

# THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

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## INTRODUCTION

The history and religion of Israel are fundamentally prophetic. Every major event in Israel's past and future, from the call of Abraham to the Babylonian captivity and her end time conversion is set in prophesy. The faith of Israel has been preserved and passed on by her prophets (Heb 1:1).<sup>1</sup> Prophesy serves to interpret history and foretell its outcomes so that no one can miss the point: *God is sovereign over all history and it moves unfailingly toward His outcome for His glory!*

OT prophesy is not exclusively Jewish in that it records God's plans and purposes for other nations as well. The reason for this is that God's universal glory and not Israel's glory is principle in His plan (Isa 45:6). Thus, the unified message of the prophets reveals history's grand design and purpose—the *sovereign rule of God over all the earth, or, the kingdom of God* (Zech 14:9). The practical distillation of that message to Israel can be summarized in one word—*return*.

Liberal critics of biblical prophesy minimize the predictive element and portray the prophets as keen philosophical observers and moral teachers. In order to do this they have to create complex explanations for the obvious predictions or suggest that the predictive elements were inserted by later writers. These statements do not just minimize the prophets but the God for whom they spoke. The ethical homilies of the prophets gain credibility when it is understood that the God who ultimately spoke them is sovereign over all events past, present, and future.

### 1. Origin and Development of Prophetism

#### 1b Liberal view

According to liberal scholarship, Israel's prophetic office began as a mimic of earlier pagan forms of prophesy. While soothsaying or divination (occult practices of foretelling events) were practiced in Canaan (Deut 18:9-14), Egypt (Gen 41:8; Ex 7:11), and Babylon (Ezek 21:21-22), prophetism in Israel was necessarily and radically different in form and content. In fact, imitating such pagan practices was strictly forbidden in Israel (Lev 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:9-22).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, says: "Israel's religion, unlike that of her contemporaries, was grounded in a revelation through historical events, rather than in metaphysical speculation, superstition or philosophical reasoning. This helps to explain why the Historical Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings are designated the "Former Prophets" in the Hebrew canon....When a writer recorded Old Testament history, he was not interested simply in writing history as history, but in recording the revelation of God in and through that history" (p 11).

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit. p. 24. In contrast to the heathen soothsayers and diviners the Hebrew prophets were men with the sense of a special call to the prophetic ministry. They were men of consecration and lofty character, courageous critics of the social, political, moral and religious wrongs of their day. Accuracy of prediction, confirmed by fulfillment on the historical plane, characterized their ministry....From the very beginning of Israel's national life, the Scriptures draw a clear distinction between true prophecy which is the result of divine revelation and the heathen methods of divination; for we are told in Numbers 23:23 "Surely there is no enchantment with Jacob; Neither is there any divination with Israel: In due time it is said to Jacob and to Israel what God doth work."

2b Biblical view

- 1c Origin of OT prophetic office (Deut 18:9-22) [Freeman 24ff]  
This passage not only serves to introduce the office of prophet but is in itself prophetic. Moses speaks of a prophetic institution which would serve as an antitype of the One who would come as the ideal prophet—Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-23).

1d The reason and basis (v 9)

2d The means of revelation (vv 15-22)

- It would come unsought
- It would come at the sovereign discretion of Jehovah
- It would come through God appointed prophets

3d The distinction from false methods (vv 21-22)

- 2c Development of the office – 2 general periods = pre-canonical (speaking) and canonical (writing)

1d Speaking Prophets (pre-canonical)

1e Pre-Mosaic

1f

2f

3f

4f

5f

2e Mosaic (emphasis on preaching and teaching)

1f

2f

3f

4f

3e Monarchy Period (organization of Prophetism)

1f Samuel

There was little prophetic activity between Moses and Samuel and virtually none during the 300 years from Deborah to Samuel (1Sam 3:1). The office of prophetism takes on

institutional dynamics beginning with Samuel (c.1050 BC) and approximately 200 years later under Elijah and Elisha. This institution is frequently referred to as the School of the Prophets, but the biblical phrase is “the sons of the prophets”.

1g first mention (1Sam 10:5-13)

2g indication of rank (1Sam 19:18-20)

3g tradition continued by Elijah and Elisha (2Kgs 2-6)

4g recognized title (1Kgs 20:35; 2Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1)

2f David, Solomon, Jeroboam era:

1g Gad (1Sam 22:5; 2Sam 24:11-19; 2Chron 29:25)

2g Nathan (2Sam 7:2-17; 1Chron 17:1-15; 2Sam 12:1-15)

3g Zadok (2Sam 15:27)

4g Heman (1Chron 25:5 cf Psa 88)

5g Ahijah (1Kgs 11:29-39; 1Kgs 14:2-18)

6g The “old prophet” from Bethel (1Kgs 13:11ff)

2d Writing Prophets (canonical)

1e 9<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>3</sup>

1f Obadiah 845 BC

2f Joel 835

3f Jonah 782

2e 8<sup>th</sup> Century

1f Amos 760

2f Hosea 750

3f **Isaiah 739**

4f Micah 735

3e 7<sup>th</sup> Century

1f Nahum 650

2f Zephaniah 640

3f **Jeremiah 627**

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<sup>3</sup>The dates for these earlier prophets (Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah) are uncertain and there is considerable debate regarding the precise dates for all of the prophets. We will discuss these issues in more detail in the introduction to each of the book studies. The dates assigned here are taken from Hobart Freeman, pp. 136-137.

4f Habakkuk 609

4e 6<sup>th</sup> Century (Exilic Prophets)

1f **Daniel 605**

2f **Ezekiel 593**

5e 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Post-exilic Prophets)

1f Haggai 520

2f Zechariah 520

3f Malachi 433

## 2. Meaning of the Term Prophet

The precise meaning of the Hebrew word *nabhi'* is difficult to determine because there is little agreement as to its precise etymology. Several words are suggested as likely roots for *nabhi'*: The Akkadian root *nabu*, meaning "to speak"; the Hebrew *nabha'* "to bubble up"; the Arabic *naba'a* "to announce; the Hebrew *bo* "to come" or "to enter"; or even the Assyrian god Nebo, who was known as "the speaker". The point is, etymology alone is not sufficient to give us a clear understanding of the term. Several key texts, however, define the office quite clearly:

1b Ex 7:1-2; cf. 4:10-16

2b Deut 18:15-22; Zech 7:12

3b Jer 1:7 cf. 15:19 & 23:16; Isa 1:20; 6:9

4b Amos 3:8 cf. 7:12-16

## 3. The Function of the Prophet

1b Moral and ethical preachers and teachers of authentic religion to Israel under Divine commission

As such, they fearlessly rebuked the idolatry, oppression, injustice, rebellion, arrogance, unfaithfulness, and social, moral, and political corruption (Isa 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins). But, like NT preachers, their ministry was both negative and positive—they called the people from sin to God (Mal 4:4 Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments).

It was part of their commission to show the people of God "their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." (Isa 58:1; Ezek 22:2; 43:10; Micah 3:8). They were, therefore, pastors and ministerial monitors of the people of God. It was their duty to admonish and reprove, to denounce prevailing sins, to threaten the people with the terrors of divine judgment and call them to repentance. They also brought the message of consolation and pardon (Isa 40:1-2).

--John Peter Lange, *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture*, trans. Philip Schaff, XIV, 7.

2b Forecasters of future events concerning the nation of Israel, the Gentiles, and the Kingdom of God.

Although the bulk of the prophet's messages dealt with local, immediate, national issues related to a specific

historical situation, there was often a predictive element as well. These predictions were never given simply to satisfy men's curiosity regarding the future nor were they to merely verify God's knowledge of the future. They always served the purpose of giving short-sighted Israel the bigger picture so as to call them to the wise and godly course.

3b Watchmen sounding alarm to warn Israel of the dangers of their apostasy (Ezek 3:17; 33:7)

**NOTE>** The division of the kingdom and resultant apostasy of the 10 tribes to the north created a permanent need for prophetism.

**NOTE>** Often the priesthood was swept along with the rest of the people as God's people bent to the pressures of paganism both on their borders and in their towns as a result of political alliances and intermarriage. Like the watchmen, strategically situated as an advance warning system in the event of enemy attack, the prophets stood before the people to alert them of God's impending judgment and the narrowing window of opportunity for mercy.

4. Distinction between True and False Prophets

Everything true and valuable in religion seems to have its false and deceitful counterpart. The Bible recognizes the existence of true and false prophets and warns against the latter. Authentic prophets often exposed the "lying prophets" among them. The Bible also clearly spells out the criteria by which Israel could discern between false and true prophets:

1b Must speak only in the name of Yahweh (Deut 13:1-5; 18:20)

2b Message must be grounded only in revelation (Num 12:6)

3b Message must be authenticated by the high moral character of the prophet (Isa 42:1-4 cf. Mt 7:15-20)  
False prophets typically were known for their low morality:

1c mercenaries – Mic 3:5,11 "Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets Who make my people stray; Who chant "Peace" While they chew with their teeth, But who prepare war against him Who puts nothing into their mouths.... her prophets divine for money...."

2c drunkards – Isa 28:7 "The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

3c profane and wicked – Jer 23:11 – "For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness," says the LORD

4c conspired to deceive and defraud – Ezek 22:25 "The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.

5c treacherous – Zeph 3:4 "Her prophets are insolent,(light or reckless) treacherous people; Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, They have done violence to the law

- 6c adulterous and generally wicked – Jer 23:14 “Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.
- 7c religious opportunists – Micah 2:11 “ If a man should walk in a false spirit And speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ Even he would be the prattler (KJV “prophet” from *nawtaf*, “to drip or distill”) of this people.
- 8c proclaimed message of popular optimism – Jer 23:17 “They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The LORD has said, “You shall have peace”’; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’”
- 9c practiced divination – Ezek 13:2 “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.
- 10c gave counsel of their own invention – Jer 14:14 “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. • They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD

#### 4b True prophets were consciously called by God

- 1c Moses – Ex 4:10-12
- 2c Jeremiah – Jer 1:4-10
- 3c Amos – Amos 7:14-15
- 4c Samuel – 1Sam 3:19-20
- 5c Ezekiel – Ezek 2:1-4

#### 5b Message was often authenticated by miracles or signs

#### 6b Message must be in harmony with previous revelation (Deut 13:1-3)

#### 7b Message must be confirmed by fulfillment in history (Deut 18:21-22)

### 5. Why Study the Prophets?

#### 1b The nature of Scripture

- 1c Profitable – 2Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- 2c Applicable – The OT was written for us! Rms 15:4 whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

3c Progressive – an “unfolding drama of redemption” **1Co 10:11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

2b The analogical use of Israel

Salvation history offers compelling illustrations of NT truth – Israel’s experience at the exodus becomes analogous to our salvation and the conquest of Canaan of our experience of victorious Christian living (Heb 3 and 4).

6. Interpretation of prophecy<sup>4</sup>

1b The clarity of a text determines the degree of confidence we may hold in its interpretation. The clearer the text, the greater the certainty about what it means. On the other hand, the more obscure a text, the more humbly and tentatively we must approach its interpretation.

2b The Bible itself offers the best guide to the interpretation of prophecy. It indicates which prophecies were fulfilled during the OT and NT periods and suggests patterns for interpreting OT prophecies today.

3b The student should seek the most likely *time* for the fulfillment of a prophecy in history. Here we must apply a knowledge of biblical history as well as of the NT’s teaching about the future. The question is, given its nature, when did/will a given prophecy most likely reach fulfillment? In the OT or NT periods? In the future?

4b Unless the NT indicates otherwise, the student should relate OT prophecies about Israel and Zion to those whose fulfillment the NT specifically teaches.

5b The student should strive to understand a text’s major points rather than all of its symbolic details. Ask, for example, what is the purpose of a prophecy (i.e., to encourage perseverance, to warn of coming accountability, etc.)? Also, what does it say about the nature of God or about Israel’s sin?

6b We recommend that longer prophetic books be read in small sections (i.e., a context of verses, a whole chapter, or several chapters, etc.). God did not intend the prophets to be read through at one sitting. The goal is to understand the major point(se) that each section stresses.

7b As for application, once a section’s major point(s) is understood, we suggest that the student should find modern life situations analogous to the one which a prophetic section handles. Ask the question: What does this section say about that analogous situation?

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<sup>4</sup>Klein, Bloomberg and Hubbard *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* pp310-311.

## EXPOSITION AND COMMENTARY ON MINOR PROPHETS

### 1. Obadiah – 845 BC

#### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Very little is known about the prophet Obadiah. His Hebrew name means, “the servant of Jehovah”. He appears to have been from the southern kingdom since he makes repeated references to Edom’s mistreatment of Judah (vv 11, 12, 17, 21). There are several Obadiahs in the OT:
- 1d An Israelite who was chief in the household of King Ahab (1Ki 18:3). Amid great spiritual degeneracy he maintained his fidelity to God, and tried to protect God’s prophets by hiding 100 of them in a cave at great personal risk (1Ki 18:4,13).
  - 2d A chief of the tribe of Issachar (1Ch 7:3)
  - 3d A descendant of Saul (1Ch 8:38)
  - 4d A Levite, after the Captivity (1Ch 9:16)
  - 5d A Gadite who joined David at Ziklag (1Ch 12:9)
  - 6d A prince of Zebulun in the time of David (1Ch 27:19)
  - 7d One of the princes sent by Jehoshaphat to instruct the people in the law (2Ch 17:7)
  - 8d A Levite who supervised temple repairs under Josiah (2Ch 34:12)
  - 9d One who accompanied Ezra on the return from Babylon (Ezra 8:9)
  - 10d A prophet, fourth of the minor prophets in the Hebrew canon, and fifth in the LXX. He was probably contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is possible that this Obadiah is the same as the one mentioned in (2Ch 17:7) see 7d above.
- 2c Since there are no dates in the context, commentators place the writing of this book anywhere from 850 to 580 BC. The earlier date coincides with an Edomite revolt against Jehoram (2Kgs 8:20-22) and appears to be the more likely date for this book. The later date is identified with Edom’s participation in the sacking of Judah by the Babylonians.

#### 2b Edom’s Strategic location

Obadiah’s message involves a severe denunciation of Edom, a kingdom to the east and south of Judah also known as Seir, Hor, and Esau. It was situated along the well used trade routes between Egypt and Syria allowing them to impose tolls on passing caravans. This, along with their own trade initiatives, brought them immense wealth. Edom was easily defended since its central area was characterized by red limestone cliffs rising as high as 5,000 feet above sea level. Edom’s principle cities were Teman, Bozrah, and Sela (later known as Petra). Biblical references fill in some of the details of their history:

- 1c Gen 14:5-6 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as I Paran, which is by the wilderness.
- 2c Gen 32:3 cf. 33:16 “Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 33:16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.”
- 3c Num 20:14-21 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. “Thus says your brother Israel: ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us, 15 how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. 16 When we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. 17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass



through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory." 18 Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword." 19 So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." 20 Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

- 4c 2Sam 8:13-14 And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt. 14 He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went.

The end of Edom is shrouded in mystery. We know only that the nation lost its independence in the fifth century BC and was controlled by the Nabataeans from about 312 BC. In this period Edom was called Idumaea, the place from which Herod the Great, an Idumaeen, came. From the time of the Mohammedan conquests the region has been virtually unoccupied save for Bedouins and, in recent history, by military outposts of the modern state of Jordan. It has indeed been brought to nothing, as Obadiah foretold.

—John Stott, *The Minor Prophets* 1:190

### 3b Edom's Relationship with Israel

- 1c Edom and Israel are descendants of the twin sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau who struggled with each other even before they were born (Gen 25:22).
- 2c Esau sold his birthright to Jacob and Jacob stole the blessing from him, events which reveal something of the character driving both of them (Gen 25, 27)
- 3c In the Exodus, Edom refused Israel passage through their land (Num 20:14-21; Jgs 11:17-18).
- 4c Balaam predicted Edom's captivity in contrast with Israel's prosperity (Num 24:18).
- 5c Saul engaged Edom in battle (1Sam 14:47).
- 6c Part of Edom was conquered by David (2Sam 8:13-14).
- 7c Further skirmishes under Solomon (1Kgs 9:26-28; 11:14-22).
- 8c During Jehoshaphat's reign (9<sup>th</sup> Century) the Edomites, along with Moab and Ammon, raided Judah (2Chron 20:1-2).
- 9c Edom successfully rebelled against Jehoram and maintained independence for about 40 years (2Kgs 8:20-22; 2Chron 21:8-10). It is this date that appears to coincide with Obadiah's message.
- 10c Early in 8<sup>th</sup> Century Amaziah recaptured Edom for Judah with great slaughter (2Kgs 14:7; 2Chron 25:11-12).
- 11c With Judah facing pressure under Ahaz's reign Edom raided and took captives (2Chron 28:17). At this time she permanently shook Judah's superior grip on her.
- 12c According to extra-biblical source (1Esdras 4:45 cf. Lam 4:21-22) the Edomites supposedly burned the temple at Jerusalem during the Babylonian invasion.
- 13c In the 6<sup>th</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC Edomite power waned and they appear to have been displaced by a group of Arabs called Nabataeans. They then settled in the Negev of southern Judah which became known as Idumaea.

14c According to some sources, the Maccabeans under John Hyrcanus conquered the Edomites around 100 BC and forced many of them to be circumcised and accept the Law. By AD 100 Edom, as a race, became lost to history.

#### 4b Message of Obadiah

The conflict between Edom and Israel (specifically Judah) can be traced back to their respective roots in Esau and Jacob and reflects a struggle that began in their mother's womb (Gen 25:22). That tension has never been resolved and finds its fullest expression in God's declaration, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated" (Mal 1:2 cf Rms 9:13).

The gospels present this continuing conflict in startling fashion. Jacob, in terms of his spiritual aspirations and character is represented in Jesus Christ, while rebellious Esau finds a counterpart in Herod the Idumaeen king. In response to a second hand threat against his life from Herod, Jesus responded, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected' (Lk 13:32). Without an understanding of the underlying Jacob–Esau conflict and its greater spiritual implications, Jesus' statement would have sounded uncharacteristically harsh and enigmatic.

Jacob is in the background of Obadiah's message while Esau occupies the stage but the message includes both. Edom carries forward the rebellious character of Esau and is destined for Divine destruction while Jacob's descendants pass through suffering with a view to cleansing and ultimate restoration—"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

As G Campbell Morgan said, "Edom is Esau enlarged into national life." In Obadiah we have a glimpse into the essential evil of Esau (pride) and its effect (violence) and end (judgement).<sup>5</sup> The writer of Hebrews characterizes Esau as "profane" from the Gk, *bebelos*, denoting men far from God. Esau typifies the common mind which is unreceptive to God (TDNT 1:605).

For those, like Jacob, who are possessed of a deep spiritual longing for God, there is reason to believe that God will fit them for fellowship even if through suffering. For those like Esau who despise that ideal, their arrogance will eventually bring them down in irreversible judgement. But, even the most profane man can be made spiritual if he is willing to humble himself and acknowledge that, "the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v 21).

A profane person is a person *against the temple*. A profane person is one who has no spiritual conception, who sets no value on a birthright, and will sell it for red pottage. A profane person has no consciousness of the eternal, no commerce with the spiritual, is proud of animal ability, and acts as though independent of God. Profanity never prays, never worships, never speaks of spiritual intercourse, has no traffic with the eternities, no commerce with heaven.

—G. Campbell Morgan, *Handbook For Bible Teachers and Preachers*, 140.

#### 5b Outline and Comments:

1c General Spiritual Indictment of Edom (1:1-9)

1d The messenger of judgement (1:1)

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<sup>5</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, *handbook for Bible Teachers and Preachers*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982. 139.

2d The root cause of judgement—pride (1:2-4)  
Obadiah makes it quite clear that the root problem for which Edom was ultimately judged by God was her stubborn arrogance (1:3). This also constitutes one of the continuing values of the book since we tend to regard the sin of pride as a lesser and more tolerable offense than God does. This indictment is general enough to be applied to nearly any nation, group of people, or individual at any time!

3d Contributing factors (5-9)  
Edom's pride was expressed in at least three areas:

1e Impregnable defenses (vv 3-5)

**NOTE>** In this section Obadiah expresses the extent of God's judgment by means of two vivid hypothetical situations (vv 5-6).

