does apply to the "end time," it obviously had a minor fulfillment in the return of Judah from Babylon.

V9 *For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of Yahweh, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.*

The gift of *purified lips* (the Hebrew term rendered, *lips* in some versions, *speech* or *language*, in other versions, refers to the act of speaking. The gift of a pure speech implies a reversal of the curse of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). This verse anticipates the great outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) of which Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11) was an illustration.

Shoulder to shoulder (*With one consent* KJV) refers to the togetherness in worship and service that will characterize the unity of God's people in the predicted age. This brings to mind Jesus' high-priestly prayer for unity among His redeemed people (John 17).

V10 *From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings.*

Ezekiel 34:11-16 is an elaboration of this verse.

For thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.

And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land.

I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down in good grazing ground, and they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest, declares the Lord God.

I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.

One fulfillment of this verse is the return from captivity. Note these verses from Nehemiah that report the return of the Jews from Babylon: 1:1-2:6; 2:17-18; 3:1; 6:15-16; 8:1-9:3; 12:27-30.

V11-13 *"In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst Your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain. ¹²But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh. ¹³The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they shall feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble.*

These verses describe conditions that were not met at the return from Babylon, nor have they yet been met. Thus, even though some of the language may be figurative it is apparent that this is an end-time prophecy.

3:14-20 Yahweh in the midst of thee is a phrase that now speaks of comfort and joy, not judgment, as in the former verse (3:5). Note also in these verses many things that point to the end of time and the Messianic Kingdom.

Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵Yahweh has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies.

King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more.

¹⁶*In that day, it will be said to Jerusalem: "Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. ¹⁷"Yahweh your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.⁶³*

¹⁸*I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts-- They came from you, O Zion; The reproach of exile is a burden on them.*

¹⁹*Behold, I am going to deal at that time with all your oppressors, I will save the lame and gather the outcast, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.*

²⁰*At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, Says Yahweh.*

These verses describe a scene that is beyond imagination. God is pictured as being beside Himself with joy...

This beautiful section brings to mind the description of New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

V20 The first and last words of the book are like two bookends.

1:1 The word of Yahweh

3:3 Says Yahweh

⁶³ Some versions render the Hebrew term (**רִנָּה**) as *singing*. It generally is understood to mean a *ringing cry*. (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, page 943)

HABAKKUK

If any man ever lived in confusing times, that man was Habakkuk. He had witnessed the reformation in Judah, under King Josiah (622 BC). Yet, the reformation had not gone deep enough in the lives of most of the people.

The setting sun of Assyria's power was in its last fading glow. Egypt and Babylon were fighting to take the place of this dying empire. When Pharaoh Necho of Egypt embarked on a campaign against Assyria (II Chronicles 35:20-24), Judah's King Josiah, for some reason, went to battle against Necho, even though the Pharaoh told Josiah that he did not want to fight him. Josiah was slain as he led the attack in the Valley of Megiddo in 609 BC. After the death of Josiah, ungodly men occupied the throne of Judah. These rulers were vassals of either Egypt or Babylon. Invasion by Judah's enemies seemed imminent.

Tyranny, strife, and lawlessness began to define the quality of life in Judah. The righteous were oppressed and the poor were abused. Men lived in open sin and returned to idol worship. Jeremiah 10 and 2 Chronicles 36:14-16 describe the condition of the people's hearts at this time.

The back and forth conflict between Babylon and Egypt, each desiring to be the dominant world power, continued until 605 BC. In that year, the Babylonian king, Nebuchadrezzar, drove the Egyptians back to Egypt. With this defeat of Egypt, Nebuchadrezzar became the ruler of the civilized world.

Habakkuk ministered during the days of these tragic upheavals. He probably wrote his book at about the time of the fall of Ninevah (the capital of Assyria) or shortly thereafter.⁶⁴ Ninevah fell in 612 BC. Thus, Habakkuk's prophetic ministry followed Zephaniah by about a dozen years.

Very little is known about Habakkuk, except what can be gleaned from a thoughtful reading of his words. He seems to have been a prominent and respected citizen of Jerusalem. His name means, *embracer*. Some think that his call to prophetic office came while he was serving as a Levitical chorister in the temple (this is suggested by the musical notations at 3:1 and the statement that closes his book, *for the choir director, on my stringed instruments*).

About 2/3 of the book is devoted to a conversation between Habakkuk and God.

In spite of his strong faith, the facts of life were too much for Habakkuk. He had trouble in harmonizing the rich promises and the dire threats of God with what he experienced and observed daily. He refused to dismiss his doubts without an answer and doggedly went directly to God seeking the answer.

⁶⁴ Credible scholars have written extensively in their efforts to present an exact date for Habakkuk's prophetic writing (Keil and Delitzsch devoted 5 pages to this question). Most of the suggested dates fall within a decade of one another.

HABAKKUK: Exegetical Comments

INTRODUCTION – 1:1

The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

The book begins with the same word that other prophets used (literally, *burden*, but rendered, *oracle*, in the NAS) that alerts us to the fact that a prophecy of judgment is to follow (Isa. 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1; 22:1; Nahum 1:1; etc.)

Note that in this introduction, the prophecy is *seen*.

I. THE PROPHET COMPLAINS 1:2-17

A. This is a definite complaint to God V2-4

V2 *How long, O Yahweh, will I call for help, And Thou wilt not hear? I cry out to Thee, "Violence!" Yet Thou dost not save.*

Evidently Habakkuk had been praying fervently without any apparent response from God. Habakkuk is a spokesman for those who see all of the injustices and problems in society and ask, "Where are you, God?"

V3-4 *Why dost Thou make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists, and contention arises. ⁴Therefore, the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore, justice comes out perverted.*

Why does God allow the wicked and lawless men of Judah to continue? How long will God let this go on? Habakkuk is lodging a definite complaint with God.

B. Yahweh's first reply V5-11

Observe the calm, patient tone of God's reply, contrasted with Habakkuk's despairing tone in his question (verses 5-6 contrasted with verses 2-4). God refuses to admit that He is inattentive or indifferent. He challenges His prophet to look beyond the borders of the land and see that He already is working a work. He already has *enlisted* the Chaldeans as His instruments of chastening for Judah.

V5 *Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days-- You would not believe if you were told.*

This verse is quoted by Paul (Acts 13:41) in his sermon to the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia. In that sermon, Paul urged the Jews to repent and to accept Christ before God brings upon them a judgment beyond belief.

This verse is a reminder of one of the reasons why humans often reject prophecy; it sometimes deals with matters so awesome and so beyond anything that has been experienced that the recipient of the prophecy just won't, or can't, believe it.

V6 *"For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.*

The Chaldeans are the Babylonians. Chaldea was the geographical location of Babylon. This verse prophesies the Babylonian invasion of Judah, which was about 20 years in the future.

The prophecy of the Chaldean invasion is God's response to Habakkuk's query as to why God doesn't do something about the wickedness of Judah.

V 7-11 The Babylonians will be invincible.

"They are dreaded and feared. Their justice and authority originate with themselves.⁸ "Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.⁹ "All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.¹⁰ "They mock at kings, and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress, And heap up rubble to capture it.¹¹ "Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god."

There is ambiguity in the King James rendering of verse 11: *Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this power unto his god.*

The NIV and the NAS are a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew:

NIV Then they sweep past like the wind and go on-- guilty men, whose own strength is their god.

NAS Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.

The key word in verse 11 is *but*. God says that He will use the Chaldeans to punish Judah, *but...* Keep this in mind as Habakkuk's second question comes forth.

C. Habakkuk's second question V 12-17

V12-13 Even though Habakkuk questions Yahweh, note his faith, *We shall not die.*

Art Thou not from everlasting, O Yahweh, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. Thou, O Yahweh, hast appointed them to judge; And Thou, O Rock, hast established them to correct.¹³ Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor. Why dost Thou look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

The prophet had complained of God's indifference. Now he is horrified to hear the means that God is going to use to bring about His purpose within Israel. How can God reconcile the cruelty and inhumanity of Babylon with his own purity and holiness? How can a righteous God use the Chaldeans to punish Habakkuk's neighbors and friends; these Chaldeans are worse than the Judeans whom God will be punishing! It is a very real problem that confronted the pious prophet.

V 14-17 *Why hast Thou made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them?¹⁵ The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net, and gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore, they rejoice and are glad.*

¹⁶ Therefore, they offer a sacrifice to their net. And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, and their food is plentiful.¹⁷ Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?

Habakkuk seemed to have missed what God said in verse 11, following the word, *but* - *But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god*. God said that Babylon worshipped its own strength. Habakkuk said that Babylon worshipped its own *net* (which they worship), as he pictures the Chaldeans catching up the nations in a drag net

Habakkuk asks if a nation such as this will not be insatiable; will the net not be repeatedly emptied and used to gather up nation after nation?

II. THE PROPHET LISTENS 2:1-20

V1 *I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.*

Habakkuk has reached an important mental and spiritual point in his dialogue with Yahweh. He realized that he will find the solution only when he obediently takes his place on the watchtower to wait expectantly for the true revelation from God. Reverently and expectantly he watches for the answer.

V2 *Then Yahweh answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run.*

The prophet is instructed to write the prophecy upon *tables*. He is to record it on something permanent. He is told to write plainly so that the prophecy could be read at a glance.

V3 *"For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

God had an appointed time for the vision to be fulfilled. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *Retribution*, comes to mind:

*Though the mills of God grind slowly,
yet they grind exceedingly small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
with exactness grinds He all.*

Costen J. Harrell wrote, *God has all of the ages in which to demonstrate His justice. The testing of time will reveal what men are, as fire separates gold from the dross. The Chaldeans may prosper in their wickedness for a season, and seem to triumph over a people more righteous than they. Yet, they carry in themselves "the germs of certain ruin." The years, which are the crucible of God, will make manifest the essential weakness of an ungodly people.*⁶⁵

We are reminded of 1 Timothy 5:24 *The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after.*

V4 *Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.*

This is one of the key statements of the Bible (quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Paul's quotation of this verse in Romans is what launched Martin Luther into his part of the Reformation.

A full reading of this verse and its context helps us to understand the use of it in the New Testament.

⁶⁵ Costen J. Harrell, *The Prophets of Israel*, (Cokesbury Press) 1933, page 113

- The impious man (described in verses 4a and 5) will not have a right soul in himself – he has the explosive power of evil within, which makes him self-destructive.
- The righteous man (the KJV renders the word, *just*, but it should be translated, *righteous*, as in the NAS and NIV, because the same Hebrew word is used here and in 1:13) will live because of his belief and his belief will determine how he lives.
- When Paul cites this verse (the three Pauline passages noted above) he uses the Greek construction, *ek pisteos zesetai* (ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται), literally translated, *out of faith shall live*. Faith is the origin of life and the source of living for the righteous.

V5-19 In these verses there are five woe paragraphs, all directed at Babylon, the nation that Yahweh was going to use to discipline Judah:

- 5-8 Woe to Babylon because of lust for land and possessions:
"Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, and he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.⁶ "Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his-- For how long-- And makes himself rich with loans?'⁷ "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, And those who collect from you awaken? Indeed, you will become plunder for them.⁸ "Because you have looted many nations, All the remainder of the peoples will loot you-- Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants.
- 9-11 Woe to Babylon because of covetous desire for selfish gain:
"Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house to put his nest on high To be delivered from the hand of calamity!¹⁰ "You have devised a shameful thing for your house by cutting off many peoples; So you are sinning against yourself.¹¹ "Surely the stone will cry out from the wall, And the rafter will answer it from the framework.
- 12-14 Woe to Babylon because of oppression that takes cities and buildings:
"Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence!¹³ "Is it not indeed from Yahweh of hosts That peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing?¹⁴ "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, As the waters cover the sea.
- 15-17 Woe to Babylon because of the godless banquets where Yahweh is dishonored, and helpless people suffer:
"Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk So as to look on their nakedness!¹⁶ "You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in Yahweh's right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace will come upon your glory.¹⁷ "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, And the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them, Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, To the town and all its inhabitants.
- 18-19 Woe to Babylon because of the silly, irrational, foolish worship of idols:
"What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork When he fashions speechless idols.¹⁹ "Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a dumb stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it.

V20 *But Yahweh is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.*

This probably was spoken by Habakkuk and not by Yahweh. Note the connection between 2:1 and 2:20b. Habakkuk was going to be silent and watch for God's word to come; the entire world is to do the same. God has silenced Habakkuk's questions.

III. THE PROPHET PRAYS 3:1-19

A. Petition 3:1-2

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. ²Yahweh, I have heard the report about Thee and I fear. O Yahweh, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

Shigionoth is a musical term, the meaning of which must remain speculative. Some understand this to refer to a musical instrument. The singular form of this term occurs in the heading of Psalm 7.⁶⁶ Evidently, this was a prayer composed by Habakkuk to be sung, or to be recited to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. *Selah* also found in this chapter (verses 3, 9, and 13), is a musical term that occurs frequently in the Psalms. As noted earlier, the closing comment of this chapter (V19) states that it was written for the choir director.

The marvelous things that God said to Habakkuk in Chapter Two had resulted in reverential fear and awe (2:20). The significance of 1:5 comes forth here (*Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days-- You would not believe if you were told*).

...in the midst of the years... Habakkuk is asking God to preserve alive or to return to life His work in the middle of the things that He has described in Chapter Two, rather than waiting until the end. Habakkuk's plea is, *Begin to display your mercy toward us, before your wrath's expression is complete,*

B. A cry of praise 3:3-15

This marvelous picture of God divides into two sections. The basic reference in this paragraph is to the mercy and deliverance of God during Israel's exodus from Egypt.

1. Yahweh's dominion over nature 3:3-11

V3 *God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise.*

- *Teman*: a city in Idumea, south of Palestine
- *Paran*: a city in Arabia Petraea
- *His Glory*: When Yahweh descended on Sinai and when He was present in a pillar of fire by night, the earth was filled with His Glory.

