

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 1: “An Introduction into the Prophets”

OVERVIEW: What comes to your mind when you hear the word minor? One may think of a young child who is not yet the age of eighteen. Others may think of something that is lessor or weaker. We may think in terms of professional sports versus minor league sports. When it comes to the prophets in the Bible some may consider Isaiah or Jeremiah to be greater prophets than Joel or Jonah only because Bible scholars placed them into major and minor categories, while the only real reason they are categorized this way is because of the volume of their content is lessor not their message. There is nothing minor concerning the message and truth that comes from the Lord. Though brief in their message from the Lord, the messages from the minor prophets are powerful and speak to the needs of our days just as much as it did for those in their days.

SETTING & ORIGIN:

What is a Prophet?: A prophet was God’s spokesman to convey His word through a direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. Three Hebrew words are used for prophets in the Old Testament:

- *nabi* - A man who is inspired to speak. This word is used over 312 times in the Old Testament. It can also refer to heathen and false prophets.
- *roeh* - A “seer.” Usually used in the context of seeing a vision. Samuel was referred to seven times as a “seer” for instance in 1 Samuel 9:9 where it first occurs.
- *Hozeh* - Was also translated as “seer” and was first used in 2 Samuel 24:11.

An occasion where all three were used is found in 1 Chronicles 29:29. “Samuel the seer (roeh), Nathan the prophet (nabi), Gad the seer (hozeh).”

The Origin of a Prophet: Prophets have had a very important part in the Lord’s dealings with His people. They were the mouthpiece of God. Just as Aaron was the mouthpiece for Moses (Ex. 7:1), so the prophets are for the Lord to His people Israel and the gentile nations. The first person in the Bible to be called a prophet was Abraham (Gen. 20:6-7). Abimelech king of Gerar took Abraham’s wife, Sarah. God kept Abimelech from sinning and commanded him to restore her to Abraham saying of him, “he is a prophet...” (nabi). Even though Enoch was a prophet, Abraham was the first person designated by the Lord as a prophet. Since then, the Lord has raised up many to be prophets and were chosen from many walks of life. Moses was adopted by an Egyptian princess and received a prince’s education (Ex. 2:5-10; Acts 7:21-22). Ezekiel and Jeremiah were priests, David was a shepherd, warrior, king, poet and a prophet. Amos was a herdsman (Amos 1:1). Elisha a plowman (1 Ki. 19:15-21). Daniel was groomed to be a governmental administrator (Dan. 2:48). From all these backgrounds, the Lord chose His spokesman to be His messenger, His prophet.

The Need for a Prophet: The origin of the prophets began as part of God’s plan and purpose for Israel as a nation through whom all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 3:15; 12:3b). The intent and purpose of God giving Israel the Law was that He wanted Israel to be His special treasure for His divine purpose of becoming a “kingdom of priest and a holy nation” among the nations (Ex.

19:5-6; Deut. 4:6-8). This purpose could not be fulfilled if they followed into the beliefs and practices of other nations. Other nations and peoples used illegitimate and demonic methods to discern the future or divine will (divination) which was condemned by God's Law (Deut. 18:9-14). How then would the Lord make His will known to His people as they prepared to enter into the promise land before Moses' death? God spoke through Moses a true and legitimate means by raising prophets up like Moses from the people of Israel that they must listen to (Deut. 18:15-22).

One may ask, why did the Lord need to send prophets to His people in the Old Testament to communicate His will? Why couldn't the Lord just speak to all His people as He needed? The writer of Hebrews gives us some insight looking back to answer the question why.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” - Hebrews 1:1-2.

During the old testament times, God spoke in a variety of ways to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2ff), to Elijah in a still, small voice (1 Ki. 19:12ff), to Isaiah in a vision in the temple (Isa. 6:1ff), to Hosea in his family circumstances (Hos. 1:2), and to Amos in a basket of summer fruit (Am. 8:1). God, during those times chose to speak to individuals through visions and dreams, through angels, through Urim and Thummim, through symbols, through natural events, etc. He did this as He appeared in various locations such as Ur, Haran, Canaan, Egypt, and Babylon. This is how God spoke to the forefathers (the patriarchs) and the prophets “long ago.” To answer the question: This is how God chose to speak to His people.

But now, “in these last days” the Lord now speaks to us “in His Son.” During the old testament times, the Holy Spirit came only upon a particular person (Num. 11:26-29; 1 Sa. 10:6-12; Eze 37). Thus, prophecy and the knowledge of God's will came upon the person to whom He raised up for a particular purpose and time. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost changed all this. But now the hour has come and the days of the Lord are here upon us as Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God stepped into time and put on human flesh and at His appointed hour became the propitiation for our sin and by His death on the cross and by the power of His resurrection we not only have redemption and eternal life, but His Spirit indwelling within us.

What the Lord chose to do in these “last days” becomes of the utmost significance both theologically and practically for God's people as the body of Christ, the Church. The relationship of the Spirit to the members of the body of Christ became much more intimate and personal at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the Spirit who “lives with you...will be in you” (Jn. 14:17).¹ The long awaited prophesy by Joel 2:28-32 was being fulfilled as the Apostle Peter cites. It was part of God's redemptive design validated by His outpouring of His Spirit on man as they prophesied and preached a message of salvation and a call for repentance.

¹ Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition

Another reason why there was a need for a prophet was because the people of Israel did not want to hear the voice of the Lord as they did in Horeb for they were afraid of Him.

“This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.’” - Deut. 18:16

The people of Israel literally feared for their lives when they heard God speak from the Mountain and saw His awesome power on display. Therefore, they requested of the Lord not to hear directly from Him. Thus the Lord spoke through Moses concerning how he will raise up from among their own countrymen a prophet that they were to listen to (Deut. 18:15-22). The Lord approves their request by stating that they “have spoken well.” - v. 17

The Selection of a prophet: (Deut. 18:15-22)

1. *The Lord will raise up the prophet (v. 15).* The first thing we notice about the selection of prophets is that they are “raised up” by God. The word “raised” in the Hebrew has many applications from “ordained, stir up, confirm, strengthen and succeed.” Israel would be wholly dependent on the Lord in whom He sends as a prophet.
2. *The prophet will be for the people (v. 15).* Who were these prophets for? They were for the people of Israel and/or other gentile nations. The nation of Israel were to be God’s Holy priest and nation. They were to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3). Knowing their bent to be disobedient, the Lord laid out special promises and warning spelled out in Deuteronomy 28-30 in the chapters of blessings and curses. The prophets would be sent to the people and their messages are to be seen in the light of this background. They would be for the people to remind them of the Lord and His Word and purposes.
3. *The prophet will come from their own countrymen (v. 15).* Moses also tells the people that the prophet that the Lord will raise up for them will be like him (Moses). Meaning, that the prophet will come “from among you, from your countrymen.” He or they will be an Israelite.
4. *The people must listen to the prophet as He speaks the words of God (v. 15, 18, 19).* The Lord would hold all accountable who do not listen and obey the words spoken by the prophet who speaks in His name. Just as important, God will also hold responsible the prophet himself. The primary function of the prophet is to be the Lord’s spokesman, just as Moses was for the Lord. This prophet would receive and speak only those things committed to them by the Lord (v.18). So great their authority handed to them by the Lord that anyone who disobeyed their word would have disobeyed God’s word and be held accountable.
5. *The prophet who speaks presumptuously in the Lord’s name will be put to death (v.20).* The prophet spoken of here is a false prophet. A false prophet of the Lord is one who proclaims a

false message or speak presumptuously for the Lord and he is also one who is a prophet of a false god, such as the prophets of ba'al. The punishment for being a false prophet was certain death.

6. *The prophet's message is authenticated when it comes true or comes about (v. 22).* The Lord provides a means for the people to be able to identify who is a true prophet and which is a false prophet. The Lord simply tells them that if what the prophet says does not come true, then he is a false prophet and has spoken not on God's behalf and thus they should not fear him because his words are unreliable.

The Message of the Prophet: The message of the prophet was not to proclaim just doom and gloom. The prophet also presented a message of good news, salvation and the hope of the coming glory of the Lord. The prophet proclaimed the message as given to him, as the "seer" beheld the vision of God (Num. 12:6-8). The prophet, as God's spokesman, spoke in God's name and by His authority (Ex. 7:1). The prophet is the mouth by which God speaks to men (Jer. 1:9; Isa. 51:16), and hence what the prophet says is not of man but of God (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Heb. 3:7; Acts 4:25; 28:25). The message of the prophets commonly includes four things:²

1. Condemnation (the description of offense).
2. Judgment (the pending punishment because of offense).
3. Instruction (the instruction for repentance and obedience).
4. Hope (the message of deliverance and restoration).

From these four things a true prophet:

- Reveals the nature and attributes of God to men (Deut. 5:4-10; Lev. 19:1-4).
- Makes known the laws of God to men (Ex. 20:1-7).
- Leads the people back to the Lord and His laws (2 Chron. 24:19).
- Exhorts the people to worship the Lord with sincere hearts (Jer. 7:1-11).
- Warns the people of God's judgement concerning personal and national sin (Jer. 36:30-31).
- Foretells the events in the future that the Lord has sovereignly willed (Jer. 30:1-3).
- Foretells of the coming Messiah, the Savior (Isa. 9:6).
- Gives an account of God's dealings with men (Deut. 31:9-13).
- Dictates and records the Word of God as divinely inspired Scripture (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Deut. 31:22; Jer. 36:27-28).

The list above reads more like a job description rather than message content. But, these are the things the Lord wanted the prophet to communicate to His people. The main subject of the prophet's message is the Lord.

It's all about God: When we boil it all down, all prophecy is God's revelation concerning Himself. It is not about the people, nor the times. It is all about the glory of the Lord and His plan

² Notes and chart from "A Survey of the Old Testament", Andrew E. Hill, p. 409

of redemption. Through the prophets we get to know God? We get to know what He has done in the past (history) and by what his plans are for the future (prophecy). This history and prophecy ought to create an awesome perspective for the creator and His sovereign plan.³

What is prophecy? When we speak of the prophets and their prophecies, what do we mean? Is it fore-telling (insight into the future things) or forth-telling (proclamation of truth)? The message of the prophet was not entirely based on prophetic fore-telling, but forth-telling as well. At certain times the Lord would raise up among the people to correct moral and religious abuses, to proclaim the great moral and religious truths which are connected with the character of God, and which lie at the foundation of His government.⁴ As a foreteller, the prophet was inspired by God to peel back the impenetrable veil of the future to give glimpses of things to come. Yet, as a forth-teller, the prophet was the inspired spokesman for and by God to deliver condemnations concerning prevalent sins, calling for repentance and reform, and declaring God's hope of salvation and His purposes for His people and mankind.⁵

The Ministry and Times of the Prophets:

Concerning the times of the minor prophets: As noted earlier, it was the Lord's desire to have a people unto Himself to be His light among the gentiles. They could only be this light as long as they did not conform to the practices of the heathen nations. Again, as mentioned earlier, the Lord predicting their fall into worldly conformity lays out for them through Moses a series of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28-30. When the northern kingdom (ten-tribe nation of Israel) separated itself from the Davidic kingdom at the close of Solomon's reign, idolatry was introduced by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, when he instituted calf-worship as the state religion. Since then, the Lord sent prophets to this kingdom with a wakeup call of miracles, and scathing denunciations which did not deter the kings who led the kingdom into further sin and finally captivity.⁶

The chart on the next page concerns itself with the writing prophets (major and minor) and their place in history. They are placed not in Biblical cannon order as your old testament may list them, but in order as they came on the scene in history. The first column tells us the audience to whom they spoke to. There were mainly four people groups that made up their audience. The people of Nineveh, Edom, Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom). Then the next three categories (Pre-exilic, Exilic, and Post-exilic) are the times before, during and after the people of Israel were taken into captivity. Finally you will note the place where their ministry took place in each century. Each prophet is listed with the approximate date of their ministry and where in the old testament their ministry took place. Prophets whose names are in all capital

³ Andrew E. Hill, "A Survey of the Old Testament," p. 410

⁴ "Easton's Bible Dictionary", Prophet.

⁵ John Phillips, "Exploring the Minor Prophets", p. 9

⁶ Exploring the Minor Prophets", John Phillips, p. 15

letters are the four major prophets and those listed in lower case letters are the twelve minor prophets.

PLACING THE WRITING PROPHETS						
AUDIENCE	Pre-exilic Prophets			Exilic Prophets	Post-Exilic Prophets	
	<u>9th Century BC</u>	<u>8th Century BC</u>	<u>7th Century BC</u>	<u>6th Century BC</u>		<u>5th Century BC</u>
EMPIRES		ASSYRIANS		BABYLONIANS	PERSIANS	
To the Gentile Nations		Jonah - <i>(to Nineveh before their fall)</i> (785-770 BC) 2 Kings 13-14	Nahum <i>(to Nineveh before their fall)</i> (645-620) (2 Kings 21-23 / Jonah / Isaiah 10 / Zephaniah 2:13-15)	Obadiah (to Edom) (592-572) (2 Kings 25 / 2 Chron. 36:11-21)		
To Israel		Amos (765-755) (2 Kings 14:23-15:7) Hosea (755-715) (2 Kings 15:1-18:1)				
To Judah	Joel (830-820) (2 Kings 11-12)	ISAIAH (739-690) (2 Kings 15-20 / 2 Chron. 26-32) Micah (736-700) 2 Kings 15:8-20:21 / 2 Chron. 27-32 / Isaiah 7-8 / Jeremiah 26:17-19)	Habakkuk (620-575) (2 Kings 23:31-24:20 / 2 Chron. 36:1-10) Zephaniah (635-625) (2 Kings 22-25 / 2 Chron. 34:1-36:4) JEREMIAH (627-575) (2 Kings 22-25 / 2 Chron. 34:1-36:21)	DANIEL (605-536) (2 Kings 23:35-25:30 / 2 Chron. 36:5-23 / Ezra 1-4) EXEKIEL (593-558) (2 Kings 24:17-25:30 / 2 Chron. 36:11-21)	Haggai (520-505) (Ezra 1-6) Zechariah (520-490) (Ezra 1-6)	Malachi (435-395) (Nehemiah 8-13)

A synopsis of the minor prophets: Concerning the twelve minor prophets from this chart, a synopsis below provides a simple overview of approximately when the prophets served, which king ruled during their ministry, and the theme of their message. Unfortunately, neither the kings nor the people of Israel listened, which led to the captivity of both the northern kingdom by the Assyrians

(722 b.c.) and the southern kingdom by the Babylonians (605 b.c.). These Israelites who once numbered as the stars in the sky under the flourishing reigns of David and Solomon would diminish to be just a few in number, a small remnant protected by the restraining hand of the Lord by the end of the period of the prophets. The Lord Himself would use this remnant as promised by these same prophets to fulfill His promise to send His King, His Son who was to come and save His people from their sins.

- **Joel** “*Jehovah is God*”- 830-820 B.C. - served during the reign of the Joash (Judah). He proclaimed God’s judgment and salvation.
- **Jonah** “*Dove*”- 785-770 B.C. - served during the reign of Jeroboam II (Israel). He proclaimed judgement against the Assyrian city of Nineveh which God spared when they repented.
- **Amos** “*Burden Bearer*”- 765-755 B.C. - served during the reign of Jeroboam II (Israel). He preached confronting social justice and social righteousness.
- **Hosea** “*Salvation*”- 755-715 B.C. - served during the reigns of Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea (Israel). He proclaimed God’s love out of his own experience of heartbreak.
- **Micah** “*Who is like Jehovah*” - 736-700 B.C. - served during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Heekiah (Judah). He preached God’s judgement and deliverance.
- **Nahum** “*Consolation*” - 645-620 B.C. - served during the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, Josiah (Judah). His message predicted the fall of Nineveh.
- **Zephaniah** “*Hidden by Jehovah*” - 635-625 B.C. - served during the reign of Josiah (Judah). He preached concerning the coming day of the Lord.
- **Habakkuk** “*Embraced*” - 620-575 B.C. - served during the reign of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (Judah). He asked the Lord questions concerning His inactivity of punishing sin.
- **Obadiah** “*Worshipper of Jehovah*” - 592-572 B.C. - He preached against Edom for abusing the people of Israel.
- **Haggai** “*Festal*” - 520-505 B.C. - Served during the reign of Zerubbabel, Darius I (Persian). He exhorted the return remnant to rebuild the temple.
- **Zechariah** “*Remembered by Jehovah*” - 520-490 B.C. - He preached also to encourage the people to finish the rebuilding of the temple.
- **Malachi** “*My Messenger*” - 520-490 B.C. - He preach concerning the sanctity of marriage and the need for true worship.

The Benefit of Studying the Minor Prophets: Now, for the question as to why we need to study the minor prophets today. For that, I turn to 2 Timothy 3:16 for concluding thoughts on this:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” - 2 Tim. 3:16

1. **First, we see that the minor prophets were inspired by God.** God’s word never passes away. The word “inspired” in the greek is “God-Breathed.” This means it came from God, not man. The words written by these twelve men were not self initiated, nor were they an act of their own human will. The words they penned were not meant to be private, but for public

proclamation as God worked in them under the control of the Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:21). God's Word is not just for a temporary moment, they are eternal words. Even Jesus commented that He did not come *"to abolish the Law or the Prophets"* (Matt. 5:17) and that even though heaven and earth should pass away His *"words will not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35) *"until all is accomplished"* (Matt. 5:18). Thus, we see that the Scripture written by these twelve still have eternal significance for us today and owe their origin and distinctiveness to God Himself.⁷

2. ***Second, the minor prophets are profitable.*** The word *"profitable"* here means, "useful." These twelve books are still advantageous for Christians today as they were when they were first written some 2500-3000 years ago. This means that the doctrines and truths that are gleaned from the minor prophets can have a true and positive application for Christians who are taught by them. Here are the doctrinal and Christological teachings seen in the minor prophets:

Doctrinal & Christological Teachings from Minor Prophets		
PROPHET	DOCTRINAL TEACHING	CHRISTOLOGICAL
Joel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judgement: The day of the Lord - Blessing: The coming of the Spirit of the Lord 	Christ is presented as the one who gives the Holy Spirit (2:28), who judges the nations (3:2, 12), and who is the Refuge and Stronghold for His people (3:16)
Amos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaches God's hatred of evil - His jealousy for His own good - Sanctity of His law (2:7). 	Christ is presented as the Rebuilder of David's Tabernacle (9:11) and the Husbandman of His people (9:13).
Hosea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Futility of formalism - The depravity of man - The unending charity of God. 	Christ is presented as the Messiah, the Son of God (11:1), the only Savior of His people (13:4), the One who will ransom us from the dead (13:14), our compassionate lover (11:4) and healer of the backslider (6:1).
Micah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's hatred of formal religion (6:7) - His concern for social justice (6:8) - His pardoning grace (7:18) - His faithfulness to His covenants (7:20) 	Christ is presented as the God of Jacob (4:2), the Judge of all nations (4:3), the Ruler in Israel who will be born in the city of Bethlehem (5:2).
Obadiah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justice of God - His faithfulness in restoring the land given to Abraham - Perils of anti-Semitism 	Christ is pictured as the Messiah who is both Savior and Possessor of the Kingdom (v.21).
Jonah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's salvation is impartial - The need to obey God. - The necessity of repentance from sin. - Salvation is from the Lord. 	Jonah represents a type of Christ resurrection (Matt. 12:40). Christ is pictured as a prophet to the nations and as Savior and Lord (2:9).
Nahum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The justice of God dealing with evil - The goodness of God in the eyes of the righteous. 	Christ is presented as the Jealous God (1:2) and the Avenger of His adversaries.
Zephaniah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - God's holiness demonstrated. - God's judgment on the world. - The day of the Lord (Ch. 1) 	Christ is presented as the righteous Lord within Israel (3:5). The witness against the nations (3:8), and "the King of Israel, the Lord (3:15).