2e Network of alliances (v 7)

3e Reputation for wisdom (vv 8-9)

2c Edom's Obvious Offense—Treachery against their brothers (1:10-14)

1d The specific historic event—four possible scenarios:

1e The capture of Jerusalem by Shishak, (2Chr 12)

2e The defeat of Amaziah by Jehoash, (2Chr 25)

3e The overthrow of Jerusalem by Babylonians 587 BC (Ezek 35:3-5 // Ob 14 cf. 2Kgs 25:1-7; Psa 137:7)

4e The sack of Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabs during reign of Jehoram, @ 850 BC (2Chron 21:16-17)

2d The specific offense—seven condemning phrases:

1e “stood on the other side” (11a)

2e “cast lots for Jerusalem” (11b)

3e “gazed on the day of your brother” (12a)

4e “rejoiced over the children of Judah” (12b)

5e “spoken proudly in the day of distress” (12c)

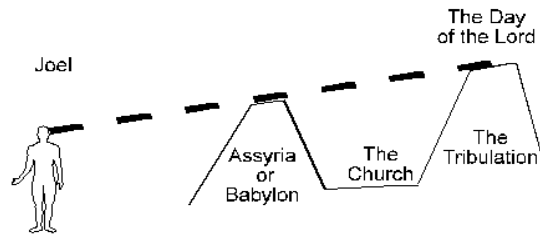
**NOTE>** So far all the offenses have primarily been *attitudes*. But these attitudes always result in actions.

6e “entered the gate of my people...laid hands on their substance” (13)

7e “stood at the crossroads to cut off...delivered up those...who remained” (14)

3c Time: Day of Yahweh (1:15-21)

**NOTE>** The Day of the Lord begins at the rapture of the church and extends through the tribulation and millennial eras. Particularly at the beginning of this time the Lord will pour out judgment on the nations for their rebellion against God and mistreatment of His people. It is a little confusing as you read the prophets to determine which part of their prophecy is going to be fulfilled in the near future and which will be fulfilled during the tribulation or the millennium. Perhaps the following drawing will show what the prophet saw and how the events are often separated in time. This concept was first set forth by Chrsyostum in the 4th Century.



**NOTE>** The “Day of the Lord” is a technical term used by OT prophets to designate a future time of cataclysmic judgment. Sometimes the term is associated with events in the prophet’s day but always there is an overriding reference to an even more intense, final judgment by God. A composite picture of this “day” can be seen by comparing the following texts (Isa 13:6, 9 10; Ezek 30:3ff; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:14-17; Mt 24:29-31; 2Pe 3:10). In summary, the following observations can be made:

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1d When all nations will be destroyed (1:15-16)

Obadiah, writing in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, projected himself into the future in vv 11-14 and described Edom’s treatment of Judah early in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. He warned the Edomites not to do what they eventually did because, “the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near.” The prophet meant that Edom would be *shamed* by her subjection to the Arameans and the Romans but ultimately they would be *exterminated* by Israel’s Messiah when He established His kingdom on earth (cf. Isa 63:1-6 the conqueror from Edom).

1e Their judgement will be just (15)

2e Their judgement will be appropriate (16)

2d When Israel will be restored (1:17-20)

During the Day of the Lord, God will restore Israel to the place of special blessing reserved for her through the centuries. Included among those future blessings, Israel will:

1e Be resettled in Canaan (17)

**NOTE>** Present Jewish efforts to regain and maintain lost territory will seem futile and puny when Christ presents it to Israel in the Day of the Lord. These are the same holdings promised to Solomon.

2e Be instrumental in Edom’s punishment (18)

3e Israelis living in the Negev will inherit the lands belonging to Edom.

1f Israelis residing in the western foothills will seize Philistine lands on the seacoast.

2f Benjamin will occupy Gilead in transjordan.

3f Returned Israeli exiles will occupy the territory from Zaraphath (near ancient Tyre) and southward.

4f Exiles from ancient Sepharad will move into the Negev (south country).

**NOTE**> Sepharad is probably, Sardis, capital of Lydia. Sardis was an important center of trade between the sea routes of the Aegean Sea and the interior land routes. For this reason, it is not unlikely that Jewish exile should be found there.

4e Be delivered forever from Edom's abuse (21)

6b Lasting Value of the Book

1c Pride deceives and leads to more sin.

2c Sin follows a downward path.

3c God will keep His word.

4c God will punish sin.

5c God will protect His own.

## 2. Joel – 835 BC

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Joel – name means “Jehovah is God” which really serves as a distillation of his message and is probably a testimony to the faith of his father Pethuel. We have no specific data regarding Joel or his family (12 men named Joel in OT). Most likely Joel lived and ministered in Jerusalem.
- 2c Since there are no dates given or kings named it is impossible to pinpoint the date of Joel’s writing. At least three views have been presented:
- 1d 9<sup>th</sup> Century (835 BC) – during the early part of Joash’s reign. These argue that Joel’s non-mention of Judah’s prominent enemies such as Syria, Assyria, or Babylon suggests early date and place his writing approximately 250 years before Judah’s exile.
- 2d Pre-exilic (many 6<sup>th</sup> Century dates are defended with little consensus).
- 3d Post-exilic – (around 400 BC). This position is argued by 20<sup>th</sup> Century German critical scholars who tend to date most biblical books as late as possible. They counter the 9<sup>th</sup> Century view arguing that Judah’s enemies are not mentioned since their incursions were forgotten history.

**NOTE**> A precise historical context is not critical to Joel’s message. A specific incident (locust invasion) occasioned this message which easily stands by itself.

### 2b Occasion for Writing

Locust plague – Early in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, BC the land of Judah was invaded by a devastating swarm of locusts which resulted in drought and fires compounding the people’s misery. This was the worst plague in their history and jeopardized every aspect of human life including the daily offerings in the temple. This calamity is seen as a warning which if unheeded would result in another form of invasion–military incursion. It is also seen as a forerunner of the immanent Day of the Lord. Joel’s message was intended to convince the people that this was nothing less than the hand of God calling them to repentance.

Judah was in a time of political and spiritual crisis when Joel ministered. About that time Jehu killed King Ahaziah (2Kgs 9:27-28) and 42 of his brothers (2Kgs 10:12-14). Athaliah, the king’s mother and the daughter of Baal worshiping Ahab, tried to assassinate all other heirs to the throne and seize power for herself. Without her knowledge, her grandson, Josiah, had been rescued by his aunt, the wife of Jehoida who arranged his coronation when he was 7 years old (2Kgs 11:1-12). During this time Judah was blessed with effective leadership because of the influence of godly Jehoida (2Kgs 12:2).

### 3b Message of Joel

The Day of the Lord – Joel’s message can really be reduced to this phrase. Whether the prophet speaks of a past calamity (locust plague), an immanent one (impending invasion), or an ultimate period of calamitous judgement; all encompass *the day of the Lord* in some sense of the term.

This book is an appeal of Jehovah to seek Him via repentance. As a result of this repentance would come an outpouring of material blessings followed by greater spiritual blessings. No other prophet quite so clearly predicts the coming of the Holy Spirit. A prediction graphically fulfilled, in part, in Jerusalem fifty days following Christ’s resurrection. The book naturally divides between these two themes of calling the nation to repentance (1:1-2-2:17) and the promise of blessings (2:18-3:21).

Joel is a *theocentric* book. Every dimension of its themes: the call to repentance, the locust plague, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the assurances of final victory, etc. are all direct acts of God. He is shown to be sovereign over creation and the nations, compassionate in forgiveness, both powerful and gracious in the Day of the Lord, and ever faithful to His word.

#### 4b Outline and Comments

##### 1c A Call to Repentance (1:1-2:32)

##### 1d The present Day of the Lord—locust plague (1:2-20)

##### 1e A devastation without precedent (1-4)

The plague Judah has experience is unprecedented and the completeness of its destructive force is expressed by four successive waves of locust invasion:

1f “the gnawer” –

2f the “locust” –

3f the “licker” –

4f the devourer” –

##### 2e A devastation with wide impact (5-12)

1f drunkards (5-7) –

2f priests (9) –

3f farmers and vine dressers (10-12) –

**NOTE**> in each of these cases, that which “sustains their lifestyle” can be removed in a moment!

##### 3e A devastation calling for repentance (13-18)

God’s purpose in punishing his people is always to bring about repentance so that he can replace wrath with favor (cf 2Cor 7:9-11).

1f a repentance led by the priests (13) –

2f a repentance participated in by the people (14-18) –

**NOTE**> the locust plague and other judgements were indicators of the judgements that will introduce the Day of the Lord (v 15). That day will begin with the darkness of divine judgements and great tribulation outlined in such passages as Ezek 38-39; Jer 30:11, Isa 26:21, and Rev 6-19. It will end with the brightness of Christ’s rule over Israel and the nations.



4e A devastation prompting intercession (19-20)

The prophet was moved to intercession by the awful conditions endured by his countrymen. The preacher becomes the intercessor representing all who were suffering under God's hand and begging for respite.

2d The Coming Day of Jehovah—invading army (2:1-32)

1e An unanticipated invasion (1-2a)

**NOTE>** The trumpet was a warning system to signal military invasions, festivals, national mourning, or the beginning of new month (Nu 10:9-10). In this case intended to stimulate fear because of the coming of the Day of the Lord

2e An unprecedented invasion (2b-11)

1f The invaders (2, 20)

1g their nature –

2g their identity –

2f The invasion (3-9)

1g devastating (3)

2g quick (4)

3g chaotic (5)

4g efficient (7-9)

3f the effect (6,10,11)

1g the people are terrorized (6)

2g the creation reflects terror (10)

3g the Lord mobilizes His army (11) –

3e An urgent response (2:12-17)

1f Analysis of true repentance (12,13a)

**NOTE>** Biblical repentance not primarily remorse or external displays of sorrow. It includes these but more importantly, it involves a basic change of mind regarding one's sin. The heart is critical since that is what God sees (1Sam 16:7).

• // Hosea who describes false repentance [no acknowledgment of sin] (6:1-2) and later, genuine repentance [acknowledge sin, confess, appeal to grace not works of penance] (14:1-2).

• ILL> Mt 3:8 re: Pharisees and Sadducees rebuked by Jn the B. "Bring forth fruits..."

• True repentance occurs when a man takes God's viewpoint re: his sin and forsakes it = turning to God!

• Order: remorse & sorrow → change of mind → evidenced by fasting, weeping mourning (2Cor 7:10f)

**QUESTION:** Why the dearth of tears, godly sorrow under ministry of Word today?

2f Incentives for true repentance (13b-14)

1g confidence in the character of God

2g confidence in the sovereignty of God

3g confidence in the covenant of God

3f Participation in true repentance (15-17)

1g urgent convocation – national fast (15)

2g total participation – old and young alike (16)

3g priestly inauguration – true function of priesthood (17a)

4g lofty motivation – God's reputation upheld (17b)

4e An answered prayer (2:18-32)

In the middle of this invasion by the Northern Armies, Israel will turn to God in repentance and faith. God will respond because of jealousy for His land and compassion for His people (v18 cf 1Pe 5:6-7).

1f Requested blessing—Deliverance (19-20)

1g from drought (19a)

2g from reproach (19b)

3g from invaders (20)

2f Unsolicited blessing—Messiah (21-27)

**NOTE>** The previous context details God's response to Israel's specific prayers. But the verses which follow outline God's compassionate "answer beyond the answer". Out of the terror and chaos of the tribulation God will bring Israel unimagined and unsolicited blessings in the personal ministry of her Messiah.

1g Material prosperity (22-26) – pastures, fruit trees, and vines will produce again. Timely rains will bring abundant harvests as God restores that which was lost in the judgments of the Tribulation.

2g Security (27)

**NOTE>** There is no security without the elimination of idolatry! This was Israel's fundamental problem *and ours!*

“For us to keep this first commandment would be, as Jesus said, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind (Mt 22:37); and to see all things from his point of view and do nothing without reference to him; to make his will our guide and his glory our goal; to put him first in thought, word and deed; in business and leisure; in friendships and career; in the use of our money, time and talents; at work and at home. No man has ever kept this commandment except Jesus of Nazareth.”

– (John Stott)

BUT grace teaches us to (Titus 2:11-13).

3g Holy Spirit (28-29) compare Acts 2:17-21

1h “afterward” –

2h “pour out my Spirit” –

3h “all flesh” –

4h “dreams and visions” –

4g God’s power unleashed (30-31) –

5g Salvation (32) –

2c A Call to Judgment (3:1-21) –

1d Judgment on the gentile nations (1-16a)

**NOTE>** When Christ returns to the earth at the close of the Tribulation era several events will happen quickly: [1] OT and Tribulation believers will be resurrected (Dan 12:2-3); [2] Surviving Israelites will repent and embrace Jesus as their Messiah (Zech 12:10-14); [3] Israelites scattered by Tribulation persecution will be re-gathered to Palestine (Jer 29:14); [4] Re-gathered Israel will be purged of unbelief (Ezek 20:34-38); and [5] Christ will judge the Gentile nations in preparation for the inauguration of His kingdom on earth (Isa 66:18; Mt 25:31-46).

1e the time (1)

2e the place (2a)

3e the basis (2b - 5)

4e the nature (4-8)

5e the occasion (9-16a)

**NOTE>** The single greatest provocation of God's wrath against the nations will be their final siege of Jerusalem. This invasion will be successful at first and cause great suffering for the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech 14:2). God's very purpose in calling the nations together is for judgment (Zech 14:3). The nations will stagger and fall as they vainly attempt to conquer Jerusalem (Zech 12:2-3). This will constitute the final battle of the war called "Armageddon".

2d Restoration of Israel (16b-21)

Christ's second coming to rule and reign on earth will be a terrifying experience for those who have persecuted and abused Israel in defiance of God. For Israel, however, it will be a time of comfort and consolation like never before (Zech 12:5-9; 14:3-5; Rev 19:19-20:3). Messiah's final deliverance of Israel will have the following effects:

1e Security (16b-17)

2e Prosperity (18-20)

3e Vengeance (21)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

1c The hand of God is seen in all events throughout history. He has a plan and a goal toward which He is guiding world events.

2c Disobedience always brings discipline

3c God is unfailingly gracious even in the midst of well-deserved judgement.

4c Believers ought to respond seriously to calamities.

5c We can trust God to avenge all wrongs regardless of time and severity.

**NOTE>** The day Joel describe here is one we also await **Acts 17:31** "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." **1Thes 5:2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

This final period will be unmarred by rebellion against God or his people. He will be supreme and rule unchallenged from his throne in Jerusalem (**Rev 21:1-3** Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God...cf **22:1-2** also).

### 3. Jonah 782

#### 1b Author and Date

##### 1c Jonah ben Amittai.

Jonah, whose name means “dove”, was from Gath-Hepher in the territory of Zebulun approximately 3 miles northeast of Nazareth in Galilee (2Kgs 14:25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher). Jonah is the best known of the minor prophets because of his exciting experience in the great fish. He ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II and prophesied the expansion of the empire under his administration (2Kgs 14:25). He no doubt enjoyed a measure of popularity in Israel because of these positive messages and thus was very reluctant to embark on a mission which stood to benefit Israel's cruel and wicked arch rival, Assyria. He appears to have been an ardent nationalist, pro-Israel and anti-foreign (at least anti-Assyrian). Both Hosea and Amos attacked Israel and Jeroboam with messages of doom for the religious syncretism and social injustice which accompanied their prosperity.

Did Jonah write this book? Many consider it unlikely since the contents are so critical of him. It reveals his hypocrisy, inconsistency, and his stubborn resistance of God's grace toward sinners. ANSWER: either a contrite Jonah chose to selflessly record these things later or a narrator penned it. It seems unlikely that a narrator would have been so intimately aware of the details of this story.

##### 2c The events recorded in Jonah took place sometime near 780 BC during the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (782-753 BC).

#### 2b Historical Background

While Israel was expanding and prospering under Jeroboam II, her already powerful northern neighbor, Assyria, was plagued with a measure of internal strife and provincial wars between 800 and 745 BC. In addition they were distracted by major war with the powerful nation, Urutu, near the Caspian Sea. These factors would have given the emerging power, Israel, a slight advantage which could only be spoiled by the blessings of Jehovah via his prophet Jonah. What appeared to Israel and her reluctant prophet as political suicide was seen by God as evangelistic opportunity. Authentic religion chooses God's view over man's view.

#### 3b Message of Jonah

The book of Jonah is unique among the prophets in that it does not contain a single message preached or spoken by the prophet with the exception of, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (3:4). It is rather a story about the prophet but that story was a powerful message for Israel and still is for us. If we cut through the “narrative incidentals” which tend to grab our attention (ship, storm, great fish, Nineveh, gourd, etc.) we discover what could be called the *Missionary Manual of the Old Testament*. No OT book captures the attitudes and actions of God toward the nations as concisely and powerfully as the book of Jonah. It is a scathing rebuke on Israel's narrow thinking. The message can be reduced to two points:

##### 1c God is a God of missionary compassion (4:11)

This point is articulated in the final verse of the book, “Should I not have pity on Nineveh?” This question interprets everything that has come before it. If Obadiah reveals God as being ready to judge the nations Jonah presents the flip side of that picture, that God is eager to extend His mercy in forgiveness. He is a God of *pity*.

2c Principle requirement of a missionary is obedience

God has ordained it such that His compassion and His plan to reclaim the lost must be incarnated— He chooses to use men and women to represent Him. The human tensions with this fact are powerfully expressed in Jonah’s responses to God’s missionary mandate and message. The obvious question posed by every thoughtful reader of this book is “Why did Jonah so steadfastly resist the missionary mandate and message?” Which of the following answers best fits the context of this book?

1d Jonah did not know God –

2d Jonah despised the Ninevites

The answer helps define the ultimate responsibility of the missionary. While it is a fundamental prerequisite that a missionary *know* God, it is his/her principle responsibility to *obey* Him. Missionaries cannot trust their desires, they must be driven by obedience to the sender!

The secret of the church’s comparative failure in missionary enterprise is not that we do not know God and His compassion. We do know Him. His love has been commended to us. We have felt its warmth, its fire. We know its victories in our own lives. Why, then, do we halt? For exactly the same reason which halted Jonah. Because we hate Nineveh. The Church does not want to see the world saved, does not want to see the heathen nations brought to Christ. She still speaks of her work as *foreign* missionary work; still describes men of other nationalities and other climates and other colors as *natives*, as *foreigners*; still adopts the attitude of supercilious indifference to them.

— G Campbell Morgan (145)

4b Outline and Comments

1c Jonah’s First Commission and Disobedience (1:1-16)

**NOTE**> Jonah fled “from the presence of the Lord” (twice in verse 3). Surely Jonah understood the impossibility of hiding from an all-seeing God. He probably reasoned that God only spoke to Israel through Israelite prophets in the land or in a covenant community in exile (i.e. Jeremiah in Egypt or Ezekiel and Daniel in Babylon). Thus if he could “relocate” far from Israel, or any community of Israelites, he would no longer hear the Word of the Lord.

1d God’s commission and the prophet’s reaction (1-3)

1e commission – God’s sovereign will

2e reaction – Jonah’s opposition to it (1 man vs. sovereign God!)

2d The storm at sea (4-5)

1e Divine initiative (4)

2e pagan response (5a, 6-8, 10-11, 13-16)

List as many of the sailor’s responses as you can find in the context: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE>** It is significant to notice the fact that the sailors fear progressed from fear of a storm to fear of the Lord: [1] “the mariners were afraid (v 5), [2] “the men were exceedingly afraid” (v 10); and, [3] “the men feared the Lord exceedingly” (v 16).

3e prophet’s response (5b, 9, 12)

1f deep sleep

2f damaging admission

3f defiant answer

4e God’s response (15b, 17)

1f calmed the storm

2f created an instrument of deliverance

2c Jonah’s Rescue and Deliverance (1:17- 2:10)

1d The prophet’s prayer (1:17-2:9)

1e situation –

2e significance –

1f it gives reason for the “partial change of heart” which made Jonah willing to obey 2<sup>nd</sup> time

2f it explains Jonah’s lasting thankfulness for God’s deliverance and provides a point of contrast making his attitude toward Nineveh all the more poignant—In this rescue God demonstrates to Jonah the kind of mercy He will later extend to the prophet’s enemies.

3f it reveals the nature of Jonah’s existence inside the fish—He is thinking, learning, and alert rather than unconscious and in agony as demonstrated by his ability to compose this psalm.



4f it supports the major theme of the book—that Jehovah is a merciful God, a God of love who desires to forgive rather than punish (4:2). “Through the psalm the wayward Jonah confesses Yahweh’s undeserved rescue. In contrast to the psalm, he cannot abide Yahweh’s undeserved rescue of the Ninevites. The psalm provides the focal statement of Yahweh’s concern for individuals in need of favor (cf. 4:11).”<sup>6</sup>

3e confession – an acknowledgment of his desperate circumstances

4e petition – an acknowledgment of God’s mercy

2d Providential deliverance (2:10)

Jonah deserved death not deliverance. In this gracious deliverance Jonah was forced to recognize God’s compassion and praise Him for it. He also had to recognize his reliance on Yahweh alone (cf. **2Cor 1:9-10** “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us”).