⁶⁶ *A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to Yahweh concerning Cush, a Benjamite. O Lord my God, in Thee I have taken refuge; Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me (Psalm 7:1)*

V4 *His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.*

Different versions render the second phrase of this verse with different terms:

KJV: *He had horns coming out of his hand.*

NIV: *Rays flashed from his hand.*

NAS: *He has rays flashing from His hand.*

The KJV is the literal translation. Both the original Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint have the word that refers to horns (Hebrew: קַרְנֵי - *qeren*; Greek: κέρασ - *keras*). There is a form of the Hebrew term that has the same consonants but different vowel points (קָרַן *karan*) that has the sense of “sending out.” This is the term used to describe Moses’ shining face in Exodus 34:29, 30, 35. Because of this, more recent versions of the Scriptures have taken this term in Habakkuk 3:4 to refer to emitting rays. Keil and Delitzsch state, “...and this meaning has developed itself from a comparison of the first rays of the rising sun, which shoot out above the horizon, to the horns or antlers of the gazelle, which is met with in the Arabian poets”⁶⁷

This could have reference to the lightening when God came upon Mt. Sinai or to the Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies.

This description reminds us of I Timothy 6:16 *who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.*

V5 *Before Him goes pestilence, and plague comes after Him.*

Pestilence: Because of Israel’s disobedience, God sent this plague upon Israel several times (Numbers 11:33; 14:37; 16:46).

The KJV reads, *Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.* The Hebrew word (רֶשֶׁף *reshef*) literally means, *flame*, which more recent versions have considered to be a description of the nature of the plague. However, there were times when disobedient Israelites were devoured by fire from Yahweh, and so the more literal rendering, *burning coals*, may be more appropriate. Yahweh also devoured an offering with fire (Leviticus 11:24; 10:2; Numbers 11:1; 16:35)

V6 *He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting.*

The literal rendering of the first half of this verse is, *He stood, and He measured earth, He saw, and He loosened nations...*

The literal rendering leads to the conclusion that this verse refers to Yahweh’s dividing the land between the Twelve Tribes and loosened the Canaanite hold on the land.

The reference to the collapsing of ancient hills could refer to the convulsions that occurred at Sinai.

V7 *I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling. Tents of Cushan...Midian:*

The Arabs of the Red Sea and the Midianites were stricken with fear, when Yahweh descended on Sinai.

⁶⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, page 99

V8 *Did Yahweh rage against the rivers, or was Thine anger against the rivers, or was Thy wrath against the sea, that Thou didst ride on Thy horses, On Thy chariots of salvation?*

rage/anger against the rivers (floods): The Lord is pictured as riding His chariot into the sea and commanding the waters to depart. Did He do this because He was angry with the waters? No, He did it because of His mercy toward Israel. This, of course, refers to the parting of the Red Sea, during the exodus.

V9 *Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. (KJV)*

Thy bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. (NAS)

These two renderings display the two possibilities of how this verse should be understood. The chief question is how to render the Hebrew term, מַשֶּׁה (masheh). The term is used in Scripture to refer to a staff, a rod, a shaft, a branch, and a tribe. Some translators have chosen to tie the term to the preceding reference to the bow and thus have understood it to refer to arrows. Other have chosen the term to refer to the tribes because of the historical references in surrounding verses.

Cleave the Rivers: This could refer to the parting of the Jordan, when Israel crossed over into Canaan, or perhaps to Israel's experiences at Arnon and Jabbok (Numbers 21:13-15).

V10 *The mountains saw Thee and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted high its hands.*

This is a continued answer to the question of verse 8. This highly poetic figure shows the ease with which God accomplished these seemingly arduous tasks.

V11 All three of the most popular translations, KJV, NIV, NAS, do not render the last half of this verse in the best manner.

KJV The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

NIV Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

NAS Sun and moon stood in their places; They went away at the light of Thine arrows, At the radiance of Thy gleaming spear.

A much better rendering is one in which the light and the brightness of the sun and moon are referenced:

By their light, thine arrows went abroad;

By their brightness, the lightening of thy spear.

Young's Literal Translation renders this verse: *Sun -- moon -- hath stood -- a habitation, At the light thine arrows go on, At the brightness, the glittering of thy spear*

2. Yahweh's dominion over nations 3:12-15

In indignation Thou didst march through the earth; In anger Thou didst trample the nations.

¹³*Thou didst go forth for the salvation of Thy people, For the salvation of Thine anointed.*

Thou didst strike the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.

¹⁴*Thou didst pierce with his own spears The head of his throngs.*

They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those Who devour the oppressed in secret.

¹⁵*Thou didst tread on the sea with Thy horses, On the surge of many waters.*

This is a figurative description of Yahweh's walking through Canaan. There was no need for God or Israel to be in a hurry. The waters were parted before them and the cloud separated them from their enemies (Exodus 14:19-20)

3. Habakkuk's testimony 3:16-19

V16 *I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us.*

This verse is related to 2:1. Habakkuk was shaken when God spoke in fullness.

V17-19 *Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls,*

¹⁸*yet I will exult in Yahweh, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.*

¹⁹*The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.*

This is one of the greatest expressions of faith to be found in Scripture. Out of his doubts, Habakkuk had received a new view and belief in the Character of God. Even though God had shown him that the future of Israel included disaster, destruction, and ruin, Habakkuk had come to realize that he could trust Yahweh implicitly.

Once a group of friends were conversing with Daniel Webster about great literature. They began to discuss the great literature of the Bible. One spoke of Genesis and the creation. Another spoke of the Sermon on the Mount. One spoke of the Apocalypse with its figures. Webster then recited the King James Version of these closing verses of Habakkuk. He then commented, "I am amazed that no artist has seen here a subject for a masterpiece. Habakkuk sitting in the midst of his dreadful desolation, still praising God and rejoicing in his unseen Saviour."⁶⁸

⁶⁸ This story has been told time and again, by various Bible teachers, for example, <http://www.joniandfriends.org/radio/5-minute/habakkuks-message-you/>. I have diligently searched for the original source and have not been able to locate it

HAGGAI

Haggai is the first of the three postexilic prophets (they prophesied after the Jews had returned to Canaan from exile in Babylon). The postexilic prophets are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

There were two stages to the captivity. The Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the ten northern tribes, were conquered and dispersed among many nations by the Assyrians (722 B. C.). The Kingdom of Judah, consisting of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were captured and carried into exile by the Babylonians in at least two different waves (note Introduction, page 2).⁶⁹

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary makes this comment on the Assyrian captivity of the Northern Tribes:

“The Ten Tribes taken into (Assyrian) Captivity, sometimes called the Lost Tribes of Israel, must not be thought of as being absorbed by the peoples among whom they settled. Some undoubtedly were, but many others retained their Israelitish religion and traditions. Some became part of the Jewish dispersion, and others very likely returned with the exiles of Judah who had been carried off by Nebuchadnezzar.”⁷⁰

NOTE: An important part of the picture in all Old Testament prophetic books is the promise that the Jews would be gathered back to Jerusalem from many nations. The clearest picture of this fulfillment is found in Ezekiel chapters 36-48.

Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian armies invaded Judah in 605 B.C. (11 Chron 36:2-7) and began transporting captured Jews back to Babylon. The fate of the Southern Kingdom was sealed when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Jews were transported to Babylon in several stages. Before Judah was taken captive by Babylon, Jeremiah had prophesied the coming exile and that the duration of the exile would be seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10; II Chron. 36:21). Thus, the exile can be seen as beginning in 605 B.C. (the date that Nebuchadnezzar began transporting Jews to Babylon) and ending with the first return of the Jews to Canaan, 536 B.C. (Ezra 1).⁷¹

While in Babylon, the Jewish exiles were under the control of the rulers of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The kings of this period were Nebuchadnezzar (also known as Nebuchadrezzar II), Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, Labosoarchad, Nabonidus, and Belshazzar (co-regent with Nabonidus).

Cyrus, the Persian ruler, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Cyrus’ policy of liberation of exiles that he found in Babylon resulted in the first return of Jews to Palestine. Cyrus not only granted the Jews the privilege of returning home, but supplied sufficient money for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

⁶⁹ As with many Scriptural dates, there is some dispute as to the exact years. The dates given in the cited Introduction are the more traditionally accepted dates.

⁷⁰ Merrill C. Tenney Ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing) 1988, page 147

⁷¹ An alternative to the above method of counting the years of the exile is noted by Irving L. Jensen: "If Jeremiah's prophecy is interpreted from an ecclesiastical standpoint, with the Temple as the key object, then the 70 year period extended from the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC , to the year of completion of it's reconstruction, which was 516 BC. (Irving L. Jensen, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: A Self Study Guide*, Moody Press, 1976) page 9, fn 5

Note that Isaiah prophesied this development approximately 200 years before it happened--even giving the name, *Cyrus*, as the deliverer. Interestingly, in Isaiah's prophecies, the yet-to-be born Cyrus is described as *My shepherd* (Isaiah 44:28) and as *His anointed* (Isaiah 45:1).

"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" Thus says Yahweh to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him, And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

Cyrus was followed by his son, Cambyses, who murdered his own brother, Gaumata. While Cambyses was on an extended military campaign in Egypt, a clever magician, Smerdis, claiming to be the murdered Gaumata, seized the throne. Cambyses became quite distraught when he received word of Smerdis' intrigue.

Before he returned to Persia, Cambyses died from self-inflicted wounds in 522 BC. Some feel that Cambyses committed suicide, despairing over what he was going to face when he returned to Persia and had to challenge Smerdis. Whether or not he committed suicide is a matter of debate. After Cambyses' death, the Empire began to fragment. Seven Persian nobles dethroned Smerdis. Darius, one of the seven nobles involved in dethroning Smerdis, was selected to be king. After many rebellions and wars, Darius established himself upon the throne as Darius I.⁷²

Xerxes and Artaxerxes I were the next two Persian kings. The Old Testament record comes to a close at about the same time as Artaxerxes I death.

The Persian kings who figured prominently in the post exilic activity were Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes. Most of the information recorded about this period is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

There were three key leaders of the Jews involved in the return to Palestine.

- Zerubbabel
- Ezra
- Nehemiah

Cyrus appointed Zerubbabel as governor of the Jews. Years later, Artaxerxes appointed Nehemiah to this position. Ezra was a priest who was a leader in the second return (see below) and a worker in the third. There were three *returns*:

- 536 B.C. First return under Zerubbabel
- 458 B.C. Second return under Ezra
- 445 B.C. Third return under Nehemiah

The prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, ministered during the first return (Ezra 5:1 ; 6:14). Malachi was associated with the Third return. Most of Malachi's ministry, took place during the period in which Nehemiah was absent from Jerusalem (Nehemiah traveled back to Babylon to present pressing matters to the king). While Nehemiah was absent, the Jews backslid. Thus, Malachi's prophecy centers on sin and judgment.

⁷² There was another Darius, known as Darius the Mede, who was king over the Chaldeans (Daniel 6:1; 11:1). In all probability, Darius the Mede was appointed by Cyrus to govern a portion of the new Persian Empire, after the death of Belshazzar.

Very little is known about Haggai. His name means, *festive*. The literal meaning of the root word from which comes his name is *celebration* or *dancing*. Haggai is one of the few prophets who had the privilege of seeing the effect of his prophecy displayed in his lifetime.

We presume that he was born in Babylon. He returned to Palestine with the first contingent of Jews. He and Zechariah were companions in prophetic ministry and they not only preached, but practiced what they preached.

When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, ² then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them. (Ezra 5:1-2).

No book of the Bible is better dated than Haggai. All four messages recorded in the book occurred in the second year of Darius the King, 520 B.C. (1:1,15; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20), between the last week of August and December 24.

TIME-LINE OF THE PERIOD

586 BC	Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians
539 BC	Babylon falls to Cyrus; the Persian Empire becomes the supreme world power (Daniel 5)
538 BC	God moves Cyrus to permit the Jews to return to Palestine (Ezra 1:1-4)
536 BC	The first return under the leadership of Zerubbabel
536 -520 BC	Zerubbabel is the governor; Joshua is the High Priest
536-535 BC	The Altar of Burnt Offering is built Feast of Tabernacles celebrated Sacrifices offered The Foundation of the Temple is laid
535-534 BC	Opposition to the building of the Temple by non-Jewish Palestinians
534 BC	Work on the Temple ceases
520 BC	Second year of Darius' reign Haggai & Zechariah begin to preach The Temple project is resumed
516 BC	The Temple is completed

RULERS AND EVENTS OF THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

CYRUS 559-530	The return from exile Ezra 1	End of Daniel's life Daniel 1:21;
10:1		
CAMBYSES 530-522	Not mentioned in Scripture	
DARIUS I 522-486	The Temple Rebuilt Ezra 4:5, 24; 5	Haggai & Zechariah
XERXES I 486-465	Ezra 4:6 The King who made Esther his queen and Mordecai his grand vizier	
ARTAXERXES I 464-423	Ezra 4:7-23; 7:1ff; Nehemiah 2:1 The king who sponsored the return of Ezra and of Nehemiah. Jerusalem rewalled and a time of reforms.	Malachi

EXGETICAL OUTLINE

THE THEME OF THE BOOK: *If you want a blessed relationship with God, put first things first.*

I. EXHORTATION TO RESUME THE TEMPLE RECONSTRUCTION Chapter 1.

Chapter One could be labeled, "A prophet's success story; A prophet preaches, the people respond."

A. The People's excuse 1:1-2

V1 *In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of Yahweh came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest saying,*⁷³

Haggai the prophet had the Word of the Lord. He was to deliver it to Governor Zerubbabel and Priest Joshua. Note the different roles:

- Prophet--the preacher.
- Governor--the ruler of the people;
- Priest -- the religious leader;

V2 *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of Yahweh to be rebuilt."'"*

Sixteen years before Haggai's prophetic utterance, the people had returned to Jerusalem for the express purpose of rebuilding the temple. In 536 BC, Cyrus sent the first contingent of Jews back to Palestine, under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Ezra gives us the background.

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 'And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"*⁷⁴

Cyrus instructed this group to rebuild the city and to rebuild the Temple. He did not send them empty handed. He supplied them with everything that they would need to accomplish the task that he set before them.