⁷ "New American Commentary", 2 Timothy 3:16

Doctrinal & Christological Teachings from Minor Prophets		
Habakkuk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The holiness and justice of God. - The necessity of faith. 	Christ is pictured as the Holy One (1:12) who justifies the righteous by faith (2:4). He will fill the earth "with knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2:14).
Haggai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The blessing of putting God first. - Never get weary for doing good for the Lord. - God's promises for tomorrow is our hope for today. 	Christ is presented as the Restorer of the Temple's glory (2:7-9), the overthrower of the kingdoms of the world (2:22), and a signet ring for Israel (2:23).
Zechariah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The centrality of the Temple in God's spiritual restoration of Israel. - The providence of God in bringing back His people to their land. - The preeminence of the Messiah in the future restoration of Israel. 	Christ is presented as the angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous branch (3:8), the Crucified Savior (12:10) and the Coming King (9:9).
Malachi	-Sincerity and purity are prerequisites for serving God.	Christ is presented as the messenger of God's covenant (3:1), the refiner's Fire (3:2) and the sun of righteousness (4:2).

What is gleaned from the prophets affirms their usefulness by what they are able to accomplish. They are able to:

- *Teach*: Their message is a source of sound teaching to guard one from heresy and to guide them in the ways of the Lord.
 - *Rebuke*: Their message shows sinners their failures, clarify the point of their mistake and to lead them to a sense of wholeness and peace.
 - *Correct*: Their message helps to restore the believer's doctrinal or personal practice back to the right state before God.
 - *Train*: Their message provides moral training that leads to righteous living.
3. ***Finally, the message of the minor prophet equips***: The word "adequate" means "fit to serve." Once a believer submits to the sufficient and authority of God's word in a abiding relationship, they become useful and serviceable unto God. This was the goal of God for His people in being a light unto the gentile nations. To submit and obey His Law, to receive the blessings of that obedience, and serve Him faithfully.

To review:

- The messages of the 12 Minor Prophets are applicable for all people in all ages.
- Christian principles abound in all the prophets' writings.
- Events in history are there for our instruction today.
- The Minor Prophets give us a greater awareness of God's presence in history.
- They provide inspiring examples of people of faith during very difficult times.
- They give an understanding of cause and effect in human events.
- They provide deeper insight into God's judgments and mercy.
- They teach the lesson of duality in Bible history.

This is why the messages of the minor prophets are important for us to study. The benefits are there for us as much as they were for the original hearers. God as He works His purpose out will fulfill it

by His own sovereign hand. These prophets at times seemed to be communicating “crystal ball” like visions, fore-telling the plans and promises of God as given and proclaimed by His very word. All God requires is for us to listen, trust, and obey. Therefore, as the prophet Hosea spoke, *"Listen to the Word of the Lord," (Hos. 4:1)*.

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 2: “Joel: The Day of the Lord”

OVERVIEW:

Late one July morning in 1874, a 12-year-old farm girl Lillie Marcks watched the sunlight dim and a peculiar darkness sweep over the Kansas sky. A whirring, rasping sound followed, and there appeared, as she later recalled, “a moving gray-green screen between the sun and earth.” Then something dropped from the cloud like hail, hitting her family’s house, trees, and picket fence. Numerous others across the state reported the same observation. What those saw that summer was not only statewide, but spread across the Dakota’s, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. What did they see, a moving, struggling mass of grasshoppers, more specifically, the Rocky Mountain locust had invaded the Great Plains.

They swept in and scoured the fields of crops, leaves on trees, every blade of grass, the wool off sheep, the harnesses off horses, the paint off wagons and the handles off pitchforks. They washed in waves, piling a foot or more deep. They feasted for days, even devouring the clothing and quilts farmhands threw over to protect remaining vegetable gardens. But, there were just too many. (Chuck Lyons, History Net)

This was probably the scene that Joel witnessed in his day. A plague of locust that invaded and devastated the land of Judah. It was against this backdrop that as the prophet reflected on this calamity, that the Word of the Lord came to him. He uses this devastating event to proclaim the divine implications of the catastrophe as he describes the plague in terms of a human army moving in like locust and leaves nothing behind but a scorched earth (1:4-12; 2:2-10). Joel knows that God is at work and this army that is to come is His hand of judgement upon a sinful people (1:15; 2:1, 11). Yet, the prophet doesn’t conclude his message with judgment, he extends hope that God will relent and withdraw the judgment if they would repent (1:14; 2:12-17). Then, by the Spirit, Joel is prompted to speak on the last days, (the day of the Lord). He uses the plague of locust by which the people were afflicted to picture the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, which is to occur before Jesus’ second coming, the tribulation before His millennial reign.

BACKGROUND:

AUTHOR: Joel (Yahweh is God), is the son of Pethuel, the prophet of Judah wrote this book. The internal claim for this is found in (1:1) and supported by many critics of this book. Jerusalem seems to be his home as noted by the many references he makes of Jerusalem (1:14; 2:1, 15, 32; 3:1, 6, 16, 17, 20, 21).

DATE: This book takes place during the pre-exilic period dating around 830 B.C. (2 Kings 12) during the reign of young king Joash (Jehoash). Several factors support this within the book that correlate with 2 Kings 12 and Chronicles of the kings of Judah (2 Ki. 12:19).

The enemies Joel mentions fits this period.

Similarities between Joel (3:18) and Amos (9:13), which also dated during this period.

The lack of mentioning a king suggest the time of a youthful king such as Joash (2 Ki. 11:4). Also, the book is addressed to elders and priest rather than a king.

AUDIENCE: Even though Joel speaks of an Assyrian invasion to come upon the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.), the message of this book seems to indicate it is directed to Jerusalem and Judah in the south where the Temple located speaking to it's priest and elders.

LOCATION: When Solomon's reign came to an end at his death, it was divided up into two kingdoms. Jeroboam (his captain) took over the northern ten tribes (Samaria) and established its capital there and set up centers of idolatry worship of the golden calf in Dan and Bethel so that the ten tribes would not migrate to Jerusalem and succeed from his kingdom. The southern tribes Judah and Benjamin kept Jerusalem as its capital and Solomon's Temple as its center for worship of the Lord. It is to these elders and priest in Jerusalem Joel addresses his message to.

OCCASION: Joel is given a warning from God of His impending judgment on Judah for their sinfulness. What was their sin? The indictment is not mentioned, therefore we do not know what the exact sin was that the people in Judah were committing. It could be that material prosperity lulled the priest and elders into spiritual poverty and religious formalism. The prophet's indictment concerning their social life may give hint to this (1:5). Moses had warned them long ago concerning this (Deut. 6:10-12) by saying, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you ... then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

In 2 Kings 12, Joash had instructed the priest to take the money given by the people, and take for themselves to repair the damages done to the temple (2 Ki. 12:4-5). In the 23rd year of his reign the house of God had not been repaired, Joash questioned the priest (v.6), they immediately made sure repairs were done (v.11-12), but made no accounting for those who did the work (v.15) and the Lord sent Hazeal, king of Aram to go up against Jerusalem and was paid off by Joash with all the sacred things and gold and he went away (v. 17-18).

Against this backdrop, the Lord speaks through Joel and calls on the people to repent (2:12-17). When the people responded positively Joel proclaimed God's favor toward them (2:18-19a) and coming prosperity was announced (2:18-27).

CENTRAL VERSE: Joel 2:11, 28-32

CENTRAL THEME: The coming day of the Lord (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14)

CENTRAL TEACHING: The coming judgment and blessing of the Lord.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Christ is presented as the one who gives the Holy Spirit (2:28), judges the nations (3:2, 12), and who is the Refuge and Stronghold for His people (3:16)

KEY WORDS/TERMS: "The day of the Lord (Yahweh).

OUTLINE:

- I. God's Judgement on Judah (1:1-2:17)
 - A. By locust invasion (1:1-20)
 - B. By army invasion (2:1-17)
- II. God's Mercy on Judah (2:18-32)
- III. God's Judgement against the nations (3:1-17)
- IV. God's Blessing on Judah and Final Judgement (3:18-3:21)

SURVEY:

- I. **Condemnation:** The condemnation or offense given by the prophet is unclear. But the message given by Joel is addressed to the elders and priest of Judah (1:2, 13). They are to hear, listen and tell future generations about the day when a plague of gnawing locust almost destroyed the nation of Judah (1:3). Even though the specific offense is not identified, there are hints that the spiritual condition of the people of Judah had grown lax because of material prosperity. Joel seems to indicate that much of the people's time was spent in merrymaking and drinking orgies (1:5). This led to a spiritual condition of formalism. Even though they practiced their ritual liturgies of bringing grain and drink offerings as required by the law (1:9), and practiced extended times of weeping and mourning through fasting (2:12-13), their heart was far from the Lord. Just as much as their life of debauchery was meaningless (Ecc. 1:1; 2:11), their spiritual life was practiced in vain. God had simply had enough burnt offerings and meaningless evil assemblies as He described them. The Lord had become weary of it all (Isa. 2:11-14). God's people needed a wake up call, thus He woke them up by sending a plague of locust and warned them of His pending judgement. All because He loves them and desired to bring them back to Him.
- II. **Judgment:** The judgement that God brought on Judah was historic. It was a literal plague of locust that swept through the land destroying everything in its path. The gnawing locust left nothing behind (1:4). Joel describes the scene like a marching army that had ransacked and scorched the countryside leaving nothing but devastation and desolation as the people wept and mourned as they girded themselves up with sackcloth (1:6, 8, 13). As with any catastrophic event, drought and starvation follows and the need to conserve food and water became a top priority, so much so that even offerings and libations were withheld from the house of God (1:13). God's anger and wrath towards Judah's sin would increase if they did not repent. The result would be a greater judgment, not from an army of insects, but an army from a nation that the Lord would send to punish the people of Judah (2:1-17). That day is declared by Joel as "*the day of the Lord*" (2:1).
 - A. **God's judgement:**
 - 1. The instrument of God's judgement: Locust and armies are known to be God's instruments of chastening (Dt. 28:38-39; 1 Ki. 8:35-39; Isa. 45:1; Am. 4:9).
 - 2. The purpose of God's judgement: It's purpose is to refine evil and turn His people back to Him through repentance.

3. God's judgement is fierce (Ex. 32:12; Ez. 10:14). It is His wrath that is kindled like a fire (Ps. 106:40) and it waxes hot like molten wax (Ex. 22:24; 32:10). It is also spoken of as a specific time in which the Lord would act in temporal judgement (Job 21:30; Prov. 11:4; Ezek. 7:12; Zeph. 1:15, 18).

B. "The day of the Lord" (2:1-17)

1. *The day of the Lord defined:* The day of the Lord is a time when God reveals His sovereignty over human great or small. It is not a specific day. It is a general event. It could mean the daylight hours, the 24 hour day, or a general time period characterized by a special event (Zech. 14:7). In the case of Joel it could describe the present disaster that is being witnessed (1:15).
2. *The day of the Lord in Joel:* Joel describes it as a "*day of clouds and thick darkness*" (2:2). He pictures the day "like dawn spread across the mountains." It will be like a deep darkness. That time of morning just before sunrise when it is the darkest. Joel describes an army that is in position to attack just before dawn. They are in their position awaiting the sun to rise. He describes the army as a "large and mighty army" and one that no one has ever seen before. He describes their strategy when he writes, "*a fire consumes before them, and behind them a flame burns*" (2:3). There is nothing anyone can do. No one will be able to escape them. Like the locust this army will shred the land and its villages with it's war horses and chariots as the people before them turn pale white (2:6). The army is so disciplined that they do not break ranks, they are skillful soldiers and like a thief, they come to steal, kill, and destroy (2:9).
3. *The day of the Lord is by God's own hand:* Joel tells us that this army stands ready to carry out His word and by His powerful and awesome hand, there is no one who could endure it (2:11).
4. *The day of the Lord is an opportunity for repentance:* Even in the midst of God's anger, ready to pour out His wrath, He stands ready to forgive His people from their sin if they would repent and turn back to Him with all their heart (2:12-13). Why would the Lord do this, because Joel says, "*For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness*" (2:13).

III. **Instruction:** To remedy the present judgement, Joel commands the priest to call for a assembly of the elders and the people in the land to set themselves apart for a consecrated fast and cry out to the Lord (1:14) because His day of judgement is coming soon. When it does come it will come "*as destruction from the Almighty*" (1:15). The invasion by the locust was just a precursor of what type of judgement would follow if they do not repent from their sin. Joel points out theirs no food or water, storage facilities destroyed, no pastures for livestock to graze from (1:16-18). The situation is so severe "*the beast of the field pant for Thee*" (1:20).

- A. **Contrition commanded:** As Joel describes the awful day of the Lord in (ch. 2:1-11), the Lord stands ready to forgive. Thus a call for change of heart by the people is ordered.

When David sinned against the Lord and was confronted by the Lord through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-13), David turned to the Lord for forgiveness by stating:

“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgression...for you do not delight in sacrifice...you are not pleased with burnt offering...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and contrite heart.” (Psalm 51:1,16, 17).

B. True repentance: This is what the Lord desires from His people. True repentance. Joel describes true repentance this way:

1. Return to the Lord with all your heart (2:12). Joel pictures brokenness. A true remorse over wrong doing and sin. The Lord is not concern with the externals but what takes place inside ones heart (2:13). The Lord tells them to *“rend your heart and not your garments.”*
2. Set yourself apart for Him (2:16). Next the people are commanded to “sanctify” themselves. This means to “set themselves apart.” To consecrate themselves for God purposes and not for their own pleasure. The only way to please God is not in the pleasure of self, but seeking the ways that please Him. The Apostle Paul exhorts the church to dedicate itself to the Lord by *“presenting your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1)*. Notice, we are to present ourselves to God on His terms not ours. This is an age old problem with God’s people. Able presented an acceptable offering unto the Lord in Genesis 4. Yet, his brother Cain brought an offering that did not please the Lord. The Lord does not take likely the cheap offerings we give Him with our lives. Notice again, Paul points out - *“presenting your bodies”* meaning, your whole being. He wants all of us, not in part, but the whole.
3. Repentance brings glory to God (2:17): It is not God’s desire that His people be ruled by other nations or the world. If the people of Judah did not repent and were taken into captivity it causes their inheritance to become as a reproach. Like a byword, a myth, a legend (2:17). This would not bring glory to God. What brings glory to God is His people serving Him with all their being and might so that He would bless them with the blessing from His own glory from heaven. But praise be to God, the people of Judah did repent and the Lord was pleased and promises to deliver them.

IV. Restoration: All is well as the prophet announces the good news that God will send deliverance from destruction to His people both in the present and in the future. This promise will be for them in the present and in the future.

A. God’s promise of present blessing (2:18-27): God promises to send an abundance crop and plentiful harvest (2:19). He will relieve the land from clear and present danger by removing the northern enemy as restoration comes to the land by God own hand (2:20). This blessing of God is the promise that His people will never again be put to shame (2:27).

1. God’s promise is an occasion to rejoice because of what the Lord has done. The prophet calls on the people to no longer fear but to rejoice (2:21).

- a) Because He will restore the land (v. 22).
- b) Because He will return the rains (v. 23).
- c) Because He will increase the harvest (v. 24)
- d) Because His people will be satisfied (v. 26).

B. **God's promise of future blessing (2:28-3:21):** The pivotal phrase, "*and it will come about after this..*" (v.28) that the Lord introduces a shift from present to the future.

1. Joel predicts the coming Holy Spirit (v.28). In the second chapter of Acts we have the fulfillment of Joel's prediction by the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon His people. His Spirit will not rest on just one person, but all mankind - the young and the old, male and female, the rich and the poor, the free man and slave (2:28-29). The Apostles in the New Testament witnessed this event on the day of Pentecost after Peter preached His sermon and even mentions these verses as fulfillment of God's sovereign plan (Acts 2:17).

C. **God's promise of future judgement (2:30-3:17):** The Future Day of the Lord will be a time of great terror for the world (2:30-31). This day or period of time will be like no other on the face of the earth. It will not be brought about an army or any man's hand, but by God Himself as He hurls on the earth His wrath of destruction from the cosmos (v. 30-31). It will be known known as "great and dreadful day of the Lord"!

1. *It is a day of judgement set in future with a eschatological impact.* It describes a delivered, regathered, repentant Israel who turns to the One true Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord (3:16-21; Zec 14:3; Mal 4:5-6). Just as the locust and pending invasion of the army of the north brought Judah true repentance, this great and terrible day of the Lord will draw His people back to Him in the future.
2. *The Future Day of the lord will provide an opportunity for salvation (v.32).* As Joel summarizes the future he does so by declaring the future revival during pentecost. Joel predicts the outworking of salvation for those who truly trust God as Redeemer (v. 32). As the Day of the Lord approaches the Lord will give an opportunity for even gentiles to be saved. All that would be required is for them to call on His name (v.32). The Apostle Paul uses this teaching in Romans 10. As he states that the only way for a person to be saved is to confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with all their heart that Jesus died and rose again three days later and that if they call on His name they will be saved (Rom. 10:9-10, 13).
3. *The Future day of the Lord will be a time when all the nations will be judged (3:1-17).*
 - a) God will execute His judgement on the nations (3:4-8). The charges against the nations are based on how they plundered God's people by taking their silver and gold. They sold their children into greek slave traders and sending them far away. God warns these nations that He would righteously repay them in kind (Isa. 24:14-23; 2 Th. 1:6-8). God promises that He would give them the taste of their own depraved ways when Uzziah recaptures Ezion-Geber and is victorious against the Philistines.