3c Jonah’s Second Commission and Delinquency (3:1-10)

**NOTE**> Chapter 3 is actually the climax of this narrative since it describes the greatest miracle of all.

“Heretofore the emphasis has been upon the prophet’s preparation; tremendous as the miracle of Jonah’s preservation in the sea monster has been, it is more a preface than a conclusion. Now the veil is drawn aside, and something of the strange purpose of the Almighty in dealing with his prophet is revealed. If the miracle of the fish is great, that of this chapter is greater. For here is the record of nothing less than the greatest mass conversion in history. Though generalizations must always be used with caution, we may say that never again has the world seen anything quite like the result of Jonah’s preaching in Nineveh.”  
(Gabelin, *Four Minor Prophets*, 95)

1d The commission renewed (1-2)

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<sup>6</sup>These 4 observations come from Stuart, 473.

2d Preaching and repentance (3-9)

3d Gracious forgiveness (10)

PROBLEM : God repenting (1Sam 15:11,29; Psa 110:4; Num 23:19, etc). Every text declaring that God does not “repent” affirms that His word is utterly reliable, which is also true in those texts in which He is represented as repenting—so as to be true to His word to forgive repentant sinners! This is the anticipated response of an unchanging God! **Jer18:7-8** The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. **Ezek 33:19** "But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it.

SOLUTION: The ultimate solution to problem of God repenting regarding judgment on sin is not seen in observing man’s response but in seeing that God resolves to take the punishment of that evil upon Himself!

“Whenever we read that God repented, and we study the context, we shall find such statement either followed or preceded by a declaration of the cause, and the cause is always man’s repentance. So that when a man turns from or repents of his wickedness, God turns from His purpose of judgment, which in itself was love-inspired.”

-- G. Campbell Morgan (144)

4c Jonah’s Displeasure and Rebuke (4:1-11)

1d The prophet’s displeasure (1-8)

- vs 1 – A world in which God forgives Israel’s enemies is not a world Jonah wishes to live in!
- that Jonah was angry goes without question. The bigger question is, “Do you have any right to be angry?”
- God made this plant grow up in single day (“next day” v 7 and “in a night” v 10) –Jonah would see this as a sovereign and gracious gift from God to Him. = 2<sup>nd</sup> merciful rescue of Jonah the rebel!—very pleased!
- What makes Jonah angry? [1] pagan’s prosperity, [2] personal misery

2d The Lord’s rebuke (9-11) –

God’s rebuke came in a series of sharp contrasts between His compassion and Jonah’s self-centered thinking:

You love your gourd	I love Nineveh
You didn’t make the gourd	I made the Ninevites
Short-lived	Eternal creation
the gourd was worth little – only a plant	the Ninevites are significant – important city of enormous population

5b Lasting Value of the Book

- 1c The book of Jonah demonstrates a wonderful blend between the sovereignty and mercy of God.
  
- 2c National sin required national repentance
  
- 3c It is futile to run from a sovereign and omniscient God (cf Psa 139:7-11).
  
- 4c God can overrule even our best attempts to frustrate His will (Psa 115:3; Job 42:1).
  
- 5c God is able to make all things in His servants' lives work for their good and His glory (cf Rms 8:28).
  
- 6c God is not delighted with servants who simply speak His words, but those who think His thoughts.
  
- 7c God's infinite concern for souls is demonstrated in contrast to man's passion for the material.

Every hearer / reader may have some Jonah in him or her. All need to reflect on the questions God asks, including the final, specific, "Should I not spare Nineveh?" (4:11). Anyone who replies "why is that such an important question?" has not understood the message. anyone who replies "No!" has not believed it.

– Douglas Stuart (435)

#### 4. Amos 760

##### 1b Author and Date

1c “neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet” (7:14)

2c “sheep breeder and tender of sycamore fruit” (1:1; 7:14)

**NOTE**> Amos was a shepherd who supplemented his income by tending sycamore fruit. This was a poor kind of fruit eaten by poorer people. However, Amos’s occupation as a tender of fig trees may suggest that he was a specialist whose work took him to points all over Israel and Judah. Such specialists knew how to split figs early in the ripening process so that they would produce a sweeter, softer fruit. Specialist or not, he was a rustic, accustomed to pastoral life and his figures of speech and mental images drawn from that background and are among the most vivid in Scripture.

3c “of Tekoa” (1:1)

4c Amos is first of the writing prophets who identifies the time of his writing

##### 2b Historical Background (1:1)

1c Days of Uzziah, King of Judah (767-739 BC)

2c Days of Jeroboam King of Israel (786-746 BC)

From their beginning Israel was hemmed in by Syria and suffered frequent border raids making times hard. About a decade before Jeroboam II, the Assyrian king, Adad-Nirari III, defeated Syria and then Assyria began to experience its own decline. This gave Israel an opportunity for expansion and prosperity and soon Israel’s borders equaled those of Solomon’s time (2Kgs 14:23-29). Wealth and leisure became possible, but at great expense. Injustice ruled as did arrogance, moral decay, oppression of the poor, and empty formalism in religion (symbolized by idolatrous golden calf worship in Bethel—the very place God sent Amos to prophesy judgement). The twin themes of social injustice and religious formalism make the book very relevant today.

3c Two years before the earthquake

##### 3b Message of Amos

This book has the unique distinction of being written by one who claimed to be a member of the untrained laity as opposed to a recognized prophet. The book is nevertheless rich in preaching style and theological content

As to content, Amos builds a solid case for the universal government of God. Interestingly, the voice of God emanates from Jerusalem (1:2) but is directed toward Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel. God is sovereign over all nations and His governing principles are consistently applied. Amos leaves his reader with several timeless truths regarding God’s universal government:

- 1c God's own character is the standard for His judgment of the nations.
- 2c In God's government light creates responsibility
- 3c The goal of God's government is always to forgive, restore, and bless
- 4c In God's government judgment always includes the element of mercy
- 5c In God's government to spurn mercy is to court judgment

4b Outline and Comments<sup>7</sup>

**NOTE**> The outline we are using follows the topical flow but the book could easily be divided according to the various literary devices used. Following this method Baxter breaks the book down as follows:

**EIGHT "BURDENS"<sup>8</sup> (1-2)**

Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel  
Key phrase: "for three transgressions and for four"

**THREE SERMONS (3-6)**

Judgment deserved (3:1-10); Judgment decreed (3:1-15)  
Judgment deserved (4:1-11); Judgment decreed (4:12-13)  
Judgment deserved (5:1-15); Judgment decreed (5:16-4:13)  
Key phrase: "Hear this word...therefore"

**FIVE "VISIONS" (7-9)**

Grasshoppers, Fire, Plumb line, Summer Fruit, God over the Altar  
Key phrase: "Thus the Lord God showed me"  
Note the final promise to Israel (9:11-15)

1c The Nations Will Be Punished (1:3-2:5)

Amos prophesied during an economically prosperous but morally and spiritually decadent era in Israel. His reference to Judah in his introduction probably serves to capture the readership of the people most likely to benefit from these messages. Israel itself would have little time or interest in these oracles preached by a "southerner" but, given their fulfillment, Judah's interest may well be aroused and they would do well to heed the warnings.

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<sup>7</sup>Portions of this outline adapted from J. Wash Watts, *Old Testament Teaching, An Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Nashville: Broadman Press) 1967. pp 246-247

<sup>8</sup>Amos does not use the term "burden" here but it is frequently used by the prophets (27 times) in contexts that are threatening in nature as these are these. The word commonly used is *massa* which is translated either "oracle" or "burden".

1d Syria (Damascus), for cruelty in war, by war and captivity (1:3-5)

Crime: “threshing Gilead” picture of savagery—as if they were dragging a sharp iron-toothed threshing machine over helpless people. describing the cruelty and barbarism of the Aramean’s frequent attacks on Gilead (v 13 and 2Kgs 8:12).

2d Philistia (Gaza), for slave-trading, by war and complete destruction (1:6-8)

Crime: slave trading – probably raided small border towns in Judah and sold captives to Edom

3d Phoenicia (Tyre), for slave-trading, by war (1:9-10)

Crime: Follows Philistia because guilty of same crime—slave trading.

4d Edom, for unbrotherly hatred, by war (1:11-12) – With Edom, Amos completes 4 points of compass

Crime: long history of violent oppression of Israel from days of Saul right up to Amos’ time (1Sam 14:47; 2Sam 8:12-14; 1Kgs 11:14-25; 2Kgs 8:20-21; 2Kgs 14:7-10, 22)

5d Ammon, for savage cruelty, by war and captivity of rulers (1:13-15) – Ammon and Moab = results of Lot’s incestuous relationship (Gen 19:30-38)

Crime: sadistic cruelty (ripping pregnant women in Gilead) for purpose of expanding territory.

6d Moab, for sacrilege, by war and destruction of rulers (2:1-3) – Indictment follows “brother—Ammon”

Crime: degrading treatment – violation of “codes of war” (// Geneva Convention, 1864) requiring respect for corpse of royal enemy (ILL 2Kgs 9:34 Jehu ordered decent burial for Jezebel, but dogs got to her first!)

7d Judah, for rejection of the Law of Yahweh, by war (2:4-5)

Crime: very unique from previous—failure to keep Yahweh’s laws, esp. the “Great Shema”! (Dt 6:4-5 cf Joel 2:27). This is a crime only covenant people could commit (Dt 4:5).

2c Israel is singled out for particular judgment (2:6-4:13)

**NOTE>** this indictment begins with same formula, “For three transgressions and for four” (v 6), but then the pattern shifts to a longer, more specific indictment which involves the 1<sup>st</sup> person rather than 3<sup>rd</sup> (v 10). The phrase, “declares the LORD” (2:11,16; 3:10,13,15; 4:3,5-6,8-11; 6:8,14; 8:3,9,11; 9:7-8,12,13) in these 21 instances represents a Hebrew word with particular force. It marks, with greater power than any other word in the language, the fact that the accompanying prophecy is the very word of Yahweh. There are various other ordinary words used to state this fact. These may be observed at many other places in Amos, as in 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1,4,6). This one is special It may be impossible to grasp this word fully in our language. Probably the most distinctive rendering is, *This is the express utterance of Yahweh.*

1d Because of moral corruption—like the Ammorites (2:6-16)

The crimes listed here are all social injustices pervasive within Israel as opposed to “international crimes” of other 6.

2d Because of abusing God’s favor (3:1-8)

This oracle, as introduced in vv 1-2 stresses God’s covenant responsibility—He must punish Israel! This was a concept which the average Israelite of Amos’ time apparently found hard to understand (cf. 5:18-20). “God should protect and benefit his nation at all times, should he not?” “Why would a God want to harm his own people who worshiped him regularly?” (5:21-23). Much of Amos’ ministry was devoted to dispelling this folly.

3d Because of oppression and violence (3:9-12)

4d Because of the illegal altars of Bethel (3:13-14)

5d Because of tainted wealth (3:15)

6d Because of corrupt women (4:1-3)

7d Because of self-gratifying worship (4:4-5)

Amos unmasked their true love—NOT God and neighbor as covenant demands (Dt 6:5; Lev 19:18) but a system which satisfies their conscience enabling them to engage in further sin. They loved ritual rather than God.

**Jer 9:24** But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

**1Sa 15:22** Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

**Mic 6:8** He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

8d Because of failure to heed preceding chastisements (4:6–11)

Conclusion: *"Prepare to Meet Your God, O Israel"* (4:12-13)

3c The House of Israel Will Be Destroyed by Captivity (5:1-6:14)

Introduction: She will fall to rise no more (5:1-3)

1d Because of stubborn refusals to seek Yahweh (5:4-17)

**NOTE>** Bethel, Gilgal Beersheba were all sites of great religious-historical significance from Israel's past. **Bethel** named by Jacob (Gen 28:19) was made a worship center by Jeroboam I (931-910 BC - 1Kgs 12:26-33); **Gilgal** was Israel's first settlement during the conquest and it became a worship center since Joshua circumcised the conquest generation there (Jos 5:2-12); **Beersheba** was associated with Abraham (Gen 22:19), Isaac (Gen 26:23), and Jacob (Gen 46:1-5), and became a popular pilgrimage for Northerners even though located in southern Judah. What Amos is saying is, "seek God, not these "Meccas"!

2d Because of hypocritical, self-made religion (5:18-27)

**NOTE>** This paragraph expresses the real nature of the Day of Yahweh for those who rebel against God (vv 18-20). It includes a Divine response to the twin cults of *injustice* (21-24), and *idolatry* (25-26), followed by a just judgment—exile! (27).



Amos revealed that the Day of Yahweh—in the contemporaneous popular hope, a day of deliverance from Israel’s enemies—would instead be a day in which Israel would be conquered and exiled by and among its enemies. Why should Yahweh punish rather than rescue his people? Because they were faithful to him only selectively....Intermittent, occasional righteousness is really no righteousness at all....  
 – Douglas Stuart (356)

3d Because of ungodly, sensual, selfish ease (6:1-14)

Both Jerusalem and Samaria were political capitals and centers of obvious wealth and power which had abandoned their original covenant values. Amos corrects their arrogant delusion of self-importance, “you’re no better than other pagans!” Two sins characterized Israel’s decadence: *occult* and *laziness*. The rich were able to avoid work because of wealth.

4c Israel’s Chastisement Will Lead to Restoration Through the Davidic Line—5 VISIONS (7:1-9:15)

1d **Vision of the locusts:** Yahweh will spare Jacob’s latter growth [future generations] (7:1-3)

2d **Vision of the fire:** Yahweh will spare Jacob’s portion [promised land] (7:4-6)

In the first case Amos had begged for *forgiveness* as well as a stay of the sentence. God granted the stay only. In this case he merely requests the stay of judgment.

3d **Vision of the plumb line:** Yahweh will not spare the present Israel (7:7-9)

A plumb line is a builder’s tool for determining that a wall is straight up and down. In this case it was not for God’s information but for *revelation*.

“I will not pass by them any more.” In this vision God does not wait for the prophet’s response but takes the initiative to relate the outcome. There would be no need to petition for mercy since, “I am set to pass through” (cf 8:2 and 5:17). If mercy is expressed in God’s *passing over*, judgement is expressed in God’s *passing thru*.

4d Amaziah’s reaction and Amos’ response (7:10-17)

1e Amaziah was loyal to the king but not to God -- why might this be?

2e Amaziah accused Amos of being “hireling” prophet and properly assessed Bethel as belonging to the king and not God’s domain.

3e Amos’ response is similar to John the Baptist’s— “He must increase, I must decrease” listen to Him!

5d **Vision of the summer fruit:** Yahweh will bring the nation of Israel to an end (8:1-14)

Summer fruit marks the end of the fruit season. Therefore, “the end is come” says predicted judgment is at hand. The greedy “worshippers” (v 5) were anxious for Sabbath to end so they could resume their dishonest businesses.

Ironically, their distress would be compounded by a “famine” of the same Word they lived well without in their “better days” (v 11).

One of the great lessons of the prophets and of history is that back of a nation's decay in moral, social, and political life there is first a decay in its religious life. Doctrinal decay leads inevitably to decay in all phases of life. This principle was declared when the psalmist said, "The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, even all the nations that forget God" (Psa 9:17).

– Homer Hailey (122)

6d **Vision from the altar:** Yahweh will destroy sinners in Israel (9:1-10)

Destruction of temple and the altar symbolized the removal of the sanctuary as a place of escape from judgment. To seize the horns of the altar was to find seek the final and best place of mercy (1Kgs 1:50-51; 2:28). If the altar was destroyed, there remained no place of mercy! This vision does not add detail to Israel's judgment as much as it underscores its certainty and identifies the judge.

• (7) God brought Israel from Egypt. Likewise, He brought Philistines from Caphtor (Crete), and the Syrians from Kir (unknown location). God directs all nations building them up and casting them down!

7d Yahweh will raise up the tabernacle of David (9:11-15)

To raise up David's tabernacle (tent or hut) implies that it had fallen into decay. The rule of David's house ended for Israel when they abandoned the theocracy in 931 BC. For Judah it ended at the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC (Jer 22:24-30). To repair this house would be to restore the former glory of the "united monarchy".

5b Lasting Value of the Book

1c God uses insignificant people to accomplish significant tasks (Amos = uneducated, untrained and possibly poor) cf.

2c Yahweh still holds the balances of justice and His standards have not changed

3c If the measure of light is the measure of accountability then the church of Jesus Christ is very accountable (cf. 1Pe 4:17).

4c God fully and justly expects that his attributes will be reflected in our daily living.

5c No culture can effectively "change the rules" because God ultimately RULES!

## 5. Hosea 750

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c This author's name is identical with *Hoshea*, the last king of Israel and with *Joshua*, the successor of Moses. The Greek equivalent of this Hebrew name is *Jesus*. The name, in all its forms, means "deliverance" or "salvation". All we know of this author is found in this writing.
- 2c Hosea was apparently a citizen of the Northern Kingdom since he seems quite familiar with places and events in that region. Furthermore, he refers to Israel's king as, "our king" (7:5).
- 3c Hosea's ministry spans the years from 760 - 715 BC making him contemporary with Amos, Isaiah and Micah.

### 2b Historical Background (2Kgs 14:23 - 18:8 and 2Chron 26:1 - 29:11)

#### 1c Religious Apostasy

- 1d By the time Hosea begins his ministry apostasy in Israel had become even more pronounced than it had been in Amos's time. Hosea's indictment can be reduced to one word, "whoredom." Israel had done worse than adultery, she had prostituted herself before the baalim of the land for hire (2:12-13). There was a dearth of spiritual knowledge (4:6; 5:4) and any acknowledgment of Yahweh was mere lip service as they paid real homage to Baal. This was the sin that provoked Hosea's most stinging rebukes (4:11-13; 8:4; 9:10; 10:1-3; 13:1,2).
- 2d These conditions had their roots in the calf worship introduced by Jeroboam I and the Baal worship promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. But the priests were equally culpable (4:6-9; 5:1; 6:9).

#### 2c Moral Degeneration

The national ethic was exactly opposite of what God required. The people were collectively guilty of swearing, breaking faith, murder, stealing, committing adultery, deceit, lying, drunkenness, dishonesty in business, and other abominations against Yahweh (4:2, 11, 12, 18; 6:8-9; 10:4; 13:1-2; etc.).

#### 3c Political Upheaval

##### 1d Violence and intrigue in the palace

The time from Jeroboam II's death until the Assyrian captivity was marked by political conniving, intrigue, murder, treachery, anarchy and rebellion (see 2Kgs 15-17). God was completely removed from their thinking and they increasingly tasted the fruit of their paganism.

##### 2d Contributing factors

- 1e Rebellion against all constituted authority resulting in violence (7:1-7; 8:4; 13:10)
- 2e Dependence on human alliances rather than God (5:13; 7:11-13; 10:13; 14:3)
- 3e These resulted from the corruption of priests and prophets and a general denigration of worship.

##### 3d Summary

At the beginning of Hosea's ministry, Israel was experiencing great prosperity (see intro to Amos). Jeroboam II reigned over more territory than Israel possessed since the kingdom was divided in 931 BC. However, Jeroboam's death in 753 BC introduced an era of steady deterioration in wealth, power, and whatever shred of spirituality they had possessed. When the cup of God's wrath became full, judgment fell on Israel. In 722 BC Sargon II, king of Assyria conquered Israel and spread them around their kingdom.

### 3b Message of Hosea

[Hosea] saw to the heart of the great subjects of which he treated, and he did so because in his training for the prophetic ministry his own heart was wrung with anguish. He who has much to teach must suffer much; and he alone can speak of the deepest things in the economy of God who has sooner or later entered into fellowship with the suffering of God.

– G. Campbell Morgan (123)

1c Summary of Hosea's message: The message of Hosea can be reduced to the three key words in the following statements:

1d Sin against love is the most monstrous sin of all.

2d Those who comprehend the abhorrence of sin are best positioned to appreciate the inevitability of judgment and therefore savor the delightfulness of God's mercy in salvation.

3d Hosea's greatest message is certainly that of the power, wonder, triumph and magnificence of redeeming love that works finally for our salvation.

2c Distinctives of Hosea's message

1d Divine Love – Hosea, like each of the prophets, reveals certain aspects of God's character, but one stands out:

1e Monotheism –

2e Omnipotence –

3e Righteousness –

4e Love –

2d Covenant Faithfulness

4b Outline and Comments<sup>9</sup>

1c Yahweh's Example: Applications to Hosea's Children and Wife (1:1 - 3:5)

1d Prophetic relevance of the names of Hosea's children (1:1-9)

Introduction: Yahweh leads Hosea to chose a wife from his apostate culture (1:1)

**NOTE**> Hosea's marriage to Gomer presents a problem to interpreters. Three interpretations

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<sup>9</sup>Portions of this outline adapted from J. Wash Watts, *Old Testament Teaching, An Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Nashville: Broadman Press) 1967. pp 254-257.

have been suggested:

[1] Allegorical Interpretation – Advocated by John Calvin and others who interpret “wife of whoredom” as though she were a prostitute and assume that God would not lead his prophet into such a contemptible relationship. However, allegorizing does not relieve the moral difficulty.