This group of Jews made the trip back to Jerusalem. Immediately, they set about to build houses for themselves. They began to plant gardens and to till the land.

⁷³ Ezra 3:8-4:5, 24 give the historical record of this period

⁷⁴ Ezra 1:1-4

After they had been in Jerusalem for seven months, they built an altar, offered sacrifices, and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles.⁷⁵

About five months later, they laid the foundation of the Temple.⁷⁶

As things progressed, the heathen inhabitants of the area started to object. At first, they wanted to join the Jews in building the Temple. They wanted to have a common “religion” in the area. Zerubbabel refused the compromise (Ezra 4:1-3).

When the Jewish leaders refused to allow the Gentiles to join in building the Temple, the Gentiles began to intimidate the Jews and hired lawyers to give to the Persian kings bad reports concerning the Jews (Ezra 4:4-5).⁷⁷

As a result of this increasing resistance, the Jews stopped rebuilding the Temple. They took the easy way. They became inhabitants of the area and began blending in with the surrounding culture.

As far as the Temple was concerned, they said, “We are waiting for the right time to begin building. Circumstances aren’t right and besides, we have to take care of our personal needs first.”

The money and supplies that Cyrus sent with them for the rebuilding of the Temple were used to make their houses more opulent. They began to put wood paneling on the walls.

At this time, their lives became miserable. Their crops did not yield as they should. One event after another happened to rob them of their assets. For sixteen years, the Temple project was abandoned.

Then, God spoke through the prophet Haggai.

Thus says Yahweh of Hosts (v2) The Divine authority of Haggai’s message is prominent. In at least twenty five of the book’s thirty-eight verses, Divine authority either is stated or implied.

B. The Lord's Rebuke 1:3-6

V3-4 *Then the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"*

Note how the Lord pursued the thought about the *right time*. They may have even welcomed the resistance – it gave them an excuse to not work on the Temple. They could just blend in with the people of the area and not face any problems with the neighbors.

⁷⁵ Ezra 3:1-6

⁷⁶ Ezra 3:8-10

⁷⁷ Later, after the deaths of Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus) became the Persian ruler. Even though the Temple had been completed, the rebuilding of the city, including the walls around the city, had not been completed. To keep the Jews from completing this project, the Gentiles sent a letter to Xerxes, accusing the Jews of being a troublesome people. After Xerxes death, during the reign of Artaxerxes, they pressed the matter further. They urged Artaxerxes to look into the historical records, and in doing so he would find that the Jews always had been a rebellious and troublesome people. In their letter, they warned Artaxerxes that if the Jews were allowed to continue the project that they would be up to no good. Artaxerxes researched the records and found that indeed the Jews had rebelled against the empires that had dominated the area. So, Artaxerxes ordered the construction of the city and its walls to halt (Ezra 4:7-23).

V5-6 *Now therefore, thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Consider your ways!"⁶ "You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes."*

The people had worked feverishly to erect their houses and produce crops. However, poor crops, blight, drought, opposition of neighbors and other misery had been their experience. In the meantime, God's house remained in ruins.

C. The Lord's solution 1:7-11.

This paragraph demonstrates the principle, *When God diagnosis a problem, He also presents a solution.*

V7-8 *Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Consider your ways! "Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says Yahweh.*

God's solution for their troubles was for them to get their priorities in order. Rebuilding the Temple was more important than their safety, peace, or comfort.

V9-11 *"You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares Yahweh of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. "Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. "And I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands."*

The economic depression was caused by the failure to erect the Temple. Note that God not only withheld His blessing, but He also put a curse upon them (*And I called for...*), for failing to rebuild His Temple.

D. The people respond 1:12-15

V12 *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Yahweh their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for Yahweh.*

The leaders (governor and High Priest) and the people are described as obeying God's voice.

Observe the interesting terminology in this verse: *The **voice** of Jehovah their God and the **words** of Haggai the prophet.*

This implies that Haggai exhorted the people in addition to his literal presentation of God's prophetic message.

The people showed reverence for the Lord. This reverence (literal Hebrew, *feared before*) was the motivation for their obedience.

V13 *Then Haggai, the messenger of Yahweh, spoke by the commission of Yahweh to the people saying, "'I am with you,' declares Yahweh."*

Haggai is identified as *Yahweh's messenger*. The Hebrew term rendered here as, *messenger* (מַלְאָךְ, *malak*) as well as the Greek term in the Septuagint (ἄγγελος *angelos*), are used both for human messengers and celestial messengers that in English are designated, *angels*. Whether celestial or human, Yahweh's messengers are to be heard and respected because they are representatives of the one who sent them with the message. Note that this is the term used to describe the leaders of the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1-2).

I am with you... This does not mean that He wasn't with them before. Before their repentance, he had been chastising them by His presence. Now, because of obedience, He was going to bless them by His presence.

V14-15 *So Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of Yahweh of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.*

This harmonizes with the historical record in Ezra 5:1-2

When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them,² then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them.

Note that the spoken word was used of God to bring about this stirring up.

It was vital that both the leaders and the people be stirred up. Sometimes leaders are stirred up and the hardness of the people's hearts quenches the leaders' zeal. Sometimes the people are stirred up and the leaders' apathy causes the zeal to dissipate without anything's being accomplished.

Haggai had received his commission from God on the first day of the sixth month of Darius' reign (1:1) and he delivered the message at that time. By the twenty-fourth day of that month, he had the satisfaction of seeing the successful results of his ministry.

One abiding lesson of this chapter is that a believer's works reveal a believer's heart. When the people's hearts were occupied with self, they built their houses. When their hearts came to have the right reverence for God, they turned from building their houses to the building of the Temple. This is an abiding lesson for the People of God in every age

II. GOD'S WORK IN BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE - Chapter 2

This chapter refers not only to God's work in behalf of those of Haggai's generation, but for His people in generations to come. The messages in this chapter exemplify the prophetic principle of multiple fulfillment.

A. The desire of all nations 2:1-9

V1-3 *On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet saying,² "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying,³ 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?'⁷⁸*

The people had been working for three weeks and the crepe hangers were busy bringing about discouragement (See also Ezra 3:10-13). Some people who had seen Solomon's Temple (they would have been aged, because Solomon's Temple had been destroyed 66 years earlier) were complaining that this Temple couldn't equal Solomon's Temple, which was admired for its exquisite beauty, not for its size. (For a description of Solomon's Temple, read II Chronicles 2:1-7:22).

⁷⁸ Note that the first word came to Haggai on the 1st day of the 6th month. This word came on the 21st day of the 7th month.

A Talmudic tradition tells us that the Temple built by Zerubbabel lacked five things that had were characteristics of Solomon's Temple:

- The Shekinah glory
- The holy fire
- The Ark of the Covenant
- The Urim and Thummin
- The spirit of prophecy

V4-5 *'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares Yahweh, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares Yahweh, 'and work; for I am with you,' says Yahweh of hosts.⁵ 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'*

God's encouragement to them was, *I am with you*. In essence, God declared that the glory of this Temple would be supplied by His presence.

V6-9 *"For thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.'⁷ 'And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory,' says Yahweh of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' declares Yahweh of hosts. 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Yahwehof hosts, 'and in this place I shall give peace,' declares Yahweh of hosts."*

The immediate fulfillment of the shaking of nations was the rising and falling of Persia, Greece, and Rome, as God used these events to prepare the world for Christ and the Gospel.

The wealth of all nations is rendered in the King James Version as *the desire of all nations*. The Hebrew term (הַמְדַת hamdat) conveys the idea of something in which one delights or desires. It can refer to precious possessions, and that is how more recent versions have rendered the term, i.e. *wealth*. This understanding of the term would refer to the treasure possessed by all nations (gold, silver, etc.) that will be returned to God. This understanding harmonizes with the NAS rendering of Isaiah 60:5 *Then you will see and be radiant, And your heart will thrill and rejoice; Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, The wealth of the nations will come to you.*

The rendering, *the desire of all nations* would understand the verse as referring to the Messiah, who came to the Temple and preached and taught there while on earth.

Those who hold to Dispensational Eschatology consider the shaking to refer to the *tribulation*, which will be followed by Christ, *the Desire of all Nations*, coming to rule and be worshipped in His house (compare this passage with Isaiah 2:2-4, Zechariah 8:21-23; 14:16).

Regardless of what eschatological rendering one places on this passage, the ultimate fulfillment of these verses will be in the end times. Heaven will be the perfect fulfillment.(.Revelation 21).

B. Worship which is accepted 2:10-19

V10 *On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Haggai the prophet saying,*

This message was given three months after work on the Temple had been resumed (1:15).⁷⁹

V11-14 *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Ask now the priests for a ruling: ¹² 'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?'" And the priests answered and said, "No."*

Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered and said, "It will become unclean."

Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares Yahweh, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

Haggai asked the priests two questions:

- *Is something made holy just because it touches a holy object? Answer. No!*
- *Is something made unclean just because it (he) touches an unclean object. Answer: Yes*

Two important lessons come from this:

- The power of evil is more infectious than the power of good.
- Holiness depends on more than just being around holy objects.

Holiness is the result of a right relationship with God. Just coming to the Temple or being associated with the Temple didn't make them holy. In one sense, holiness ultimately comes from God; in another sense, holiness comes from obedience to God.

V15-17 *'But now, do consider from this day onward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of Yahweh, ¹⁶from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty. ¹⁷I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew, and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares Yahweh.*

All of their efforts to produce prosperity had gone to naught before they began building the Temple.

V18-19 *'Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of Yahweh was founded, consider: ¹⁹'Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'*

God pledged to change His conduct toward them. From the time that they began to build the Temple, blessings began to flow from Him. They were to have abundant crops. They would get more with less work.

C. A Signet 2:20-23

V20-21 *Then the word of Yahweh came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month saying, ²¹"Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah saying, 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.*

This message came on the same day and was for Zerubbabel only. Verse 23 explains why.

⁷⁹ Note that the first word came to Haggai on the 1st day of the 6th month. The second word came on the 21st day of the 7th month. This word came on the 24th day of the 9th month.

V22 *'And I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.'*

This is a repeat of the promise of v6-7

V23 *'On that day,' declares Yahweh of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares Yahweh, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,'"*
declares Yahweh of hosts.

The statement to Zerubbabel is similar to the statement made to Abraham, *I will make of thee a great nation* (Gen. 12:2).

Throughout history, great empires have risen and fallen. Yet, the Jews have survived as a people. They were restored after the Babylonian captivity and continued as a nation until the coming of the Messiah.

After the coming of the Messiah, the nation was destroyed⁸⁰ and ceased to exist as a nation until 1948. The Jewish people were dispersed among the nations of Europe. However, even during the 1800 years that the nation did not exist, the Jewish people continued to exist; they never lost their identity. This is amazing, since no other people has been able to survive as a people, after the destruction of their nation – and when antisemitism has flourished in many of the nations where they lived.

Today, they once again exist both as a people and as a nation. This survival is a manifestation of the honor conferred on Zerubbabel in this passage.

Another aspect of this promise to Zerubbabel is the fact that Zerubbabel was an ancestor of Jesus. The Messiah was descended from David, through Zerubbabel (Matthew 1:12). The Messianic Throne of David has been secure while nations have crumbled.

In his lifetime, Zerubbabel was no more than a governor, a vassal to a Persian King. He never reigned upon a throne or received any signal honor. Hebrews 11:13 is a fitting description of Zerubbabel.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Even so, Yahweh was going to make Zerubbabel a *signet*. A signet ring was a mark of royalty which kings conferred on their administrative agents. It conferred both authority and honor. A signet ring was a very precious possession and the possessor of such a ring carried it with him at all times – concerned that it not be lost or stolen.

Thus, Zerubbabel, as God's signet, would not be separated from Yahweh and would be protected when the kingdoms of the world were overthrown. It is apparent that what is promised is not something that would happen in Zerubbabel's lifetime.

A reasonable understanding of this verse is that Yahweh would fulfill His promises to David through the preservation of the line of David's descendants proceeding from Zerubbabel. Both David and Zerubbabel are antitypes of the Messiah. Thus, the fulfillment culminates in Jesus Christ, the son of David and descendent of Zerubbabel.

⁸⁰ 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple; in 135 AD, the Bar Kochba rebellion was squelched.

As the angel said to Mary, *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."*

Today, we are awaiting the fulfillment of the word spoken to Zerubbabel, as well as the word spoken to Mary. This is end-times language.

ZECHARIAH

The background for Zechariah is the same as that for Haggai. Cyrus, the Persian, conquered Babylon in 539 BC and, in 536 BC, he began to restore the Jews to their home in Judea. Cyrus appointed Zerubbabel as governor of Judea, and it was under his leadership that the first return to Judea took place.

The main purpose for their return to Jerusalem was to rebuild the temple. They began the task, and then turned to their personal interests. The temple rebuilding project was abandoned in 534 B. C., with only the foundations laid and the altar of burnt offerings having been constructed.

For fourteen years, the project was ignored, until the year 520 B. C.⁸¹ In that year, God called both Haggai and Zechariah to prophetic ministry. They shared the task of exhorting the Jews to finish the temple.

Ezra 6:14 describes the success of their ministry. *And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.*

Although Haggai and Zechariah shared the same main task, they differed in emphasis. Haggai's chief task was to rouse the people to the outward task of building the temple. Even though Zechariah often referred to this project, his main task was urging the people to examine their hearts and get right with God.

In addition to this difference in their ministries, Zechariah preached a great deal about the Messianic Kingdom. There are more prophecies about Christ in Zechariah than in any other prophetic book, except for Isaiah. Here is a partial list of prophecies and their fulfillment.⁸²

	Prophecy of Christ	Fulfillment
Servant	3:8	Mark 10: 45
Branch	3:8; 6:12	Luke 1:78
King-Priest	6:13	Hebrews 6:20; 7:1
Lowly King	9:9-10	Matt. 21:4-5; John 12:14-16
Betrayed	11:12-13	Matt. 27: 9
Hands Pierced	12:10	John 19:3 7
Cleansing Fountain	13:1	Rev. 1:5
Humanity & Deity	13:7; 6:12	John 1:1; 8:40
Smitten Shepherd	13:7-9	Matt. 26:31; Mark. 14:27
Second coming & Coronation	14:5, 9	John 10:16; Rev.11:15; 21:27

Zechariah's prophetic ministry extended about fifteen years beyond Haggai's. It is probable that Zechariah wrote chapters 9-14 after the completion of the temple.