- b) God will execute His judgement on the final battle at Armageddon (3:9-15). In the future as the Lord gathers the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat (3:12), He will sit as a judge as He roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem (3:21). Joel describes the scene as a great harvest that is ripe (3:13). It will be here that the final decision concerning the fate of the world and God's people will be made. The Lord will split the sky and come in all His glory and His holy ones and the defeat of the enemies of God will be done with one final word from the mouth of our glorious Savior (Rev. 19:15) - *"and from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations and He will rule them with a rod of iron and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty."*

CONCLUSION: As we conclude this study of Joel there are several applications for us to take away for us today.

1. God judges sin. God does not sin likely and will not allow the guilty to go unpunished. Even though He is slow to anger He will eventually deal with sin in ones life either now or in eternity. Nahum tells us, *"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished."* (Nah. 1:3).
2. God takes no pleasure in superficial or formal religion that has no heart for Him. If all we do is worship God through liturgy and traditions, He is not pleased. The Lord desires our heart that is devoted to seeking way to please Him. This is our reasonable act of service and worship to Him.
3. God is the source of judgement and calamity. Part of God's dealings with sinful people is to bring about judgement in the form of wrath through devastating catastrophes.
4. God is merciful and stands to forgive anyone who has a contrite heart. All one has to do is humble themselves before the Lord, repent from their sin (which means to stop doing them) and turn to him for forgiveness.
5. God through Christ is the only source for salvation. If anyone who is repentant calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved. This is His promise both for the Jew and gentile (Rom. 1:16).

LESSON TWO: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Joel”
Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: Why do we need the prophets? What good can come from studying them?

-REFLECT-

2. Who is Joel and who is he speaking to? (Joel 1:1; 13)
3. What did God use to speak to Joel concerning His prophecy? (Joel 1:4-12)
4. What day did Joel predict and what would it be like? (Joel 2:1-10)
5. What was Joel’s instruction for Judah to escape God’s wrath? (Joel 2:13-17)
6. What does God promise to do for Judah if they repent? (Joel 2:18-27)
7. How was Joel’s prophecy fulfilled in Acts 2:17? (Joel 2:28-32)

-REVEAL-

8. Is God pleased with your worship and service of Him? If you were Judah, what would the Lord through Joel say of you?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 3: “Amos: God’s Burden Bearer”

OVERVIEW: The burden to carry the truth of God’s message of light to a dark world is probably greater today than it has ever been. There are many similarities between our world today and the world and times of Amos. Israel and Judah were powerful and prosperous. The poor was exploited which caused great dislocation. Many people were forced to leave family, farms, and homes. The rich got richer and the poor got poorer. The wealthy controlled the court system and exploited the poor without compassion or concern. Religion seem to be the thing to do rather than something that pleases God. Religion was mixed with biblical and pagan rituals and liturgies and orgies.

It was against this background that the Lord called raised up a simple farmer from Judah to be His spokesman and to speak against this prosperous and complacent society who seemed to think they were immune to any discipline by God because they saw themselves as the entitled children of God. Justice and God was indifferent to Israel and Amos, whose name means “burden carrier,” carried the burden of God’s message to the northern kingdom, Judah, and their surrounding neighbors.

BACKGROUND:

AUTHOR: Amos (*a load / burden bearer*) is credited as being the author of this book (1:1). He was a herdsman (a cattle-tender / 7:14), more specifically, a sheep breeder rather than a common shepherd employed by a wealthy owner of the sheep.⁸ He was from the village, Tekoa (1:1), which was near Bethlehem in Judea. Amos did not call himself a prophet, rather he spoke of his blue collar bi-vocational employment as “*a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees*” (7:14) then the Lord employed him as a shepherd-preacher who was to carry a heavy burden for his people. He had no formal training as a prophet (7:14-15). He was a lone voice who preached in the desert and villages indicting both Israel and Judah for their religious apostasy, moral and social collapse, and political corruption in the northern kingdom. Thus he came to Bethel not as a representative of one of the prophetic guilds, but as a farmer under divine order to perform the function of a prophet.

DATE: The date of Amos’s ministry was probably somewhere around 765-755 B.C.. A specific clue concerning the dating of his ministry is noted by the author when he referenced “*two years before the earthquake*” (1:1). Archaeological evidence shows that an earthquake took place at Hazor around the dates of 765-760 BC. Amos gives us another clue to the dating of his ministry by referencing an eclipse of the sun (8:9) that had occurred on June 15, 763 BC which would have been observed in Palestine.⁹ Finally, Amos gives his readers another clue to the date of his ministry by mentioning the reigns Uzziah, the king of Judah (790-739 BC) and Jeroboam II, the king of Israel (790-748 BC).

⁸ New American Commentary, Amos/Author / Olive Tree Bible Study.

⁹ New American Commentary, Amos/Historical setting, second paragraph / Olive Tree Bible Study.

AUDIENCE: The message of Amos was directed to the wicked but prosperous ten tribes of the northern kingdom (3:1, 12; 7:10, 14, 15). Though, Amos himself was from Judah, his warnings had obvious implications for his own countrymen as well (2:4,5). His words went out against the nations of Damascus (1:3-5); Gaza (1:6-8); Tyre (1:9-10); Edom (1:11-12); Ammon (1:13-15); Moab (2:1-3); Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16).

LOCATION: The centrality of Amos's message was located mostly in the northern half of Palestine. Bethel, was the center of the northern kingdom's idol worship which Amos pointed out for God's judgement (4:4f., 7:13). Bethel (*House of God*) has been around since the time of Abraham (3200 BC). Then, it was called "*Luz*". It was here that Abraham called upon the Lord (Gen. 13:3) and Jacob, his grandson, spent the night there on his way to find a wife. God confirmed His covenant with Jacob and renamed it "*Bethel*" (Gen. 28:10-22). During the time of the judges, Bethel was the keeping place of the ark of the covenant (Judg. 20:27). Bethel had been considered an orthodox place of worship for God's people from Abraham to the Judges until Jeroboam I made it a religious center of idolatry for his new kingdom when the ten northern tribes split from the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin (1 Ki. 12:29-33). Since then, God sent prophets to preach against this apostate idol worshipping people and their kings. It can be said that not one king from the northern kingdom did right in the eyes of God. Prophets such as "Elijah" preached against king Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel (1 Ki. 17-22; 2 Ki. 1-2). Amos was sent to rebuke the kingdom of Jeroboam II (Amos 7:10-13).

OCCASION: Amos begins his prophesy by stating what he saw (invisioned) concerning the reigns of "*Uzziah the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel*" (1:1). The reigns of these two kings spanned four decades. The Biblical account of their reigns are found in 2 Kings 14:17-15:7 and 2 Chronicles 26. Given the tenure of the two kings, they were able to bring about stability and prosperity to both kingdoms. During Amos's time, the northern kingdom under Jeroboam II leadership had become rather powerful and prosperous. Jeroboam II was able to extend the borders of the northern kingdom to its greatest extent with the aid of Assur-dan III, king of Assyria (773 BC)¹⁰ who attacked Damascus (2 Ki. 14:28). The prosperity that the kingdom enjoyed was only for the upper class. The chasm between the rich and poor created a wicked social injustice. The theological condition of Israel was falling more into spiritual decay since Israel split from Judah and formed its own idolatry worship initiated by Jeroboam I. Since then, Israel and her kings immediately turned away from God and built pagan altars with calf idols at worship centers such as Bethel, Dan and Gilgal (1 Ki. 11-12). By the time Amos came on the scene, the northern kingdom was deeply entrenched in their idolatry and corrupted moral behavior which prompts God to send Amos to speak to their multitudes of sins (1:2-2:16), God's judgement on Israel (8:4-9:10) and the hope of a coming Davidic King and restoration (9:11-15).

CENTRAL VERSES: Amos 3:1-2; 4:11-12; 8:11-12

¹⁰ Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook/ Amos / Setting / Olive Tree Bible Study.

CENTRAL THEME: “The Lord roars from Zion.”

CENTRAL TEACHING: God judges Israel for her sinful ways.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Christ is the rebuilders of David’s dynasty and restorer His people (9:11-15)

KEY WORDS/TERMS: “transgress” and “transgression” occur 12 times.

KEY PHRASE: “*I will not revoke its punishment*” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6)

OUTLINE:

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Farmer/prophet speaks against the nations (1:3-6:14)
- III. Five Visions of Judgement (7:1-9:4)
- IV. Future Restoration and Hope (9:5-15)

SURVEY:

- I. **Condemnation & Judgment:** “*The Lord roars from Zion*” (1:2) as the prophet Amos speaks the word from the Lord, he speaks of Him as One who is roaring like a lion ready to devour His prey. Until now, the Lord had been characterized as the Shepherd of Israel. Every Israelite would have been familiar with David’s 23rd Psalm just as much as we are today. In it David describes the Lord taking care of His people as a good shepherd would for his sheep. Amos, now changes that imagery of the Lord into a angry Lion. Shepherds were familiar with lions who were a threat to the livestock. David in the 23rd Psalm tells about how the shepherds staff and rod protects the sheep, especially as the flock walks through the valley of the shadow of death. Amos was a shepherd too and knew of the dangers of preying lions and other beasts lurking to steal, kill, and destroy the flock. Amos’s description of the Lord as a roaring lion depicts the Lord not as the benevolent God, but the God of judgement and wrath because of on going sin. This “*roar from Zion*” is to wake up nations and God’s people that He is no longer patient and benevolent. Condemnation and judgement will be given out by His very hand. Thus, the Lord would attack and devour the flock while the shepherds (kings) hopelessly watch. This is the word of the Lord to the house of Israel, Judah, and their surrounding neighboring nations.
- II.
 - A. The three/four formula: “*For three transgressions of (nation) and for four I will not revoke its punishment*” - (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). This language is declaring that the Lord has had enough. The iniquity of their sins has been filled. It means that if one more

transgression is added to the first three makes judgement inevitable.¹¹ It would be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Anymore sin would tip the scale and God's mercy would come to an end and the roar of His wrath would be felt.

- B. The roar of God's Judgement: The chart below describes Amos's message of condemnation and judgement upon God's people and their surrounding neighbors. It is divided into three groups: 1). Gentile Nations, 2). Kinship Nations, 3). God's Nations.

GOD'S ROAR OF JUDGEMENT		
Gentile Nations (1:3-10)		
NATION	CONDEMNATION	JUDGEMENT
Damascus (1:3-5)	The Syrians had literally threshed Gilead with sharp threshing instruments that tore and mangled the bodies (2 Ki. 10:32-33; 13:3-7). This had been predicted by Elisha in 2 Kings 8:12.	The Syrians would reap what they had sown. God would decree a bloody war when an invader would capture the Syrian valleys and cities and take the people into captivity. This was done by the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser, whose practice was to conquer and deport the people to prevent them from future uprisings.
Gaza (1:6-8)	Gaza represents the Philistines. Their sin was that they raped an Israeli settlement - and swept away the entire population (men, women, children) and delivered them to the Edomites who had no mercy on the Israelites. (2 Chron. 21:16-17).	God's judgement was the decimation of the Philistine population. The remnant of the Philistines will perish (1:8).
Tyre (1:9-10)	The Phoenicians were great traders and colonists. They were sea merchants. Once friends with Israel since the days of David. Later Tyre reversed its policy towards Israel and like the Philistines sold Hebrew prisoners of war as slaves to Edom. Their crime - no Hebrew king ever made war on Phoenicians	The judgement of God on the Phoenicians would be that they would burn for their sin. This prophecy was fulfilled by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar.

¹¹ Exploring the Minor Prophets, John Phillips, p. 90.

GOD'S ROAR OF JUDGEMENT		
Kinship Nations (1:11-2:3)		
NATION	CONDEMNATION	JUDGEMENT
Edom (1:11-12)	The Lord impressed upon Israel its brotherhood relationship with Edom (Nums. 20:14). No king ever invaded them, Saul and David had defensive wars against Edom. Later Israel provided Garrisons for protection against Edomites. Edom joined the surrounding nations in their hatred towards God's people. Very much like today. Their sin was that they pursued Israel with the sword (1:11).	God's judgement on Edom was to summon the Assyrians and Babylonians to wage war against them. To leave their cities and strongholds in dust.
Ammon (1:13-15)	The sin of Ammon was that they chose gods like themselves to fulfill their wanton pleasures (1Sam. 11:1-3). They chose Moloch whose form of worship included the sacrifice of children. Amos describes that they " <i>ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders</i> " (1:13).	God's judgement on Ammon would be to invade and capture Rabbah, which is now Amman, the capital of Jordan.
Moab (2:1-3)	Moab's sin was a spiteful revenge against the king of Edom. Moab burned the bones of Edom's king to lime. This incident occurred during the wars in 2 Kings 3:26-27. Because of their unrestrained anger and hate God would not revoke His judgement against them.	God's judgement on Moab would be vengeance. This vengeance would be carried out on them by Nebuchadnezzar who did such a thorough job of thrashing Moab that it disappeared as a nation.
God's Nations (2:4-16)		
NATION	CONDEMNATION	JUDGEMENT
Judah (2:4-5)	Judah's sin was because they rejected the Law of God and have not kept it's teachings (2:4). During Solomon's reign he had imported the gods of his wives, therefore breaking God's law found in Ex. 20:3-4 of not having other gods before Him. They were also liars and turned their back on God's truth and embraced falsehood.	Therefore God would in due time send the Assyrians to scourge Judah all the way up to Jerusalem. Because lies have become the way of national life in Judah, the Lord would eventually send the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem and destroy it.

GOD'S ROAR OF JUDGEMENT		
Israel (2:6-16)	<p>Israel's sins were injustice, immorality, idolatry, ingratitude, and intolerance. More specifically, <i>"they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (2:6).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The poor were so greatly oppressed that they cast dust on their heads in mourning (Job 2:12). - The society in the northern kingdom was so depraved that it was devoid of any moral restraints. Incest, harlotry, Ashtoreth worship. Thus, God saw this sin as a profanation of His holy name. - They would even try to violate one who took the vow of a nazirite (one who consecrated himself to God). They did this to silence any testimony against themselves. 	<p>Their sin tipped the scales of God's judgement on them at home and abroad. Therefore God will send an army that no one has ever seen before and will take them into exile (5:27). We know that this was executed by the Assyrians.</p>

III. **Instruction:** Chapter 3 begins a series of five messages by Amos to all of Israel. The first message instructs Israel concerning their present situation as the Lord points out His quarrel with His people (3:1-15). The second message concerns Israel's past as God scorns them for their social injustice (4:1-13); The third and fourth messages focuses on Israel's future as the Lord teaches them the "the Day of the Lord" is not something to look forward too (5:1-27), and then the fifth and final message, God points out Israel's false sense of security (6:1-14). Even though that God's condemnation and judgement is threaded through these messages, the purpose of these five message teach Israel what their sin is, how it will effect them, and the certain judgement they must face for their sins. It would be God desires that these lessons would wake them from their slumber and turn their hearts towards Him, repent from their sin and obey His word.

- the chart below comments on the five message by Amos to Israel. (see next page)

GOD'S INSTRUCTION TO ALL OF ISRAEL (3:1-6:14) (Five Messages to Israel)		
First Message: Israel's Present (3:1-15)	God's questions: <i>"You only have I chosen..."</i> (3:2) - Just because the Lord chose this people does not entitle them to receive special treatment. The Lord is not partial when it comes to sin. Israel had a false sense of immunity from judgment because they saw themselves as chosen people living in a chosen land and city. They took their relationship with God for granted (6:8) and now God will punish them (3:2). How certain is judgment, the Lord ask seven questions to point out that judgement is inevitable (3:3-8). God always reveals Himself and His plan to mankind. He tells us what we should do and if we fail to obey judgement will soon follow.	God's quarrel: <i>"They do not know how to do what is right"</i> - (3:10) - Amos calls on Egypt and the Philistines (two known oppressors of Israel) to witness the imploding oppression going on in Israel. Israel was oppressing themselves worse than their oppressors ever did against them. <i>"An enemy will pull down your strength..."</i> - (3:11). Israel had a strong military, but it would not be enough to save them from the horror that God would unleash to destroy them. <i>"...Israel's dwelling in Samaria will be snatched away"</i> - (3:12) - The intensity of God's judgement will demolish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their homes (3:12) - Their places of worship (3:14) - Their vacation homes (3:15) - Their palaces (3:15) All their wealth and power will not save them from the enemy the Lord will send to destroy their way of life (3:15). APPLICATION: Sometimes the Lord has to roar in our lives and demolish all the lesser things to gain our attention and return our hearts back to Him.