[2] Literal Interpretation - wife unchaste before marriage – These interpret “wife of whoredom” like Calvin but believe the circumstance was real not allegorical. They consider Hosea an exceptional case.

[3] Literal Interpretation - wife chaste before marriage – These interpret “wife of whoredom” as a woman belonging to a generation of idolatrous and spiritually adulterous people and even sharing their debauched view of morality but yet a virgin at the time of her marriage to Hosea.

This third view resolves the moral dilemma and provides an interpretation consistent with the immediate context (1:2a) with the contrast, “by departing from the Lord” (1:2b). It also enables the reader to see the woman of chapters 1 and 2 as identical to the one in chapter 3. Furthermore, it should be noted that Gomer’s first child is specifically identified as Hosea’s (1:3) but the other two are not (1:6 and 1:8). Therefore his 1<sup>st</sup> child was not a “child of harlotry and Gomer was not a wife of harlotry at that time. Also, the parallel breaks down if Gomer is regarded as a harlot at the point of her marriage to Hosea since Israel was not in spiritual harlotry at the point of her marriage to Yahweh. “The Land (Israel) committed great harlotry in departing from Jehovah” as did Gomer commit great harlotry in departing from Hosea.

1e Lesson from Jezreel – no continued mercy for those guilty of bloodshed (1:3-5)

The name, Jezreel, means “I will scatter (sow)”. God would “scatter” the people from him. The land of Jezreel (Plain of Esdraelon extending from the Mediterranean Sea near Carmel to the Jordan River), was the place where Jehu (841-814 BC) was swept to power in tide of bloodshed. Jehu’s extermination of Ahab’s household was ordained by God (2Kgs 9:1-10) but he and descendants “overplayed their hand.” Their zeal for bloodshed knew no bounds and Jehu’s personal ambition overshadowed his regard for Divine commission.

2e Lesson from Lo-ruhamah – no mercy at all for Israel but eventual mercy for Judah (1:6-7)

Lo-ruhamah means “no mercy” or “not pitied”. In other words, no forgiveness was to be granted. This is a terrifying prophecy!

3e Lesson from Lo-ammi – no mercy at present for Israel (1:8-9)

Lo-ammi means, “not my people” and speaks of God’s disassociation with Israel (annulment of the covenant) and of the prophet’s personal realization that this was not his child.

2d Prophecy of a future marriage between Israel and Yahweh in perpetual faithfulness (1:10 - 2:23)

Introduction: Assurance of a glorious future for Israel (1:10-2:1)

The harsh words of vv 1-9 were well deserved BUT at no time does God utterly “cast aside his people whom he foreknew” (Rms 11:1-2). The kingdom of Israel, as known in history, is forever obliterated but God’s intention is to honor his promises to Abraham and his seed:

[1] \_\_\_\_\_ (1:10a cf. Gen 13:16)

[2] \_\_\_\_\_ (1:10b) some day the nation will cease their rebellion and embrace Yahweh. This will involve an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as their proper Messiah (Zech 12:10; 13:1).

[3] \_\_\_\_\_ (1:11a) as evidence of God’s restored favor. This will be divinely orchestrated not politically inspired.

[4] \_\_\_\_\_ (1:11b) the nation will eventually embrace Christ as Messiah (cf 3:5) and worship him (Zech 8:18-23) and Jezreel will become a place of celebration rather than judgment.

[5] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:1)

**NOTE>** God’s judgement is always designed to bring his children back to himself so he can bless them!

1e Yahweh’s chastening love will force Israel to recognize her folly (2:2-13)

Israel’s rebellion necessitates 7 disciplines:

[1] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:3)

[2] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:4-5)

[3] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:6-7)

[4] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:8-9)

[5] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:10)

[6] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:11)

[7] \_\_\_\_\_ (2:13)

2e Yahweh’s redeeming love will renew and deepen Israel’s love for Him (2:14-20)

3e Yahweh’s perfecting love will abundantly bless Israel in Jezreel (2:21-23)

3d Expectation that the prophet will emulate Yahweh’s example (3:1-5)

Israel’s entire history is summarized in these five verses. When viewed in light of her past and present, God’s love for her is surprising, unfathomable, and overwhelming. Acting out a parable of God’s love for Israel does not make the command easy for the betrayed prophet but grace received issues in grace given.

1e Through love that remains loyal despite betrayal (3:1a)

2e Through love that remains loyal despite adultery (3:1b)

3e Through love that remains loyal despite prostitution (3:1c)

4e Through redemption of the unfaithful one from slavery (3:2)

Apart from Hosea, Gomer had no hope just as apart from Jesus Christ no sinner has hope (Eph 2:12). God's love has provided the ransom price to purchase any sinner from the slave market of sin (1Jn 2:2).

5e Through prevention of the unfaithful one from relapse (3:3a)

Restoration, though gracious, was not without requirements. Gomer was instructed to abandon her wanton ways and give herself to no man. Likewise, Hosea promised his fidelity to her and in a very similar way God is jealous of his wife and faithful to his covenant.

6e Through persuasion of the unfaithful one to reconciliation (3:3b-4)

Persuasion in form of *temporary* and *disciplinary* period of time which is *prophetic* in nature. God promises to withhold sacrifices from Israel. Thus there has been no temple in Jerusalem for over 1900 years and God's glorious presence has been absent for over 2500 yrs (Ezek 10-11 record its departure). The destruction of genealogical records has prohibited any Jew from serving as high priest. So, without temple, priest, or God, there has been no possibility of sacrifice—that which was abused was removed!

7e Through reconciliation by request and respect (3:5)

The despised, degraded nation has a glorious future! They will again seek God and David—in the person of his more glorious descendent, Jesus Christ.

2c Yahweh's Controversy: A Complaint That Israel's Iniquity Grows Worse and Worse (4:1-7:16)

The scene changes from a broken home (Hosea and Gomer disappear from view) to a courtroom in which God issued legal charges against the defendant, Israel.

Introduction: The land is full of iniquity (4:1-5)

Summary of charges: "no truth, mercy, or knowledge of God in the land"

[1] truth or faithfulness -

[2] mercy or kindness -

[3] knowledge of God -

1d Israel has rejected the law of God (4:6-10)

2d Israel practices idolatry (4:11-14)

3d Israel is committed to shameful living (4:15-19)

4d Israel has embraced whoredom (5:1-7)

5d Israel has chosen man's way over God's way (5:8-15)

6d Israel's (Ephraim's) goodness is short-lived at best (6:1-11)

7d Yahweh's efforts to heal reveal more and more iniquity (7:1-16)

multiple analogies reflecting the stupidity of Israel

1e

2e

3e

4e

5e

6e

7e

8e



3c Yahweh's Warning: Terrible Chastisements are Coming (8:1-10:15)

Introduction: Warning of impending judgment (8:1)

- announcement of Assyrian invasion swooping like eagle to carry off Israel

1d Prophecy of invasion (8:2-7)

2d Prophecy of captivity (8:8-14)

3d Prophecy of fruitlessness in the field (9:1-9)

4d Prophecy of fruitlessness in the home (9:10-17)

5d Prophecy of ineffective leadership (10:1-3)

6d Prophecy of idolatry gone sour (10:4-8)

7d Prophecy of terrible chastening in captivity (10:9-15)

4c Yahweh's Debate: Decisions Resulting in God's Intervention on Behalf of Israel (11:1-14:8)

- 1d Decision concerning captivity (11:1-7)
  - 1e Ephraim has continually spurned my love (11:1-4)
  - 2e Therefore I will send him into captivity in Assyria (11:5-7)
- 2d Decision concerning restoration (11:8-11)
  - 1e I cannot bear to cast off Ephraim entirely (11:8)
  - 2e Therefore, I will restore a remnant (11:9-11)
- 3d Decision concerning future dealings (11:12-12:6)
  - 1e Ephraim continues to multiply lies (11:12-12:2)
  - 2e Therefore, I will entreat him like Jacob (12:3-6)
- 4d Decision concerning the latter days (12:7-13)
  - 1e Ephraim has become a "Canaanite" (12:7-8)
  - 2e Therefore, I will I will judge him for crass ingratitude (12:9-14)
- 5d Decision concerning future chastening (13:1-8)
  - 1e Ephraim's idolatry renders him guilty of his own destruction (13:1-3)
  - 2e Therefore, I will stalk him like a ravenous beast (13:4-8)
- 6d Decision to redeem Israel (13:9-14)
  - 1e Future Israel's only hope is God but his life is threatened (13:9-13)
  - 2e Therefore, I will destroy death before it destroys him (13:14)
- 7d Decision to bless the remnant in Israel (13:15-14:8)
  - 1e Israel will be made a desolation (13:15-16)
  - 2e Therefore, I decree restoration of a believing remnant (14:1-8)

5c Conclusion: A Challenge to Understanding (14:9)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

**NOTE>** The message and application of this book, though written to a nation, cannot be applied to any particular nation today. It is written to God's specially redeemed people (Israel) and therefore must be received by God's specially redeemed people today, namely His believing church.

1c We best understand the heart of God and the awfulness of our sin when our hearts are wrung by the agonies of betrayal.

2c To presume on God's mercy or inattention is to court inevitable judgement.

3c God's kind of love survives the most obscene assaults—"love endures all things...never fails" (1Cor 13:7,8).

4c Sin against love (ingratitude) is the most monstrous sin of all.

5c We will not revel in the wonder of our salvation until we comprehend the horrendous nature and pervasiveness of our sin.

6c The power, wonder, triumph and magnificence of redeeming love that works finally for our salvation is certainly the greatest theme of Scripture

## 6. Micah 735

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Micah is identified as the author in 1:1.
  - 1d Name means, “who is like Yahweh?” The fact that this rhetorical question was prominent in the prophet’s thinking and message is apparent from 7:18a “Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?”
  - 2d From Moresheth-gath (1:1, 14) about 17 miles southwest of Jerusalem in Judean foothills overlooking the Philistine settlement of Gath.
  - 3d Nothing is known regarding Micah’s occupation and it matters little since his credentials are entirely spiritual (3:8). He appears to combine Amos’ passion for justice and Hosea’s heart for love.
- 2c Time of Micah’s ministry is identified in the first sentence and by other indications through the book:
  - 1d Omission of Uzziah indicates he began about the time of Isaiah (cf. Isa 6:10)
  - 2d Absence of any mention of Samaria or Israel after chapter one indicates Micah’s ministry continued after 722 BC.
  - 3d Silence regarding Hezekiah’s reforms suggests he did not continue into his best days

### 2b Historical Background

The prosperous era of Uzziah was over (767-739 BC). During his time the Aramean state of Damascus had been crippled by Assyria who was also weakened by internal conflict. Seizing the opportunity Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah, greatly expanded their borders and their wealth. Jotham succeeded Uzziah and during his reign Assyria reasserted its power under their Napoleonic Tiglath-pileser III. Both Damascus and Israel became Assyrian tributaries and were eventually swallowed by that empire. Hezekiah attempted to gain independence from Assyria and suffered both economic and territorial reprisals but maintained his throne.

Economic prosperity during this time fostered a spirit of selfish materialism, a denigration of religion, and a virtual disintegration of moral values both personally and socially. Micah’s role became one of religious commentator in Jerusalem identifying the nation’s apostasy and calling them back to their covenant relationship with Yahweh. As the Amos of the Southern Kingdom, Micah attacked the leaders for abandoning theocratic standards for material advantage.

It is possible that Hezekiah’s reform was the result of Micah’s blunt and confrontational ministry. But Judah seems only to have toyed with reform for over a century until his prophecies clearly materialized in the destruction of Jerusalem and Babylonian captivity.

### 3b Message of Micah

- 1c When human authority is perverted the people suffer
  - 1d Key phrase – **3:11a** “Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money.”
    - 1e civil leaders –
    - 2e priests –
    - 3e prophets –
  - 2d Every level of authority and thus the entire culture was corrupted by covetousness
  - 3d Wherever there are oppressed people there are corrupt leaders and God’s purposes have been wickedly skewed. – “The authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Rms 13:1)

2c Messiah is the ultimate standard for human leadership

1d Key text – **5:2b-5a** “out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel. 4 And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth; 5 And this One shall be peace.

1e sanction – delegated by God – out of obscurity, not by man’s selection or standards

2e nature – deity “from everlasting” (5:2b)

3e administration – “He shall stand” (consistent and unbending) “He shall feed” selflessly motivated to minister on behalf of others

4e effect – “This *One* shall be peace”

4b Outline and Comments<sup>10</sup>

1c Captivity is Certain (1:2-2:11)

1d Yahweh’s testimony condemns the people (1:2-7)

Micah’s God is no provincial overlord but the God who rules the world and the universe (v 2). Thus all nations must listen because all must give account to him! Amos adopted the same tactic when indicting the surrounding nations so as to increase Israel’s level of respect for the God who stood to condemn them (cf Isa 3:13 ff). God not absentee Lord—invades local scene to hold his people accountable (v 3).

**NOTE**> careful balance b/w immanence and transcendence – *temple* and *palace* = same word in Hebrew: deity and kingship are inseparable in God...**Psa 11:4** The LORD is in His holy temple (דִּיכָלִּי trans both temple and palace) , The LORD’S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. In the prophet’s mind, God’s earthly temple is counterpart to his heavenly abode from which he sees all and holds all accountable, thus becoming the more awesome...**Hab 2:20** ...the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him. That majesty is captured in the words of 3b-4.

2d The prophet mourns their fate (1:8-16)

1e reason for the lament – Judah’s certain and calamitous fate

The prophet’s sincere anguish over the fate of God’s people ought to have been shared by his audience. However, the measure of one’s faith and one’s comprehension of God’s majestic

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<sup>10</sup>Portions of this outline adapted from J. Wash Watts, *Old Testament Teaching, An Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Nashville: Broadman Press) 1967. pp 254-257.

holiness and power determine the measure of one's response to such revelations!

2e focus of the lament – 10 cities of the Shephelah (word play on names)

- 1f Gath – no word-play, quote from David (2Sam 1:20)
- 2f Beth-le-Aprah – “house of dust”
- 3f Shaphir – “beautiful”
- 4f Zaanan (hapax) – “one who goes out” (to battle)
- 5f Beth-ezel (hapax) – “house by the side of another”
- 6f Maroth (hapax) – “bitterness”
- 7f Lachish – “invincible” or “to the steeds”
- 8f Moresheth-gath – “dowry”
- 9f Achzib – “deceitful”
- 10f Moreshah – “possession”
- 11f Adullum – no word-play

“This oracle contains profound truth about God, the covenant community, and the prophet. Yahweh is the universal Lord to whom all men must render humble account. He is the majestic Lord of history, intervening through human activity to work out his righteous will. He is the Lord of Israel, laying claims upon his people which they disregard at their peril. He is the exclusive Lord of his people, who for their part must therefore have no truck with other religions. Micah agrees with Amos that special privilege implies special responsibility: “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I shall punish you for all your iniquities*” (Amos 3:2). It fell to Micah's lot to stand over against the twin communities and courageously threaten them. Yet as mediator between God and man he experienced the tension that came from standing with feet in both camps. He was filled with no vengeful, callous spirit but with heartbreak, concern, and empathy.”

– Leslie C. Allen, 275-276

3d Moral corruption demands this fate (2:1-11)

- (1) devise iniquity premeditated, carefully planned and executed with gleeful enthusiasm at 1<sup>st</sup> opportunity
- (5) you will not be represented in the redistribution process
- (6) angry response is predictable (Isa 30:10; Amos 7:10-13) BUT their confidence was couched in bad theology: God wouldn't say/do these things...He'll no overreact, we're not that bad!...
- (8-9) lately cruel injustice motivated by greed is a current and continuing problem
- (11) the real “prattler” is the one who tells folks just what they want to hear regardless of truth!

2c But Restoration from Captivity Is Likewise Certain (2:12-13)

- the one who breaks open re: Messiah who effects salvation – remember Egypt!

3c Captivity Is Coming Because of Moral Corruption (3:1-12)

1d the corruption of rulers (3:1-4)

- 1e it was their true *function* to know justice
- 2e it was their real *character* to hate good and love evil
- 3e it was their perverted *conduct* to cruelly divest the poor of their possessions
- 4e it was their ultimate *fate* to cry vainly to God for rescue in their own oppression

2d the corruption of prophets (3:5-8)

the content of their message was determined by audience response – payment!

3d the corruption of priests (3:11)

4c But Zion Will Be Restored to Moral Preeminence in the Latter Days (4:1-8)

1d Zion will become a permanent instrument of universal instruction and peace (4:1-5)

The "Lord's house" will be:

1e permanent and perpetual

2e universally attractive

3e educationally oriented

4e missional in nature

5e marked by justice, peace, prosperity, and worship of Yahweh

2d The afflicted remnant of Israel will be made a permanent center of influence (4:6-8)

5c Captivity is Coming Because of Lack of Leadership (4:9-5:1)

Micah Interrupts his message of Messianic hope with more words about the present circumstances and impending judgment. He predicted that they would be sent to Babylon which was at this time a vassal state to Assyria (both Micah & Isaiah had this truth revealed to them – cf. Isa 39:1-6). Babylon did not become independent power until a century after Micah.

6c But Israel Will Be Restored by Messiah (5:2-15)

Key Verse: "To be ruler in Israel (5:2)

1d One born in Bethlehem

2d One going forth from everlasting

3d One who will restore and shepherd his brethren "in the strength of Yahweh" (4)

4d One who will establish peace with the nations (5)

5d One who will make "the remnant of Jacob" a supernatural influence among the nations. (7-8)

6d One who will remove militarism from this people (10)

7d One who will remove idolatry from his people (11-14)

**NOTE>** Unless "Assyria" here is used figuratively for powers raising up against God's people, Micah is seeing the coming of Messiah sometime immediately following the Assyrian crisis. "Assyrian" here probably represents the deadliest foes of God's people against whom they would be able to raise 7 shepherds (perfect number to deal with the crisis) and 8 princes (more than sufficient number) to resolve the emergency. These would function under Messiah and would wield spiritual weapons not carnal, since these had already been beaten into plowshares (4:3).

8d One who will judge all peoples who refuse to submit (15)

7c Captivity Is Coming Because of Faithlessness (6:1-7:6)

1d Yahweh demands an answer to his suit (6:1-2)

Nature is summoned as the jury because they've been around long enough to witness Yahweh's consistent and unfailing faithfulness to his covenant people.

2d The hearing (6:3-8)

1e Yahweh's question: Has he given any occasion for Israel's rejection of him? (6:3-5)

- indirect approach...could have listed specific charges vs. Israel
- Have I wearied you? In reality it was Yahweh who had the right to be "wearied"

**Isa 43:24** "...You have wearied Me with your iniquities"

**Mal 2:17** You have wearied the LORD with your words; Yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, And He delights in them," Or, "Where is the God of justice?"

- Shittim (Accacia grove) to Gilgal from the east of Jordan to the west

2e Israel's reply: Can Yahweh not be satisfied with her lavish gifts (6:6-7)

This is a revealing response—Israel, eager to please a God who is so gracious to them, wonders what they should offer and appears ready to bring whatever might be required—except the very thing God desired!

burnt offerings costly since all given nothing withheld for personal use

yearling calves eligible for sacrifice from age of 7 days. Those that were a year old were the most expensive because of the investment of feed and therefore would be of greater value to the owner. This was an expensive animal at its economic prime.

Micah then turned from the *quality* of offering to its *quantity*

thousands of rams . . . speaks of huge offerings like Solomon (1Kgs 3:4; 8:63), Hezekiah (2Chr 30:24), or Josiah (2Chr 35:7)

give my firstborn or the ultimate sacrifice. Was their paganism so deeply entrenched that they believed God would be pleased with this wholesale perversion of the Law? Ignorance of truth and familiarity with error breeds a monstrous sincerity!

3e Yahweh's answer: Nothing more is required than "do justly...love mercy...walk humbly" (6:8)

By this answer it is clear that Yahweh looks at the heart not the hands! In fact, "He has shown you", so "Why do you ask, you ought to know!" The offer of legally prescribed sacrifices (Lev 1-6) is rejected on the principle that, by themselves and without a proper relationship with God and one's neighbor, such sacrifices are useless (Isa 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Psa 40:6-8; 50:7-11; 51:16-17; 1Sam 15:22).