⁸¹¹⁸¹ The second year of Darius the King (Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20; Zechariah 1:1, etc.)

⁸² This chart from Irving L. Jensen: *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, A Self-study* (Chicago, Moody Publishers) 1976

EXEGETICAL NOTES

INTRODUCTION:

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,

The prophetic spirit stirred in Zechariah in the same year as it did in Haggai (Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20). God spoke to Haggai in the 6th month, and He spoke to Zechariah in the 8th month.

Zechariah means *The Lord Remembers*. This was a common name. There are about thirty men in the Old Testament who are named Zechariah.

Both Zechariah's father, Berechiah, and his grandfather, Iddo, were priests. Ezra 5:1 calls Zechariah *the son of Iddo*. In Jewish terminology, *son of* often meant *descendant of*. Nehemiah Chapter 12 lists the priests that came from Babylon and their descendants who served as priests after arriving in Jerusalem.

I. THE WAY OF SALVATION 1:2-6

V2 *Yahweh was very angry with your fathers.*

The reason for God's being displeased with their forefathers is spelled out in Vs 4-6. God had sent prophets to Judah and Israel, calling them to repentance, and they either had paid no attention, or had made only an outward display of repentance. Therefore, the tragedy of defeat and Babylonian captivity of which God had warned them, had come to pass.

V3-5 *"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Return to Me,' declares Yahweh of hosts, 'that I may return to you,' says Yahweh of hosts. 'Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.'" But they did not listen or give heed to Me," declares Yahweh. 'Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?'*

Be not as your fathers is God's plea. In verse 3 we have the basic picture of God's consistent salvation pattern--*Turn to me and I will turn to you*.

Ephesians 2:8-9 must come into view here. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*

The pattern is:

- We are disobedient
- God, in His mercy and grace does not destroy us, but calls us to repentance
- We repent and turn to Him
- He accepts us, forgives us, and cleanses us.
- We have neither earned nor merited His forgiveness. The only thing that we have earned or merited is destruction.

Yahweh had sent prophets with the plea to repent, but the fathers had ignored Yahweh's plea. The question is, "Will prophets live forever and keep pleading with you?"

II. THE EIGHT VISIONS 1:7-6:8

The eight visions came in one night, three months after the prophet had begun preaching (1:1 & 1:7). These visions were God's means of impressing upon Zechariah the vivid reality of the events symbolized. The prophet always was at a loss to interpret the symbols. However, each time he asked for an explanation of their meaning, it was given to him. The replies given to Zechariah's questions teach us a very important lesson in interpreting prophetic symbols: not all of the objects and actions of a vision symbolize something.

A. The First Vision: The Lord's Patrol 1:7-17

V7-11 *On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows:*

⁸*I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him.*

⁹*Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are."*

¹⁰*And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the earth."*

¹¹*So they answered the angel of Yahweh who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet."*

Note the participants in the conversation:

- *the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah*
- *Zechariah asks for an explanation*
- *An angel responds*
- *The man on a red horse, described as the Angel of Yahweh, gives an explanation*
- *The angelic patrol speaks to the Angel of Yahweh who is seated on the red horse*

God's angels patrol the earth and know what is happening. The patrol sees the Gentile nations at rest (verses 11, 15) while Israel is suffering. In the Bible, myrtle trees often symbolize Israel (v8).

V12 *Then the angel of Yahweh answered and said, "O Yahweh of hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years?"*

The angel that was talking with Zechariah asked Yahweh how long Jerusalem and Judah must continue to be punished. Note that the word came after Judah had been in Babylonian captivity for seventy years (this word came in the year that Judah was going to be returned to Canaan).

V13-17 *And Yahweh answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words.*

¹⁴ *So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. ¹⁵ "But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster."*

¹⁶ *"Therefore, thus says Yahweh, "I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," declares Yahweh of hosts, "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem."*

¹⁷ *"Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and Yahweh will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem." "'*

Jehovah answered in a comforting manner. He was displeased with Judah only to a small degree, but He was greatly displeased with the heathen. The heathen went beyond what God desired in punishing Judah.

I will return to Jerusalem with compassion - the Temple is to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, rather than building the Temple in some other location.

B. The Second Vision: Four horns and Four Craftsmen 1:17-21

V 18 *Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there were four horns.*

In prophetic literature, horns always symbolized power. When the number four occurs in prophetic literature, it often refers to the four corners of the earth.

V 19-21 *So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these?"*

And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

²⁰ *Then Yahweh showed me four craftsmen.*

²¹ *And I said, "What are these coming to do?"*

And he said, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man lifts up his head; but these craftsmen have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it."

God sent heavenly craftsmen (חֲרָשִׁים *harash*, which, literally, refers to an engraver, but also is used in the general sense of a maker of things) to shred the horns (nations) that had scattered Israel and Judah.

This passage emphasizes the truth that although observable entities appear to be the cause of the destruction of these nations, in reality it is the unseen spiritual world that is at work, using observable means.

C. Third Vision: The Measuring Line 2:1-13

V 1-5 *Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a man with a measuring line in his hand.*

² *So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is."*

³ *And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, ⁴ and said to him, "Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.*

⁵ *'For I,' declares Yahweh, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"*

God will repopulate, protect, and dwell in the City of Jerusalem. The population will increase to the point that the walls cannot surround them. No walls will be needed because Jehovah will be a wall around His favorite city and a glory in the midst of His people.

This prophetic promise has not been fulfilled. In some sense, it is an end-time prophecy. However, in another sense, this prophecy is fulfilled in the Church (Matthew 16:15-18).

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

V 6-13 *"Ho there! Flee from the land of the north," declares Yahweh, "for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens," declares Yahweh.*

⁷*"Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon."*

⁸*For thus says Yahweh of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.*

⁹*"For behold, I will wave My hand over them, so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me.*

¹⁰*"Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares Yahweh.* ¹¹*"And many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me to you.* ¹²*"And Yahweh will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.*

¹³*"Be silent, all flesh, before Yahweh; for He is aroused from His holy habitation." "Ho there! Flee from the land of the north," declares Yahweh, "for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens," declares Yahweh.*

The main theme of this lyrical poem is that Israel is God's chosen people. This theme occurs so many times in the prophetic books, that it is difficult to ignore.

Verse 11 (*many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day and will become My people*) is related to Romans 11:11-15:

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be!

But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

¹²*Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!*

¹³*But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.*

¹⁵*For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

Reading these verses from Zechariah in the light of Paul's comments in Romans presents the truth that not only will many from the Gentile nations become, *My people*, but also the anticipation of a Gospel harvest among the Jews.

D. Fourth Vision: High Priest, Joshua 3:1-10

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

² *And Yahweh said to Satan, "Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"*

³ *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. ⁴And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him."*

Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes."

⁵ *Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.*

⁶ *And the angel of Yahweh admonished Joshua saying, ⁷"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.*

⁸ *'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you-- indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. ⁹'For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares Yahweh of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. ¹⁰'In that day,' declares Yahweh of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'"*

In this vision, Yahweh turns from the City to the people. Joshua, with soiled garments, is representative of the people. He is cleansed, re-clothed, and forgiven. He becomes the sign of the Messiah. Note Satan's part - the old accuser always is trying to argue that we have no place before God or that God has no right to accept us. We are reminded of his charges against Job (Job 1:1-12; 2:1-6).

- The analysis of this vision must begin with Israel's problem: *The iniquity of the land*
- The analysis of this vision must conclude with the Divine work: *I will remove the iniquity*

The marvelous redemptive events that cause the iniquity to be removed are presented in this vision:

- Israel (or any object of redemption) is a burning stick, pulled out of the fire (verse 2). The sticks all are consumed except that which is plucked from the fire.
- God cleanses that which He plucks from the fire.
- In order for the cleansed object (or being) to remain in God's favor, he must keep the ordinances given by God.

How God plucks from the fire, and how He cleanses can be understood only in the light of the New Testament revelation.

The Branch (verse 8) clearly is the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-7; 33:15)

Behold the Stone (3:9) refers to the headstone of the Temple, but the ultimate reference is to Christ.

Peter (I Peter 2:6-8) weaves together several Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14) demonstrating that the Old Testament's frequent mention of the stone is in reality, describing Christ:

For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,"⁸ and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

V 10 *'In that day,' declares Yahweh of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree. This verse describes the beautiful fellowship that will be experienced among the citizens in the Messianic Kingdom.*

E. Fifth Vision: Lampstand and Olive Trees 4:1-14.

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned, and roused me as a man who is awakened from his sleep.² And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;³ also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."

⁴ *Then I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?"*

⁵ *So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."⁶ Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says Yahweh of hosts.⁷ 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"*

⁸ *Also the word of Yahweh came to me saying,⁹ "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you.¹⁰ "For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel-- these are the eyes of Yahweh which range to and fro throughout the earth."*

¹¹ *Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?"¹² And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?"¹³ So he answered me saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."¹⁴ Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who are standing by Yahweh of the whole earth."*

The lampstand was a rack made of pipes, with a bowl at the top, which contained a supply of oil. At the end of each pipe, there was a lamp containing the wick, into which the oil flowed from the bowl.

Verse 10 explains the lamps: *Do not despise this small beginning, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work begin, to see the plumbline in the hand of Zerubbabel. For these seven lamps represent the eyes of the Lord that see everywhere around the world* (paraphrase in Today's Living Bible).

The Bowl of the lampstand was fed continuously with oil from two olive trees. The trees symbolize the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord. These generally are regarded as being the priest, Joshua, and the governor, Zerubbabel. Through these anointed leaders, God's rich blessings are to come to the chosen people.

The main thrust of this vision is in verses 6-10. In this context, emphasizing that the Temple will be completed by Zerubbabel, the oft quoted verse 6 has special meaning:

Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says Yahweh of hosts.

The temple will be completed because of God's Holy Spirit's stirring- up Zerubbabel. The people will not be driven to the task, but will be inspired to the task. The erecting of the Temple is a mountain-like task that Zerubbabel will complete. He laid the foundation and, at its completion, (verse 9) will lay the capstone.

F. The Sixth Vision: Flying Scroll 5:1-4

Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll.² And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits."

³*Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side."⁴ "I will make it go forth," declares Yahweh of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones."*

The vision is of a scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide, flying through the air. The scroll contains God's standards of morality and the punishment for disobedience.

The Bible often cites parts of the Ten Commandments to represent the whole (James 2:10). Note that stealing is the middle commandment of the second table of the law, and swearing falsely is the middle commandment of the first table.⁸³ Thus, sins against God and man are represented. God will purge mankind of sinners.

This brings to mind the New Testament description of the new heavens and the new earth that will be the home of God's people.

II Peter 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

Revelation 21:1, 8, 27, 22:15 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. (21:1)*

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (21:8)

⁸³ The first table of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-11) speak of man's relationship with God. The second table (Exodus 12-17) refer to the relationship between humans

and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (21:27)

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (22:15)

G. The Seventh Vision: The Woman in an Ephah 5:5-11

Then the angel who was speaking with me went out, and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes, and see what this is, going forth."⁶ And I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth."

Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land"⁷ (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah."

⁸ Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.

⁹ Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.

¹⁰ And I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?"¹¹ Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal."

An Ephah is a bushel basket. The basket had a heavy lid made of lead. Sin personified as a woman, is carried in the basket. She is taken out of Judah to Babylon. The lesson is that when the Temple is built, evil must be removed out of the land. The Sixth and Seventh Visions imply the fulfillment of the promise contained in 3:9 (*and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*).

H. The Eighth Vision: Four Chariots 6:1-8

Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains.² With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses,³ with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.⁴ Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these, my lord?"

⁵ And the angel answered and said to me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth,⁶ with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country.

⁷ "When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth." And He said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth.⁸ Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, "See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north."

Babylon was the enemy of the North. Egypt was the power of the South. The powerful forces of heaven will carry out God's commands so that His promises can be fulfilled. The nations that threaten God's chosen people will be defeated. Sometimes the forces of heaven use earthly nations and sometimes they do not. Because chariots are in this vision, military might probably is involved in the fulfillment of the vision.

III. THE BRINGER OF SALVATION 6:9-15

V 10-11 *"Take an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon.¹¹ "And take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.*

Some exiles who had remained in Babylon arrived in Jerusalem with an offering for the Temple. A crown was to be made from the silver and gold that the exiles had brought as an offering. This crown was to be placed upon the head of the priest, Joshua.

V 12-13 *"Then say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of Yahweh.¹³ "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of Yahweh, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."*

This coronation of the priest was a prophetic act, looking to the Messiah who was to be both priest and king. *The counsel of peace shall be between them both*, refers to the two offices of priest and king (cf. Heb. 5:10; 7:1; Ps. 110:4).

Note that the Messiah - priest - king will build the Temple of the Lord. Among the many possible fulfillments of this prophecy, one is certain: The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which the Messiah has built and is building (I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; I Peter 2:5).

V 14 *"Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of Yahweh to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah.*

The crown, used to illustrate this lesson, is to be left in the Temple at Jerusalem as a memorial to the three generous exiles from Babylon.

V 15 *"And those who are far off will come and build the temple of Yahweh." Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place, if you completely obey Yahweh, your God.*

A further and more complete restoration of Jews to Palestine is predicted. When promise is fulfilled, no one could dispute that the Angel of Yahweh had spoken to Zechariah.

Note that the prophetic promise is conditional: *If you completely obey Yahweh, your God.*

IV. FOUR MESSAGES 7:1-8:23

These messages were God's reply to a question asked by a delegation from Bethel. During their Babylonian exile, the Jews began to memorialize four events associated with the fall.⁸⁴ They did this by fasting on each anniversary of these events. The fasts were self-imposed by the Jews, rather than being in response to a Divine command. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem, they were uncertain about continuing these four fasts.