GOD'S INSTRUCTION TO ALL OF ISRAEL (3:1-6:14) (Five Messages to Israel)		
Second Message: Israel's Past (4:1-13)	God's scorn: (vv. 1-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Exploiting the poor:</u> "Hear...you cows of Bashan" - (4:1) - Amos compares the women to the fat cows living on the lush pastures of Bashan. They were spoiled women living the life of luxury and the only way to please them was to have their husbands oppressed and exploit the poor (v. 1) to fill their wanton pleasures. - <u>Spiritual Hypocrisy:</u> "Enter Bethel and transgress" - (4:4) - Bethel and Gilgal were important sites of Israel's salvation history (Gen. 28:10-22; Josh 4-5). Everything they did in worship was to impress other people, not God. They were going to their their un-authorized temple to sin. - The problem wasn't that they were not religious. The problem is that they worshipped themselves. This earned not the Lord's saving grace, but His scorn. 	God's scourge: (vv. 6-13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Yet you have not come back to me" (4:6) - Through Amos, the Lord reminds them of the punishments He sent to wake them up, but they still did not return to Him. These He had warned them about in the Law (Deuteronomy 28) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Famine (4:6; Deut 28:17-18) 2. Drought (4:7-8; Deut. 28:23-24) 3. Locusts (4:9; Deut. 28:38) 4. Plague (4:19; Deut. 28:60). - "Therefore...prepare to meet your God" - (4:12). - All this shows God's patience. His long suffering and mercy was demonstrated through these small acts of punishments, but now the scale has been tipped, what started out as lesser measures of punishment will not increase to severe forms of punishment. God is now appealing once more to the guilty sinner consciences to repent or be prepared to meet your creator. It is a heavy dooms day warning. <p>Application: Perhaps the Lord has been trying to gain your attention through life's little curses. Perhaps you have been so self absorbed that you actually sin when you worship. Do not try the Lord's patience too long or you might meet Him sooner than later.</p>

GOD’S INSTRUCTION TO ALL OF ISRAEL (3:1-6:14) (Five Messages to Israel)		
Third & Fourth Message: Israel’s Future (5:1-27)	The Lord’s Dirge (5:1-17): <i>“I take up a dirge for you...” - (5:1, 16-17) -</i> The demise of Israel was so certain that Amos lamented for her fall as if it already happened (vv. 2-3). The Lord wanted Israel to hear this lament as if she were reading her own obituary before she died (<i>Hear this word...she has fallen, she will not rise again</i>) - (5:2). In this message he points out the sovereignty of God: 1. His justice (5:2-7) 2. His creation (5:8-9) 3. His salvation (5:10-17) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“Seek Me that you may live” - (5:4) -</i> How would God instruct Israel to return to Him, to seek Him first. He exhorts them not to go back to their former way of worship. Jesus tells those who are anxious about material things to seek the kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:31-34). By seeking the Lord first they just might escape the pending wrath to come (5:6). They are to seek the one who made the stars (v.8) and stop oppressing the poor (vv. 10-13). - <i>“Seek good and not evil” - (5:14) -</i> By doing this perhaps as Amos says, the Lord would be gracious to save a small remnant. 	The Lord’s Day: (5:18-27): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“you who are longing for the day of the Lord” - (5:18) -</i> The mentality of the Israelites again was that they thought of themselves immune to God’s judgement and wrath. This distorted their view of the day of the Lord. They assumed it would be a great day of light (v. 20). Instead, it would be a dreaded day of darkness and gloom <i>“with no brightness in it” (v. 20).</i> - <i>“as when a man flees from a lion...” - (4:19) -</i> Amos is echoing the preaching of Joel by mentioning “The Day of the Lord.” He describes it as a day of “terror” as when “a man flees a lion” or a “bear meets him” - (v. 19). It is a picture of hopeless flight just as it was for the Egyptians (Ex. 12:12). No one will survive unless covered by the blood of the Lamb. - This day of the Lord is coming for them sooner than later. For them, it will be faced with the invasion of the Assyrian army. This would be an initial, partial, and illustrative fulfillment of Amos’s prophecy (John Phillips). <p>APPLICATION: The dark days of the Lord are coming sooner than later for us. The clouds are gathering and it would do our generation well to heed the warnings of Joel and Amos prophecies.</p>
Fifth Message: Israel’s False Hope (6:1-14)	God’s determination (6:1-7): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion” - (6:1) -</i> There was a false sense of security during Amos’s day in Israel. This message spoke to those people <i>“who feel secure” (6:1).</i> They would continue in their lives of luxurious indulgence tempting the day of calamity by putting it off and inviting terrible violence upon themselves (v.3) - <i>“Those who recline on beds of ivory...they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles” - (6:4, 7).</i> The price of their boastful indulgence will only get them to the head of the line of exiles. There will be no passes for being rich, they will only pass away. 	God’s declaration (6:8-14): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“The Lord God has sworn by Himself... God of host has declared” - (6:8) -</i> Through the blindness of Israel’s wanton pleasure, one thing will be certain, God will exercise His judgement. So help Him. God is declaring through Amos that the only delivering God will do will be to hand Israel over to death and total destruction. - <i>“...behold, the Lord is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces...” - (6:11) -</i> There will be nothing left of Israel. He declares that He will raise up a nation against them and their past strengths and victories (v. 13) will not save them.

B. *Instructions through the visions of the prophet: (7:1-9:10)* - One of the ways that the Lord instructs through prophets is through visions. The Lord used five objects that to help Amos to communicate His warning to Israel:

GOD'S INSTRUCTION THROUGH VISIONS		
The Vision	The Message	The Outcome
The devouring locust (7:1-3)	This vision depicts the all-consuming nature of God's wrath. (v.1)	Amos was able to plead for mercy and the judgement was cut short (v.2-3)
The devouring flame (7:4-6)	This vision indicates the scorching drought by an all consuming fire by God. (v.4)	Again, Amos pleaded on Israel's behalf and the judgement was cut short (v. 5-6)
The plumbline (7:7-9)	This vision indicates that God had already judged Israel by the rule of His own justice and marked them for their due recompense (vv. 7-9)	Amos does not plead for Israel because he sees what God see and that judgement is deserved and Jeroboam II's rule must end (v.9).
The summer fruit (8:1-3)	This vision indicates the end of Israel's fruitful years had come. Now is the time for judgement. (vv. 1-2)	Amos foretells of an earthquake (v.8) and an eclipse (v.9). There will be mourning, famine for the word of God, not bread. They will seek for it, but not find it.
The Lord at the altar (9:1-4)	This vision indicates the end of the religion of the northern kingdom, which was the reason for their destruction because it brought forth the decay of social structure of gross sin of idolatry.	The Lord is no respecter of persons especially His own when it comes to the gross sin of idolatry. Israel will be sent to captivity and God will set evil not good for them.

C. *A historical interlude: (7:10-17)* - Amos's visions are momentarily interrupted by important information about Amos himself.. Amos is accused by Amaziah, the priest at the sanctuary in Bethel (vv. 10-13). Amaziah had reported to Jeroboam II Amos's messages that he was conspiring against him and the house of Israel. Amos's replies to Amaziah's accusations by first saying that he is not a prophet, nor a son of a prophet, but simply a herdsman and a grower of sycamore trees (7:14-15). Amos tells him that it was the Lord who took him from the flocks and told him to prophesy against Israel. Amos ends his encounter with Amaziah with a prediction of dire judgement against his family and his wife. The prediction was that the wife of Amaziah would be violated like a harlot and that his children would be killed. He would lose all he had and would die in "pagan" unclean country. Meaning, Israel certainly will be going into exile from its own land.

IV. Restoration: The promise of Messianic restoration and blessing (9:5-15). It is important to note that the ultimate purpose of God's judgment is not revenge, it is restoration. All through the prophets God punishes His own in order to bring His people back to Himself. It has always been for the purpose of discipline.

- A. *God's sovereign power (9:5-10)* - Even though God's eyes were on the sinful kingdom and destroyed them from the face of the earth, He did save a few from the house of Jacob (v.8). As God shakes the nation to separate the wheat from the chaff, He will determine who will be saved and who will not. It is not up to us to save, only God can save. We can hope and pray that a person will be saved, but ultimately it is up to God to decide the one of His choosing (John 1:12-13).
- B. *God's restoration of Israel and Davidic dynasty (9:11-15)* - The restoration of Israel and the Davidic dynasty includes the restoration of His chosen race. This restoration will be directly linked to the appearance of a Messianic Ruler to come from David's line. This Ruler would be Christ Jesus our Lord, the only Begotten of the Father who will come again to set up His throne and rule over His people (Rev. 19). Even though that Israel had rejected God, God had not abandoned them. He promises to plant Israel in their own land forever, never again to be removed. Those of us who live today, quite possibly could be witnessing God's fulfillment of Amos's prophecy. For today we see the nation of Israel planted once again in their land. The advent of the Messiah has already come with salvation, but He will come again to rule. While the fulfillment that Abraham's descendants would be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:3) has been realized by Christ on the cross and His resurrection, it will have its final completion when He sets up His reign on His throne in Zion.

CONCLUDING APPLICATION: There are many similarities between the people of Israel during Amos's time. We too live in a powerful country that has a strong military, great wealth and prosperity, social injustice, moral decay and superficial religion that caters to self rather than pleasing the Lord. Here are other ways we are like the Israelites in Amos:

1. Those who believe in Christ tend to think they have a go sin free card and are immune to God's discipline.
- The Apostle Paul states: *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it...Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."* - Romans 6:1-4
2. Therefore, we need to present ourselves to the Lord for worship that is acceptable to Him - *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God"* - Romans 12:1
3. God's discipline on His own is His way of bringing us back to repentance. - *"I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us."* - 2 Corinthians 7:9

4. Finally, God desires mercy, not offerings - *“For judgement will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.” - James 2:13*

LESSON THREE: "Survey of the Minor Prophets: Amos"
Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: Joel seems to indicate that the Lord is not pleased with worship by His people that is formal and without heart. How would you describe your own personal worship to the Lord? Is it from the heart that seeks to please Him, or is it in formalism and tradition that pleases only self?

-REFLECT-

2. Who is Amos and what was his occupation? (Amos 1:1; 7:14)
3. List the nations Amos was sent to. (Amos 1-2) See if you can determine what his message of condemnation and judgement was.
4. What was Israel's main sin against God? (Amos 2:6-8; 3:9; 4:1; 5:7)
5. List the five visions Amos received from the Lord (Amos 7-9:4). See if you can determine meaning and outcome of the visions.
6. Even though the Lord declares Israel's doom (6:11), how does He intend to restore them? (Amos 9:11-15)

-REVEAL-

7. If you were found guilty by the Lord of being a superficial Christian because of your material prosperity, what is His instruction to you for repentance? (Amos 5:4, 6, 14).

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS
Lesson 4: “Hosea: ”God’s Undying Love” PART II
Hosea 4-14

REVIEW: Jeroboam I formed and established the Northern Kingdom of Israel around 731 BC which divided the northern ten tribes from the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin after Solomon’s death. He also instituted a new state religion of worshiping the golden calf which he declared to the people, “brought you up from the land of Egypt” (1 Ki. 12:25-33). A new counterfeit state religion was established with a false god, a false message, based on evil and false motives. Jeroboam went as far as ordaining non-Aaronic priesthood and re-organized the the religious calendar. The reason for doing this, fear. Jeroboam was afraid that the tribes in the north would want to go back to Jerusalem to make sacrifices as God instructed and desire to reunite as one kingdom (1 Ki. 12:27). Since then the northern kingdom plunged itself for 150 years to the time of Hosea in the sin of idolatry, material wanton pleasures, and social injustice towards the poor. The northern kingdom of Israel proved to be especially vulnerable to the pagan worship of Baal worship which was actively promoted by king Ahab and his wife Jezebel.

All this to say, Israel had greatly broken the covenant that bound her to the Lord. An act that was like a spouse breaking their marriage covenant by unfaithful acts of adultery. It is in this analogy that develops the love story of Hosea and Gomer. God calls on Hosea to marry a woman who will become unfaithful to him and take to herself many lovers and even bear a child by one of them. This marriage shows Hosea’s visible suffering at the betrayal of a wife he sincerely loved personified God’s love for His own people. It pictured the Lord’s suffering at Israel’s betrayal of Him. Even though Gomer leaves Hosea, he searches for her and finds that she has become a slave. He redeems her at the price value of a dead slave. She was worthless, still Hosea rescued her and redeemed her. He brought her home and told her she belongs to him and she is to stay with him forever.

This is the picture of God’s undying and enduring love for His people. Despite of their unfaithfulness to Him, God’s unquenchable love rescues and restores His own. *“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).* What a powerful reminder to us all that there is nothing greater than the love of God and that there is nothing that can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:39).

But, one thing is clear in this story, the Lord will not let the guilty go unpunished. He will destroy the house of the king and it will be no more. Even though the promises to reunite Israel in the future, the present house of the king and its kingdom must be destroyed before restoration and redemption begins.

OVERVIEW: In part two of Hosea’s message to Israel, the Lord is more direct in speaking to the kingdom and it’s people. Chapter 4-6:3 deals with God’s condemnation towards Israel as Hosea lays out God’s indictment and rebuke towards them as a nation. Chapters 6:4-10, Hosea’s message focuses on God’s punishment of judgment. Their punishment must fit the crime. They will be exiled. Chapters 11-14 Hosea presents a message of hope. Not all is lost, Israel will be restored as one nation as God intended, but it will come in the future as the depth of God’s love is expressed.

BACKGROUND: (See fuller notes in Part I, Lesson 4)

AUTHOR: Hosea (Salvation) is the author. He is the son of Beerī (1:1).

DATE: Hosea was written somewhere around 760-715 BC during the reigns of four Judean kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) and one Israelite king, Jeroboam II (1:1).

AUDIENCE: Hosea is primarily directed to the northern ten tribes of Israel (1:1; 5:1) who is often referred to as “Ephraim” (5:3, 5, 11, 13; 12:1; 13:1).

LOCATION: Israel among the northern ten tribes. Their capital city was Samaria (10:5).

OCCASION & PURPOSE: Hosea’s prophecy reflects the conditions of economic prosperity, religious formalism and apostasy, and political stability that marked Jeroboam II’s reign. The historical background of the Book of Amos is almost a carbon copy of Hosea. Though, Amos was more broader and ethical in spirit, Hosea’s message go deeper and is more religious in spirit.¹² The purpose of Hosea’s message is listed below:

1. To call Israel and Judah to repentance in Yahweh, the God of loyal love.
2. To reveal the faithlessness of the nation toward their covenant with Yahweh.
3. To indict the nation of its lack of knowledge, loyal love, and faithfulness.

CENTRAL VERSES: Hosea 1:2; 2:23; 6:6; 14:2-4

CENTRAL THEME: The unchanging love of God and jealousy for His covenant.

CENTRAL TEACHING: Hosea, whose name means salvation speaks of God’s saving love towards Israel. God’s saving love was demonstrated through Hosea’s marriage as his message from God was to convict Israel of her sin so she would repent and come back to Him to find love, forgiveness, and restoration.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: “*But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:8). Through Hosea (salvation), Christ is presented as the Son of God (11:1, the only Savior who will one day ransom us from the dead (13:14; 1 Cor. 15:55). He is our compassionate lover of our soul (11:4) and healer of the backslider (6:1).

KEY WORDS/TERMS:

- Return - 10x’s (3:5; 5:4, 15; 6:1, 8:13; 9:3; 11:5; 12:6)
- Harlotry - 7x’s (1:2; 2:2, 4; 4:11, 12; 5:4; 6:10)
- Adultery - 4x’s (2:2; 4:2, 13, 14)
- Covenant - 4x’s (2:18; 6:7; 8:1; 12:1)

¹² Harper, I.C.C., Amos and Hosea p. 164,

OUTLINE:

- I. Hosea's Marriage as an Illustration.
 - A. A Covenant Breached. (1:2)
 - B. A Covenant Condemned (1:2-2:23)
 - C. A Covenant Restored (3:1-5)
- II. Hosea's Messages of Illumination.
 - A. First Message: "The Condemnation of Israel" - (4-6:3)
 - B. Second Message: "The Judgement of Israel" - (6:4-10:15)
 - C. Third Message: "The Restoration of Israel" - (11-14)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:**II. HOSEA'S MESSAGES OF ILLUMINATION****A. First Message: "The Condemnation of Israel" - (4:1-6:3)**

1. *The sins of Israel's Spiritual leaders* (4:1-11). Hosea points out the multiple sins of Israel's spiritual leaders. In them the Lord found no faithfulness (truth) or kindness (loyalty) and no knowledge of God in the land (4:1). Moreover, there is "*swearing, deception, murder, stealing, and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed*" (4:2). God's response to these sins, "*I will punish them for their way, and repay them for their deeds*" (4:9).
2. *The sins of Israel as a nation* (4:12-19). The sin of the nation was that the people were consulting with "*their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand informs them; For a spirit of idolatry has led them astray*" (4:12). This worship of the Israelites is characterized by excessive drinking of wine, sacrificing at open-air Baal temples, worshiping wooden idols, and sacred prostitution by both men and women (4:10-14).¹³ They worshipped and turned to false gods for direction rather than from their own true God. God's response to these sins, "*I will punish your daughter when they play the harlot or your brides when they commit adultery....so the people without understanding are ruined (thrust down)*" (4:14).
 - a) *NOTE: Baal worship:* Baal was the name of the supreme god worshiped in ancient Canaan and Phoenicia. It infiltrated Jewish religious life during the time of the Judges (Judges 3:7), and spread wide in Israel beginning with the reign of Jeroboam I and climaxed during Ahab (1 Ki. 16:31-33) and also Judah (2 Chron. 28:1-2). The word "Baal" means "lord". In general Baal was a fertility god who was believed to enable the earth to produce crops and people to produce children. In a agricultural society you can see how this religion could have been very prominent since the livelihood of so many depended on crops and the bearing of children.
 - b) *Where did worship of Baal come from?* Canaanite mythology tells us that Baal was the son of El, the chief god, and Asherah, the goddess of the sea. Baal was considered the most powerful of all gods, eclipsing El, who was seen as rather

¹³ Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary (4:10-14), Proof that Israel does not know God.

weak and ineffective. The myth tells that Baal defeated Yamm, the god of the sea, and Mot, the god of death and the underworld. Baal's sisters were the Ashtoreth, the fertility goddess associated with the stars, and Anat, a goddess of love and war. Thus, the Canaanites worshiped Baal as the sun god and as the storm god - he is usually depicted holding a lightning bolt who defeated enemies and produced crops. They also worshiped him as a fertility god who provided children.

- c) *The practice of Baal worship.* The practice of Baal worship was rooted in sensuality and involved ritualistic prostitution in the temples. To appease Baal, it was required to sacrifice humans, which usually meant the sacrifice of the firstborn of the one making the sacrifice (Jer. 19:5). The priests of Baal appeal to their gods in rites of wild abandon which included loud, ecstatic cries and self-inflicted injury (1 Ki. 18:28).
 - d) *God's warning to the Israelites before taking over the promise land.* Before the Hebrews entered the promised land, God warned against worshiping Canaan's gods (Deut. 6:14-15), but Israel turned to idolatry anyway. God predicts Israel's unfaithful behavior when He tells Moses before he dies, "*For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them and spurn Me and break My covenant*" (Deut. 31:20). He told Moses that many evils and troubles will come on them (v.21).
3. *God's Judgement on the priest, people and royal house of Israel (5:1-14).* The Lord announces His judgement against all of Israel.
- a) His divine verdict means that the Lord will withdraw from His people (vv.1-7). They will look for the Lord when troubles come and the Lord will not be found to help. This is a terrible place to be. To be helpless before the Lord as He allows His own feel the pain of His verdict.
 - b) His divine verdict means that the Lord will not cure His people (vv.8-15). Israel had renounced a national policy of reliance on God. Instead of choosing the Lord as their protector, they chose Assyria to protect her against Syria (v.13). The end result was that eventually Assyria marched west and took over Syria and turned against her ally, Israel.
4. *God waits for Israel to repent (v. 15).* Until the nation as a whole "*acknowledges their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me*" (5:15). When God's punishment has been unleashed, He will withdraw to await the desired results. Eventually, those results would not come as witnessed by the changeless hearts that brought on the Assyrian-Babylonian captivity. It will not be until Christ comes when all of Israel will turn to Christ the true Messiah that the hearts of Israel will be united and devoted to the Lord (cf. 1:10-11; 2:14-23; Isa. 64:8; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). The Apostle Paul states it best when he writes:

- *“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved just as it is written, (Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20) ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:25-27).*
5. *Israel’s presumptuous words of repentance (6:1-3):* The voice of repentance apparently given by Israel seemingly sound like words of repentance. James Boice challenges us to listen carefully to this confession and see if you detect anything wrong with it:
- Boice ask: “Does Israel seem to be honest, forthright, orthodox? They have the right vocabulary. The verbs “return” and “acknowledge” are certainly actions the Lord looks for in repentance. There is also the recognition that the hand of God was in their calamities (6:1). They even express the sovereignty of God in their midst and appeal to him, not on the basis of Israel’s deeds, but of God’s mercy.”¹⁴
 - They have all the elements of a true confession except one - their confession and reference to their sin. They reference the consequence of sin, but not the total acknowledgement of the sin they committed. Their prayer of confession is very similar to that of the self righteous pharisee in Luke 18:11 who stood and prayed giving thanks to God that he was not like that tax collector. Whereas, the acceptable prayer of repentance is very much like the tax collector in Luke 18:13 who prayed, *“God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”* Jesus stated that that man went home justified rather than the one who exalts himself. Again, 1 John 1 teaches us that *“if we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make Him (God) a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).* But, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

Application for Israel and us: Like Israel in Hosea’s time, the American evangelical church tends to be shallow and anemic when it comes to sin and repentance. On one end, the church speaks of salvation, but does not want to confront sin, the root of the problem. Since that is the case, there is never really any true revival in the churches of America until true awareness of and turning from sin takes place.