3d The decision (6:9-7:6)

1e Verdict – reality simply does not conform to standard just expressed (6:8,9-12)

2e Sentencing – the cities to be made desolate, their inhabitants a hissing (6:13-16)

3e Reaction – one godly man laments the just fate of his nation (7:1-6)



8c But Israel Will Be Restored Through Faith (7:7-20)

1d The prophet's faith brings assurance of restoration (7:7-13)

Micah speaks for a spiritually sensitive remnant, expressing the sentiments associated with their deliverance and restoration:

- 1e they would trust in Yahweh (7a)
- 2e they would be willingness to *wait* (7b)
- 3e they would admit of the justice of their chastisement (8-9a)
- 4e they would rest assured of final justification (9b)
- 5e his assurance that Zion's restoration will follow (11-12)
- 6e However, captivity will not be avoided (13)

2d A prayer for restoration through chastisement (7:14-17)

- 1e for "good old days" prosperity (14)
- 2e for miraculous evidence of God's favor (15)
- 3e for humiliation of the arrogant nations (16)
- 4e for change of heart among enemies so they fear Yahweh (17)

3d A closing word of worship (7:18-20)

The incomparable God will keep the promises made to the fathers

5b Lasting Value of the Book

- 1c When centers of authority, individual or larger, become corrupted—many experience the denigrating and damning effects.
- 2c Unchecked covetousness will quickly and inevitably destroy people.
- 3c Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ultimate standard for all human authority.
- 4c A proper relationship with God is at the heart of all acceptable worship and that heart will always express itself in behavior consistent with the character and actions of God.
- 5c A genuine confession of faith is prerequisite to forgiveness and restoration in the economy of God.
- 6c God will always keep his promises regardless of man's shabby behavior and unfaithfulness and one of those promises is that he will punish sin.
- 7c The deity and kingship of Yahweh cannot be separated. He rules the universe according to perfect and uncompromising holiness. Thus Messiah is man's only hope!

## 7. Nahum 650

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Nahum is identified as the author in 1:1
  - 1d His name means, “consolation” (shortened form of Nehemiah “Yahweh is consolation”) and fits his message intended to console those who were oppressed by Nineveh.
  - 2d He is called an “Elkoshite”, a name and location which does not appear anywhere else in the OT.
- 2c Nahum was contemporary with Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. While no specific dates are given and no kings named, two events are mentioned which indicated the general time period
  - 1d the sack of No-Amon (Thebes) the capital of Egypt by Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria in 663 BC
  - 2d the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC.

### 2b Historical Background

Evidently Nahum witnessed the height and the eclipse of Assyria’s power. By sheer military strength, Assyria, the lion of the Ancient Near East, with its capital in Nineveh, was able to conquer and rule most of the known world. Tiglath-Pileser III had overrun Israel, which he called Omri-land.” A few years later Sargon II and Sennacherib were to make Judah a vassal state. Ashurbanipal devastated Thebes in Egypt and burned Babylon. Ishtar, goddess of war and ancient queen of the universe, who was originally revered in Nineveh, came to be exalted from Mesopotamia, through Babylonia and the kingdoms of Palestine, even in Egypt. The lion had roared from its den and the seventh-century world trembled at the sound.

But with the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 BC, coalitions of Medes, Babylonians, and Sythians sought revenge for the ravages of Assyria. By 612 BC, these armies would lay siege to Nineveh and destroy her. The rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire took less than a century-and-a-half. Unbelievably, the great city of Nineveh lay in fiery ruins, hardly to rise again. In these years Nahum, the prophet, spoke for God.<sup>11</sup>

### 3b Message of Nahum

Nahum has been criticized because he offers no word of condemnation for Israel’s sin and no call for her repentance. But his message is strengthened for its singularity. He declares the sovereignty of God over the nations and over history, affirming that God is just and the champion of the oppressed and helpless and “will by no means acquit the wicked” (1:3).

Nahum 1:2-7 offers the most complete exposition of God’s vengeance anywhere in the Scriptures. The following observations can be made:

- 1c Yahweh’s vengeance is a perfect balance of passion and corresponding action.
- 2c Yahweh is always the master of his wrath and uses it for righteous purposes. The opposite is often the case with men.

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<sup>11</sup>Ralph Smith. “Micah - Malachi”, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco: Word Books 1984. 64-65.

- 3c Yahweh's wrath follows mercy and is a perfect expression of justice on those who despise that mercy (cf v3a) – Jonah documents the fact that God extended mercy to Nineveh but their destruction proves that any people must bring forth fruits of repentance or taste the vengeance of God.
- 4c Yahweh administers his vengeance through his providence (cf 1:2b-6).
- 5c Yahweh's vengeance makes a distinction between those who take refuge in him and those who reject him, like Nineveh (cf 1:7)
- 6c Two particular sins stimulate Yahweh to wrath: [1] the God-ward sin of pride and rebellion (Na 1:11), and [2] the man-ward sin of oppression and cruelty (Micah 3:1-4).

#### 4b Outline and Comments<sup>12</sup>

##### 1c A Psalm in Praise of Yahweh (1:2-8)

###### 1d Yahweh—A God of wrath (1:2-3a)

God often presented as “jealous” in OT (Num 25:11; Dt 6;15; Isa 59:17; Ezek 5:13; 38:18-19)

**NOTE>** Jealousy is, in essence, an intolerance of rivals which can be sin or good depending on the legitimacy of the rival. God allowed no rivals in the case of his covenant people.

###### 2d Yahweh—A God of sovereign providence (1:3b-5)

The appearance of Yahweh (theophany) was often accompanied by a storm or whirlwind (Ex 19:16; Isa 28:2; 29:6; 66;15; Jer 23:19; Zech 7:14; 9:14; Psa 18:10-15; Job 38:1). Yahweh is called “rider upon the clouds” (Psa 68:4; cf Isa 14:14). Pagans generally assigned their gods providential control over certain aspects of nature but when put to the test (plagues of Egypt and contest on Mt Carmel) they proved impotent and Yahweh proved omnipotent!

###### 3d Yahweh—A God of love and judgment (1:6-8)

##### 2c Prophetic Responses (1:9-2:2)

###### 1d A message of judgment against Assyria (1:9-11)

###### 2d A message of salvation for Judah (9:12-13)

Assyrian oppression had been long and severe. Although Judah retained king and throne, she was forced to pay tribute and bow to her gods for over 100 years. When she asserted independence she

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<sup>12</sup>Portions of this outline adapted from Ralph L. Smith, “Micah - Malachi”, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol 32*. 68-69.

was brutally beaten into subjection (3:8 called “bloody city” and 2:12 compared treatment of captives to a lion strangling and tearing the flesh from its prey). God takes responsibility for oppressing Judah but will now put an end to this!

3d A message of judgment against Assyria’s king (1:14)

- command of God carries authority and certainty!
- king and gods together destroyed and suitably buried

4d A message of salvation for Judah (1:15, 2:2)

- Nahum borrows words and figure from Isaiah’s Messianic announcements (40:9; 52:7) to introduce good news that Assyrian oppression is over!
- Deliverance is not occasion for independence but for resuming right relationship of worship and service to Yahweh!

3c Condemning Words Against Assyria (2:1-3:19)

**NOTE>** Nahum’s condemning rhetoric cannot really be appreciated unless one comprehends the magnitude of Nineveh’s violent wickedness which is well documented in their own cuneiform inscriptions. Many accounts are unprintably graphic in their horror. Farrar gives this general description<sup>13</sup>

Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of her kings, no power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on the way to ruin. The kings of Assyria tormented the miserable world. They exult to recorded how “space failed for corpses”; how unsparing a destroyer is their goddess Ishtar; how they flung away the bodies of soldiers like so much clay; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they burned cities; how they filled populous lands with death and devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with the corpses of their defenders as with chaff; how they impaled “heaps of men” on stakes, and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kings and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities; how they employed nations of captives in making brick in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs.

It should be further noted that although the carnage of Assyria’s violence was well distributed around the known world, Judah frequently tasted it also. Maier observes:<sup>14</sup>

It should thus be borne in mind that one Assyrian king after another spoiled Israel and later Judah. Shalmaneser III, Adad-nirari IV, Tiglath Pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, all had laid bloody hands on God’s people.

Significantly, the worst of these invasions came from Nineveh. Indeed, as Assyria hastened to its end, that city assumed increasing and almost exclusive importance. Prism B, recording the achievements of Ashurbanipal, who ruled at Nahum’s time, mentions Nineveh as “the city of my lordship.” The grand monarch repeatedly boasted that it was Nineveh to which he returned after his arduous campaigns. To Nineveh came the distant chieftains who kissed the royal feet, rebel leaders paraded in fetters, distant and deceitful kings tied with dog chains and made to live in kennels. To Nineveh were sent gifts of far-off tribute, heads of vanquished enemies, crown princes as hostages, beautiful princesses as concubines. In Nineveh rulers who experienced rare mercy carried brick and mortar for building operations. There recalcitrant captives were flayed, obstinate opponents crushed to death by their own sons. The Nineveh against which the prophet thunders divine denunciation had become the concentrated center of evil, the capital of crushing tyranny, the epitome of cruelest torture.

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<sup>13</sup>Farrar, *The Minor Prophets*, pp. 147-148 quoted in Hailley p. 251.

<sup>14</sup>Walter A. Maier, *The Book of Nahum*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 1980 reprint of 1959 edition. pp. 92-93.

**NOTE>** Boice calls this chapter (2) a “masterpiece of ancient literature, unsurpassed for its graphic portrayal of military assault.”

1d Mocking commentary on the battle for Nineveh (2:1, 3-10)

2d Taunt song against Nineveh (2:11-13)

3d Judgment message against Nineveh (3:1-7)

4d Condemning analogy of Thebes (3:8-13)

Thebes (No-Amon, “city of Amon) was the capital of Egypt during much of her history. About 440 miles south of Cairo and 150 miles north of Aswan at point where Nile takes bend closest to Red Sea...broad and fruitful valley. Thebes called the world’s first great monumental city includes Luxor, Karnak on the east side of the river and Thebes proper with ruins of Hatshepsut’s temple and the tombs of the kings on the west

Like Nineveh, Thebes was a great city and her destruction was legendary in Nahum’s day. Ashurbanipal captured and partially destroyed the city in 663 BC carrying off enormous spoils to Nineveh.

5d Satirical warnings for Nineveh (3:14-17)

6d Rejoicing over Nineveh’s ultimate destruction (3:18-19)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

1c We are surrounded by evil but evil does not go unjudged in God’s universe.

2c Yahweh jealously preserves his unique position as God and judges those who vainly oppose him and oppress his people.

3c Since the recipient of this message was Judah, its purpose was to comfort an oppressed but disobedient people. God cares about his people enough to communicate his actions on their behalf.

## 8. Zephaniah 630

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Zephaniah is identified as the author in 1:1
  - 1d Name means “Yahweh hides” or Yahweh treasured”. It may reflect some incident in his early life or may be associated with his message in 2:3, “Seek ye the Lord...it may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.”
  - 2d His lineage is traced back 4 generations, which is unusual, and may indicate that the Hezekiah named may be the notable king of Judah. On the other hand, Hezekiah was not an uncommon name and he is not identified as “king” like Amon is later in the same verse.
  - 3d Zephaniah’s home place is not identified but the words, “this place” in 1:4 may indicate he was from Jerusalem.
- 2c Zephaniah’s ministry occurred during the reign of Josiah but his mention of idolatry (1:3-5) suggests that it was prior to the great reforms associated with the discovery of the Law in 622 BC. A reasonable time frame for his ministry may be between 640 - 625 BC.

### 2b Historical Background

#### 1c Religious

Hezekiah had brought significant reform and revival to Judah but these positive steps were more than reversed under the long and wicked reign of his son, Manasseh. (2Kgs 21; 2Chr 33:1-9). He later tried to undo some of his evil influence but was largely unsuccessful (2Chr 30:10-20). His son, Ammon, succeeded him and perpetuated the worst of his father’s vices (2Chr 33:21-25). Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight and was the last good king to reign in Judah. At age 16 he began to seek the Lord and by age 20 began a serious purge of Judah. His reform was the most aggressive ever attempted by a Judean king but these reforms were yet future when Zephaniah was preaching. Nahum, Habakkuk and Jeremiah were contemporary with him.

#### 2c Political

Assyria was still the firmly entrenched and brutal world power whose world dominance showed little signs of waning though it utterly collapsed by about 609 BC. Josiah appears to have remained a loyal vassal of Ashurbanipal who was the last great king of Assyria. Following his death in 633 BC the kingdom began to weaken.

#### 3c Religious and Moral

In spite of the godly nature of their king, the people of Judah appear to be nervous, cruel and corrupt. Social injustice and moral corruption seem widespread—the effects of a culture immersed in luxury, ease, and extravagance. The baalim are still worshiped and what respect was offered Yahweh was a mere token at best. The time was ripe for judgment.

### 3b Message of Zephaniah

- 1c Zephaniah’s message is seen by many to be a summary of the prophets who went before him. Most notable is his description of the Day of the Lord (1:14-18) which closely reflects the language of Joel and Amos. (See Joel 2:1-2 and Amos 5:18-20). It forms an important part of Zephaniah’s message and may have been instrumental in facilitating the reforms later initiated by Josiah.

Zephaniah links his prophecy to those of the earlier prophets...by reproducing in a compendious form the fundamental thoughts of judgment and salvation which are common to all the other prophets, that his contemporaries may lay them to heart.

– Keil quoted by Boice (116)

2c Zephaniah presents Yahweh as the God of the universe. Yahweh is no provincial deity but calls all peoples to the same standards. Whatever is threatened in terms of judgement and whatever is promised in terms of salvation Yahweh alone will accomplish it all according to his own sovereign purpose and for his own glory!

4b Outline and Comments<sup>15</sup>

1c Heading (1:1)

2c Judgment on the whole world – Judah in particular (1:2-18)

1d A world judgment (1:2-6)

1e Prelude: judgment on the whole world (1:2-3)

- universal, all-consuming judgment
- animal creation affected by man's sin (Joel 1:18; Hos 4:3; Jer 12:4)
- stumblingblocks idols and pagan relics
- cut off man because he is responsible for it all!

2e On Judah and Jerusalem for idolatry (1:4-6)

The focus is narrowed to Judah & Jerusalem who should have known better. Three classes are indicted:

[1] "idolatrous priests – appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense to the host of heaven (2Kgs 23:5; Hos 10:5).

[2] "orthodox" priests – whose loyalty was divided between Yahweh and Baal in violation of 1<sup>st</sup> command. Also worshiped "host of heaven" contrary to Dt 4:19 and set up altars on their housetops which became personal "conservatories of idolatry".

[3] the indifferent – simply don't care about Yahweh's favor or disfavor!

**THE DAY OF YAHWEH (1:7-3:20)** This important theme is introduced by Zephaniah in 1:7 and remains the focus for the rest of the book. This emphasis should have struck terror to the hearts of Yahweh's people and moved them to repentance. The prophet clearly revealed that the Day of Yahweh is "at hand" (1:7), "near" (1:14), a day of darkness and of terror (1:15, 16), that it comes with judgment against sin (1:17), accompanied by natural calamities (1:15), that it falls on all creation—man, beast, God's people and pagans (1:2, 3; 2:1-15; 3:8). This theme sets the tone of the entire book which George Adam Smith has aptly characterized, "No hotter book lies in all the OT. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, saltpits, and owls and raves looking from the windows of desolate palaces"<sup>16</sup>

2d the Day of Yahweh brings judgment (1:7-13)

1e on princes (1:7-8)

- sacrifice to be offered is Judah
- the guests are the nations
- Judah's royalty held accountable for Jerusalem's sin...Josiah not named (one of most godly kings)
- clothed with foreign apparel rich who show their affinity to Egypt and Babylon by wearing their styles

<sup>15</sup>Outline adapted from Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 226-228.

<sup>16</sup>George Adam Smith. *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol II, p. 48, quoted in Hailey, 226.

2e on idolaters (1: 9)

3e on merchants (1:10-11)

4e on indifferent and wealthy (1:12-13)

**NOTE>** "When wine sits quietly, the heavier solid particles settle, leaving the dregs at the bottom of the cask or bottle. This can lead to thickening or coagulation if the wine is left too long. Rather than being of use, like fine aged wine (Cf. Is 25:6), the rich and influential of Jerusalem...will stagnate in indifference. G. A. Smith clearly expressed the problem when he wrote: *'The great causes of God and Humanity are not defeated by the hot assaults of the Devil, but by the slow crushing, glacier-like mass of thousands and thousands of indifferent nobodies. God's causes are never destroyed by being blown up, but by being sat upon.'*" – David Baker

3d The imminence and terrible nature of the Day of Yahweh (1:14-18)

1e imminent, (1:14)

2e terribly dark day, (1:15-17)

1f wrath – v 18; Ezk 7:19; Ho 5:10; Hab 3:8

2f trouble and distress – v 17 Ge 35:3; Jb 15:24; Psa 25:17; Ob 12,13; Na 1:7

3f devastation and desolation – Jb 30:3; 38:27; Psa 35:8; Is 47:11

4f darkness and gloominess – (2 forms of same Heb root) – Jb 3:4; Joel 2:2; Am 5:18,20; Ex 10:22; Is 8:22; 58:10

5f clouds and thick darkness – Psa 97:2; Ezk 30:3; 34:12; Joel 2:2; Isa 60:2; Jer 13:16

6f trumpet and alarm – Isa 27:13; Ezk 33:3; Am 2:2; Jos 6:5; Jdg 7:18,22; Am 1:14

3e no deliverance, (1:18)

3c Exhortation to repentance and perseverance (2:1-3:8)

1d Call to repent and seek the Lord (2:1-3)

2d Reason: God will judge the nations near and far (2:4-15)

1e Judgment on the nations that are near, (2:4-11)

1f Philistia, (2:4-7)

2f Moab and Ammon, (2:8-10)

3f all the gods of the earth, (2:11)

2e Judgment on powerful nations afar, (2:12-15)

1f Ethiopia, v 12

2f Assyria and Nineveh (2:13-15)



- 3d If God punishes the heathen, He will not spare Judah (3:1-8)  
1e Woe to the polluted city—classes of sinners and sin, (3:1-7)

Zephaniah speaks of wickedness in distant or generic terms “convincing the jury” that judgment is deserved and then naming the jury as the guilty party. So, Jerusalem is now named in the indictment. This line of argument is similar to Micah 1:1-5 and Amos 1:3-2:16.

- 1f Their leadership was hopelessly corrupt, (3:1-4)  
1g princes –  
2g judges –  
3g prophets –  
4g priests –  
2f Jehovah’s constant reminder of His sovereignty, (3:5-7)  
• Yahweh will act in harmony with his own inviolate character  
2e God has called; they have refused—therefore, Woe! (3:8)  
• Wait for me favorite expression of Isaiah (40:31; 42:4 49:23; 64:4)  
• apocalyptic language—re: Armageddon?

- 4c After the judgment, salvation and glorification for the remnant (3:9-20)  
1d God’s remnant will come from among the heathen (3:9-10)

PIPER: *“What could be more ludicrous in a vast and glorious universe like this than a human being, on a speck called earth, standing in front of a mirror trying to find significance in his own ser-image?”*

- 2d Restored Israel will be sanctified (3:11-13)  
• “that day” is not only a day of judgment and destruction BUT also of hope and deliverance  
• Haughtiness and pride will be eradicated from the temple mount (Isa 3:16; Ezk 28:2, 17) pride is one of the major sins involved in any attempt to live without God!  
• (13) the remnant will share characteristics with Yahweh himself in contrast to their wicked brethren...this is a benefit of meekness and humility – *When the Creator is worshiped and served as he ought to be, paradise is regained!*  
3d Israel will be comforted and exalted (3:14-20)  
1e A psalm of joy (3:14-17)

Although immediate circumstances have not changed and the wrath of Yahweh is impending, Zephaniah calls a believing remnant to rejoice with him in confident expectation.

- 2e A promise from Yahweh (3:18-20)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

- 1c Yahweh is infinitely capable both to thoroughly judge sin and to overwhelmingly bless his believing remnant according to grace.
- 2c Man's environment is adversely affected by his sin and not vice versa.
- 3c Anything less than pure worship is no worship at all!
- 4c Leadership brings with it a higher level of accountability to the one who ultimately endows it.
- 5c The purposes of God suffer greater violence from indifference than from any hostile assault.
- 6c Men tend to adjust to and accommodate their surroundings, but God is unchangingly true to his own character.
- 7c Pride is one of the major sins in any attempt to live without God.
- 8c Faith enables God's people to rejoice in the promise and prospect of blessing though the present circumstances are entirely bleak.

## 9. Habakkuk 609

### 1b Author and Date

1c Habakkuk is identified as the author in 1:1 and 3:1

- 1d The name “Habakkuk” does not come from a typical Hebrew word but is probably derived from חֲבַקֵּק meaning, “to embrace”.
- 2d Theories abound regarding the identity of this prophet but none have attained the level of probability. There is actually less data in the Scriptures about this prophet than any other. We are told nothing of his father, city of residence, or his tribe in Israel.
- 3d Habakkuk stands with Job as one of few devoted followers of Yahweh who dared to ask probing questions regarding the legitimacy of his actions. While most believers do so internally, few engage the Almighty in open debate.