The memorialized events were:

- Tenth month (9th year) - siege of Jerusalem (I Kings 25:1)
- Fourth month (11th year) - Jerusalem taken (I Kings 25:3-4)
- Fifth month (11th year) - Jerusalem burned (I Kings 5:8-9)
- Seventh month (11th year) - Gedaliah slain (I Kings 25:25)⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The record of the fall of Jerusalem is given in II Kings 25 (586 B. C.)

⁸⁵ Gedaliah was the benevolent governor that Nebchadnezzar placed over Judah after the

A. The people's question and God's first answer 7:1-7

V 1-3 *Then it came about in the fourth year of King Darius, that the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.² Now the town of Bethel⁸⁶ had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men to seek the favor of Yahweh,³ speaking to the priests who belong to the house of Yahweh of hosts, and to the prophets saying, "Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?"*

Zechariah had been ministering, prophetically, for two years. The completion of the Temple was less than two years in the future. Worship already was being conducted on the site.

Evidently the fifth month fast is used in a representation sense for all the fast's (note 7:5 and 8:9).

V 4-7 *Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came to me saying,*

⁵ *"Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?"*

⁶ *'And when you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?"*

⁷ *'Are not these the words which Yahweh proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous with its cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?"*

God's answer implies that something had been wrong with their fast.

V 5 God questions whether or not the fast was kept as an act of worship unto Him or for some other reason (manipulation of God).

V 6 When they were not fasting, they were giving no thought to God, only to self. A good measure of a person's heart is how he acts in days of feasting.

V 7 The most important thing for them to remember was the ritualism of their forefathers was only outward action, not inward devotion. The lifestyle should be consistent with the implications of the ritual.

B. Second Answer 7: 8-14

Then the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah saying,

This reply is in three parts.

V 9-10 How those who fasted should be living

"Thus has Yahweh of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice, and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother;¹⁰ and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.'

destruction of Jerusalem. He was killed by the ambitious Ishmael. Gedaliah's assassination resulted in Nebuchadnezzar's wrath and tremendous hardship for the Judean. To this day, the Jews fast on the third day of Tishrei, the Fast of Gedaliah.

⁸⁶ The KJV, *When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,* is a poor rendering of the Hebrew. The term, Bethel, means, *house of God*. The Hebrew is best understood as the named individuals being sent from Bethel, rather than to Bethel, i.e. the house of God.

V 11-12 Why Jerusalem fell

"But they refused to pay attention, and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. ¹² "And they made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which Yahweh of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts.

V 13-14 The principle of just recompense

¹"And it came about that just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says Yahweh of hosts; ¹⁴ "but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them, so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate."

Jehovah declared that He had cried out unto Israel, through the prophets, and the people had not listened. Therefore, after the fall of Jerusalem, the people had cried out unto Jehovah, through their fasting, and He had not listened.

The message in this answer is, *Hear God!*

C. Third Answer 8:1-17

V 1-8 *Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came saying,*

² "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.'

³ "Thus says Yahweh, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.'

⁴ "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. ⁵ 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'

⁶ "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares Yahweh of hosts.

⁷ "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; ⁸ and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'

Note the repeated emphasis, *Thus says Yahweh of hosts*

The picture is one of Yahweh's love for and protection of Israel. God promised to do the following things:

- Dwell in the midst of Jerusalem in such an obvious way that the city will be called, *A city of Truth and the mountain of Yahweh of Hosts, the holy mountain*. No doubt, this promise pointed to God's inhabiting of the Temple of Zerubbabel, then under construction in Jerusalem. It also has Messianic significance.
- The city will be re-inhabited by families that will not be separated by wars and captivity. Children will fill the streets and will grow to old age in Jerusalem. The establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 could be seen as a fulfillment of this portion of the promise.
- Jews from many lands will be brought to Jerusalem and God will be in their midst. This promise has not been completely fulfilled. The Messianic Kingdom is in view.

V 9-13 *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts,*

'Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of Yahweh of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.

¹⁰ *'For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. ¹¹ 'But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,' declares Yahweh of hosts.*

¹² *'For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. ¹³ 'And it will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.'*

This is a Divine appeal to complete the temple. God reminded the Jews of their tragic state before the Temple foundation was laid. Now that the Temple is being built, Israel's fortune will change. It must be remembered that all of these promises are conditional (6:15b, and implied throughout, by the reminders of the failure of their forefathers). Obviously, verses 12 & 13 have not been achieved at this time.

V 14-17 *"For thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says Yahweh of hosts, 'and I have not relented, ¹⁵ so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!*

¹⁶ *'These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. ¹⁷ 'Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares Yahweh."*

Here are the conditions for Israel's blessing: honesty, uprightness, and love for one's neighbor.

NOTE that this reply is similar to the one in 7:9-10.

The lesson that God is seeking to communicate to Israel is that fasting is not a means whereby one manipulates God. Ritual and ceremony are powerless if they are not a reflection of one's life. Fasting does have spiritual power, but the main benefit of fasting is the benefit received in the spirit of the one who is fasting.

D. FOURTH ANSWER 8:18-23

Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came to me saying,

¹⁹ *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.'*

²⁰ *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. ²¹ 'And the inhabitants of one will go to another saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of Yahweh, and to seek Yahweh of hosts; I will also go." ²² 'So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh.'*

²³ *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"*

Here is a great truth about fasting: It is pleasing to God when it is done as an act of worship unto God. All fasting should be an act of joy, not a burden to be borne. Isaiah 58:1-12 describes the motives that God Rejects.

Verses 20-23 contain a marvelous promise to the Jews! God will be with them and so bless them, that people of all nations will want to come to Jerusalem and share in the blessing.

Among other things, this prophecy speaks of Jerusalem and the Temple as being the center from which the doctrine of salvation blesses all mankind.

V. ISRAEL'S HISTORY TO THE END OF TIME 9:1-11:17

Because this section of Zechariah is almost 100% predictive prophecy, it is one of the most difficult exegetical challenges to be found in Scripture. Some who exegete these verses approach them with a pre-conceived idea of Israel's end-time role. This especially is true of those who advocate a Dispensational Pre-millennial eschatology (see ADDENDUM D).

Jesus told His apostles that they wouldn't understand some of His prophecies until they were fulfilled. When one reads predictive passages such as Zechariah 9:9, it becomes clear as to why the Jews of Jesus' day did not realize that He was fulfilling that prophecy in the Triumphal Entry. No one would have expected the event to transpire as it did in the context of Zechariah Chapter Nine.

One must interpret predictive prophecy and teach predictive prophecy passages with the realization that he may be missing the mark.

This section of Zechariah is a battlefield between pre-millennialists and post-millennialists. The problem with the classic pre-millennialist view is that it robs the Church of many prophecies that relate to the Church, which is the Bride of Christ. The problem with the post-millennial view is that it makes figurative the many clear promises to Israel, concerning her place in God's economy.

Anyone who reads the Old Testament prophets with an open mind and is aware of N. T. passages, such as Romans 11, must conclude that God is not through with Israel. Israel, and the land of Palestine, especially Jerusalem, will figure prominently in the closing history of this age.

In conjunction with these thoughts, one should read Romans 9-11 and note the identity of true Israel, i.e., those Israelites who through faith in the Messiah are the chosen remnant.

A. Gentile Cities fall 9:1-8

The burden of the word of Yahweh is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward Yahweh),² And Hamath also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

³ For Tyre built herself a fortress And piled up silver like dust, And gold like the mire of the streets.⁴ Behold, Yahweh will dispossess her And cast her wealth into the sea; And she will be consumed with fire.⁵ Ashkelon will see it and be afraid.

Gaza too will writhe in great pain; Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded. Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.⁶ And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

⁷ And I will remove their blood from their mouth, And their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, And be like a clan in Judah, And Ekron like a Jebusite.

⁸ But I will camp around My house because of an army, Because of him who passes by and returns; And no oppressor will pass over them anymore, For now I have seen with My eyes.

An important truth displayed in this section is that God's providence and authority extends over all nations, not just over Israel.

Some Bible expositors see this prophecy as being fulfilled in Alexander the Great's Fourth Century BC conquest of the Mediterranean world and its surrounding nations. The cities of the world fell before him. As prophesied in Zech. 9:8, Israel was protected by Jehovah, during this conquest.

However, a literal fulfillment of 9:8b, *and no oppressor shall pass through them anymore*, could not have been exhausted by Alexander's conquest. Many oppressors have passed back and forth through Judah in the intervening centuries. This being true, Zechariah 9:8b refers either to the present state of the nation of Israel, or it, in some way, refers to a future Messianic Kingdom.

B. King Jesus comes 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This verse is cited by Matthew as a prediction of Jesus' Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:1-11), which further emphasizes the need to understand the messianic nature of this entire section.

C. Israel in Triumph and Glory 9:10-17

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ *As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.* ¹² *Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope; This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you.* ¹³ *For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; And I will make you like a warrior's sword.*

¹⁴ *Then Yahweh will appear over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning; And Yahweh God will blow the trumpet, And will march in the storm winds of the south.* ¹⁵ *Yahweh of hosts will defend them. And they will devour, and trample on the sling stones;*

And they will drink, and be boisterous as with wine; And they will be filled like a sacrificial basin, Drenched like the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ *And Yahweh their God will save them in that day As the flock of His people; For they are as the stones of a crown, Sparkling in His land.* ¹⁷ *For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.*

Note that Judah is described as a bow and Ephraim (the dispersed 10 northern tribes) as an arrow, and that these two will be victors over Greece. Because of this language, some expositors feel that verse 13 refers to the amazing military victories of the Jews during the Maccabean wars (175-163 B. C.), which did result in Judah's being freed from Grecian domination.

This extremely figurative section describes

- An era of peace and a broad extension of Israel's borders (verse 10)
- Israel's victory over the Gentiles (verses 13-15)
- Israel's reigning (verse 16).

This section certainly refers to Israel's liberation from Babylonian exile, but some interpret these verses as describing the conditions of the Messianic Age. If the paragraph does describe the Messianic Age, note the tremendous time space that would occur between verses 9 and 10, i.e. between the time of the Triumphal Entry and the Messianic Age, which to this present point has been almost 2000 years.

D. Israel as wandering sheep 10:1-2

Ask rain from Yahweh at the time of the spring rain-- Yahweh who makes the storm clouds; And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man.² For the teraphim speak iniquity, And the diviners see lying visions, And tell false dreams; They comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep, They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.

One very clear emphasis in this passage is that God's people (both Israel and the Church) are to ask God for the blessings needed for their prosperity, and not turn to idols or other sources, as Israel had done before the Babylonian captivity.

Some, focusing on the last line of verse 2, *Therefore the people wander like sheep, They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd*, consider this passage to be a description of Israel during the dispersion that took place after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. There have been several "dispersions" in Israel's history (Note that both the Epistle of James and the First Epistle of Peter, written before 70 AD, are addressed to the Jews of the dispersion). If this passage does refer to the dispersion that began in 70 AD, then *they wander like sheep* describes the plight of the Jews that continues even into our present generation.

E. Messiah comes forth 10:3-4

V 3a-3b *"My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the male goats; For Yahweh of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah,*

This prediction of the Lord's deliverance from false shepherds, could be a reference to the removal of the Sadducees and Pharisees, the false shepherds in Jesus' day.

V 3c-4 *"And will make them like His majestic horse in battle. From them will come the cornerstone, From them the tent peg, From them the bow of battle, From them every ruler, all of them together.*

Although it requires much speculation to do so, some see in this verse a description of a battle setting that will be associated with Jesus' Second Advent, i.e., Jesus, the Cornerstone from Israel, the tent peg that holds all things together, will be the Commander who leads His forces.

F. Israel Triumphs over foes 10:5-7

"And they will be as mighty men, Treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle; And they will fight, for Yahweh will be with them; And the riders on horses will be put to shame.

⁶ *"And I shall strengthen the house of Judah, And I shall save the house of Joseph, And I shall bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am Yahweh their God, and I will answer them.⁷ "And Ephraim will be like a mighty man, And their heart will be glad as if from wine; Indeed, their children will see it and be glad, Their heart will rejoice in Yahweh.*

Once again, Yahweh speaks of His Divine defense of Israel and His regathering of Israel. Some consider verse 5 to be a reference to the Battle of Armageddon and verses 6-7 to describe the blessings of Israel after the battle.

G. Full restoration 10:8-12

"I will whistle for them to gather them together, For I have redeemed them; And they will be as numerous as they were before.⁹ "When I scatter them among the peoples, They will remember Me in far countries, And they with their children will live and come back.¹⁰ "I will bring them back from the land of Egypt, And gather them from Assyria; And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, Until no room can be found for them.¹¹ "And He will pass through the sea of distress, And strike the waves in the sea, So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up; And the pride of Assyria will be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt will depart.¹² "And I shall strengthen them in Yahweh, And in His name they will walk," declares Yahweh.

Although there are many things concerning the Messianic Kingdom that are vague in Scripture, passages, such as this one, make it difficult to deny that a regathering of dispersed Jews is somehow involved.

G. The theme of Judgment 11:1-3

Chapter eleven reverts to the theme of Israel's woes. These three verses figuratively introduce the theme of judgment.

Open your doors, O Lebanon, That a fire may feed on your cedars.² Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, Because the glorious trees have been destroyed; Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the impenetrable forest has come down.³ There is a sound of the shepherds' wail, For their glory is ruined; There is a sound of the young lions' roar, For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.

One of the themes of the chapter is that the reason for the certainty of Israel's destruction is the evil, "shepherds," or "leaders."

I. The Good Shepherd rejected 11:4-14

Thus says Yahweh my God,

"Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter.⁵ "Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and each of those who sell them says, 'Blessed be Yahweh, for I have become rich!' And their own shepherds have no pity on them.⁶ "For I shall no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," declares Yahweh; "but behold, I shall cause the men to fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I shall not deliver them from their power."

⁷ So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staves: the one I called Favor, and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.

⁸ Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me.⁹ Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh."

¹⁰ And I took my staff, Favor, and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples.¹¹ So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of Yahweh.