B. Second Message: “The Judgement of Israel” - (6:4-10:15)

1. *God’s desires for Israel (6:4-11):* The Lord is not interested in Israel’s superficial worship. What God desires most from His people is *“loyalty rather than sacrifice”* (v. 6). This is somewhat strange in that the Lord commanded His people to not only abide by His word, but also, practice the rituals given in the Law. Like little children

¹⁴ Boice Expository Commentary Series: The Minor Prophets; Hosea 6:1; Olive Tree Bible Study; “Sin and Presumption.”

who receive information with a concrete mindset, the Israelites never could quite understand the heart of what the Lord was teaching them through His word. God's intent in His instruction was that His word would fundamentally change His people in attitude, not simply return to Him and go through the motions. The result of their mis-understanding of God's intent is given by Hosea when he writes, "*But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me*" (6:7) and the sins they committed were considered terrible crimes against the Lord and His people especially among the priest and the nation of Israel (6:8-10).

2. *God's punishment planned for Israel (7:1-10:15)*: Chapters 7-10 describes the heavy hand of God's judgement on the northern kingdom of Israel. More specifically, the Lord plans to heal the entire nation of Israel as it was meant to be (7:1), but here He will reveal and deal with "Ephraim," - even more specific it's capital, Samaria. As in the court of law the punishment must fit the crime. The various crimes that Israel committed against its people and God are described and so it the punishment the Lord prescribes for them.
 - a) *Israel's destructive crimes (7:1-7)*. The list of Ephraim's sins were such things as, deceit, burglary, street robbery by gangs. The sin of adultery both spiritually and the accepted physical adultery practiced in Baal worship ceremonies. Their wickedness was so extreme that Hosea gives an example of the assassination of the king that happened on a special festival day where the ringleaders planned the crime of their treacherous deed (vv. 3-5).
 - b) *Israel's destructive foreign policy (7:8-16)*. Just as Israel's spiritual life was in decay, so was their foreign policy eating away at the nation. Those who oversaw the nation's foreign affairs were negligent in allowing foreign powers to eat away their resources. Hence the reference to the cake analogy (7:8; 2 Kings 15:20). So, the Lord described Israel like a "*silly dove without sense*" (7:11), the meaning here might be (like a stupid homing pigeon that cannot find its way home).¹⁵ The historical reference might be (2 Kings 17:4). Therefore the Lord laments over His frustration of Israel's refusal to repent (7:13-16).
 - c) *Israel's destructive course (8:1-14)*: The Lord confronts Israel concerning her hypocrisy. The only person the Lord will listen to is the one who truly acknowledges the Lord and their sin. That person will only seek to do good to please the Lord and do good to others. Faith and works, says James goes hand in hand (Jms. 2:26). Verses 1-7 is a restating of Israel's national sin against the Lord of breaking their covenant with God by going after false gods and worshiping them. This is the act of humanistic religion that ignores the revelation of God and His commands and push them aside by the beliefs of man. Thus since Ephraim has multiplied their altars of worship (8:11) the Lord will remember their iniquity and punish them. Thus they will seek out the help of Egypt instead of the Lord,

¹⁵ New American Commentary Old Testament, Olive Tree Bible Study, Hosea 7:11.

yet no help will be found as the Lord consumes their cities, homes and palaces (8:11-14).

- d) *Israel's destructive flight (9:1-17)*: It will make no difference where Ephraim or the whole house of Israel goes. Though they go their southern neighbor, Egypt, it will do no good, because no matter where they go, the Lord will find them. They will be buried by Egypt as they are overtaken (9:6). Lawrence Richards comments on this by saying, *"If you or I were to be cut off from God, it would make no difference whether we settled in the north, the south, the east, or the west. Any place in which we were isolated from the Lord would be exile."*¹⁶ Thus, all the glory, power, prosperous living of Ephraim will flourish away like a bird (9:11). The easy living under Jeroboam II will quickly come to an end. Within 30 years of Jeroboam II death, all that Israel counted on will soon fly out the window like a bird. Even though at one time the Lord found Israel like grapes, she gave herself to shame at Baal-peor (9:10) and now the Lord finds them evil like Gilgal, the evil satanic cult center (4:15; 12:11). What the Lord may be saying is this, "that, every kind of evil that Israel practices can be found at Gilgal. This is why I have come to hate them."¹⁷ The only course of action for Israel is to begin to sow seeds of righteousness. As for now their present course will only lead them to be wanderers among the nations (9:17).
- e) *Israel's destructive conclusion and end (10:1-15)*: God's final message for Israel, *"Sow with a view to righteousness" (10:12)*. What the Lord would want most for Israel is for her to reap the fruit of God's unfailing love. Israel was an aggressive growing vine in good soil that only produced poisonous fruit. God is instructing Israel by using the farm analogy of animals plowing the fallow ground and planing good seeds of righteousness. All they have plowed and sowed thus far are seeds of wickedness (v. 13). Since they are unable to sow a crop of righteousness, the Lord will bring an end of their wickedness at Bethel where the source of all of Israel's darkness. (v. 15).
- f) **APPLICATION**: There is an old saying that we are all familiar with; *"You reap what you sow."* You cannot sow wild oats during the week and expect to reap good fruit. The crop of your life will fail, no matter how much one prays for a successful crop. Faith and works do compliment each other. God is not honored by superficial confessions that do not plow the fallow ground of ones heart. The Lord listens and resounds to the one whose heart is contrite (Psalm 51). That's the one the Lord will not turn away. If the course of your life is being planted with wild evil seeds, you will only reap the destruction that you planted for yourself. Paul reminds us what happens to those who acknowledge God, but yet suppress the truth concerning God. He writes:
 - *"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of*

¹⁶ Lawrence O. Richards, Devotional Commentary, Victor Books, p. 535.

¹⁷ New American Commentary Old Testament, Olive Tree Bible Study, Hosea 9:15

God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 1:24-25).

C. Third Message: “The Restoration of Israel” - (11:1-14:9)

1. *Israel is truly loved by God:* God loves His people with a love that will not let them go (11:4). The emotional expression of God’s love is seen more clearer here than anywhere in the Bible. Read God’s emotional cry when He asks, “*How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel?...My heart is overturned within Me, All my compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again.*” ...Here it is... “*for I am GOD and not man, the Holy One in your midst*” (11:8-9). The Lord is justified to be angry with Israel. He is also just to punish Israel. Yet with all his anger against their multiplied sins, the Lord also feels His compassion over His true love for Israel. Thus, one day He will roar like a lion, calling His cubs back to Him in safety of His den (11:10-11).
2. *Israel truly provoked God:* Even though God’s love for Israel is great, He reminds them once again that it was their great sin of breaking His covenant and their unfaithfulness towards Him that provoked the Lord’s punishment on them (12:1-5). Yet, His dispute is not only with Israel to the north, but also with Judah too (12:2). They will not get off easy too. Even though Jacob wrestled with the Lord (Gen. 32:25-29) and won...God’s blessings for His people does not come easy. God’s blessing means a return to Him and to maintain love and justice, and to wait for the Lord always (12:6).
3. *Israel’s idolatry angered God:* Israel chose the easy way of pleasing self rather than the hard way of pleasing the Lord. They chose through Jeroboam I to go after their own form of idol worship. The worship was easy because sin is easy. They exalted themselves (13:1) and through their worship of Baal they did all kinds of wrong and died. So, like the mist in the clouds they will disappear (13:3). At one time since Egypt the Lord was their Savior (Ex. 20:3). There were not to know any god, but God, because there is no god beside Him (Isa. 45:5). Now the Lord will become their destroyer (13:7). He will be like a lion that waits for its prey and attack to kill and destroy.
4. *Israel’s ransom is God’s undying love:* Yet, again, in His words of anger, the Lord speaks of hope and ransom because of His great love for His own (13:14). The sting of death and the power of Sheol will not have it’s final grip on God’s people. Hosea preaches a message of God’s hope for His people very much like Paul’s message of the resurrected Christ who will by the power of His resurrection will put an end to the power and sting of death and the grave (1 Cor. 15:54-57). The undying love of God is found only through Jesus Christ His only Son who overcame death to pay the ransom of our sin to set us free from the bondage of sin and death. The power of His resurrection is our hope to be raised up to eternal life through Him to be with Him for

all eternity. This is the beautiful message of God's salvation for an unfaithful sinner whom He has loved.

5. *Israel's future is in God's hands*: God's invitation to Israel is to return to Him (14:1). If Israel will only return to the Lord He alone would heal their wayward ways (14:4). If Israel would return to the Lord He alone will make them flourish to bloom and grow (14:5-9). God's final plea to Israel is, *"O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; From Me comes your fruit"* (14:8). God shares seven ways He intends to bless Israel, this blessing will not come to fulfillment until the millennial reign of Christ (14:4-7; Isa. 65:17-25).

III. CONCLUSION: Hosea's book closes with two final statements - (14:9)

- *"Whoever is wise, let him understand these things."*
- *"Whoever is discerning, let him know them."*

This is Hosea's appeal to those who have wisdom to discern the truthfulness of his message. There is only one way to walk with the Lord and to please Him. That way is walk in His ways. The Psalm writer writes:

"How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe his testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart." - Psalm 119:1-2

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But His delight is in the law of the Lord" - Psalm 1:1-2

The only way to be pleasing and acceptable to the Lord is not by conforming to this world, but by being transformed by renewing your mind to be like Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). As the Apostle John stated: *"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols"* (1 John 5:21).

Here are some practical application from Hosea for us to take with us:¹⁸

1. Nothing is able to quench God's love for us.
2. God suffers intense pain when His own deserts Him.
3. God takes seriously the sacred covenant of the marriage relation.
4. In God's plan there can be no double standard of morality.
5. Sin destroys man's discernment that enables them to make moral decisions.
6. Divorce is not a solution. It's an opportunity for reconciliation and restoration.
7. Worship cannot please God until the worshiper comes in the right spirit.
8. A nation declines rapidly when its leaders become corrupt.
9. There is danger of becoming like those with whom we associate.
10. Genuine repentance will bring forgiveness and full restoration of God's favor.
11. Inward corruption in a nation is more dangerous to its existence than external enemies.
12. The root of sin from which all others spring is unfaithfulness to the Lord.

¹⁸ "Preaching from the Prophets", Kyle M. Yates, Broadman Press, 1942, p. 82.

LESSON FOUR: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Hosea” Part II **Study Questions**

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: What can we learn about the depth of God’s love for us by reading Hosea 3:1-5? What is the implication of God’s love towards us?

-REFLECT-

2. The heart of God’s controversy of Israel’s sin was what? (Hosea 4:1-14).
3. Read Hosea 6:1-3. How authentic is Israel’s repentance? Do they say the right things? What is missing from their repentance? (Hint: 1 John 1:6-10).
4. In the commentary, read on page 3, (#2, a) - the note concerning “Baal worship.” What is it about the practice of Baal worship that angers God? and What did God warn the Israelites concerning worshiping the false idols of the Canaanites?

5. Where can Israel go to escape the wrath of God? (Hosea 7:11-16)

6. How broken is God over His love for Israel? (Hosea 11:1-11)

-REVEAL-

7. Even though the Lord promises to restore Israel in the future, what final advice does He give in the closing verses of this book? (Hosea 14:9). What are some practical ways you might apply that wisdom in your life today?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 5: “Jonah: ”The Patriotic Prophet”

OVERVIEW: The word of the Lord came to Jonah to preach against Nineveh (1:1-2), but he tried to flee to Tarshish (v.3). While on the ship the Lord caused a great storm that threatened the ship. Jonah was identified for the cause of the storm and was cast overboard (vv. 4-16) and swallowed by a great fish (v.17). It was inside the fish that Jonah prayed and was delivered (2:1-10). Jonah was once again called by God to go and preach against Nineveh and they repented (3:1-10). Jonah was upset and angry and asked God to let him die (4:1-4). While complaining the Lord used a great vine to teach Jonah the value and lesson of His grace (vv. 5-11).

BACKGROUND:

AUTHOR: There is no explicit reference to the author or the book’s chronological setting. The only support for Jonah being a historical figure is found in Matt. 12:40 by the testimony of Jesus and 2 Kings 14:25 where we read:

“He (Jeroboam) restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.”

From these two verses we learn that Jonah whose name means “dove” is the son of Amittai (1:1). He is from Gath-Hepher a town less than 5 miles north of Nazareth in the Galilee region. Which would make sense for Jesus to reference Jonah as a prophet (Matt. 12:39) being that the two towns were near each other and proves the inconsistency of the Jews statement during Jesus’ day when they stated that “a prophet does not come out of Galilee,” (Jn. 7:52) when in fact Jonah did.

Some scholars struggle with the authorship of Jonah because in how they interpret the book. Some see it as parabolic (parable teaching) or allegorical (figurative) instead of being historical.

Regardless what we or any scholar

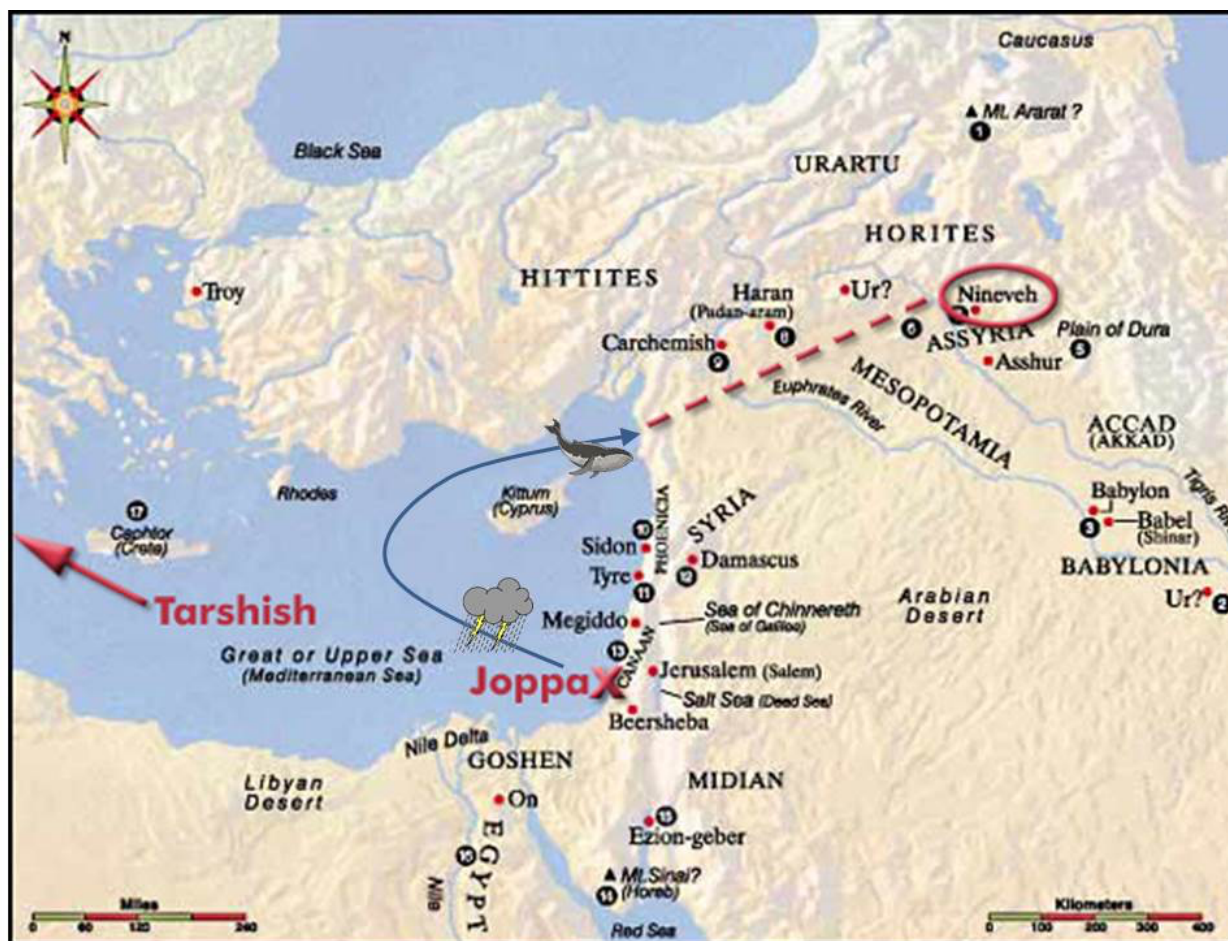


thinks it was included in the canonical Scriptures because that community of Israel acknowledged its divine inspiration and prophetic character.¹⁹

DATE: The date of authorship is again hinted by 2 Kings 14:25 during the reign of Jeroboam II, which places Jonah around 785-770 BC. This was also during the time of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. This would clearly make Jonah an pre-exilic prophet to the Northern kingdom.

AUDIENCE: At first glance the main audience would be the Ninevites (1:2; 3:2) because of their great sin, but another audience could be Jonah himself (4:5-9) who needed to know about God's abundance grace (4:11). The greater audience could be to the weak people like Jonah (3:1-2; 4:4; 9-10), and lost people like the Ninevites (1:2; 4:11).

LOCATION: For a brief book, the geography of Jonah is large as we track Jonah's travels from Galilee, to Joppa, then to Nineveh. The distances between Nineveh and Tarshish was vast. Nineveh was more than 500 miles to the east of Galilee while Tarshish would have been at least 2500 miles to the west from Israel. This would have been the furthest remote location Jonah could have gone to avoid the call of God to minister to the Assyrians.



¹⁹ New American Commentary Old Testament, Jonah, Author, 3rd paragraph, Olive Tree Bible Study.