2c The date of Habakkuk’s writing is generally identified with the Babylonian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem (1:6). Habakkuk probably wrote sometime between the Babylonian overthrow of Nineveh, 612 BC, and the first deportation from Jerusalem in 605 BC. Habakkuk’s words, “I must wait quietly for the day of trouble, for the coming up of the people that invades us” (3:16), places his message before the invasion of Judah. For these reasons, dates between 610 and 606 BC are frequently suggested.

### 2b Historical Background

The background of Habakkuk is virtually the same as that of Zephaniah with the additional factor of Babylon. Habakkuk probably ministered at the end of godly King Josiah’s reign. With the Josiah’s death at Megiddo (2Kgs 24:29), his son Jehoahaz was installed on the throne for a brief but wicked rule (2Kgs 24:31-32). Thus began a series of abbreviated and evil reigns as the clock ran out for Judah and Jerusalem.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire gained prominence under Nabopolassar from about 625 BC and became the contending world power in 612 BC with the defeat of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. With the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish, in Syria (Jer 46:2), Nebuchadnezzar was established as the most powerful emperor in the world. This was probably the invasion which Habakkuk foretold in 1:6.

Judah had witnessed the decline and fall of her northern counterpart over a century before, but failed to learn the lesson that crisis was meant to convey. She continued to despise God’s covenant and nurse the delusion that she would not suffer common fate for the identical offense. Habakkuk’s prophecy actually anticipates the demise of the Babylonian Empire which took place in 539 BC at the hands of the Medes and Persians led by Cyrus.

### 3b Message of Habakkuk

- 1c The message of Habakkuk is directed to Judah in the beginning stages of a crisis which led to the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the deportation of a great number of people. BUT the crisis, as Habakkuk saw it, was more internal than external. Why does not God or his law restrain the wicked who so callously abuse the righteous...and why doesn’t God punish these evil-doers? The answer comes in 2:4-5 and becomes the theological center piece of this work.
- 2c The message of Habakkuk can be distilled into one statement: *Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith* (Hab 2:4). If this book begins with confusion, it ends with confidence...if its opening notes betray apprehension, its final movement resolves in a crescendo of affirmation. But the issue which effects the resolution is most important – faith, without which no man can please God.
- 3c Faith is the underlying principle of all of life. Yet, even a godly man’s faith is, at times, bewildered by

circumstances. In Habakkuk's case the man dared to say so. Like Jonah and Hosea 1-3, this book is more a biographical sketch than a confrontational message. If one compares the beginning with the ending, faith conflict and eventual resolution make up the story and the message Habakkuk.

1:2 -- CONFLICT "O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save."

3:17-19 -- RESOLUTION: "Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls--Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills."

#### 4b Outline and Comments<sup>17</sup>

##### 1c God's judgment on Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Chaldeans (1:2-2:3)

###### 1d First perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:2-11)

This section is in the form of a "lament" (psalm of complaint) often introduced with the words, "how long?" (Nu 14:27; Psa 6:3; 13:1,2; 35:17; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 94:3; Zec 1:12; Re 6:10).

###### 1e Perplexity: How can Jehovah justify His indifference in the presence of wickedness and violence? (1:2-4)

1f the prophet's theological understanding of God as just and righteous is being challenged by his experiences. Job suffered the same dilemma (6:28-30).

###### 2f agnosticism's declarations:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| [1] "you are not hearing me"                      | T/F |
| [2] "you are not saving"                          | T/F |
| [3] "you cause me to see iniquity and perversion" | T/F |
| [4] "the law is powerless"                        | T/F |
| [5] "justice never occurs"                        | T/F |
| [6] "wickedness trumps righteousness"             | T/F |
| [7] "perversity works"                            | T/F |

###### 2e Jehovah's reply: He is not indifferent; He will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment (1:5-11)

1f Their rise is Jehovah's doing (1:5-6)

2f Their character is of themselves (1:7-11)

##### 2d Second Perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:12-2:3)

###### 1e Perplexity: How can a holy God employ an impure and godless agent: (1:12-17)

• Rhetorical ? anticipating "NO" answer in most cases.

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<sup>17</sup>Outline adapted from Hailey, 274-275.

- 1f Fundamentals of Israelite faith:
  - 1g Yahweh is from everlasting (Dt 33:27; Psa 55:19)
  - 2g Yahweh is the covenant keeping faithful God (Ex 6:2-8)
  - 3g Elohim the “great God” is near to his people, “my God” (Psa 3:7; 7:1 etc)
  - 4g Elohim is “my holy one” אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשׁ that holiness is basis on which men come for help (Ps 22:3-5)
  - 5g Yahweh is “Rock”, עֹרֵךְ, (Dt 32:18; Psa 19:14) the God of changeless stability
  - 6g Yahweh owns justice and redemptive correction and assigned it to whom he wills
  - 7g Yahweh is too pure to look on evil (thus the many purification rites and rituals, Lev 11-12; 15; Nu 19)
- 2f Habakkuk’s faith in holy God is challenged by the reality of Yahweh’s choice of the Babylonians as his instrument of punishment...thus he again asks, “why...why?”
- 2e Jehovah’s reply: the judgment is sure, but not immediate (2:1-3)
  - 1f The prophet’s decision: wait (2:1)

Few believers give such serious attention and focus even though we have the Word in our hands! Some would say that God does not speak to men as he did of old. Rather, men do not listen today as they listened of old!

- 2f Jehovah’s command: write plainly, for the promise is certain (2:2-3)
- 2c God’s judgment upon the Chaldeans, the ungodly world power (2:4-20)
  - 1d Fundamental principle in world government (2:4-5)
    - 1e The righteous—live by faith (2:4)

The theological significance of this statement is demonstrated in its NT use (Rms 1:17; Gal 3:11; He 10:37-38). It is the “answer in principle” prior to the answer in particular. Who is the proud? The statement is sufficiently broad so as to suggest there are 2 classes of people: One is proud, conceited, swollen with arrogance and self-sufficiency—certainly the Chaldeans fit this category! The other is righteous. This is the man or woman who lives by God’s standards because his/her soul is confident in God (faith).

Faith is the principle of life in spite of all appearances. Pride is destructive in spite of all appearances. These godless men and affairs seem to be so high and so proud; these enterprises, which are in rebellion against eternity, seem so mighty, and encased in armor so strong that we cannot overcome them. Look again. "My righteous one"—poor, despised, in difficulty, hardly daring to lift his dead—"shall live." The principle of faith is the principle of life. Anything that is not of faith is crooked and swollen; leave it alone. It will pass and perish"

– G. Campbell Morgan, 158

2e The wicked—drunken on pride, power, greed—will not survive (2:5)

2d Woes upon the Chaldeans: a taunt song (2:6-20)

1e Woe upon lust of conquest and plunder (2:6-8)

2e Woe upon effort to build a permanent empire through cruelty and godless gain (2:9-11)

3e Woe upon the building of cities with blood (2:12-14)

4e Woe upon cruelty in the treatment of conquered kings and nations (2:15-17)

5e Woe upon idolatry (2:18-20)

3c Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment (3:1-19)

Habakkuk reacts to the responses of Yahweh by offering this beautiful and model prayer marked by humility and praise. It is one of the most moving statements of faith and trust in all the Scriptures—contrast his opening sentiments!

1d Petition (3:1-2)

1e Revive your work (3:2a)

2e In wrath remember mercy (3:2b)

Thundering wrath is not all that Yahweh is. He is a God of mercy. Since all that God is is the foundation for all that we pray, Habakkuk confidently prays, "Remember mercy, employ it now" whether toward Chaldeans or Judah.

2d Praise—Jehovah's mighty works in creation and history (3:3-15)

1e Jehovah's terrible approach – A Theophany (3:3-7)

2e Question: Why did Jehovah appear? (3:8-12)

1f God displays his power over all nature (8-11)

2f God displays his power over all nations (12)

3e Answer: For the salvation of His people (3:13-15)

In contrast with God's threat to destroy Babylon, there is a promise of hope and deliverance for God's *people*. "Your people" reminds the reader of the special covenant relationship not enjoyed by other nations (Ex 3:7; Dt 7:6; Hos 1:9; 2:1). The term "anointed" probably refers to Messiah or to Israel as an "anointed people" represented by an anointed king.

The whole purpose of this prayer and Theophany is to clarify the simultaneous aspects of divine judgment and gracious care. This is really the answer to Habakkuk's prayer (1:12-17). God does not ignore wrong-doing (1:2-4) nor does He allow oppressors to go unpunished (1:12, 17), BUT God remembers His covenant. The purpose of theophany is to demonstrate continued grace and mercy in the midst of judgment—His people will be saved!

3d Implicit Confidence in Jehovah (3:16-19)

The Scene changes again. Habakkuk is now speaking (soliloquy). His doubts are answered in such a way that he can proclaim one of the most powerful confessions of faith anywhere in Scripture or history.

1e Fear and trembling at the tribulation (3:16-17)

2e Joy and confident trust (3:18-19)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

- 1c God is bigger and in sovereign control over the greatest of world powers regardless of how intimidating and how personally threatening they may appear.
  
- 2c The destiny of all nations and people is in the hands of Yahweh
  
- 3c Faith is the essence of life.
  
- 4c Evil is self-destructive.
  
- 5c Suffering is disciplinary and discipline is for our benefit.
  
- 6c We cannot and ought not judge theology by our experiences but by the revealed Word of God.
  
- 7c Faith has its struggles in every age, BUT men of wisdom take their doubts to the Lord not to their neighbors!



## 10. Haggai 520

### 1b Author and Date

1c Haggai is identified as the author repeatedly (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20)

1d Haggai's name means "festival", possibly a shortened form of Haggiah, "festival of Jehovah". The prophet's name does not appear to have any connection with the content.

2d Our knowledge of this prophet is gleaned from this short book and from Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14-16. Haggai and Zechariah worked together to encourage repatriated Jews to complete work on the temple. Apparently Haggai's ministry spanned only a couple of months.

2c Haggai no doubt wrote his own messages, all of which were delivered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius (Hystaspes) in 520 BC (1:1; 2:1,10;20).

### 2b Historical Background

Judah was carried off into Babylonian captivity in a series of three deportations. It is probable that Daniel left with the first group in 605 BC and was there for the 70 year duration. Ezekiel was part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave in 597 BC and prophesied until 572 or 570. These men provided spiritual hope and inspiration for the exiles. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC and the "former glory" of Israel was a fading memory. Following Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 BC a series of less competent rulers allowed the power and dominance of Babylon to ebb. Finally, in 539, while Nabonidas was away and his son, Belshazzar ruled, Cyrus the Persian who had dominated and assimilated the Median empire, conquered Babylon (Dan 5). Cyrus installed Darius the Mede (Gubaru or Gabryas) of secular history).

Cyrus's policy regarding conquered peoples was the opposite of Assyria and Babylon. Rather than taking people from their homelands and scattering them about their conquered territories, he allowed them to return home to rebuild their homes and cities, reestablish their temples and worship, and call on their gods to be favorable to him. The account of his decree concerning the Jews can be found in 2Chron 36 and Ezra 11. It was formally issued sometime in 538 BC and the first group of exiles returned to Judah with Zerubbabel in 536 BC. Jeremiah had predicted this, naming Cyrus, over 150 prior (Jer 44:24-45:7).

Following the death of Cyrus in 529 the empire convulsed with intrigue and rebellion until Darius I, put down the rebellions and assumed control. In his 2<sup>nd</sup> year

After their return to Jerusalem in 536, the Jews laid a foundation for the temple and erected an altar but then suspended construction and became distracted, building their personal wealth. Things deteriorated rather quickly and discouragement began to choke them. Conditions were worse than they thought they would be, neighboring peoples antagonized them, crops were poor and the whole picture looked rather bleak. It is at this point that God sent Haggai and later Zechariah to encourage and energize them.

Haggai does not catalog the sins of these returned Jews. They appear to be law-abiding in his day, possibly restrained by the yet poignant memories of captivity. They suffered from contentment with the way things were but their contentment was not a happy one. Resignation to the status quo had killed their faith and paralyzed them into inactivity regarding their heightened spiritual calling.

### 3b Message of Haggai

1c Haggai has a simple, straight forward message: *God's blessing is to be secured only by putting him first and persisting in obedience to his calling.* They had returned with the purpose of rebuilding the temple. They had allowed themselves to become discouraged and distracted. Their distractions were patently

self-centered and comfort oriented. They were looking to enjoy material blessings but could not seem to attain their goal because they were dishonoring God. Under the terms of their covenant, those material blessings were directly related to obedience (Dt 28) and to be enjoyed in a spirit of grateful worship, not in isolation from God.

2c This message pervades the text as Baldwin points out:

Haggai was a man of one message. he represented the God whom he loved to call the Lord of hosts, the source of all power, the controller of armies, on earth and in heaven. It followed that His word had authority; the weather obeyed His commands (1:11); the whole universe was in His grasp and would one day be shaken by His hand (2:6,21).

This same God was consistent in His dealings with men. Though they disregarded Him, He never gave them up. When they failed to fulfil His will He made life hard for them so that they would seek Him (1:5). When they committed themselves to His service he took pleasure in the fact and was glorified (1:8). He changed men's attitudes (1:14) and by His Spirit abode among them (2:5). He would transform the work they did for Him, and cause the nations to supply gifts of gold and silver, all of which belonged to Him by right (2:8).<sup>18</sup>

Haggai's message is one of rebuke but primarily of hope in the assurances of God's present and long term promises of salvation. They are a people who need to see God in their present and their future and Haggai supplies this need.

4b Outline and Comments<sup>19</sup>

Title: The prophet and his commission (1:1)

**NOTE>** The name Zerubbabel, probably comes from Babylonian expression meaning "seed of Babylon" or "shoot from Babylon". He is referred to as "son of Shealiel" 5 times (1:1, 12,14; 2:2, 23). This connection makes him a grandson of Jehoiachin and a direct descendant of the Davidic line. He was the governor of Judah, although it seems that authority was shared with Joshua the high priest and both of them were accountable to the Persian king. It appears that Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14, 16) are the same person (compare Ezra 5:16 and Zech 5:9). Sheshbazzar is probably his Chaldean name.

1c First Message—Rebuke for religious indifference and admonition to build the temple (1:1–15)

1d The message (1:2-11)

1e The people's selfishness and unconcern (1:2-6)

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<sup>18</sup>Joyce Baldwin, "Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi" *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Vol 24, 32-33.

<sup>19</sup>Adapted from Hailey 301-302.

2e Divine displeasure and exhortation to resume the work (1:7-11)

2d The effect (1:12-15)

2c Second Message—Consolation to those in despair: the glory of the new temple (2:1-9)

1d Jehovah's presence with the builders (2:1-5)

**NOTE>** Haggai was not intending to “discourage” but “encourage” the people by telling them exactly what they were thinking and then giving them reason to think differently. Those who remembered the Solomonic temple realized they would build nothing approaching its glory (no gold to cover its interior, no funds to hire highly skilled craftsmen, etc.). Unfortunately, the unfavorable comparison between past and present undermined all incentive to persevere.”

2d the temple's future glory (2:6-9)

The term “desire of all the nations” commonly understood as reference to Messiah, but since Hebrew verb is plural it requires a plural subject. Better understood as “the treasures (desirable things) of all nations”, since they belong to God will be easily requisitioned by him for the building of his temple. Thus, unwitting and unwilling Gentiles are seen as yielding up their wealth for the worship of Yahweh! This principle was illustrated soon after when their opponents, who hoped to bring the construction to a halt were actually ordered to pay the building expenses out of their local tax revenues (Ezra 6:8-12). Later on, Herod the Great lavished the wealth of Rome on building a spectacular temple.

3c Third Message—Completion of the temple a guarantee of blessings (2:10-19)

1d the people's uncleanness is result of their own conduct (2:10-14)

The date of this message coincides with the early rains which softened the soil so as to be ready for planting. This was the time when folks “anticipated” good crops—this is exactly what God intended to give them since they had put him 1<sup>st</sup> (cf v 19).

2d Indifference has produced calamity; zeal will restore prosperity (2:15-19)

4c Fourth Message—Renewal of the promise of salvation: exaltation of Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

This final message was delivered the same day as the previous one, although this one addressed to Zerubbabel.

God had made a promise to David, which is now revived in his descendant, Zerubbabel:

**2Sam 7:11-16** "since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. 12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15 "But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

This promise was not fulfilled in Zerubbabel, but in his office and lineage.

5b Lasting Value of the Book

1c Every age has its peculiar perils to the work of God, but the man of faith must see through them to find hope in the God whom he serves.

2c Sometimes God's people wait for the opportune or obvious moment to do what they know they ought to do. But God blesses those who take initiative in spite of lethargy.

3c The better things of yesterday must not paralyze us today for the best is always yet to come!

4c Blessings are not created by obedience, but always an act of God's grace.

5c The day to attempt great things for God is the day God says, "I will be with you".

6c The God who is with us is the God who easily overthrows nations and effects his purposes.

## 11. Zechariah 520

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Zechariah is identified as author in 1:1 and 7:1
  - 1d Name means, “whom Jehovah remembers”
  - 2d Son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo – Iddo was a priest among those who returned with Joshua and Zerubbabel with the original group of exiles in 538 BC (Ne 12:4 note v 16 where Zechariah is named in connection with Iddo).
  - 3d Not the same as Zechariah the priest, son of Jehoidada, who was slain in the Lord's House (2Chr 24:20-22). There are over 30 individuals named Zechariah in the OT.
- 2c Zechariah's first message followed Haggai's first message by about 2 months. Both occurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius, 520 BC. However, his ministry extended much longer than Haggai's. Zechariah's last dated prophecy was in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Darius.

### 2b Historical Background

See introduction to Haggai

### 3b Uniqueness and Message of Zechariah

- 1c In many ways this book is a sequel to Haggai though its style is quite different and its content ranges much farther. Zechariah's immediate concern had to do with the reconstruction of the temple and he joins Haggai in stirring the people to this project. But Hailey lists several characteristics which make Zechariah unique among the prophets:<sup>20</sup>
  - 1d It is the longest and most obscure of all the Minor Prophets and is the most difficult OT book to interpret.
  - 2d Others have characterized it as the most Messianic, the most apocalyptic and eschatological of OT books. This may be an overstatement but it surely ranks along with Isaiah.
  - 3d Zechariah differs in at least 3 points from the prophets who preceded him:
    - 1e emphasis on visions as means of divine communication
    - 2e Angelic mediation plays prominent role in his message (especially in 1<sup>st</sup> 6 chapters)
    - 3e apocalyptic symbolism in his visions.
  - 4d Messiah is presented a “the Branch” or “Sprout” of David, a servant of Jehovah. He comes as lowly king, rejected and ultimately pierced shepherd
  - 5d Emphasis on the truth that triumph ultimately depends on God's people being surrendered to God's will.
- 2c Zechariah and Haggai minister to a people whose glory days seem to be behind them. Their hope has been all but extinguished. Herein is the value of Zechariah. It was written to inspire and encourage that kind of believer.
- 3c Sometimes referred to as the “apocalypse of the OT”, Zechariah blazes with hope in a God whose power pervades the universe and whose purposes can never be thwarted (Job 42:2).

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<sup>20</sup>Hailey. 318-319.

The peculiar peril of the day of adversity is that therein men are in danger of seeing only the things that are near. The apocalypse provides visions and voices; visions through the near to the distant, voices from the distant calling to the near. These men were looking at the near; Zechariah bade them look through to the things beyond. They were looking at the narrow circumstances; Zechariah called them to the wider circumstances of the Divine government and activity.

– G. Campbell Morgan (169)

#### 4b Outline and Comments<sup>21</sup>

Introduction: Restoration depends upon repentance (1:1-6)

#### 1c Eight Night Visions and oracles (1:7-6:15)

- 1d Vision of a man riding on a red horse (1:7-17)  
It assures the restoration of Jerusalem (cf. 9:16-17)

**NOTE>** regarding God's "jealousy" (v 14) – Yahweh is presented as *jealous* (Nu 25:11; Dt 6:15; Isa 59:17; Ezek 5:13; 38:18-19, etc.) Cf Na 1:2, "Jealousy is, in essence, the intolerance of rivals". This term is best understood in terms of God's covenant relationship with Israel. As in marriage jealousy is a legitimate response when rivals are present!