¹² And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.¹³ Then Yahweh said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of Yahweh.¹⁴ Then I cut my second staff, Union, in pieces, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

This quite long, figurative section, is difficult to understand. Even so, some things are clear.

- One clear truth is that the shepherd who is instructed to pasture the flock is not the one who is leading them to slaughter.
- The evil shepherds whom Israel preferred to follow, rather than Good Shepherd, are the ones who have led the people into the conditions that resulted in the slaughter's being their fate.

Verses 12-13 were fulfilled in Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Note the clarity with which this is depicted:

- The money was "weighed out."
- The amount was 30 pieces of silver
- The money was thrown into the house of Yahweh
- The money was used to purchase a potter's field as a cemetery for the poor

The description of the fulfillment of these actions is recorded in Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10.

However, this section also could be looking to the past, to the final separation between Judah and Israel, as well as the tragedies the descendants of Jacob experienced after that event (dispersion and exile), and a reflection on why that happened and why Yahweh allowed it to take place.

J. The Bad Shepherd re-elected 11:15-17

And Yahweh said to me,

"Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ "For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs. ¹⁷ "Woe to the worthless shepherd Who leaves the flock! A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye! His arm will be totally withered, and his right eye will be blind."

We not told what the equipment of a foolish shepherd might be, but this statement is made to change the subject of the prophecy from the Good Shepherd to the evil shepherds who were going to be cut off.

This portion of the prophecy speaks of Israel's rejection of the true Shepherd, and, as a result, they would be subjected to false, or foolish, shepherds. This could be a description of any one of the wicked rulers who plagued Israel through the centuries. This also could be Messianic, in that when Israel rejected Jesus, the Good Shepherd, wicked rulers dominated the nation until its destruction by the Romans.

In the long view, this prophecy could refer to the counterfeit Christ who will arise in the end-time (Daniel 11:36-39; II Thessalonians 2:1-2; Revelation 13:11-18).

VI. KING OVER ALL 12:1-14:21

This section presents events that will transpire from the time of Christ's death to the time of the Messianic Kingdom. Those who advocate the Dispensational Premillennial eschatology consider this chapter to refer to the Tribulation experience of Israel, which will result in many Jews' turning to Christ (Zechariah 12:10-13:2; Ezekiel 36:24-29; 37:1-14; Romans 11:25-26).

A. Israel's Deliverance 12:1-9

The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel.

Thus declares Yahweh who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

² *"Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.*

³ *"And it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.*

⁴ *"In that day," declares Yahweh, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment, and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.*

⁵ *"Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Yahweh of hosts, their God.'*

⁶ *"In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.*

⁷ *"Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first in order that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be magnified above Judah.*

⁸ *"In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them.*

⁹ *"And it will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

These verses which picture Judah and Israel as being attacked by many nations of the world, yet defended by Yahweh, are considered by most expositors to refer to the same event as that described in Revelation 19:11-21.

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.¹² And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.¹³ And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

¹⁵ *And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*

¹⁶ *And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

¹⁷ *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God;¹⁸ in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."*

¹⁹ *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army.²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who*

had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

B. Israel's mourning 12:10-14 (Ezekiel 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-29)

Out of the military deliverance will come a spiritual awakening as many Jews mourn over the Christ whom they rejected.

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.¹¹ In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.¹² And the land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;¹³ the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves;¹⁴ all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

Note that the New Testament loosely quotes verses 10 and 11 as referring to Christ. Thus, we must consider much of the language of this section to be messianic in its fulfillment.

- John 19:37 *And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."*
- Revelation 1:7 *Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.*
- Matthew 24:30 *and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.*

This description of the pouring out of the Spirit and the mourning brings to mind Peter's Pentecostal sermon and the crowd's response:

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power...

"This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ..."Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Acts 2:22-24, 32, 36-37

C. Israel's cleansing 13:1-6

"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

² *"And it will come about in that day," declares Yahweh of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.*

³ *"And it will come about that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of Yahweh'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.*

⁴ *"Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;⁵ but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.'⁶ "And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'*

The contrite of heart described in 12:12-14 brings the spiritual cleansing (Ezekiel 36:24-27; John 19:34).

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews never returned to the practice of idolatry. The captivity and exile had purged the nation of that sin.

A custom of the Baalistic priests of Israel was to cut themselves while praying or prophesying (I Kings 18:28). This is the custom behind the scars of verse 6. The pagan prophets will try to hide the fact that they ever were associated with these idols (verses 4-6). Note that the Jews themselves will slay the idolatrous prophets.

The setting of this section is consistent with the conditions in Palestine during the ministry of Jesus, which climaxed in a fountain's being opened for cleansing (verse 1).

These things being true, this prophecy may refer either to the first advent of Jesus or to the end-times, or, as is true in so many Old Testament prophetic statements, to both.

D. ISRAEL'S GLORIFICATION 13:7-9

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares Yahweh of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones."⁸ "And it will come about in all the land," Declares Yahweh, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it."⁹ "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'Yahweh is my God.'"

Those who understand these verses as applying to Israel, usually consider them to describe a panorama that begins with Christ's crucifixion (verse 7 - *smite the shepherd*) through the dispersion (verse 7 - *sheep scattered*), the tribulation (two-thirds of the inhabitants slain and the remaining third in fire – verse 8), and the final glorification (verse 9).

Note the significance of the dual expression *They are My people ... The Lord is my God*. God's choice and man's acceptance of that choice is required.

E. PHRASES AND WORD PICTURES OF ISRAEL'S MESSIAH 14:1-21

V 1-3 *Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ³ Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.*

These verses prophesy a horrible tribulation for Jerusalem, resulting in God's subduing of the nations. Most expositors consider verse 3 to refer to the same battle described in Chapter 12:1-9 and, as noted earlier, the same battle described in Revelation 19:11-21.

V 4-11 *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.*

⁵ *And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!*

⁶ *And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. ⁷ For it will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.*

⁸ *And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.*

⁹ *And Yahweh will be king over all the earth; in that day Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one.*

¹⁰ *All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. ¹¹ And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.*

The Messiah is pictured as standing on the Mount of Olives, resulting in a tremendous earthquake that splits the mountain and creates a valley, running east and west through the land. All of the saints of the ages will come with the Messiah when he comes to stand on the mountain. A river shall burst forth from the mountain, flowing both east and west through the new valley.

An age of glory will be ushered in. Night and day no longer will exist; there will be glorious uninterrupted light. Since a day is as a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years as a day, this period will be as a single day to God, even though it will encompass years--There will be uniformity of seasons. All of the pegs that mark the passing of time will be gone!

The desolate land south of Jerusalem will be inhabited and will flourish (the NIV renders 14:10 *The whole land. ..will become like the Arabah*. The Arabah was bottom land along the Jordan River. Jerusalem will be inhabited, never again to be destroyed (verse 11).

V 12-15 *Now this will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.*¹³ *And it will come about in that day that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.*¹⁴ *And Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance.*¹⁵ *So also like this plague, will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey, and all the cattle that will be in those camps.*

Here is a picture of the destruction of the heathen that oppose Jerusalem. Note the similarity between verse 12 and the effect of the atom bomb on the citizens of Japan who were victims of the two bombs dropped in World War II.

V 16-21 *Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*¹⁷ *And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, there will be no rain on them.*¹⁸ *And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which Yahweh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*¹⁹ *This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*²⁰ *In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO YAHWEH."* *And the cooking pots in Yahweh's house will be like the bowls before the altar.*²¹ *And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day.*

Jerusalem is pictured as becoming God's Holy City in the fullest sense. Even the cooking pots of the Temple will be sacred (verse 20). The Messianic Kingdom will be fully realized.

As stated earlier, so much of Zechariah clearly is messianic, that it is difficult to distinguish between those portions that are messianic on one hand and on the other hand, those portions of the book which are predictions of an historical fulfillment of events to transpire in Palestine.

The underlying message of Zechariah is repentance and hope – the vision of a wonderful future that will be the result of the action of Yahweh and not the creation of any human instrument.

MALACHI

Malachi contains the last recorded words of God in the Old Testament era.

The name, Malachi is a shortened form of the Hebrew *Malachiah*, which means *messenger of Jehovah*. Some feel that Malachi is not the author's name, but rather, verse one should read as it does in the Septuagint, *An oracle of the hand of the Lord against Israel by the hand of His messenger*. Note that the word, *messenger*, occurs three times in the book (2:7 and 3:1). The Jewish Targum assigns the book to Ezra. This side of heaven we may never know whether Malachi is the author's name or the descriptive title given to him.

The author of Malachi and Nehemiah were contemporaries. The Temple was completed and dedicated in 516 BC. Very little information exists concerning the people associated with the little Jewish community of Jerusalem, during the next sixty-plus years. The only glimpse that we have is the 458 B.C. arrival of the brilliant scribe, Ezra. He came from Babylon with some new recruits and several scrolls of Scripture. However, we are not given much information about the people.

The world situation during this period was characterized by dramatic change. The Persian Empire was the dominant world power while the Temple was being built, as well as during most of the subsequent years. Darius' significant career extended from 521-485 BC. Xerxes ruled from 485 to 465 BC. Artaxerxes reigned from 465 to 435 BC.

During these years, the Greeks were ascending in strength. In the closing years of Darius' reign, the Greeks and Persians began to lock horns. In 490 BC., on the plain of Marathon, the Greek commander, Miltiades, defeated the Persians in one of history's most important battles. In 480 BC, Xerxes' armies were stopped by the Greeks in the memorable battle of Thermopylae. In that same year, the mighty Persian fleet was destroyed at Salamis. In 479 BC, Xerxes lost his finest troops in a battle at Plataea, and consequently, lost Europe.

The Roman Republic was founded in 509 BC. Europe, first under the Greeks and then under the Romans, was preparing to take the world power away from Asia. This was the beginning of the golden age of Greek culture. Pericles was born in 470 BC. The hand of God can be seen in all of this. The *fullness of time* (Galatians 4:4) for the birth of the Messiah was not far off. As a result of the Greek and Roman successes, the Messiah would be born into a world with an international language (Greek), and an Empire (Roman) that made the rapid spread of the Gospel possible.

In the meantime, the situation at Jerusalem became grave. The beautiful promises made by Daniel, Haggai, and Zechariah had not come to pass. The people, tired of waiting for the promised glory, became indifferent to spiritual matters. There was no prophet among them to interpret the will of God. Worship lost its glow and people became disillusioned, cynical, and skeptical.

In 445 BC, Nehemiah, a highly regarded member of Artaxerxes' administration, was sent to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. In spite of vicious opposition from surrounding peoples, the walls were completed and Jerusalem was made secure. The people held Nehemiah in high regard. He was able to accomplish sweeping reforms. As governor of the city, he welded the people into a strong group. Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes' court for one year, in 433 BC. During his absence, Jerusalem was ruled by a Persian. This seems to be the year in which Malachi was written (the word, *Pehah*, translated *governor* in 1:8, is a borrowed word, used for the Persian governors in Palestine after the Jew's return to Jerusalem). The two books, Malachi and Nehemiah, should be studied together.

In their backslidden condition, the Jews were hypercritical of God. Irving L. Jensen comments, *That God would even speak with them, is evidence of His long-suffering and mercy.*⁸⁸

Of special note is that fact that in the list of Israel's sins addressed in Malachi, idolatry is missing. The exile permanently purged the Jews of the sin of idolatry. However, they were flirting with idolatry through their intermarriage with Canaanite women. They even were divorcing their Jewish wives in order to marry these *strange women*.⁸⁹ Idolatry first gained entrance into Israel after the Exodus through intermarriage between the people of Israel and the surrounding pagans.⁹⁰

The message of Malachi is important for our present age. Our Lord returned to heaven almost 2000 years ago. As Peter predicted (II Peter 3) some have begun to doubt that He will return. Were it not for the Holy Spirit and His continual work of revival, our waiting would result in a hopelessness and despair that would be almost impossible to escape.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

The oracle of the word of Yahweh to Israel through Malachi.

The same comment made concerning the opening verse in some of the other minor prophets is noted here: In the KJV and related versions, the verse reads, *the burden of Ninevah*. The Hebrew term *masah* (מָסַח), frequently used in the sense of *burden*, is used in the prophetic books to mean, *judgment*. Thus, the idea of judgment occurs immediately in the opening verse of this book.

Note also, that it is *the word of Yahweh*.. This book surpasses all other prophetic books in the number of verses spoken by Yahweh (47 verses out of a total of 55).

The most distinctive feature of Malachi is the repeated pattern of discourse:

- God makes a charge or statement.
- The people question the statement.
- God answers the question.

This pattern is repeated over and over, throughout the book.

I. GOD'S LOVE REJECTED 1:2-5

"I have loved you," says Yahweh. But you say, "How hast Thou loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares Yahweh. "Yet I have loved Jacob;³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."⁴ Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says Yahweh of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom Yahweh is indignant forever."⁵ And your eyes will see this and you will say, "Yahweh be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"

⁸⁸ Irving L. Jensen, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: A Self-Study* (Chicago, Moody Publishers) 1976

⁸⁹ Ezra 10:2; Nehemiah 13:26-27

⁹⁰ Numbers Chapter 25

- God's statement - *I have loved you.*
- The people's question - *Yet ye say, How hast thou loved us?*
- God's reply - *Was not Esau Jacob's brother ... yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau... etc.* (verses 2c-5).

II. THE SIN OF THE PRIESTS 1:6-2:9

A. The indictment 1:6-8

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says Yahweh of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Thy name?'"⁷ "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled Thee?' In that you say, 'The table of Yahweh is to be despised.'⁸ "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says Yahweh of hosts.

- God's charge - you have not honored me as much as a son honors his father or a servant his master. *You have despised my name.*
- The Priest's question - *and ye say, "wherein have we despised thy name?"*
- God's reply - *ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar.*
- The Priests' question again - *ye say, "wherein have we polluted Thee?"*
- God's reply - *In that ye say "The table of the Lord is contemptible."* v7.
You offer blind, lame, and sick animals as an offering - v8
Why don't you offer such animals to the ruler and see how well he is pleased with you - v8

B. An exhortation to repentance -1:9-10

"But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says Yahweh of hosts. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says Yahweh of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.