OCCASION: What was Nineveh like and why did Jonah the patriotic prophet from Israel so despise the Assyrians living in Nineveh? The people living in Nineveh during the 8th century BC were godless, wicked, violent Assyrians. Archaeological inscriptions found show that Assyrian kings boast of their own cruelty, such as flaying their enemies and hanging their skin on the city walls. The king in Jonah actually call his people to repentance when he specifies of their violence (3:8). Their violence was aimed at the surrounding nations like Israel, which Assyria tried to conquer and later did 125 years later.

But, there was a brief transition of leadership change taking place in Assyria. 2 Kings 14:25 notes that Jonah's ministry took place during the reign of Jeroboam II. This was during the weakest state and transition of power in the Assyrian empire when Adad-nirari III (782 BC) died and before Tiglath-pileser III (745BC) took the throne. Assyria during this period was engaged in ongoing battles with the mountain tribes of Urartu and its associates of Mannai and Madai in the north who had push the Assyrian borders back to less than a hundred miles of Nineveh. This consciousness of weakness among the Ninevites and possible threat by its neighboring enemies would prove to be an opportunity and readiness for the Ninevites to accept the prophet's message of repentance from the Lord.²⁰

PURPOSE: Why was Jonah written?

Threaded in the book of Jonah is a strong sense of patriotism. Jonah did not like the Assyrians. He was blinded by his own patriotism and the Lord rebuked him for it because it kept him from seeing God's love for the Assyrians. Thus...

- Jonah teaches us about God's love and grace.
- Jonah teaches that God's salvation is not just for the Jews, but also for the gentiles as well.
- Jonah teaches the need for obedience to the call of God.
- Jonah teaches the need for repentance from sin.
- Jonah teaches the truth that "salvation is from the Lord" (2:9).

Thus the main purpose of this book is to teach Israelites that God loves other nations than their own, or to teach us to love other nations than our own. Jonah stood for most Israelites or us as he represents the typical attitudes people tend to have towards peoples and nations they have no reason to love.²¹

CENTRAL VERSES: Jonah 1:3; 17; 2:2; 3:10

CENTRAL THEME: God's love manifests itself in His accessibility to all regardless our reputation, nationality or race. This theme shows us God's mercy extends beyond what we would like, even to those who show no mercy. It also shows us God's sovereignty. In that God's plan will be carried out and cannot be avoided. But, it also shows the bitterness and resentment we might have against other people and against God's plan.

²⁰ Expositor's Bible Commentary, Jonah Introduction, 1. Background, first paragraph, Olive Bible Study.

²¹ Stuart, p. 479. Cf. Dyer, p. 773.

CENTRAL TEACHING: God so loved the world and so must His people.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: The New Testament mentions that Jonah is a type of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 12:40). All through Jonah, Christ is pictured as a prophet to the nations, while in Jonah's life He is shown as the Savior and Lord (2:9).

KEY WORDS/TERMS: Appointed (4 x's), Calamity (4x's), The Word (4 x's)

OUTLINE:

Part One

- I. First Commission and Jonah's Response is to Flee (1:1-16)
- II. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Repents (1:17-2:10)

Part Two

- I. Second Commission and Jonah's Response is to Obey (3:1-10)
- II. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Resents (4:1-11)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

PART ONE

I. First Commission and Jonah's Response is to Flee (1:1-16)

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah..." - (1:1) - Being the patriot Jonah was for his countrymen, he was very indignant of God's command to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. His reason for this is found in chapter 4 where Jonah's suspicion of God's plan was correct when he said, *"for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (4:2b).* Jonah knew that the Lord would withhold his judgment on Nineveh if they would repent. This suspicion by Jonah explains why he would take flight and try to get as far as he could from Galilee and Nineveh. So he sets sail from Joppa for Tarshish (Spain).

"But Jonah rose up to flee" - (1:3) - But why was Jonah so against taking the good news to such a wicked race such as the Assyrians who lived in Nineveh? If they repent, would this not be good for Israel and its surrounding neighbors? The problem is two fold. One, the Assyrians were so wicked and cruel that anyone who had knowledge of their fierce ways of dealing with those they conquered would have despised them as much as Jonah did. They would have known about how their kings boasted about flaying their enemies and hanging their skin on the city walls. They would drag their prisoners away with hooks in their noses and oppressed any opposition by impaling leaders like kabobs on stakes in front of the city. The Israelites had dealings with Assyria in the battle of Qartar in 853 BC and under Jehu had to pay tribute to Assyria in 841 BC. If Assyria were to be spared now, it could be that the doom pronounced at Horeb to Elijah (1 Ki. 19:15-18) should go into full effect. A contemporary version of this would be the Lord commissioning you to be a missionary to share the good news of the gospel to those who belong to ISIS. One might seek to run away from the Lord as Jonah did. (1:3).

The second problem was that Israel had this entitlement perception that God's saving grace was meant only for them and not the world. Why would the Lord who is jealous for the love and loyalty for the children of Israel have any love and compassion for an evil gentile nation. We see this same message of God's impartiality written in the gospels and also in Acts. Take for instance the popular verse, John 3:16.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

In the English and at first glance, we as western-evangelicals would say amen to this, that God would want us to go out into the world to make disciples of all nations. Yet, this message in John 3:16 was directed to Nicodemus and the Jews who were so into themselves that they could not see that the coming Messiah would come to save them not only from their sins, but the sins of gentiles. So what Jesus was saying to Nicodemus was similar to what God was saying to Jonah, *"I so love the world Jonah, that I am willing to save not only the children of Israel, but the wicked people of Nineveh."* Therefore, no wonder Jonah was willing to get away and flee. Not from God's judgment on the Assyrians, but so that God would not save them.

So, Jonah paid for a fare to sail to Tarshish (to smelt). Tarshish is commonly accepted to be located somewhere on the Mediterranean coast, probably Tartessus in Spain.²²

"I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven..." - (1:9) - As Jonah rebels and leaves on the ship for Tarshish, the Lord "hurled" a great wind on the sea (Mediterranean) (1:4). The storm was so great that the ship was about to break a part. Each man on the ship began to cry out to their god, but no relief. Finally the captain finds Jonah asleep below the deck and ask him to cry out to his God (v. 6). Then the men had the idea to cast lots to see who this calamity was for and the lot fell on Jonah. He then tells them that he is a Hebrew who fears the God of heaven and who made the sea and dry land. The men became extremely frightened (v.10) and ask what they must do to calm the sea? Jonah said to them to pick him up and throw him into the sea. The men chose not to do what Jonah said and began to row to return to land, but the storm became more fierce and then they prayed to the Lord to save them and asked the Lord for forgiveness for what they were about to do by throwing Jonah overboard (v. 14). When they did, the storm stopped raging and the men feared the Lord and offered sacrifices and vows to Him (vv. 15-16).

I am reminded of Jesus walking on the sea in Matthew 14:22-33. When Jesus' disciples got into a boat to cross the other side of Galilee during the evening the waves began to batter the boat. At that time Jesus came out to them walking on the water. At first they thought him to be a ghost but Jesus spoke, *"Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid"* (Matt. 14:27). Peter said that if it was truly Him then command him to come out and meet him on the water. Jesus said, *"Come!"* (v.29). Peter walked out to Jesus but seeing the wind and waves became fearful and began to sink into the water and cried out, *"Lord, save me!"* (v.30). Immediately, Jesus reached out and saved Him

²² Expositor's Bible Commentary, Jonah 1:3, Olive Tree Bible Study

and then got in the boat and the wind stopped (v. 31). At that moment they worshipped Jesus confessing that He was truly God's Son.

APPLICATION: The application here is that there is only one God in heaven who created the sea and dry land. He commands the stars in the universe and the winds on the seas. As God and creator, He is also Lord and Savior to those who fear and call upon His name for salvation. We do not know what the nationality or race of the men on Jonah's boat, but we do know that the fear of God came into their lives and they cried out to Him to be saved and they offered their allegiance to Him alone by making sacrifices and vows to Him.

II. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Repents (1:17-2:10)

"The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah..." - (1:17) - Some have called this great fish a whale. The Hebrew does not indicate that it was despite the KJV rendering (Matt. 12:39-40). What's not relevant are the stories of whaling men being swallowed whole and later found alive (or dead) in a whale's stomach. What is relevant is that God "appointed" the great fish. The great fish was a miracle in two ways. One, it was such a Goliath fish that it was able to swallow Jonah whole and that Jonah was able to survive. The sovereign power of God controls the winds and waves is also able to appoint at the proper time and place a great fish to swallow a reluctant missionary and that fish would preserve Jonah for three days and nights until he prays his repentant prayer to the Lord for his disobedient ways.

APPLICATION: God could have provided many other means and ways to preserve Jonah and save him, why a great fish? For the men on the boat the raising of the storm and its quieting showed God's control over chaos. This fish, at God's disposal, shows that every force in the world, no matter how potentially dangerous, is and was at God's control for His purpose. Just as the storm was secondary to the men's salvation, so was the great fish secondary to Jonah's grasp that God's love is operative in a world that is entirely under divine control.²³

"While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord;" - (2:7) - Jonah's prayer is actually a poem restating his experience in the belly of the great fish. He tells of the currents that swirl around him. The clammy seaweed wrapped around his head as he sank. As he nears death he remembers the Lord and gives thanks to him and his praise rose to the Lord and His holy temple. This prayer recalls Solomon's prayer at the temple's dedication. In the prayer Solomon asked God to restore any sinning person who was aware of *"afflictions and pains, and spreading out his hand toward this temple"* (2 Chron. 6:29). This is what Jonah was doing. Remembering God's temple and His grace.

This reminds me of John Newton's story in how he came to saving grace in the Lord and the birth of his infamous hymn, "Amazing Grace." -

After years of leaving his Christian home and life behind at age seventeen, John Newton embraced his new life as a sailor. Part of this new life was engaging in the depraved ways of his

²³ Expositors Bible Commentary, Jonah 1:17, Olive Tree Bible Study.

ship mates. A couple of ships and crews later, Newton found himself on the Greyhound bound on a voyage from Brazil to Newfoundland. The ship and crew sailed into a violent storm. The ship began to split and take on water. Newton tied himself to the ship so he would not be washed away tried to pump as much water as he could from the ship. During this tempest, Newton confessed his sins of licentious ways and mockery of the gospels and was convinced that he had sinned too much to have any hope for God's forgiveness. Yet when the storm did not recede he felt he would soon meet his God as he at last clung to Scriptures that he learned that taught God's grace towards sinners, and he breathed his first weak prayer in years. As he was later to recall it, this was "the hour he first believed." - thus the hymn "Amazing Grace" was born.

Jonah's prayer and John Newton's, was a silent confession of his sin and commitment to be obedient by stating that, "*which I have vowed I will pay - Salvation is from the Lord.*" (v. 2:9). Then the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah up onto the dry ground (v.10).

REFLECTION: Penance is an old fashion word that means confession. It is the mortification showing sorrow for and repentance of sin. Confession and repenting of sin is only good if one feels that their very life would pass if they were not honest with God concerning their sin. Very much like the men who were cut to the quick after hearing Peter's sermon. "What must we do to be saved" they asked (Acts 2:37). Peter's response, "Repent..." (Acts 2:38).

In both of these confessions (the men on the ship and Jonah's) we see that both not only acknowledge God's sovereign control over their circumstances, but also acknowledge their sin and the God who would exercise His just reward for their sin. Yet, as Jonah proclaimed, "*Salvation is from the Lord.*" Jonah did not ask for it...he knew it, but isn't that what true penance is...knowing you are a sinner who does not deserve salvation? It's easy to judge the motive of ones heart when they are in mortal danger, especially if they are simply trying to get out of danger. But, when one ask for nothing in return, just simple penance this is the person who is genuinely sorry for their sin.

PART TWO

I. Second Commission and Jonah's Response is to Obey (3:1-10)

"*Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time*" - (3:1) - This next section teaches us that God has compassion for all. God is also a God of second chances, in that here, He gives Jonah a second opportunity to go and preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh. One would ask, if Jonah being disobedient to God's call, why did the Lord not just raise up another prophet to preach against Nineveh? Perhaps the best answer for this will be found at the end of this book. As much as Nineveh needed to here God's condemnation and pending judgment for the opportunity to repent, Jonah, as a patriot of Israel, representing Israel, needed to learn about God's impartiality towards other nations. In that, as Peter wrote:

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" - (2 Pet. 3:9).

Or when Peter was called upon by God to go and share the good news with the house of Cornelius. Cornelius was a gentile who was a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort in

Caesarea (Acts 10:1). The interesting note about Cornelius is that he was a God fearer who prayed to God continually and gave alms to the Jewish people (v.2). Peter who was still practicing Jewish dietary law as a believer, was called to visit Cornelius, but Peter was perplexed that the Lord would ask him to this unlawful task to go into the home of a gentile, much less a roman centurion home. As it turns out, Peter eventually obeys the Lord and visits Cornelius's home, preaches the gospel and his house heard the good news and while he was speaking the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening (Acts 10:44).

The point? God is not impartial. His gospel is for Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the other most part of the world (Acts 1:8). Jonah is about to learn that lesson, that even though he is a patriot, the Lord does care for ex-pats.

“Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city...” - (3:3) - Archeologists seem to indicate that Nineveh had a maximum population of around 175,000 people. Compare this to the size of Samaria, the capital of Jonah's day in the Northern Kingdom of being around 30,000. We have a more precise accounting of the population by the Lord in (4:11) when He tells us that there are more than 120,000 persons in Nineveh. Nevertheless, it was a big city for their day and (v.4) tells us that it took Jonah three days to walk across it.

“Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown” - (3:4) - This was the message that Jonah preached. As stated earlier, because of the transition of power in Assyrian and the approaching enemies a hundred miles from the city, the king and people of Nineveh were fully aware of their weakness. This message coming from the patriot prophet of Israel struck a chord that rang out through the whole city. When they heard the message, the people believed in God and repented. Even the king repented because realizing the violence and wickedness that came from His hands (vv. 5-8). The end result was when God saw their deeds of repentance and turned from their wicked ways, the Lord relented from His wrath on Nineveh that He was going to bring upon them.(v. 10).

APPLICATION: Jonah's mission was to a metropolis. A city teeming with people. It was the hub and root of depraved evil and sin that was ready for repentance. The problem here is if only Israel was willing to repent like Nineveh did. This pagan nation was an object lesson for God's own people. If they would too repent then God would forgive them and they would escape their own demise preached by Jonah's contemporaries (Amos, Joel, Hosea).

There is a bit of irony here. The very people that Jonah preached to and God saved (the Assyrians) would be the very people and instrument God would used to carry out His judgement on His own who did not repent, because of their hardened heart towards God.

Sometimes the hardest people to reach are not the unchurched, but those who have grown up in the church. Same here with the people of Israel and Nineveh. This is what the Lord was using Jonah for. To teach him and Israel this lesson. Look to Nineveh for what I desire from you. Turn from your evil ways and turn to me like they did or else.

II. God's Response to Jonah and Jonah Resents (4:1-11)

"Therefore now, O Lord please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." - (4:3) - James Boice reminds us that Jonah, who was given a great commission is a story of God's great mercy. The result of God dealing with men in this story should end with great rejoicing because of God's great mercy. First you have God's mercy on Jonah for being disobedient. God not only spared His life, but gave him a second chance in ministry. Then God's mercy on the sailors from Jonah's ship who were pagans who worshiped other gods. When they heard Jonah's testimony and witnessed the calming of the sea after Jonah was thrown overboard, they began to worship Jehovah and offering sacrifices to Him, making vows because they believed. Finally, there is the mercy on the people of Nineveh. An ungodly city that was particularly wicked and yet the Lord relented His wrath on this metropolis because its king and people believed Jonah's message, acknowledge and repented from their sins. There should be rejoicing. There was, the sailor's rejoice and the people of Nineveh rejoiced, but Jonah, the prophet of God, the patriot of Israel did not. In fact, he'd wish the Lord would strike him dead then and now after the repentance of Nineveh because of his displeasure for its people. Because the Lord did not smite them, he'd rather the Lord take his life.

Jonah is expressing several emotions. He was displeased and angry. He obeyed God. Did what God commanded him to do, but God had not done what Jonah wanted done. In his anger and prayer towards God Jonah was trying to:

1. ***Justified himself, both in his eyes and God's.*** - *"was not this what I said while I was in my own country? (v.2).* Jonah was trying to justify his former disobedience knowing that the Lord would do exactly this act of mercy. Thus he confesses *"this is why I fled to Tarshish 'to forestall this'" (v.2).* This is why I fled and what is more - I was right!.
2. ***Turned God against Himself.*** - *"for I knew that thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (v.2).* What Jonah is attempting to do here is turn God against His own word. These words are from Exodus 34:6-7 when the Lord passed in front of Moses on the mount giving Moses and the children of Israel a second chance for God's law. This is dangerous territory that Jonah is walking on. Because, is this not the same technique that Satan used in the garden? Or Satan's strategy with Jesus in the wilderness? Satan used God's own word against Himself to justify evil. James Boice comments by saying that, "Jonah sought to justify himself and prove God wrong by Scripture, Jonah took a place as Satan's spiritual progeny."
3. ***Asked for death a second time.*** - *"take my life from me" - (v.3)* - Why would the prophet want to die? Had he become depressed? This is twice now that Jonah seemed to expressed a death wish. First, when he was on the boat. Instead of repenting then he had the sailors throw him overboard. Instead of perishing, the Lord spared his life. Now, the prophet is requesting to die once again. Now that he had obeyed, he is still unhappy and would rather perish and get it all over with than see the Ninevites repent and be spared.

APPLICATION: The application for this section comes to us in the form of a question. What is wrong with Jonah? What is wrong with Jonah is the same thing that is wrong with many self-justified individuals. They have not come to a point in their own pride and self righteousness to agree with and submit to the will of God. Jonah was opposed to God's will from the very beginning. This is what the Lord was teaching Jonah. It's a hard lesson for anyone who believes that God should act upon what they perceived to be the right way. It's a faulty presupposition about God and His will. It's an idol in our own heart with pride at the root of the problem.

What is needed is a type of humility that Peter expressed when visiting Cornelius in Acts 10. As we once again recount this narrative. Peter, like Jonah was oppose to God. In this case to eat anything unclean and unlawful (Acts 10:14). *"By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."* But God reprimanded Peter by telling him, *"what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy"* (v.15). Now, even though Peter was perplexed, he submitted, left with the men from Cornelius's house and went to preach, they believed and received the Holy Spirit and notice Peter's response to those being saved:

"Then Peter answered, 'Surely no one can refuse the water fro thse to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did can he? - (v.47).

In short - Peter accepted the work of the Lord on these gentiles and accepted them into the fellowship of the church by baptizing them and even remaining with them for a few days longer (v. 48). This is how Jonah should have responded. This is how the Lord would have wanted Jonah to react. This is how the Lord expects us to rejoice in His will to save others we would consider un-savable.