The Hebrew words used here relates to "jealousy" especially in the marriage relationship. Adultery was punishable by death (Lev 20:120; Dt 22:22). By marriage the "two become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Hence, adultery was a severing of the body—a form of murder...through idolatry, Israel incited God to justified wrath...repeated warnings went unheeded and God gave his people the justice due their spiritual adultery (Ezk 5:13; 8:3, 5; 16:38). The Psalmist identified the jealousy of God as the cause of the exile and besought his Sovereign to quench his wrath against Israel (Ps 79:5). According to promise, God rested his jealous wrath against Israel (Ezk 16:45; cf Dt 30) and turned against those who had misused them (Ezk 36:5-6). So strong is his disposition to vindicate his name (Ezk 39:25) and his people, that all the earth felt his wrath (Zeph 3:8). Thus it will be seen that the action informed by this intensity may result in perdition and is associated with words denoting wrath (Nu 25:11; Ezk 16:39, 42; 36:6; 38:9) and anger (Dt 29:19), and as a consuming force with fire (Zeph 1:18; 3:8).

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<sup>21</sup>Outline adapted from Watts. 362-363 and Smith. 181.

On the other hand the divine action accomplished with “jealousy” may result in good and salvation. Thus this arduous love effected the return (Isa 42:13). The restoration of Israel does not, however, exhaust God’s gracious activities in behalf of his people. He will effect their salvation (the restitution of a perfect relationship between himself and his creatures), which they lost in father Adam, by a second Adam–Immanuel (Isa 9:7). Furthermore, the return from the exile foreshadowed an even greater event–God’s creating and choosing a perfect bride through his Servant (Isa 42:13). God’s jealousy when offended issued in just retribution, but when stirred by his grace it resulted in eternal love.

2d Vision of four horns and four smiths (1:18-21)  
It assures the overthrow of Jerusalem’s enemies (cf 1:21b)

3d Vision of a man with a measuring line (2:1-13)  
It assures the increase of Jerusalem’s people (cf 2:4, 11)

...

4d Vision of a change of the garments of the High Priest (3:1-10)  
It assures the cleansing of the land by “the Branch” (cf. 3:4,9)

- 5d Vision of a candlestick fed from two olive trees (4:1-14)  
It assures victory through the Holy Spirit of Yahweh and two anointed ones (cf. 4:6,14)

NOTE on “might and power” as the fleshly way of doing things — **Theodore Laetsch**, The two Hebrew words *might* and *power* denote inner strength...inherent power, courageous bravery, fortitude, as well as manpower, large numbers of soldiers, riches, leaders, well-coordinated organizations, good financial systems, etc. The Lord’s work, the building of His Temple, the inner growth, the expansion of His Church cannot be carried out by mere external means. Human strength and wisdom alone will fail. My Spirit must do it!<sup>22</sup>

• Summary of this vision:<sup>23</sup>

The lampstand represents not the Lord but the witness of the Temple and the Jewish community to Him.... Joshua and Zerubbabel wait on the unseen Lord, who is the source of their authority and power. They in turn give themselves to build both the Temple and the community; by daily life and worship the whole people is to be a light to others. The city set on a hill cannot be hid (Mt 5:14). If we ask how such a thing could be true of people who had so recently been exiled for their failures, the answer lies in the supply of oil through the “anointed ones” which kept the lights burning. It was by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts’ (V 6)...Ultimately the only true light was the Lord Himself (Jn 8:1), but he saw fit to give light to the world through the church of both Old and New Testament times, and in particular through its leaders. They do their part to the best of their ability, but the factor that counts is their receptivity to the oil that flows from the olive trees into their branches, and through them to give light to others. For the operation of God’s Spirit there can be no substitute, however able the leaders may be....The completion of God’s kingdom is as certain as the completion of the Temple. God’s Spirit flows through His servants who wait on Him to turn the day of small things into the day of world-wide rejoicing, as the last living stone is added to the structure of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20).

- 6d Vision of a flying roll (5:1-4)  
It assures destruction of the wicked (cf. 5:4)

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<sup>22</sup>Theodore Laetsch, *Bible Commentary, The Minor Prophets*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1956, 428.

<sup>23</sup>Baldwin 124-125.



7d Vision of a woman in an ephah (5:5-11)  
It assures permanent removal of wickedness (cf. 5:8,11)

8d Vision of four chariots (6:1-8)  
It assures providential quieting of the earth so as to permit establishment of the reign of “the Man whose name is the Branch,” a priest-king (cf. 6:8,12,13)

2c The Symbolic Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

Why crown Joshua the priest instead of Zerubbabel the ruler? Priests usually wore a turban or mitre not a crown. Was this double tiered (gold and silver bands, the word crown is plural) indicative of the blending of the offices of priest and king in the role of Messiah/BRANCH?—possibly.

5-fold revelation regarding BRANCH (12-13):

[1] from His place He shall branch out pun on name...cf. Isa 53:2 come from unlikely, lowly origins but rise to prominence (Isa 52:13)

[2] He shall build the temple of Jehovah... Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the material temple and his hands would finish it BUT the Branch would build the temple of Jehovah. Some suggest that this is a reference to the church (cf. 1Pe 2:5; Eph 2:21ff, He 3:6) but it actually refers to the Millennial temple (Ezek 40 ff).

[3] He shall bear the glory loaded down with honor, majesty, and power...The throne promised him was the throne of his father, David (2Sa 7:11-14; Isa 9:6-7) which was the throne of Jehovah (Psa 2:6-7; 110:1). Actually, David’s royal throne was the throne of Jehovah (1Kgs 2:12; 1Chr 29:23).

[4] so He shall be a priest on His throne kingly and priestly offices combined in the throne of Branch...as in the case of his antitype, the “king of Salem and priest of Most High God” (Gen 14:18). Jehovah affirmed that the King would be “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (“king of righteousness – Psa 110:4)

[5] the counsel of peace shall be between them both peace will be provided by the Branch in his 2-fold office of king and priest. That his rule would bring in and be marked by peace has been made abundantly clear (Isa 9:6-7; Mic 5:5; cf. Eph 2:14, 17).

3c The Question of Fasting and Morality (7:1-8:23)

**NOTE>** The date notation in 7:1 indicates that the message comprising chapters 7-8 occurs a little over 2 years following the eight night visions of 1-6. The temple project appears to be progressing and

conditions in the land seem to be favorable (8:1-13 cf. Hag 2:19). It also suggests that Zechariah's ministry continued and he was probably a source of encouragement to the people all along. As in 6:10 these messages are stimulated by the coming of a delegation from Bethel or Babylon with a question about "weeping" and "separating themselves" which elicited a discourse on fasting which epitomizes both.

1d The question about fasting (7:1-7)

- Since the individuals named cannot be clearly identified, no attempt will be made...their names indicated their Babylonian origin whether Jew or gentile, but their identity is irrelevant to the greater message of the text re: worship.
- (5) all the people of the land all the Jews living in Judah and Jerusalem. (cf. Hag 2:4)
- (5-6) their fasting, like their eating and drinking, appears to be driven by self-interest. Similar accusation Isa 58:3
- **NOTE**> fasting has never been a lever to force God to send revival or blessings. Jonathan Edwards comments on the freedom of God's sovereignty in this regard:
  - Only one fast was authorized in the law, the fast of the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27). Other fasts were self-proclaimed and tended to bemoan tragedies. These serve only to perpetuate self-pity and not signal grief over sin (cf. Zech 8:19).
    - death of Gedaliah (Jer 41:15) 7<sup>th</sup> month
    - breach in walls by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 52:6-7) 4<sup>th</sup> month
    - beginning of seige of Jerusalem (2Kgs 25:1; Jer 52:4) 10<sup>th</sup> month
    - burning of Jerusalem and temple, 5<sup>th</sup> month
  - How often we have mocked God with hypocritical pretenses of humiliation, as in our annual days of public fasting and other things, while instead of reforming, we only grew worse and worse; how dead a time it was everywhere before this work began. If we consider these things, we shall be most stupidly ungrateful, if we don't acknowledge God's visiting of us as he has done, as an instance of the glorious triumph of free and sovereign grace.<sup>24</sup>

2d 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon—Reiteration of the words of the former prophets (7:8-14)

This paragraph provides an excellent summary of the message of the former prophets and some of their key words: truth, justice, and covenant love (Ho 4:1; Amos 5:24; Mic 6:8). These responses are looked for by Yahweh particularly in relationship to the poor and widows (Isa 1:17; Amos 2:6-7; 8:4).

3d Relevant Sayings (8:1-8)

1e *Yahweh is jealous for Zion* (v 2)

2e *Yahweh has returned to Zion* (v 3)

3e *The streets of Jerusalem will be filled with children* (vv 4-5)

4e *Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh?* (v 6)

5e *I will restore my covenant people to their land and their God* (vv 7- 8)

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<sup>24</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning Revival* p. 345. Quoted in John Piper, *A Hunger for God*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1997.

4d 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon—A sermon with promise and exhortation (8:9-17)

- message of encouragement in form of admonition...2 parts begin with *let your hands be strong* and end with *do not fear*. – “strengthen the hands” is term re: preparation for war (Jdg 7:9-11, 1Sa 23:15-17; Ezk 22:13-15)
- turning point in the message is verse 13 where Yahweh who was set against Israel is now for her...reminiscent of old cursing/blessing covenant idea.

5d Answer to the original question (8:18-19)

- regarding that “fasting question” 7:3, by now you understand that a new day is coming in which it is inappropriate to fast....let fasting give way to joy and gladness and cheerful feasts
- love truth and peace the opposite of those 2 was proscribed in v 17 and things God hates...

6d Conclusion—Universal Longing for God (8:20-23)

People from all over (cf 2:11) will flock to Jerusalem looking for their secret to joy and gladness, truth and peace. This implies the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant of Ge 12:3 “in you all the nations of the earth will be blest”

4c Judgment of the Nations (9:1-11:17)

**NOTE>** Several commentators separate the book of Zechariah into two parts, this being the beginning of part two. These last 6 chapters are significantly different both in content and style from the first 8. Chapter 9 begins with “the burden of the word of the Lord” as does 12:1 and Malachi 1:1, but the phrase has not occurred previously in the book. The names Joshua, Zerubbabel, Darius and Zechariah are not mentioned and there is no reference to rebuilding the temple. If the first 8 chapters are marked by peace and encouragement, the tone abruptly changes here to war and judgement.

These differences have led some to question whether Zechariah wrote this section. **However, there** are several similarities which tie the two together: Jerusalem and Zion play a significant role (1:12-16; 2:1-13; 9:8-10; 12:1-13; 14:1-21); the covenant community is cleansed as God's final act (3:1-9; 5:1-11; 10:9; 12:10; 13:1-2; 14:20-21); all nations eventually find their place in God's kingdom (2:11; 8:20-23; 9:7,10; 14:16-19); and the work of the former prophets is referenced.

1d Jerusalem protected from the nations because of the coming of her king (9:1-17)

1e Judgement on Israel's enemies (9:1-8)

1f Hadrach (v 1) - Older commentators found great difficulty with the word. Modern archaeologists identify it with the Hatarikka' of the Assyrian inscriptions, against whom Assur-dan III made expeditions. It also appears in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III. These inscriptions place it north of Lebanon but this is not yet definitely established. Others conclude from the meaning of the word, 'sharp-soft', or 'strong tender,' that it is used symbolically of the Medo-Persian Empire. This nation had been strong in conquest and in empire building, but it became soft later through its effeminate rulers. Hailey, 367).

2f Hamath, a region to the north and the gateway to Israel from the north. This land included the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

3f Tyre wisely built a stronghold ½ mile off shore from the mainland city. This fortress-city was surrounded by a double wall 150 feet high. Between this wall and the surrounding sea Tyre was considered impregnable. From this position she prospered greatly cultivating incredible strength and wealth via shipping. Notice Ezekiel's description of her (Ezek 27). Prophecies of her destruction (v 4 cf Ezek 26:5,12, 14). would have seemed quite remarkable since Tyre had resisted a 5-yr siege by the Assyrians and a 13 yr siege by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. For this reason they were not so not troubled by

Alexander who conquered the city in 7 months. He accomplished this by building a 200 foot wide land bridge which required 7 months of hard labor using stones, timber, and other materials from the remains of the old city and Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled (Ezek 26:5, 12, 14). Alexander's causeway remains to this day, a monument to the truth of Scripture and the folly of human arrogance.

## 2e Coming of the New King (9:9-10)

Israel's new King comes riding on a donkey which may indicate humility as opposed to a horse which suggests militarism.

### 1f nature of the King (9:9)

1g righteous – refers to the conduct of the king as he relates both to Yahweh and his people. He will keep his covenant with Yahweh (2Sam 23:1-7) and will rule his people with complete righteousness.

2g saved – not so much “having salvation” (KJV) as “bringing salvation”.

3g humble (poor) – this King will come as “meek and lowly” rather than arrogant and bombastic like so many of his predecessors!

**NOTE>** The present age of the church fits in between verses 9 and 10.

### 2f nature of his rule (9:10)

1g He will completely put an end to war (cf. Mic 5:10; Hos 2:18; Isa 2:4; 9:5; Psa 46:9)

2g He will bring peace to the nations – peace means “blessings” or “wholeness”

3g His rule will extend to the ends of the earth – cf Psa 72:8

## 3e Judah and Israel triumph over Greece (9:11-13)

The only time in history that the Jews battled against the Greeks was during the Maccabean era. After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., the empire divided into 3 parts: Greece itself, under a variety of rulers: the eastern lands, including Judah, under the Seleucids; and Egypt, under the Ptolemies. If Judah had been ruled by the milder Ptolemies, the nation might have drifted gently toward a pagan culture. But the Seleucid kings ruled ruthlessly. Moreover, they repeatedly offended the Jew' religious sensibilities. A climax came with the rule of Antiochus IV, known as Antiochus Epiphanes (175 -163 BC). He suspended the daily sacrifices, abolished the Sabbath, destroyed copies of the Scripture, forbade circumcision, and erected pagan altars.

To crown it all, in December, 167 BC, he introduced the cult of the Olympian Zeus into the temple by setting up a pagan altar and offering swine's flesh on it. This is probably the 'abomination that causes desolation' spoken of in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 ...The spark was struck in Modein, a little town in the hill country northwest of Jerusalem. A Syrian officer had demanded that the people make pagan sacrifices. But when a Jew came forward to make the sacrifice, a local priest named Mattathias rose up and killed both the Jew and the Syrian officer. Then he fled to the wilderness with his five sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. Others gathered around them, and a guerrilla war commenced.

When Mattathias died soon after the outbreak of the rebellion, leadership passed to Judas, who became known as Judas Maccabeus, which means 'the hammer.' Judas won stunning victories

against a number of Antiochus's generals and eventually occupied Jerusalem and purified the temple. The Maccabees were able to achieve a century of Jewish independence that lasted until the coming of the Roman ruler Pompey in 63 BC. (Boice, 195-196).

4e The ministry of Israel's Shepherd-King (9:14-10:12)

1f The Shepherd saves His people (9:14-17)

This fact is stated first in v 16 which follows the more militaristic language of Maccabean warfare. This salvation is more than deliverance since that had been "achieved" by the Maccabean revolt. This refers to God endowing his people with spiritual salvation. Consider the personal relationship in the words, "as the flock of His people" (16).

2f The Shepherd provides for His people (10:1-2)

This point is made in contrast to Israel's former experience (v 2). God had always stood ready to Shepherd them but their delusion was too strong.

3f The Shepherd protects His people (10:3-5)

1g majestic steed in battle –

2g cornerstone –

(Psa 118:22, 23 Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pe 2:4-5; Eph 2:19-22).

3g tent peg –

4g battle bow –

4f The Shepherd gathers His people (10.6-12).

Some of the terminology here is reminiscent of the exodus. This is a future regathering and not post-Babylonian exile since that was already history at this time. This regathering may have begun with the establishment of the permanent state of Israel in 1948 but it transcends that event and is yet to be fulfilled at a future time.

**NOTE>** While these 4 things are blessings for future Israel, they do reflect the work of Christ on our behalf as well. He is our 'Shepherd-king' as well and therefore we cherish Psa 23.

2d Worthless shepherds of Israel removed because of rejection of the true shepherd (11: 1 -17)

This chapter is a lamentation over the devastated and humiliated land since its glory has departed! The encouragements of chapters 9-10 are now followed by some of the darkest prophecies of the OT. The phrases are short and the words are harsh. They speak of an awesome outpouring of God's wrath on the land.

1e Judgement on the land (11:1-3)

The prophet uses poetic lamentation which includes personification (trees crying out) and describes a judgement that begins in the north and moves toward the south covering the land

completely. The result will be a nation grieving the loss of their land and their national pride for centuries. God used Rome to bring about this devastation.

- 2e Judgement on the people (11:4-6)
  - 1f Object lesson: Zechariah may well have “fattened a flock” for slaughter as an object lesson to people (v 4). That flock represented the nation of Israel and God used the Romans to slaughter them.
  - 2f The object lesson of verse 4 continues here when God calls Zechariah to “feed the flock of slaughter” (v 7). The prophet uses 2 staves (rod and staff cf Psa 23) to minister to the flock:
    - 1g “beauty” – God’s graciousness in tenderly caring for his covenant people
    - 2g “bands” – God’s purpose for his people is their unity and oneness
  - 3f Israel’s shepherds are removed and she is abandoned to herself (11:8, cf Rms 1:24)
  - 4f The “band of beauty” is broken, suggesting that the limits of grace God had imposed on Israel’s enemies is removed (11:9-10).
  - 5f Israel’s thanklessness is exposed (11:12-13)
  - 6f The staff called “band” is broken (14-16) indicating the disintegration of Israel. She is given over to “foolish shepherds” and has existed that way ever since.
  - 7f The “worthless shepherd (v 17) is probably a reference to anti-christ, throwing this prophecy into the tribulation period during which Israel will be cleansed and made ready for the Good Shepherd.

3d PRACTICAL INFERENCES: (Thomas Moore, quoted by Boice, 205-206)

- 1e No defense shall protect the wicked from punishment when God's time has come. Though they tower as high and strong as Lebanon, the storm shall bow their summits, and though they hide themselves as deep as the lairs in the creeping thickets of Jordan, the tempest shall find them out and wrap them in ruin (vv 1-3).
- 2e Sin is always folly & the sinner always a fool, for he secures the great evil of punishment in exchange for the small good of gratification & therefore always makes a fool's bargain (vv 4-5).
- 3e Wicked rulers are a curse from God on a wicked nation. As religion tends to prevent such rulers or at least prevent their choice, there is an obvious connection between politics and religion. Church and state may and ought to be separated; politics and religion ought not, for thus the state becomes exposed to the curse of God & political evil follows in the train of moral evil (v 6).
- 4e Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v. 7).
- 5e Union of feeling in a people is a mark of the favor of God, & disunion a token of his wrath (v 7).
- 6e Christ cannot be rejected with impunity. Even the Jews, who 'did it ignorantly in unbelief,' paid a terrible penalty for their crime; how much more terrible will be the punishment of those who have all their unbelief without any of their ignorance (vv 8-11).
- 7e Men now sometimes reject Christ for a far less reward than 30 pieces of silver, and of course with far more guilt than Judas (vv 12-13).
- 8e God may bear long with the wicked, but there is a point where the piling avalanche will cease to be held back and descend in fearful ruin (vv 14-17).

5c Second Burden (oracle)—Judgment of Israel (12:1-14:21)

These last 3 chapters contain another 'oracle' or "burden" corresponding to the previous one in chapters 9-11. The 1<sup>st</sup> was addressed to Hadrach, a gentile nation and this one concerns Israel herself. In the 1<sup>st</sup>

the gentile enemies of Israel are finally destroyed and Israel is given strength to overcome, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> has to do with the judgments of God through which Israel is finally purged so as to become the holy nation of Jehovah.

#### 1d Recognition of the rejected Messiah (12:1-14)

Having followed one false shepherd after another, God abandoned Israel to a leaderless fate of national disintegration and oppression. She has suffered and been severely oppressed over the centuries, the Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms, and Nazi Holocaust, to name a few of the more notable events. In the first Century Paul asked, "Has God cast away his people? Certainly not!" (Rms 11:1). The evidence behind that confidence is both in the nature of God (unchangeable and faithful to his word) and in the prophecies that follow in these chapters (Zech 12-14).

#### 1e Intervention of the Sovereign God (12:1-9)

- 1f Jerusalem will be a cup of drunkenness – the repeated outpourings of God's wrath on Israel (cup of drunkenness or trembling cf Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15,17, 28), will be given over to her enemies.
- 2f Jerusalem will be a heavy stone – probably the figure of the upper millstone that crushed the grain or the catapult stones hurled at enemy cities.
- 3f Jerusalem will be a blinding terror – afflicting the horses of her enemies with blindness and confusion
- 4f The governors of Judah will be a fiery torch – quickly igniting the enemy like a burning torch touching the dry sheaves of grain.
- 5f Jerusalem will fight mightily, but God is the power behind her who will claim victory (v 9)

#### 2e The final repentance of Israel (12:10-14)

**NOTE>** The conquest of her stubborn heart is a greater phenomenon even than the defeat of her enemies! This text demands the incarnation since Jehovah is spoken of as 'pierced', a challenging passage for average Rabbi (cf Isa 53: 5-6). Israel can only come to this thinking through the power of the Holy Spirit ("Spirit of grace and supplication"). This prophecy is fulfilled every time a Jew comes to Christ from Pentecost on, but ultimately, it is fulfilled nationally in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.