C. The people's role in the priest's sin 1:11-14

"For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says Yahweh of hosts.

¹² *"But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of Yahweh is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.'*

¹³ *"You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says Yahweh of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery, and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says Yahweh.*

¹⁴ *"But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock, and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to Yahweh, for I am a great King," says Yahweh of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."*

V11 The Gentiles will have a proper reverence for Jehovah and will worship Him continually, throughout the world, because His name is great. God is stating here that He will be *worshipped by loving hearts*. If those hearts are not to be found in Israel, He will find such hearts elsewhere. (note Paul's experience in Antioch - Acts 13:42-49)

V12-13 The evidence confirming the indictment is their bringing inferior and damaged goods as an offering to God was the result of their attitude toward God. Two negative attitudes are displayed here:

- Contempt and resentment toward God for requiring them to serve the offerings. It could be that since this was the priests' profession, that they resented the role that they were required to fulfill because of their legacy (being Levites, this was their task in life). To them it was a wearisome task.
- A disrespectful mockery toward the whole Temple ministry was displayed by the priests. By treating the altar as common, and by making light of the ceremonies associated with it, the priests had encouraged, indirectly, the presenting of inferior and damaged animals as an offering. Their attitude was similar to the religious charlatans who do not believe the things that they are teaching but go ahead and teach these things because of the gullibility of the people.

V14 God demands the best. A man who has a fine ram in his flock but presents a sick animal as a sacrifice to God will be cursed by a divine curse. The priests irreverent attitudes toward the sacrifice had encouraged the people to view the sacrifice with the same irreverence.

D. The priests are commanded to repent or face the consequences 2:1-9

"And now, this commandment is for you, O priests.

² *"If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says Yahweh of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart.*

³ *"Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it."* ⁴ *"Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says Yahweh of hosts.*

⁵ *"My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me, and stood in awe of My name."* ⁶ *"True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity.*

⁷ *"For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of Yahweh of hosts."* ⁸ *"But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says Yahweh of hosts.*

⁹ *"So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways, but are showing partiality in the instruction.*

V3 God pledges to rub upon the faces of the priests the manure, dropped by the animals brought to the Temple for sacrifice. Just as the manure is shoveled out of the Temple area, so shall these corrupt priests be removed. Since the Scripture says, *take you away with it*, we see that the priests will be taken away as the sacrificial animals are removed. This, of course, was to take place if the priests did not repent.

- A literal physical fulfillment occurred in 70 AD, as the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, thus putting an end to the animal sacrifices and the functioning of the priesthood.
- The fulfillment of this curse was fulfilled theologically, when the Temple veil was torn (Matt. 27:51) at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. In that moment, the ministry of the Temple and the Jewish priesthood, along with animal sacrifice, was discarded by Jehovah (Hebrews Chapters 7-10).

V4-5 God is concerned about keeping covenants. He desires that men keep their covenants with Him, that He might continue the covenant with them. God had made a covenant with Levi (Numbers 25:10-13; Deuteronomy 33:8-11) and it was God's desire that the relationship continue. If the priests (descendants of Levi) failed to keep the covenant, however, it would be broken.

V6-9 The priest had the responsibility of bringing repentance and righteousness into the lives of the people (Deuteronomy 33:8-10). He was to seek knowledge of God and to pass that on to the people. These priests, by bad example and attitude, had led many astray. Because of this, the priests were not held in respect or honor by the people. They were the object of contempt and scorn. God pledged to humiliate them, publicly.

One of their sins was that they had not ministered equally to all the people but, had shown partiality.

III. THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE 2:10-3:15

A. The consequence of one man's sin 2:10

"Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?"

When a man breaks or violates the covenant with God, he is described as breaking faith with his countrymen. We are reminded of the sin of Achan at Jericho (Joshua 7), resulting in the defeat of Israel at Ai. Joshua 7:1 states that the *Children of Israel* trespassed God's commandment, when in truth, only one man in the whole nation had broken the commandment. Because of this single sin, God said that there was sin in the camp (Joshua 7:10-13) and that the thirty six Israelites slain in the embarrassing defeat at Ai were killed because the covenant was violated. God did not fight for them because one man among 600, 000 Israelites (Numbers 26:51) had broken the covenant.

This is a Divine principle. No man is an island. The sin of a single individual impacts all of those about him. When we break God's covenant, we have broken faith with the rest of those who are involved in that covenant.

B. The sin of marriage between the people of God and the Ungodly 2:11-12

"Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of Yahweh which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.¹² "As for the man who does this, may Yahweh cut off from the tents of Jacob everyone who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to Yahweh of hosts.

Note that an Israelite who married a foreign woman was described as marrying the *daughter of a strange God*

God pledges to cut off from the tents of Jacob anyone who does this. This sin and God's statement concerning it demonstrate that God's view on the subject had not changed from the time of the Exodus (Numbers 25) until the time of Malachi (1000 years later). God will be impartial in executing this judgment.

C. The offering of a disobedient worshipper is rejected by God. 2:13-16

"And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

¹⁴ *"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because Yahweh has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*

¹⁵ *"But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring?*

Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For I hate divorce," says Yahweh, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says Yahweh of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

The Jews had been divorcing their wives to marry the women of the land.⁹¹ Therefore, God did not respond to their offerings. They mourned and wept at the altar, thinking that this might get God to respond. However, through divorce, they had broken a covenant. Therefore, their worship and offerings were useless.

God desired holy offspring and mixed marriages could not produce this. Note that God addresses this as a spiritual problem.

D. They wearied God with their criticism of His way 2:17.

You have wearied Yahweh with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of Yahweh, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

Again, we see the question and answer pattern.

- God's statement - *you have wearied Jehovah with your words*
- The people's question - *How?*
- God's reply - *you say, "God blesses the evil man. . etc.*

E. God's ultimate reply to their question 3:1-5

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And Yahweh, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says Yahweh of hosts.

² *"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 fullers' soap. ³ "And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to Yahweh offerings in righteousness.*

⁴ *"Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Yahweh, as in the days of old and as in former years.*

⁵ *"Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress*

⁹¹ Ezra 10:2; Nehemiah 13:26-27

the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me," says Yahweh of hosts.

They questioned, *Where is the God of judgment?* 2:17c

V1 God replied:

- *I will send my messenger* (fulfilled by John the Baptist [Mark 1:2-9])
- *Yahweh whom you seek shall suddenly come* (fulfilled by Jesus [Mark 1:9])

V2-5 His coming will be more than what these complainers will be able to handle

Note -Some feel that two advents are spoken of here:

- *He shall come* (verse 1) refers to Jesus' first coming
- *The day of His coming* (verse 2) refers to Jesus' second coming

F. The sin of being God-robbers 3:6-12

"For I, Yahweh, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

⁷ *"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says Yahweh of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'"*

⁸ *"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says Yahweh of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*

¹¹ *"Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says Yahweh of hosts. ¹² "And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says Yahweh of hosts.)*

Here is another of the exchanges characteristic of this book. Note that the exchange begins with Yahweh's assertion that He does not change – He always is compassionate and patience, seeking repentance on the part of sinners so that the relationship can be restored.

- God's statement - *return to me*
- The people's question - *How?*
- God's reply - *you have robbed me*
- The people's second question - *How?*
- God's reply - *you have not been tithing*
- God's promise- *If you will be faithful in tithing, you will have material prosperity*

Note that the prosperity would come in two ways:

- Direct blessing from heaven - increased income
- Prevention of diseases & other things that destroy assets

G. The sin of saying harsh things against God - 3:13-15

"Your words have been arrogant against Me," says Yahweh. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?'" ¹⁴ "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before Yahweh of hosts?' ¹⁵ 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also test God and escape.'"

- God's statement – *for you have said harsh things against me.*
- The people's question - *What have we said?*
- God's reply *That it is futile to serve God because we see so many ungodly people prospering.*

IV. THE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE 3:16-4:3

3:16-17 *Then those who feared Yahweh spoke to one another, and Yahweh gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Yahweh and who esteem His name.¹⁷ "And they will be Mine," says Yahweh of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."*

Some of the Israelites listened to the words of Malachi. They acknowledged the validity of the charges and exhorted one another to keep faithfully the Covenant (an expression of what is a motivation for being faithful in the attendance of church gatherings - Heb. 10:25). God had their names affixed to a Divine scroll, which He would refer to when gathering together those who would inhabit His Kingdom (Revelation 20:12).

3:18-4:3 *So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says Yahweh of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."² "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."³ "And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says Yahweh of hosts.*

For the present, the justice of God is not evident. In many instances, the good suffer and the godless get rich. However, the day is coming when justice will rule and the righteous shall reign.

V. FINAL EXHORTATION 4:4-6

V4 *"Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.*

V5-6 *Elijah will come before the Day of Yahweh "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh. "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."*

When the angel appeared to Zechariah, informing him of the coming birth of John the Baptist, the angel said,

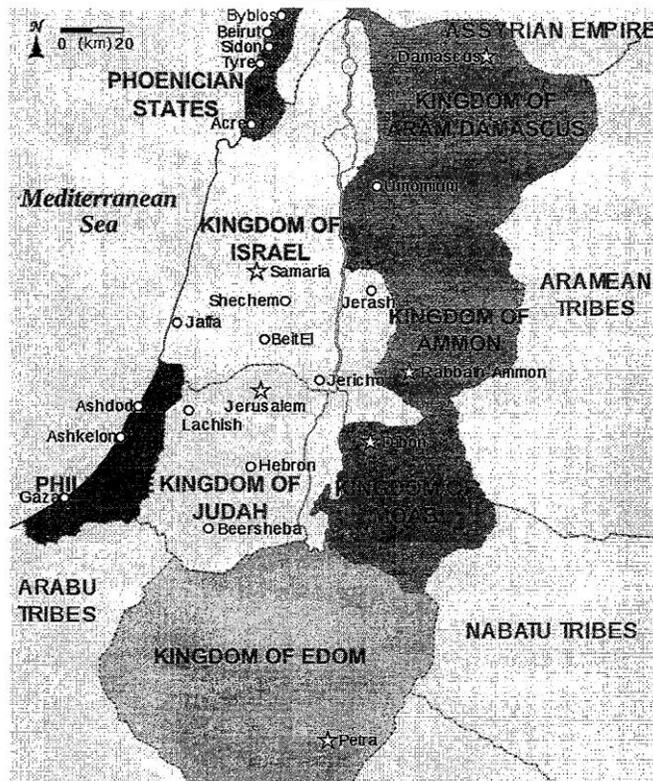
"And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him(Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁹² (Luke 1:17 NAS)

With these words, God became silent for about 400 years. The next time that His voice was heard was through an angel who spoke to the little Jewish maiden, Mary, whom God chose to become the mother of our Lord Jesus.

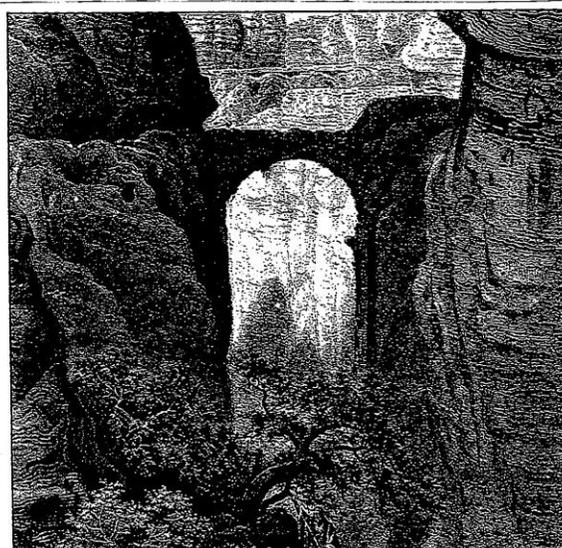
⁹² Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:11

ADDENDUM A

Edom



Entrance into the valley of Petra



ADDENDUM B

Cult Temple Prostitutes

In the Astarte or Asherah cult of the Canaanites and the Qudshu cult of the Egyptians (goddess of fertility), a woman was required at least once in her lifetime to go to the temple of the goddess and sit in the sacred bench of the goddess with a crown of cords on her head and offer herself to any stranger that comes along and lays a monetary offering to the goddess.

This woman would have a sexual relationship with this stranger and fulfill her duty to the goddess. She would then be free the rest of her life from any further obligation, if she so chooses. Some women, due to lack of feminine attractiveness, might sit on the bench for years before she fulfills her duty. Such women were forced into this sort of prostitution against their will. However, there were those who were not so opposed to the practice and fulfilled their duty many times over particularly since she got a percentage of the offerings (for expenses of course).