CONCLUSION:

"So the Lord appointed a plant" - (v. 6) - In the conclusion, the Lord uses a vine to teach Jonah a lesson about God's mercy. The vine that grew up over Jonah pleased him because it sheltered Jonah from the sun. But, the next day the Lord appointed a worm to attack the plant and it withered (v.7). Then the sun came up and the Lord appointed a scorching east wind and it beat down on Jonah's head that he became faint and wanted to die (v.8). The point of God's illustration with the plant, the worm, and the sun was to teach Jonah that - you cared enough about the plant, why do you not care enough for the thousands and thousands of people in Nineveh.

God who is concerned for His people in Israel is just as concerned for those who are Israel's enemies and idolaters. Just as the people of Israel are important to God, so too were the people in Nineveh. Are you partial to whom you would rather love? There was a challenge here for Jonah. There is also a challenge her for us. What is it that makes you happy? What do you care about? Is it the things and values of this life or the values of God and His will that is important to you? Make sure you do not express the same attitude towards God's will like Jonah and Israel did. Submit to God and serve Him with a glad heart no matter to whom or where He sends you.

**LESSON FIVE: "Survey of the Minor Prophets: Jonah
Study Questions**

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: How is Hosea's love toward Gomer similar to God's love towards us?

-REFLECT-

2. To whom was Jonah to preach to? (1:2).
3. What was Jonah's response to God's call on his life? (1:3)
4. What was God's response to Jonah's disobedience (1:4-17)
5. Restate Jonah's prayer poem from the belly of the fish by identifying his distress, what he could feel and sense, his brink of death, what he remembers, what he concludes. (2:1-10).
6. What was Jonah's message to the Ninevites? (3:4) and what was their reaction? (3:5-9)
7. How did the Lord react to the people of Nineveh? (3:10) How did Jonah react? (4:1-3)

-REVEAL-

8. What lesson do you suppose the Lord taught Jonah, Israel and you about the wideness of His great mercy and compassion? (4:5-11).

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 6: “Micah: Who is Like Jehovah”

OVERVIEW: The first three chapters of Micah initiates the judgement of God on both Israel and Judah and their impending doom. This message is for all the earth to hear and its message denounces the rulers, false prophets and priest. Chapter four and five offers comfort and hope by looking forward to the days of enduring peace when the Lord’s kingdom will be established on His holy mountain in Zion. A remnant will return to Zion out from their captivity in Babylon. The Messiah will come from Bethlehem who will cause His righteous remnant to be a blessing on the earth. During that time the land will be purged of its idolatry and oppression. Chapters six and seven conclude with the way of salvation through the means of a lawsuit where God is the plaintiff and Israel is the defendant. The Lord reminds them He was the One who rescued them from Egypt and speaks to them about true worship. He again rebukes them for their treasures and oppression which follows Israel’s confession and prayer that the Lord will return to shepherd His people once again. In conclusion, Micah conveys the meaning of his own name, “Who is a God like Thee?” Only God can pardon and show compassion to His people of His covenant.

BACKGROUND:

“A Booming Voice that Made a Difference”

Some people get all the credit. Mostly it’s because of who you know rather than what you know. Micah was a prophet who ministered during the same ministry years of the aristocratic prophet Isaiah. Isaiah’s closeness to Uzziah and Hezekiah cast a long shadow of the former prophet, Micah. Yet, the preaching of Micah did not go unnoticed. For, Micah’s preaching of God’s impending judgement bore fruit during Hezekiah’s reign (2 King 18-20). Revival broke out because of the voice that came 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem from the small farming village of Moresheth.

Here is the historical account of what happened. When Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and conquered the northern capital of Samaria, he then deported the people of that kingdom. Then about eight years later Shalmaneser’s successor (Sennacherib) swept down and attacked the southern kingdom of Judah - stopping right before the walls of Jerusalem and forced Hezekiah to pay tribute to him.

Hezekiah was given a message by Tirhakah, the king of Cush saying:

“Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” Then he gives an example... “Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered?” - (2 Kings 19:10-12).

In short, the king’s message was this, “Look man, look to the other nations. Their gods did not save them from my mighty hand. Do not be a fool and trust in your god for there is no god who will save you from this terrible kingdom.

Hezekiah is the king that God’s word says, he did what was right in God’s eyes by removing the high places, smashed the sacred stones, cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake that Moses made, for the Israelites had been burning incense to it (2 Kings 18:3-4).

Now notice how king Hezekiah responded to Tirhakah's message:

"Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said: 'O Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God...So now, O Lord our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone.'" - (2 Kings 19:14-19).

What happens next - revival broke out in Jerusalem. Hezekiah's prayer factored in God's decision to spare the city from Sennacherib and as announced by Isaiah that the city would not be destroyed and that Sennacherib would himself fall.

Why this long introduction? What does this have to do with Micah? Micah is not even mentioned in this narrative. It was Isaiah who brought the good news to Hezekiah. Yet, but we know later from a later incident during the days of Jeremiah that it was because of Micah's preaching that the people repented and Jerusalem was spared.

"A Weeping Voice that Sheds Light on Micah's Message"

Jeremiah lived about one hundred years after Micah. Like Micah, Jeremiah was also called by God to be His spokesman to prophesy Jerusalem's destruction. Unfortunately for Jeremiah his message was not well received for he offended the priest and false prophets of his day (Jer. 26:4-6). So they seized Jeremiah and brought him before the officials and people, demanding his death.

Here was Jeremiah's defense:

"Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts,

*"Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height. '*

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord, and did not the Lord relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves" - (Jeremiah 26:18-19)

It was this memory given by Jeremiah that sheds light on the voice of Micah that was heard by Hezekiah who repented and revival followed and saved Jerusalem from impending destruction.

WHO WAS MICAH?

Micah, was a Morasthite from Moresheth near Gath (or Moreseth-Gath which means "possession of the wine-press"), was a town of the tribe of Judah located about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Outside of being the prophet's hometown, it was possibly connected with Eliezer the prophet and could have been one of Rehoboam's fortified town. It is sometimes connected with the Old Testament town "Lachish" an important Judean town in Micah's day.

Micah, whose name is a shortened version of “Micaiah” which means “who is like Yahweh?” ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (kings of Judah - II Kings 15-20). This would put his book and ministry around 735-700 B.C.. How appropriate was his name in that he helped the people understand what Yahweh is like.

WHO WROTE MICAH?

Evidences of Micah’s authorship are found in its claim (1:1), the character and unity of the whole book (cf. 1:2; 3:1; 6:1), its similarity in content to Isaiah (cf. 4:1-3 and Isa. 2:2-4), the confirmation of early Jewish teaching, and general agreement of scholars.

WHO WAS THE AUDIENCE?

Micah’s audience was to Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem) concerning the things “*which he saw in Samaria and Jerusalem*” - the capitals of the two kingdoms (1:1), yet His message seems to be primarily directed to Judah since only the southern kings are mentioned in the address.

WHAT WAS THE OCCASION?

Much of Micah’s background is very similar to Amos, Hosea, and Joel. The problems of social injustice and idolatry worship in Israel and the formalism and disobedience to God’s word in Judah are still the same issues. As Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (1:1), along with Isaiah and the prophets mentioned above. The years were economic affluence and international peace along with spiritual decadence for both Israel and Judah.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MICAH’S MESSAGE?

The purpose of Micah’s message is that he shows God’s hatred of His people’s passionless ritual and sin (6:7) and His offer of pardon to them. It is a mixture of judgement and hope. The judgement upon Israel was for social evils, corrupt leadership and idolatry. This judgement was for the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem, yet the book proclaims not just restoration of the nation, but the transformation and exaltation of Israel and Jerusalem as well. Therefore, the books purpose is to proclaims God’s message of Judgement, Restoration and Transformation.

CENTRAL VERSES: Micah 1:2; 5:2; 6:8; 7:18-19

CENTRAL THEME: Micah name means, “Who is like Jehovah.” The content of Micah is very similar to Isaiah - a message of salvation to the nations. Micah basically has two divisions: Denunciation and Consolation.

CENTRAL TEACHING: There are several points of teaching in Micah.

- God’s hatred of empty formal religion (6:7).
- His concern for social justice (6:8).
- God’s pardoning grace (7:18).
- God’s faithfulness to His covenants (7:20).

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Christ is represented as the God of Jacob (4:2), the Judge of the nations (4:3), and the Ruler in Israel who will be born in the city of Bethlehem (5:2; cf Matt. 2:1-6).

OUTLINE:

- I. God's Condemnation and Judgment (1-3).
 - A. On Samaria's idolatry (1:1-7)
 - B. On Judah's idolatry and wickedness (1:8-2:13)
 - C. On the princes and prophets for their injustice and deception (3:1-12)
- II. God's Consolation and Glory (4-7)
 - A. God's rescue for Israel and Gentile nations (4:1-13)
 - B. God's Redeemer who will shepherd in the strength of the Lord (5:1-15)
 - C. God's requirement for man (6:1-16)
 - D. God's reminder of His grace and forgiveness (7:1-20)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

I. CONDEMNATION & JUDGEMENT:

A. The Two Kingdoms:

1. **God Condemnation:** Both Israel and Judah are being condemned by the Lord for their rebellion and sins against Him (1:5). What was this rebellion and sin? The non-Israelite religious practices. Because of the influence of Canaanite religion, Israel was giving only lip service to the Lord. They were also guilty of ignoring the ethical demands of God's law for the poor and slave. Prosperity was not universal in Israel. The newly rich used their wealth only to exploit the poor (2:1-2). Notice that the rich "scheme iniquity" and "work out evil on their beds" and "do it" come the morning light. Why? Because they can (2:1b). Notice also that they "covet fields and then seize them" (2:2).

What does the Law of Moses state in the Ten Commandments?:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, servant, ox, donkey, ...or anything that belongs to your neighbor" - Ex. 20:17.

This was an intentional sin of commission. To "covet" means to take pleasure in something that attracts you. It is precious in your sight and you must take it for yourself because you can. One might remember from the popular story by J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" where the one ring to rule them all is coveted by all the creatures in middle earth. It was precious to one who possessed it.

As if that wasn't bad enough, notice the Lord gives example of their depraved injustice:

“You strip the robe off the garment from unsuspecting passers-by, from those returned from war. The women of My people you evict, each one from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever” - (2:8-9)

2. **God’s Judgement:** When God speaks from “His holy temple” (1:2), the image implies God’s divine judgement. So what is God’s judgement on Israel? God’s judgement is to lay flat all that they have. He will destroy the “high places” (1:3). He will make Samaria *“a heap of ruins in the open country”* (1:6). Since they were unwilling to smash their idols into pieces, the Lord will do it for them (1:7). Finally, He will take away the wealth of the rich (1:7b).
God is intrinsically holy. His holiness is on display in two primary ways: in His own faithful commitment to what is good, and in His judgement of those who desert the way of holiness and turn away from their “set apart” condition.

B. Rulers and Prophets

1. **God’s Condemnation:** God’s condemnation was also on the rulers and (false) prophets of Israel and Judah.
 - a) **Israel’s rulers,** the Lord condemns them for their harsh treatment directed against the poor. Notice how graphically Micah depicts the rulers exploited treatment on the poor. Treating them like animals being butchered and prepared for eating. As one reads God’s indictment, at first glance it reads like cannibalism (3:1-3).
 - b) **To the false prophets,** the Lord condemns them for leading His people astray (3:5). Prophets are charged with the responsibility to communicate God’s message. These prophets of Israel were motivated by monetary gain. If someone paid them, they were quick to say what their employer wanted to hear (3:5)
 - c) **Judah’s rulers,** Judah’s aristocracy was also being indicted by the Lord because her leaders judged for a bribe, her priests teach for a price and her prophets tell fortunes for money (3:9-11)
2. **God’s Judgement:** As a result for their sin here is how the Lord will judge.
 - a) Israel’s rulers: The Lord will not answer them when trouble comes their way because they have practice evil deeds (3:4)
 - b) Israel’s prophets: They too will find no consolation or answers from the Lord. They will be ashamed, embarrassed. They will be shut up with their mouths covered because there will be no answer from God for the misuse of their leadership (3:7).
 - c) Judah’s leaders: Zion will be plowed like a field. In the end, the Lord will make His city a heap of rubble. The temple destroyed with a hill and mound covered with a thick forest (3:12).

C. APPLICATION: Who is Yahweh? By the meaning of Micah's name, he shows Israel and Judah the God who is holy, and who stands in His holy temple. His holiness is about to exhibit judgement on His wicked people. By His holiness, His people will be punished for sin that Israel and Judah displayed. Micah reminds the leaders and prophets that He is the true prophet that is *"filled with power - with the Spirit of the Lord"* (3:7b) to do one thing - to make known how sinful Israel has been and their rebellious ways.

Like Israel and Judah, you and I have been set apart too by God. We are to serve Him and like Micah, reveal His goodness. The problem is, is that if we turn away and conform ourselves to the pattern of this world, God will judge us based upon what His holiness reveals.

The Apostle Paul spoke to this when he wrote:

"Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." - 1 Cor. 3:12-15

Or the prophet Isaiah who writes of similar condemnations and judgements, speaks to the holiness of God when he encounters the Lord's holiness in the temple. He even confesses of the lying lips of his people in his day:

"Then I said, woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." - Isa. 6:5

II. INSTRUCTION:

God's Kingdom: God's kingdom differs from modern or secular view. We think of it in terms of a location with land and borders, though one day Jesus will reign in a earthly kingdom during His millennial reign (Rev. 20:6). In the Old Testament, a "kingdom" is a sphere within which the will of a king is supreme. So, in this case, God's kingdom is the entire universe. For He is its Maker and ultimate authority. Yet, since the fall in the garden, this universe has been a kingdom in rebellion against the Lord, the Rightful Ruler. Even though this universe is fallen, the Lord seeks to reclaim back those who rebelled against Him on earth. Thus, He set a plan in motion when He spoke to Adam (Gen. 3:15), to Abraham (Gen. 12:3) that His promise and covenant is broad enough to cover all Abraham's seed and the nations.

The Lord will show Abraham's seed after He redeems them out of Egypt as promised, and show them how to live out His character among the nations. To do good. To be righteous and exercise His justice through His Law. To teach Israel how to love God's way and to show them how to live with Him as their King, by voluntarily submitting to His will.²⁴

²⁴ Lawrence Richards, The 365 Devotional Commentary, p. 579.

A. What God Requires from Man:

1. ***What God does not want:*** The Lord does not desire religious formalism or sacrifices (6:6a). God is not interested in the choicest animals nor in their number offered. He doesn't take delight in great quantities of oil. It will not bring you any closer to the Lord. The Lord doesn't require and is greatly angry with child sacrifices that was being practiced by His own people (2 King 3:27-16:3; Isa. 57:5) as the first born in (6:7) refers to the greatest thing one could give God, even this, God does not want.
2. ***What God wants:*** Micah reminds the people of Israel and Judah what it is that God desires the most from His people: *"but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"* (6:8). That's it. The best way to honor God in His kingdom is to mimic Him. To honor Him. To please Him. The only way to do that is to act justly, be kind towards one another, and to humbly walk with the Lord the days of your life.

B. APPLICATION: The role of the citizen in God's kingdom is to walk as Paul would say in Ephesians 4:1-3: *"to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all -*

1. *humility*
2. *gentleness*
3. *patience*
4. *love*
5. *unity*
6. *peacefully*

The Lord takes no greater pleasure in seeing His people living out the two greatest commandments: Love God with all your being by doing that you will love your neighbor with the Love of God. Though, this love is only found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. RESTORATION:

Before sharing the glorious plan of God's consolation and restoration towards Israel and Judah, we must again strongly consider that the Lord has a strong case against His own people. Because in doing so, and as Micah vividly does, it's only then you begin to understand the depth of God's love for His own.

- A. Micah Laments:** Because Micah knows that the Lord must destroy the two kingdoms (Israel and Judah) in order to regather them to Himself, Micah laments. What does it mean to lament? People in biblical times showed their humility to God, their grief over the confession of their sins with loud weeping, wailing, howling, and moaning. They would strip off their finer clothing and would wear only the oldest and most threadbare clothing. Micah shows us this when sharing with God's people the Lord's judgement, Micah laments. He mourns and wails. He strips himself of his clothing and howls like a jackal for the judgement on Israel and Judah is too great (1:8-9)

B. God's Time: The "last days" that Micah mentions, speaks of an unknown future when the Lord will fulfill His plan and purpose for Israel (4:1).

1. What will the last days look like? The last days will be that time when the Messianic King will rule will effect the will of God for His people and restore the fortunes of Israel. Notice several things:
 - a) God's mountain will be the chief of all mountains (6:1)
 - b) Peoples will stream to it (6:1-2)
 - c) God's word will be taught and people will walk in its path (6:2)
 - d) The Lord will judge from His throne (6:3)
 - e) There will be no more war (6:3)
 - f) There will only be peace and safety (6:4)
 - g) All will walk with the Lord forever (6:5)
 - h) God's remnant will be gathered together (6:6-8)
2. How will the Lord accomplish this? By the promise of His King, the Lord Jesus Christ (5:1-5). This is one of the Old Testament's most significant and clear messianic predictions.
 - a) A ruler will appear who will bring the promised blessings to Israel.
 - b) This ruler will be born in Bethlehem (5:2)
 - c) He will be from the days of eternity (Ancient of Days) (5:2)
 - d) He will have an earthly mother (5:3). Of course we know this to be Mary.
 - e) This ruler will shepherd His flock (Israel) in the strength of the Lord (5:4)
 - f) This ruler will guarantee their security and peace (5:4-5)
 - g) The greatness of this ruler will reach the ends of the earth (5:4)

C. God's Salvation:

1. **Is something to wait for:** Micah now looks expectantly for the Lord (7:7). The coming of the Lord is imminent. The old and new testaments do not give clear indication as to when, for only the Father knows the day and hour when this will all take place (Matt. 24:36), but Micah demonstrates what the Lord has asked all of us - to be on the alert as we wait in the darkness of this world. Like the bridesmaids who wait for the coming bridegroom (Matt. 25:1), so Micah takes watch and waits for God. The day of the Lord is something worth waiting for just as it is worth for a virgin to wait as a bridesmaid for her groom. It will certainly be a day of rejoicing when we hear the horn of the Lord announcing His coming to come and take His bride home to the place He has prepared for her (Jn. 14). Though we wait in darkness as Micah does, the Lord is our light (7:8).
2. **Is Assured:** When the Lord does come, His salvation will be sure, because His victory is sure. He will and will display His power and shepherd His people with "His scepter" (7:14). This emblem pictures the Lord's power and might of sovereign reign, but not as a king or ruler of this world, but in the fashion of the Great and

Good Shepherd. Trace the prophets words in verses 14-15, like a shepherd, the Lord will use His staff as a sturdy stick to aid Him to walk over rough ground and to beat off wild animals that would attack and hurt His sheep (Ps. 23). His staff will produce wonders and miracles like Moses did in Egypt. The surety of God's salvation is founded in that He is our King. He is our sovereign Lord with ultimate power because He is the creator of all things. This assures us that it will be good to be a citizen in the kingdom of God.