**NOTE>** This piercing couples with the Psa 34:20 prophesy that 'not a bone of his body would be broken' as two very remarkable predictions since both are quite unusual in the case of a crucifixion.

The whole cause of this unprecedented mourning will be the final realization that the One they have rejected for so long is their Messiah—Jesus Christ!

#### 2d Salvation of a remnant of a remnant (13:1-9)

This chapter is so closely related to the previous both chronologically and theologically that the break is unfortunate. The cleansing in 13 follows repentance in 12 as it always does (2Chron 7:14; 1 Jn 1:9).

#### 1e The fountain of Israel' cleaning (12:1)

This portrait of Jehovah as a fountain of cleansing from sin is richest "fountain imagery" in Scripture (cf Psa 36:9; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Ezk 36:25-26 ... John observed (19:34) 'a sudden flow of blood and water which reminded him, no doubt, of this text.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from 'Immanuel's veins,  
and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.  
The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;  
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.  
For since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my song and shall be till I die.  
Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more

(Wm Cowper)

Foul, I to the Fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die.  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee.

Augustus Toplady)

## 2e The effect of Israel's cleansing (12:2-6)

When the hearts of God's people are cleansed their entire culture lifestyle is transformed:

1f idols will be so thoroughly purged that even the memory of them will fade

2f zeal for God will be so great that false prophets will not be tolerated even among family members

3f those who formerly prophesied falsely will be so ashamed they will want to hide their identity and even explain away the scars of their former worship.

## 3e The price of Israel's cleaning (12:7-9)

1f the LAMB (Jesus) is smitten (12:7a)

**NOTE>** This is not a reference to the 3 false shepherds of 11:8 or the foolish shepherd of 11:15-17 but to the one true shepherd, Christ! The words, "my shepherd" and 'my companion" require this. In fact the 2<sup>nd</sup> phrase could be translated as 'my close relation" indicating one who shares essence and nature with the speaker who is Jehovah. Therefore the passage has to do with the *incarnation* and the *atonement*. As in Isa 53:4,6,10 God is shown striking his own son because it was his will for him to suffer purposefully.

2f the sheep (Israel) are scattered (12:7b-9)

**NOTE>** The immediate effect of this "smiting" will be scattering of the sheep which Jesus also predicted (Mt 26:31 cf. Mk 14:27). This will continue to be fulfilled until "that day." When Zechariah predicts that 2/3 will be cut off this is no exaggeration. In spite of the historic devastation in 70 AD and Bar Cochba's revolt a generation later and the purges in the Middle Ages when it seemed there were only about a million Jews left in the world and finally, Hitler's extermination of 6million Jews, YET there will be even a worse slaughter in the final days described as, 'the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7). BUT grace will be poured out on the remaining 1/3!



### 3d Establishment of the universal kingdom of God (14:1-21)

"Behold, the day of the Lord is coming!" – These words signal officially the "consummation of all things". For Bible interpreters who attempt to find all the OT prophecies fulfilled in history or in the church, this is a very difficult chapter. Martin Luther wrote two commentaries on Zechariah. The first he did ended with 12:9 and in the second he said on 14, 'Here, in this chapter, I give up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about.'<sup>25</sup> The "problem" with this chapter is that nothing in it fits historic events, but that problem is resolved by understanding it to refer to a yet future time when these amazing events will certainly occur.

#### 1e Jerusalem's great defeat (14:1-2)

By the end of the Tribulation period, Israel will be in a desperate and demoralized condition. The armies of the nations will have gathered against her (v 2; 12:3). This is the final effort of the nations to drive Israel into the Sea and they nearly succeed. Half of the population will be taken captive and the city of Jerusalem will have suffered its final defeat. But, just then, the Covenant-faithful God of Israel will make his glorious appearance and Jerusalem will once again be the "city of peace" (v 11).

1f there will be a Jewish population in and around Jerusalem.

2f the nations of the world will gather against Israel.

3f God, in the midst of Israel's seeming defeat, will come to her rescue

#### 2e Jerusalem's great deliverance (14:3-11) – The second coming of Christ!

1f a grand appearance (14:3-4a, cf Acts 1:11)

2f a great deliverance – 14:4b-5)

As Christ's feet touch the Mt of Olives, the mountain splits in two from east to west creating a valley of escape for the remnant of Israel in Jerusalem. This may well be the Valley of Jehoshaphat ("Jehovah will judge") referred to by Joel (3:2, 12).

3f a redeemed army (14:5b)

4f a unique daylight (14:6-7)

5f a living river (14:8)

#### 3e Jerusalem's great King – "AND THE LORD SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH" (14:9

This is the moment in time that all believers live and long for! Human history has been long under the grip of sin with all of its curses and afflictions, but this verse brings hope that one day it will all change when Christ comes back to rule and reign on earth.

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<sup>25</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 20, *Lectures on the Minor Prophets: III, Zechariah* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1973), 337.

1f a universal rule from Jerusalem (14: 10-11)

2f a universal destruction of Israel's enemies (14:12-15)

3f a universal worship of Christ (14:16-21)

God has not forgotten his covenant people!

5b Lasting Value of the Book

1c The secret of strength is not in the "things that are seen, but the things that are unseen" (2Cor 4:17).

2c God answers genuine repentance with forgiveness followed by restoring grace.

3c When people truly believe the promises of God, the proof is strength to persevere.

4c God's people will ultimately succeed "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord"

5c True religion includes justice and compassion for the otherwise afflicted among us (7:9-10).

6c The day is coming when Yahweh will rule and reign over all the earth in peace!

## 12. Malachi 433

### 1b Author and Date

- 1c Malachi is identified as the author in 1:1 of the text and his name means, "my messenger." The name here corresponds exactly to the word, "my messenger" in 3:1 and "my angel" in Zechariah 1:9,11.
- 2c Apart from the book we know very little about Malachi and little is revealed in his writing.

### 2b Historical Background

- 1c Whereas most of the prophets lived and ministered in turbulent times of social, political, and/or spiritual upheaval, Malachi's epoch is more a transitional period punctuating no particular crisis or impending disaster.
- 2c During the uneventful days of Malachi's ministry God seems to have forgotten his people struggling along in poverty and foreign domination in Judah. Both Zerubbabel and Joshua, whom Haggai and Zechariah had heralded as God's instruments for a "new day" in Judah, had died and hopes of prosperity seemed to have been buried with them. The temple had been completed but Ezekiel's promise of Yahweh returning to fill it was yet unfulfilled (Ezek 43:4-5). Religious ritual were perpetuated with perfunctory precision but without enthusiasm. Where was the God of their fathers? Does it really matter if we serve him or not? These questions appear to be plaguing one generation after another who looked with waning faith for the promises (Heb 11:13).

Malachi's prophecy is particularly relevant to the many waiting periods in human history and in the lives of individuals. He enables us to see the strains and temptations of such times, the imperceptible abrasion of faith that ends in cynicism because it has lost touch with the living God. Even more important, he shows the way back to a genuine, enduring faith in the god who does not change (Mal 3:6), who invites men to return to Him (3:7), and never forgets those who respond (3:16).

– J. Baldwin (211)

- 3c The only historical reference in Malachi is the destruction of Edom (1:3-5). This may refer to Nebuchadnezzar's campaign in 587 BC or, more likely, the incursion of Nabatean Arabs who totally drove out the Edomites between 550 and 400 BC. The strongest clues as to the date of Malachi's writing are to be found in several close parallels with Nehemiah. Most scholars readily agree that Malachi and Nehemiah shared some obvious concerns:
  - 1d Marriage of heathen wives (Mal 2:11-15 and Neh. 12:23-27)
  - 2d Neglect in paying tithes (Mal 3:8-10 and Neh 13:10-14)
  - 3d Disregard of the Sabbath (Mal 2:8-9 and Neh 13:15-22)
  - 4d Corruption of the priesthood (Mal 1:6-2:9 and Neh 11-9)
  - 5d Existence of social wrongs (Mal 3:5 and Neh 5:1-13<sup>26</sup>)
- 4c Based on these observations and others there is general consensus that Malachi functioned as something of a forerunner who laid the groundwork for Nehemiah's extensive reforms following his return in approximately 433 BC.

### 3b Message of Malachi

- 1c The heart of Malachi's message is that of God's unfailing love for a people who saw little evidence of it and were not adverse to saying so. He reminds them that the glory of Israel's history was bound up in their fellowship with Yahweh and their shameful past had everything to do with their infidelity to that

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<sup>26</sup> Kaiser, Walter. *Malachi, God's Unchanging Love*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book Co., 1984), 16.

fellowship. Morgan summarizes the message of Malachi in the following three revelations:<sup>27</sup>

1d Revelation of the unfailing love of Jehovah

Malachi's opening statement is a very concise but forceful declaration of this truth. Malachi cataloged seven cardinal sins of Israel, any one of which would have justified divine wrath. But his purpose is not to warn of impending judgment for their sins but to help them see that their sins are a monstrous affront to love and therefore an assault on the heart of God. When seen this way, sin becomes a greater offense to a redeemed people.

2d Revelation of human failure

Malachi's message reveals that all motives other than genuine love fail to preserve fellowship in the context of love. It is possible to do all the right things outwardly but unless obedience is inspired by love, communion with God breaks down. When love dies a hardness sets in which makes God's people blind to the continuity of God's love. This, then, becomes the irrational justification for all other sins. When we hear Israel's response to Malachi's banner declaration— "Wherein have you loved us?" we can no longer be shocked at the list of charges the prophet brings against them.

3d Revelation of the secrets of strength in an age of failure

These secrets of strength are to be discovered by observing the two-fold response of the people to the preaching of Malachi (3:16). They meditated on the name of Yahweh and they spoke continually to one another about him . They found what Solomon also found, namely that, "the name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe (Prov 18;10). They literally took inventory of the attributes of Yahweh expressed in his names and made those wonders the inspiration of their conversation and growing hope. The Lord responded to their renewed faith, hearing every word and responding with expressions of the love he never ceased to have for them. Furthermore, they were strengthened by the prophetic word regarding the "Son of Righteousness who shall arise with healing in his wings" (4:2), another proof of God's unfailing love for them.

4b Outline and Comments

1c A Call to Respond to God's Love (1:1-5)

The theme of 1<sup>st</sup> message—God's love for his people—is theme of entire book.

1d Characteristics of God's love (Norman H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the OT*, quoted by Kaiser, 21-23.)

1e Sovereign – No necessity or compulsion on him who is Lord of all.

2e Unconditional – The motivation for God's love is always on his side, usually "for the sake of his name" (2Kgs 19:34; 20:6; Psa 22:3; 25:12; 31A 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; Isa 37:35; 43:25; 48:11; Jer 14:7,21; Ezk 20:9,22,44; cf Dt 7:7- 8).

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<sup>27</sup>Morgan, 175-176.

3e Personal – Moses found it arresting that the God to whom "belong the heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it" should *in the face of all this* ("yet" in v 15) set his affection personally on Israel and their descendants (Dt 10:14-15; cf Hos 11:4).

2d Nature of God's love (1:1-3)

1e It is an electing love (1: 1 -3)

2e It is a righteous love (1:4)

3e It is a universal love (1:5)

2c A Call to Be Authentic (1:6-14) – God looks for authenticity in four areas:

**NOTE**>The connection with the preceding context is clear. Having established proof of Yahweh's unfailing love, Malachi moves on to point out why that love is not so readily apparent. It was because of Israel's indifference, carelessness, and half-heartedness on the part of both spiritual leadership and the people. The call to be authentic is compelling: "In direct proportion to which mortals grasp the greatness of the person, character, and attributes of God (his name), to that degree will their own inadequacies, falseness, and diluted worship take on credibility, substance, acceptance, and posture" (Kaiser, 33).

1d In our profession (1:6-7)

Israel is referred to as 'servant of the Lord' 20 times from Isaiah 41:8 - 53:11. The term variously refers specifically to Jacob, believers in Israel, and the Messianic scion of Israel. God had chosen Israel as "son" (Ex 4:22; Hos 11:11; Jer 31:9) and "servant" (Ex 3:12; 9:11; 1Sam 3:9; 1Kgs 8:66; Ezra 5:11; Zech 3:9), roles indicating both privilege and service. It is this dual role that the prophet addresses here.

2d In our gifts (1:8-9)

These verses call Israel (us) to be real, authentic, credible men and women specifically in the gifts we bring to God. Gifts that are of little worth to us will be of little worth to God. There is a sense in which this kind of defective gift-giving is a violation of the command, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"

3d In our service (1:10-12)

These polluted services of the priests are so distasteful that Malachi offers the outrageous recommendation: "Someone lock the door and bar further access to the temple. Shut these wicked priests out - It would be better to board up the church than to carry on such shameful perversions of worship! This kind of worship is unacceptable for three reasons:

1e failure in purpose –

2e failure in calling –

3e failure in faith –

4d In our joy (1:13-14)

Hypocritical worship is never self-sustaining, it always results in boredom. 3-fold evidence:

1e words –

2e attitudes –

3e actions –

The reason, that such action was so reprehensible is because of who God is! His authenticity is indisputable, it is we who need to become more authentic in our profession, our gifts, our service, and our time—especially, because he is the great King and it is his sovereign and sacred purpose that his name be exalted in all the earth!

3c A Call to Love God Totally (2:1-16)

Malachi turns again to the priests, but his words can be applied widely to those in ministry since he speaks not of priestly issues but regarding their teaching role, their regard for God's people, and their

treatment of their wives. Failure to be authentic is serious, but notably so in those who teach (Jms 3:1). More fundamental than our teaching is our aim to glorify God in all things which requires thorough authenticity.

1d Love for God's glory (2:1-4)

This is a call for serious thought and action ("lay it to heart"). Glory carries the idea of weight or of sheer gravity of presence, more than renown. So central is the glory of God to life and ministry, that everything which failed to measure up became empty and hollow.

2d Love for God's Word (2:5-9)

The very continuance of Levitical priesthood at stake. The "covenant with Levi" is not mentioned other than in references like Jer 33:20-21 and Ne 13:29. Truth, as sacred trust on lips of priests was to be:

1e True –

2e Bold –

3e Redemptive –

4e Impartial –.

3d Love for God's people (2:10-12)

The failure to teach and model truth quickly reflects itself in community morality including the collapse of marriage and family. The unfaithfulness of the priests was reflected in the people... "water can only rise to the level of its source"

1e because of common origin –

2e because of common obligation –

**NOTE**> Both OT and NT emphasize the individual's relationship to the "body". Two important texts in the NT seem to be saying same thing but "number" tells the story! 1Cor 6:19-21 uses *singular*, while 1Cor 3:3:16-17 uses *plural*. The idea that the individual is more important than the body is unbiblical.

#### 4d Love for God's gift of a marriage partner (2:13-16)

The way they were viewing marriage was a significant issue with God. The phrase, "this...second thing you do," implies that divorce is just as serious an offense as marrying idolaters. But they didn't get it—"We may be violating our marriage covenants, but why doesn't God answer our prayers? Maybe we need to shed tears!" God's people very often substitute emotion for obedience! These marriages were not simply human contracts but they had been entered into with God as witness. That marriage is viewed as a covenant (legally binding contractual relationship) is seen elsewhere (Pro 2:17; Ezk 16:8)

Three phrases illustrate the significance of the marriage relationship and thus, the seriousness of offense:

1e "wife of your youth" –

2e "your companion" –

3e "wife of your covenant" –

**NOTES**> Malachi refers to Gen 2:24 as did Jesus in Mt 19:4-6 cf. Mk 10:7-8. The thought is as follows: "Why did God make Adam and Even only "one flesh" when he might have given Adam many wives? God certainly had more than enough of the Spirit, or his creative power, in reserve to furnish many partners? However, our God was seeking a godly offspring, and such plurality would not have been consistent with this result" (Kaiser, 71-72).

When God says, "I hate divorce", this is the strongest protest against divorce in Scripture. It is not a contradiction with Dt 24:1 since that passage did not condone, it but only provided limited protection for the victim. God hates divorce but he loves justice!

#### 4c A Call to Trust an Unchanging God (2:17-3:12)

It is not uncommon when circumstances are difficult, for those who know God least to complain of his unfairness and unfaithfulness and even to deny his providence. For these Jews, 100 years beyond the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (520 BC), no changes were apparent and none seemed immanent. However, to the spiritually perceptive, it was obvious that they had willfully neglected the most important of God's commands while meticulously keeping the least significant ones. Their blindness to personal guilt also twisted their theological conclusions (2:17).

2 unchanging qualities:

1d Our God is just—the issue at stake (2:17-3:6)

The charges of verse 17 were not only wrong but monstrous perversions of truth. They knew better. This attempt to justify their own wickedness was an abomination to the Lord (Pro 17:15). The



Hebrew word for “delight” is used properly when God “delights” in his law being kept (Isa 56:4), in “mercy “ and “knowledge of God” (Hos 6:6), in “justice, covenant love, and a humble walk with God” (Mic 6:8), or in “truth (Psa 51:8). These scorners reversed all this.

“Where is the God of justice?” – The God of justice would be revealed in 5 ways:

1e In his preparation (3:1a)

2e In his coming (3:1b-2)

3e In his refining (3:3-4)

4e In his judgment (3:5)

5e In his long-suffering (3:6)

**NOTE>** The focus of this paragraph is found in verse 6, “I the Lord do not change.” In a world where everything is subject to change: economy, styles, technology, medicine, aging, etc. God is unchanging in his nature, attributes, qualities, being, and person (Jms 1:17). This does not mean that God is inflexible. God can change his actions like any other sovereign being (God is the only completely sovereign one), but what he cannot and does not change is the basis of these decisions—his person.

2d Our God is faithful (3:7-12)

God has proven faithful to his commitment to mercy at an extraordinary level since he did not change his intent throughout Israel's long and rebellious history.

1e In his call (3:7)

2e In his challenge (3:8-10)

"Will a man rob God?" – This embarrassing issue was but one illustration of God's unchanging expectation met by Israel's unfailing neglect. God had required tithes since the very beginning (Cain and Abel, Gen 4; Abraham and Melchizedek, Gen 14:20, and in the law). Nearly every "revival" in Israel was marked by a renewal in this area (Neh 10:38ff; 2Chron 31:5-19).

3e In his promise (3:11-12)

God gave Israel a 2-fold promise by which they could test his faithfulness:

1f to release "floodgates" or abundant rains (Dt 28:12; 2Kgs 7:2,19)

2f to "rebuke the devourer" (probably locusts)

The fulfillment of these promises would include the nations calling Israel "blessed"—What a generous and great God! Contrary to Israel's delusion, God was not indifferent, he was simply waiting for them to meet the long-standing conditions for the blessing he was so eager to pour out!

5c A Call to Take Inventory (3:13-4:6)

The "worldly church" is not a new phenomenon! These Jews were like many modern believers who suppose God owes them something for attending and possibly serving, however grudgingly. "Serving God is no longer 'profitable' for us...others are prospering even in arrogance and wickedness, so God's standards have surely changed." Inauthentic worship demands immediate gratification.

1d Is it vain to serve the Lord? (3:13-18)

1e. The proud complainers (3:13-15)

Godly people have questioned God's actions and motives (Job, Asaph, Habakkuk) but never in such blatantly disdainful terminology and with such heretical conclusions. Their sin was 3-fold:

1f wrong method – "

2f wrong attitude –

3f wrong words –

2e The believing God-fearers (3:16-18)

Theirs was an entirely different kind of conversation. They spoke concerning God, his name, and reasons to fear him.”

1f they “feared his name” –

2f they “thought on his name” –

3f they belonged to God

1g “a book of remembrance” –

2g “they will be mine. . . treasured possession”

2d Is there no difference between the wicked and the righteous? (4:1-3)

1e. The destiny of the proud (4:1)

2e. The destiny of the righteous (4:2-3)

3d Are there no guides for righteousness? (4:4-6)

Perhaps Malachi wished to remind the God-fearers once more that the final victory promised in 4:2-3 required faithfulness to revealed truth.

1e. Yes—the law of Moses (4:4-6)

2e. Yes—my Elijahs, the prophets (4:5-6)

5b Lasting Value of the Book

- 1c Regardless of circumstances, believers can be absolutely confident in God's unfailing love.
  
- 2c Fellowship with God can thrive only on the basis of obedience inspired by love.
  
- 3c Sin becomes more offensive when seen as an offense to God's love.
  
- 4c Hypocritical worship cannot sustain, it always degenerates into meaningless boredom.
  
- 5c The state of our marriages reflects on the quality of our worship.
  
- 6c Holy fellowship celebrates the attributes of God.
  
- 7c Righteousness will triumph finally and completely over wickedness.