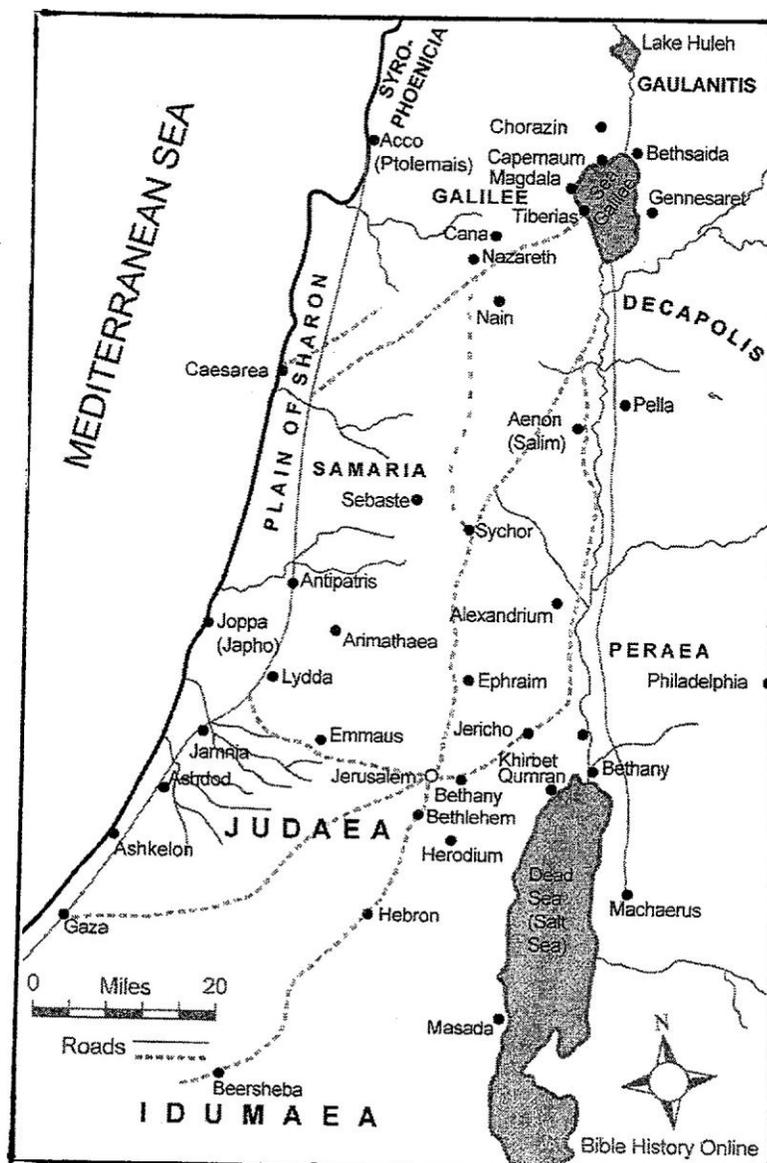
Such a woman was then referred to as zonah . A zonah is your everyday, street walking for profit prostitute. To be sure, women had very little rights in those days and if her husband divorced her or died, many women were forced into prostitution just to survive.

Hebrew law provided for women who have lost their husbands and there was no need to go into prostitution unless she wanted to. Often the solution provided under Hebrew law was not desirable, like being forced to live with a man who abused her or treated her like a slave. Thus, Judah and Israel had their share of prostitutes.⁹³

⁹³ <http://www.chaimbentorah.com/2016/03/word-study-prostitute>

ADDENDUM C

Palestine after the Babylonian Exile



ADDENDUM D

Dispensational Premillennialism⁹⁴

1. Distinctive Features and Emphases:

a. Dispensationalists argue for the necessity of the literal interpretation of all of the prophetic portions of Scripture. Charles Ryrie makes this point very clearly:

When the principles of literal interpretation both in regard to general and special hermeneutics are followed, the result the premillennial system of doctrine... If one interprets literally, he arrives at the premillennial system.

This means that all promises made to David and Abraham under the Old Covenant are to be literally fulfilled in the future millennial age.

b. Dispensationalists insist that God has two redemptive plans, one for national Israel, and one for Gentiles during the "church age." This presupposition forms the basis for the dispensational hermeneutic. As John Walvoord states regarding the dispensational hermeneutic, "Pretribulationism distinguishes clearly between Israel and the church and their respective programs."

c. There is a "rapture" of believers when Jesus Christ secretly returns to earth before the seven year tribulation period begins (the seventieth week of Daniel, cf. Daniel 9:24-27). Believers do not experience the persecution of the Anti-Christ who rises to prominence during this "tribulation period." The Biblical data dealing with the time of tribulation is referring to unbelieving Israel, not the church. Therefore, church age, or the "age of grace," is to be seen as that period of time in which God is dealing with Gentiles prior to the coming of the kingdom of God during the millennium.

d. The visible and physical second coming of Christ occurs after the great tribulation. Those who are converted to Christ during the tribulation, including Jews (the 144,000) who turn to Christ, go on into the millennium to re-populate the earth. Glorified believers rule with Christ during his future reign.

e. Jesus came to earth bringing with him an "offer" of the kingdom to the Jews, who rejected him. God then turned to dealing with the Gentiles -- thus, the church age is a parenthesis of sorts. The rapture is the next event to occur in Biblical prophecy. The signs of the end of the age (i.e., the birth of the nation of Israel, the revival of the Roman empire predicted in Daniel as seen through the emergence of the EEC [common market], the impending Russian-Arab invasion of Israel, etc.) all point to the immediacy of the secret return of Christ for his church. Antichrist is awaiting his revelation once the believing church is removed.

f. The millennium is marked by a return to Old Testament temple worship and sacrifice to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ. At the end of the millennium, the "great white throne" judgement occurs, and Satan and all unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire. Then will occur the creation of a new heaven and earth.

⁹⁴ This is an edited adaptation of a chart found at http://www.fivesolas.com/esc_chrt.htm

ADDENDUM E

The Two Sieges Jerusalem (597 & 586 BC) and its Final Destruction

In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon defeated Pharaoh Necho at the Battle of Carchemish. He did not attempt to invade Egypt, at that time but he did invade Judah, which had been loyal to Egypt. Fearing the destruction of Jerusalem, King Jehoiakim of Judah, in his third year, changed his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon. Jehoiakim paid Nebuchadnezzar tribute from the treasury in Jerusalem as well as some artifacts from the Temple. Some members of the royal family and prominent families of Judah were taken to Babylon as hostages. This was the first group of exiles to be taken to Babylon and so the first Babylonian Captivity (605 BC).

During the fourth year of his reign (601 BC), Nebuchadnezzar attempted to invade Egypt. His armies were repulsed with heavy losses. The failure led to numerous rebellions among the Palestinian states, including Judah. King Jehoiakim took a pro-Egyptian position and stopped paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar quickly responded to these rebellions. According to the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle, he laid siege to Jerusalem, which eventually fell on 2 Adar (March 16) 597 BC. The Chronicle states:

“In the seventh year [of Nebuchadnezzar, 598 BC] in the month Chislev [November/December] the king of Babylon assembled his army, and after he had invaded the land of Hatti (Syria/Palestine) he laid siege to the city of Judah. On the second day of the month of Adar [16 March] he conquered the city and took the king [Jeconiah] prisoner. He installed in his place a king [Zedekiah] of his own choice, and after he had received rich tribute, he sent forth to Babylon”⁹⁵

Jehoiakim died during the siege and Jeconiah became the new king. Nebuchadnezzar pillaged the city and its Temple. the treasures and furnishings of the Temple, including golden vessels dedicated by King Solomon. were taken to Babylon. Jeconiah and most of the Judeans (numbering about 10,000) were deported to Babylon and "None remained except the poorest people of the land"⁹⁶. The deportation occurred prior to Nisan of 597 BC. The dates in the Book of Ezekiel are counted from that event.

Following the [siege of 597 BC](#), Nebuchadnezzar installed [Zedekiah](#) as tributary [king of Judah](#).. Zedekiah revolted against Babylon, and entered into an alliance with Pharaoh [Hophra](#), the king of [Egypt](#). Nebuchadnezzar responded by invading [Judah](#) and began a siege of [Jerusalem](#) in December 589 BC. During this siege, "every worst woe befell the city, which drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs"⁹⁷ In 586 BC, after completion of the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign Nebuchadnezzar broke through Jerusalem's walls, conquering the city. Zedekiah and his followers attempted to escape but were captured on the plains of [Jericho](#) and taken to [Riblah](#).. There, after seeing his sons killed, Zedekiah was blinded, bound, and taken captive to Babylon, where he remained a prisoner until his death.

⁹⁵ No 24 WA21946, The Babylonian Chronicles, The British Museum

⁹⁶ II Kings 24:13-14

⁹⁷ II Kings 25:3; Lamentations 4:4

ADDENDUM F

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY JUDAH, ISRAEL, AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SURROUNDING NATIONS DURING THE MINISTRY OF THE PROPHETS

Solomon had levied heavy taxes on the people to finance his extensive building projects. He also had instituted a conscription program in which the men of Israel were drafted to serve in the army. All non-Israelites living in his kingdom were forced to become laborers in the construction of his many projects.⁹⁸

One of the men overseeing a portion of the Jerusalem project was an Israelite soldier named Jeroboam, from the tribe of Ephraim. Jeroboam fulfilled his duties so well that he was promoted to the position of overseer of all the forced laborers that had been conscripted from within the borders of Ephraim. One day, as Jeroboam was leaving the city, he was approached by the prophet, Ahijah, who was wearing a new cloak. As they walked along together, Ahijah suddenly took off the new cloak and tore it into twelve pieces. He told the startled Jeroboam to pick up ten pieces of the torn garment and then declared,

*for thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes ... because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did.'*⁹⁹

The prophecy continued with the statement that because of His promise to David, Yahweh would not rend the kingdom during Solomon's lifetime, nor would the Davidic dynasty lose the entire kingdom; they would be granted one tribe.¹⁰⁰

The same general promises and warnings were given to Jeroboam that had been given to Saul, David, and Solomon,

*Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.'*¹⁰¹

After this prophecy, Jeroboam attempted a revolt, which seems to have been influenced not only by the prophecy of Ahijah but also by the heavy taxes and other burdens that Solomon had imposed upon the people.¹⁰² Solomon crushed the revolt and Jeroboam fled to Egypt where he remained until after Solomon's death.

Upon the death of Solomon, in 931 BC, his son, Rehoboam, became the King of Israel. Although the three previous kings of the nation were chosen by Yahweh, those over whom they were to reign, by common consent, had accepted them as the king. In each instance, a covenant of sorts had been enacted at the time of the coronation.

⁹⁸ I Kings 9:15-23

⁹⁹ I Kings 11:31, 33

¹⁰⁰ I Kings 11:34-36

¹⁰¹ I Kings 11:38

¹⁰² Such implication can be seen in the words of the Israelites to Rehoboam (I Kings 12:1ff)

Rehoboam and the tribal leaders gathered at Shechem for this confirmation event.¹⁰³ Before the planned event, the leaders of the northern tribes summoned Jeroboam to return from Egypt. The northern tribes had a petition that they wanted to present to Rehoboam before they installed him as king. They wanted Jeroboam to be one of their spokesmen when they met with Rehoboam. The petition consisted of a plea for Rehoboam to lighten the heavy burden of taxes and other obligations that Solomon had imposed upon the people.

*Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.*¹⁰⁴

Rehoboam told the Israelites to give him three days to think about their request. He immediately turned to the elders who had served with his father, Solomon. These were experienced men, seasoned by years of service. They knew the people. Their counsel was to yield to the request.

*Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."*¹⁰⁵

Evidently Rehoboam did not like this counsel and so he turned to the young men who grew up with him. These were young men who had grown up as a part of the privileged class. They never had worked at hard labor. Throughout their lives they had been the benefactors of Solomon's heavy taxation policies. Their counsel was the opposite of that which the older men had given.

*The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins!'¹¹ 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"*¹⁰⁶

When the Israeli delegation returned to Rehoboam on the third day, he ignored the advice of the elders and gave the arrogant reply of his young companions. The result was the immediate defection of the northern tribes.

*When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!" So Israel departed to their tents.*¹⁰⁷

Thus, the kingdom was divided and the northern tribes quickly installed Jeroboam as their king. This kingdom became known as the Kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam ruled the southern kingdom, which came to be known as the Kingdom of Judah.¹⁰⁸

Jeroboam, feared that when his people traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the required religious festivals, they would be drawn back into a relationship with the Judeans. To prevent this, he instituted two shrines, one in Bethel (in the southern portion of his kingdom) and one in Dan (in

¹⁰³ I Kings 12:1-24 II Chronicles 10:1- 11:4

¹⁰⁴ I Kings 12:4; II Chronicles 10:4

¹⁰⁵ I Kings 12:7; II Chronicles 10:7

¹⁰⁶ I Kings 12:10-11; II Chronicles 10:10-11

¹⁰⁷ I Kings 12:16; II Chronicles 10:16

¹⁰⁸ I Kings 12:17, 20; II Chronicles 10:19

the northern portions of his kingdom). At each of these shrines, he erected the statue of a calf, which represented the power of Yahweh.¹⁰⁹

With this separation, God's chosen people became two nations, with separate histories and separate experiences with the surrounding nations.

During the span of history encompassed by the ministry of the writing prophets (Isaiah through Malachi), there were three world powers that fought for dominance: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

During the reign of King Hezekiah, the Assyrians attempted unsuccessfully to conquer Judah. Yahweh intervened in behalf of Judah when the Assyrians were laying siege to Jerusalem.¹¹⁰

In 722 BC, the Assyrians destroyed the capital of Israel (Samaria). It was the custom of the Assyrians to relocate those whom they conquered. Thus, most of the Israelites were dispersed among the nations conquered by the Assyrians, and people from other nations were relocated to Israel. This mongrel group of many nations – some of them Jewish, became known as "Samaritans."

The next world power was Chaldea, whose capital was Babylon. Chaldeans usually are referred to by the name of the capital, i.e., *Babylonians*. The Babylonians conquered the Assyrians, occupying their capital, Nineveh, in 612 BC.

The Babylonians invaded Judah and carried many Judeans into exile in 605 BC. In 597 BC, they removed to Babylon most of the remaining Judeans.

In 539 BC, the Persians captured Babylon and in 536, the Persian King, Cyrus, began returning the Jews back to Jerusalem. He instructed them to rebuild the Temple of Solomon, and provided what they needed in order to accomplish this task.

Habakkuk had his dialogue with Yahweh near the year 612 BC

In that dialogue, Yahweh revealed that He was going to bring the Chaldeans against Judah and that Jerusalem would fall and that the Judeans would be carried into exile in Babylon.

That began to happen approximately 7 years after Habakkuk's dialogue with Yahweh and it was completely fulfilled 26 years after the dialogue, when Jerusalem fell and the remainder of the Jews were taken to Babylon.

70 years later, after Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon, he began restoring the Jews to Judea. He appointed Zerubbabel as the governor of the Judean province. Cyrus not only sent Zerubbabel and a contingent of Jews back to Judea, but he instructed them to rebuild the Temple of Solomon, and he provided the materials for that to be done.

Haggai was among those who traveled back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. It was during Zerubbabel's governorship that Haggai prophesied – about 92 years after Yahweh had spoken to Habakkuk and 16 years after the Jews were first sent back to Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁹ I Kings 12

¹¹⁰ II Kings 19:35