- 3. Is unique:** There can be no one else like our God (7:18). This is what Micah message proclaims. Like Isaiah's message when he writes: *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God."* - (Isaiah 45:5). Micah reminds us of the uniqueness of God and His salvation. There is no one like Him and there nothing like His salvation. A God who *"pardons iniquity."* (v. 18).
- a) Unique in its source - There is no one like Jehovah God.
 - b) Unique in its affirmation - God's willingness to forgive.
 - c) Unique in its love - His love for His people and covenant is everlasting.
 - d) Unique in its compassion - for those who confess their sins He forgives.
 - e) Unique in its promise - only the Lord is capable in fulfilling promises. Though we have trodden underfoot God's promises, He still keeps His.

D. APPLICATION: To God, sin is sin. We make look at all the horrific sins of God's people in the Old Testament, the sins of His disciples in the New Testament, and even the sins of Paul who even murdered and put to jail God's very own before the uniqueness of glorious power of God's salvation came to save. If the Lord is capable in forgiving, having compassion, and grace on such people - certainly you can be assured that the Lord is able to forgive and save you too. There is no one too sinful that cannot be saved by the marvelous grace of our Lord. As Paul would pray - and this my prayer to you:

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God." - Eph. 3:14-19

**LESSON SIX: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Micah
Study Questions**

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: How reluctant are you to go and share God’s message of salvation to a person you so despise? Would you move as far away from that person, or would you obediently go and tell?

-REFLECT-

2. Micah’s message was to show God’s people what? (7:18)
3. God’s case against Israel and Judah was what? (Micah 1:3, 5, 7, 2:1-2, 9; 3:1-3; 5-6; 9-11)
4. We know that God planned to destroy both kingdoms, how did Micah feel about this? (Micah 1:8-9)
5. List what the last days of the Lord will be like. (Micah 4:1-8).
6. What does Micah’s prophecy reveal in (5:1-5)?
7. What does God require of man? (Micah 6:6-8)

-REVEAL-

8. What does Micah 7:14-20 tell us about the Lord’s ability to shepherd your life?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 7: “Nahum: The Vengeance and Consolation of God”

OVERVIEW: The awful wrath of the jealous God of Israel will not be denied against His enemies (1:1-15), yet God’s own will be exempt if they repent (1:15). God declares He will utterly destroy Nineveh (2:1-13) and leave it in utter ruin for ignoring His warnings (3:1-19).

BACKGROUND: In Jonah’s book, Nineveh repented from their evil ways when Jonah preached against her. Yet, 150 years later, Nineveh returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance (Nahum 3:1-4). So, once again the Lord sends another prophet, Nahum to warn the city that God was about to judge the city in the form of destruction and exhorting them to repent. Unfortunately, they did not heed Nahum’s warning and the judgement that Jonah once sought on this great Assyrian city will be brought upon by another nation the Lord raises up (Babylon) to bring it under its dominion.

For roughly 250 years (858-612 BC) the Lord used Nineveh and the Assyrian empire to be His oppressive instrument on Israel and Judah to get them to repent of their ways or be destroyed and be scattered.

- Shalmaneser III (858-824) exacted tribute from Jehu (c. 824).
- Tiglath-pileser III (&45-727) invaded Israel during Menahem’s reign (752-732; cf 2 Ki 15:29; 1 Ch 5:6,26). His authority went as far as into Judah forcing Ahaz (735-715) to submit to him.
- Pekah, king of Israel opposed to this policy of submission (740-732) and favored a anti-Assyrian coalition (2 Ki 16:5-18; 2 Ch. 28:16-25; Isa. 7:1-25; 8:6-8).
- Hoshea (732-722) murdered Pekah and adopted a pro-Assyrian policy, yet also relied on Egypt which repudiated his allegiance to Assyria and was invaded by Shalmaneser V (727-722).
- Samaria fell to Shalmaneser and Sargon II (721-705). The Northern kingdom then was destroyed and its people deported (2 Ki 17:3-6). This destruction was attributed to the Lord’s punishment of Israel’s sin (2 Ki. 17:20).
- Sargon II inflicted other deportations in Palestine (Isa. 20:1-6).
- Hezekiah (728-687) succeeded Ahaz and abandoned his pro-Assyrian policy (2 Ki. 18:7-8, 19-20).
- Sennacherib (704-681) invaded Judah because of Hezekiah’s policy but stop short of invading Jerusalem before being decimated by a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors (Isa. 10:16; cf 2 Ki. 18:13-19:37; 2 Ch. 32:1-31; Isa. 36:1-37:38).
- Nineveh continued for another century until the power of Babylon climbed and crumbled the Assyrian empire led by Nabopolassar (625-605) and in 612 Nineveh was besieged and destroyed.

WHAT WAS NINEVEH LIKE? Nineveh was the ancient capital city of Assyria. It was located in modern day Mosul, Iraq. It was one of the oldest and greatest cities in antiquity. It was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-10). In its peak of influence, the city as described by Jonah was surrounded by a circuit wall of almost 8 miles long. It would have contained a population of 120,000 people (Jonah 4:11), thus the prophets three day journey around the city to preach to its

inhabitants who after hearing Jonah's message repented from their wicked ways and from the violence of their hands (Jonah 3:8). Against Jonah's wishes, the Lord relented from destroying the Ninevites (Jonah 3:10) when He saw them repent and withheld His wrath until they returned back to their wicked ways and sent Nahum to preach concerning their destruction. The Ninevites and the whole Assyrians empire was destroyed in 612 BC by the Babylonians. Nineveh was never rebuilt and was not discovered by archaeologists until 1846 by Campbell Thompson and George Smith. until that time scholars could not confirm that the Bible's mentioning of this once great city actually city. This discovery of its ruins in ancient Mesopotamia unlocked many mysteries of the Old Testament and the authority and accuracy of God's word.

What is sad about Nineveh, it was one of the great technically advanced civilizations in the world, yet the Bible never speaks favorably of her. As a matter of fact the prophet Nahum says this about the city:

"Behold I am against you," declared the Lord of hosts; 'And I will lift up your skirts over your face, and show to the nations your nakedness and to the kingdoms your disgrace. I will throw your filth on you and make you vile, and set you up as a spectacle. And it will come about that all who see you will shrink from you and say, Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her? Where will I seek comforters for you?'" - Nahum 3:5-7

THE BOOK, THE AUTHOR, THE PROPHET: Nahum is credit with the authorship of this book. It was probably written somewhere between 663-612 BC because he mentions the fall of the Egyptian city Thebes (3:8) and it was written before the fall of Nineveh (612 BC). His name means (compassion or consolation), a name which should have meant (condemnation or wrath) because that was the nature of his message he spoke from God on the inhabitants in Nineveh. But, his message did bring comfort and consolation to the Judeans. We know nothing about Nahum other than what we read in his book. Nahum was "the Elkoshite" (1:1) who was from Elkosh (a town whose location is unclear). Some scholars seem to indicate it might be a town near Nineveh such as Capernaum (city of Nazareth) in Galilee. He was a Hebrew prophet who lived before the fall of Samaria in 722 BC.

THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE: Obviously Nahum was a Jewish prophet sent to speak against the Ninevites. Thus is the conflict between the meaning of his name and the purpose for message. The book of Nahum had a dichotic purpose. It was an "oracle" (1:1) which is an uplifting and/or threatening prophecy. On one end, the message was purposeful to threaten the Ninevites concerning God's certain destruction for the city and empire (1:2), on the other hand, it was a message of consolation for Judah (1:7-15). Even though God chose Assyria to act as his instrument of punishment against the rebellious Israel (Is. 7:17; 10:5-6), He does hold that nation corporately responsible for the excesses and atrocities committed in fulfilling this role (Is. 10:7-19; cf Zeph 2:14-15).

THE OCCASION: After responding to the preaching of Jonah, Nineveh turned from their evil ways to serve God. But after 150 years they returned to their idolatry, violence and arrogance (Nahum 3:1-4). God sends Nahum to warn them of God's judgment to destroy their city and exhorting them to repent. This time they do not repent and the city and empire is conquered by the Babylonian empire in 612 BC.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MESSAGE: The purpose of this message was to show to the world that God is patient and slow to anger. He gives every country time to proclaim Him as their Lord. But God will not be mocked. Anytime a country turns away from His to serve its own purpose, God will step in with judgement.:

- Nahum comforts the faithful in Judah by describing the justice of God in the condemnation of Nineveh.
- The book teaches the doctrine of God's justice in dealing with evil and His goodness in the eyes of the righteous. It describes the truth of Hell (Ps. 9:17) and that vengeance belongs to the Lord (Rom:12:19).

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Nahum sees Christ as the jealous God (1:2) and the Avenger of His adversaries.

CENTRAL VERSES: Nahum 1:7, 14, 15; 2:13; 3:19

CENTRAL THEME: The retribution of God as He vindicates His holiness on pagan nations.

CENTRAL TEACHING: God's justice is reserved for those who are His enemy and consolation for those who take refuge in Him.

OUTLINE:

- I. God's judgement declared (1:1-15)
 - A. God's character and Judgment (1:1-8)
 - B. God's administration of judgment (1:9-15)
- II. God's judgment described (2:1-13)
 - A. God's deliverance of Judah (1:12, 13, 15, 2:2)
 - B. God's destruction of Nineveh (2:1-3:1)
- III. God's judgment defended (3:1-19)
 - A. The sin and wickedness of Nineveh demanded God's judgement (3:1-7)
 - B. The nation's greatness cannot detour God's judgment (3:8-19)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

I. God's judgement declared (1:1-15)

Any view that does not take into account God's wrath is a distorted view of God's righteous character and justice. Understanding the doctrine of God's judgment can be a source of comfort those who love and obey Him. For as Nahum states:

"A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished...The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him. (Nahum 1:2,3, 7)

A. God's character and Judgment (1:1-8).

1. *The character of God? (vv. 2-3)* - Isaiah speaks of God as the sovereign Lord of the universe who is the holy Creator God and who is incomparable in the heavens (Isa. 40:9-26). Again, Isaiah would write that the Lord declares *"I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God"* (Isa. 45:5). Notice how Nahum describes God's being in the opening verses:
 - a) He is jealous
 - b) He is avenging
 - c) He is patient (slow to anger)
 - d) He is great in power
 - e) He is just
2. *The power of God? (vv. 4-6)* - God's power is described in the image of drought, consuming the fertile highlands of Palestine (Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon) and their sources of water. Though they were once prosperous and fertile, like the strength of human pride, they will dry up and wither before the burning anger of the Lord. Nahum reminds his audience how God once dried up the sea at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 14:21-22) or the river Jordan during its high stage to allow His people to cross (Josh 3:15). These were powerful images that served to remind Nineveh who they were dealing with.
3. *The goodness of God? (vv. 7-8)* - The goodness of God not only stands in contrast against evil, it also stands against it. The goodness of God is His willingness to stand against evil and treat evil as an object of His wrath. If God is not willing to do this, then God can not be good. For instance, the attribute of God's goodness forms the basic foundation of Israel's faith:
 - Psalm 107:1 - *"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting."*
 - Psalm 31:19 - *"How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee, before the sons of men!"*

- a) The goodness of God is seen in the opening chapters of the Bible. Everything He created was good (Gen. 1). The goodness of God prompted Him to create a wife for Adam, because God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. (Gen. 2:18-25). It was by the goodness of God that He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden and forbid Adam and Eve to eat from it (Gen. 2:9; 17).
- b) The goodness of God does not immune His own from suffering. Those who teach that God only wants to bless us with healing and prosperity in this life is untrue and a false teaching. Knowing God is NOT the way to the “good life” as some may teach. In fact, as Asaph would indicate, it is through suffering that we come to know the goodness of God in our life (Psalm 119:67, 75). The Apostle Paul wanted to know not only the “power of His resurrection” but also the “fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10).
- c) The goodness of God is also evident in the gospel of Christ. It is the “good news” (Isa. 40:9; 52:7; 61:6; Luke 1:19; Acts 8:12; Heb. 4:2,6). God is good to all men in His common grace, showering blessings on the wicked and the righteous alike (Matt. 5:43-45). But, God is particularly good to those who believe in the gospel (Rom. 11:22).
- d) The goodness of God helps shape our perspective toward God and His dealings with us in this life. In the garden, Satan’s attack was not just against God’s word, but the dimension of His character. If you recall, Satan virtually called God a liar and attacked His goodness (Gen. 3:1-5). Satan was able to cause Adam and Eve to rationalize God’s goodness, making them think that God was hiding something from them, not wanting them to be like Him, “knowing good and evil.” They did not understand why God did want them to take from the tree, it should have been enough to know that God is simply good.

B. God’s administration of judgment (1:9-14)

1. *On the one who plotted against Him (1:9-13)* - The one who plotted evil against the Lord and counseled “wickedness” against Him is “the king of Assyria” (Nahum 3:18). This was probably Sennacherib, who was the most aggressive of the Assyrian conquerors, who according to Assyrians records devastated some 47 fortified cities in Judah in 701 BC.²⁵ The Lord’s vengeance against those who troubled Israel in terrible will be so conclusive that it will not rise a second time because God’s destruction is complete. God only needs one battle to destroy His enemies. Which means, Nineveh will not live to fight another day no matter how strong they perceived themselves to be.
2. *On the one who is contemptible (1:14)* - The Assyrians were so vile in the eyes of the Lord that God “issued a command concerning” them. They will not be remembered. From the 7th century B.C. Nineveh was not remembered, nor were their ruins ever

²⁵ bible-history.com, Sennacherib.

found until 19th century A.D. by Campbell Thompson in 1846. It appeared that Nineveh was invincible. But their arrogance in the their gods and might became their downfall in the hands of the Lord. It appeared that their gods beat out their neighboring gods. Even the “gods” of Samaria and Jerusalem appeared unable to stand up to fight the might of the Assyrians. yet the Lord plans to deliberately liberate his people and crush the barbaric oppressor.

APPLICATION: We must remember that it was the Lord who used the might of the Assyrians to discipline His people. To cause them to repent and return to Him. But, it was in their arrogance that the Assyrians (Nineveh) went to far in their barbaric and wicked ways in conquering their foes. Other examples of those who went too far were Moses when out of frustration struck the rock twice for water when the Lord commanded to strike it once (Num. 20:11). His punishment was not being able to cross into the promise land (Num. 20:12). The house of Jehu was destroyed because when he killed Ahab, he also killed all those in his house, leaving no survivors. Jehu went to far (2 Ki. 10:11; Hos. 1:4).

The point. Vengeance belongs to the Lord and because it belongs to Him it not only vindicates His own people but His own is consoled by His goodness and compassion despite their unfaithfulness to Him (Deut. 32:35-36).

II. God’s judgment described (2:1-13)

The rest of the book concerns the overthrow of Nineveh. But, before diving into Nahum describes God’s plan of destruction on Nineveh, he does have one final word directed to Judah. Because God has decided to restore Judah’s splendor, Nineveh’s splendor must vanish from the earth. This destruction is meant to be Judah’s comfort.

A. *God’s deliverance of Judah (1:12, 13, 15, 2:2) -*

1. *The proclamation of peace:* God reveals His comforting plan not only in the face of the Ninevites, but also to the Judeans. In v. 12-13 the Lord says, “*Though they are at full strength and lie wise many, even so, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer. So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you, and I will tear off your shackles*” - (1:12-13). This is obviously good news to those living in Judah.
2. *The beautiful feet of peace:* The good news shared here and in (v.15) is stated elsewhere in the Bible.
 - Isaiah writes: “*How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation*” - (Isa. 52:7).
 - Paul writes: “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!*” - (Rom. 10:15).

All this to say, we as Christians would understand the powerful message of God’s work of salvation through Christ. The people in Judah would see it not only as their release from the oppressive hand of the Assyrians, but also the the joyous and complete restoration of the Lord to His people.

3. *The beautiful word, “peace”*: The Hebrew word for “peace” is a remarkable word. It refers to wholeness, completeness, total well-being. It means in most cases a quality of life. It is the peace you wish for the bride and groom. When you offer all the good things of life. Judah had been at peace for a long time, but that peace had been their problem. Their peace was imposed by the Assyrians. As long as Judah paid its tribute, swore allegiance to the king of Assyria, and did not rebel, they would have peace. But the peace that God offered was something more meaningful to His people. He promised to bring justice God’s peace meant that wholeness would be returned to the land of Israel, to Judah.

B. God’s destruction of Nineveh (2:1-3:1)

1. *God is against you: (2:1, 13)* - Chapter 2 begins and ends with God’s declaration that He “is against” the Assyrians in Nineveh. In this chapter Nahum moves from broad descriptions to more details that describes Nineveh’s destruction. No commander and chief would ever reveal his plans to conquer his adversary. The Lord does. Nahum tells us exactly what God is going to do:
 - a) Nineveh will prepare for the coming invasion (v.1)
 - b) Nineveh will sight the first approaching armies (vv. 3b-4)
 - c) Nineveh streets will be overrun by the enemies chariots (v.3)
 - d) Nineveh’s walls will be overrun (v.5)
 - e) Nineveh’s river will undermine the city’s foundation (v.6-8)
 - f) Nineveh’s wealth will be plundered (v.9)
2. *The fall of Nineveh*: The doom of Nineveh finally came to a close in 612 B.C.. Ancient sources recount a remarkable picture of the destruction of Nineveh by the armies of the Babylonians and Scythians as they marched up the left bank of the Tigris river and surrounded the city. It happened in the early spring at the time of the annual rainfalls. The rains were especially hard that year, the Tigris and other rivers flooded and apparently washed away part of the walls, leaving a breach for the armies to enter the city. Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (c. 20 B.C.) stated that the river not only broke down the walls of the city, in also inundated part of it. The city was flooded and burned by it’s enemy. Diodorus states once more, “So great was the multitude of the slain that the flowing stream, mingled with the blood, changed its color for a considerable distance.”²⁶ This would support (3:1) where Nahum predicts: “*Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; Her prey never departs.*”

APPLICATION: Romans 8:31 reminds us that if God is for us who can be against us. None of us are free from sin. We all have sinned against the Lord (Rom. 3:23). What we deserve for our sin is death. But, God in His own love protects His own, despite knowing that even though we are sinners, Christ still died for us (Rom. 5:8). Even though the Lord will judge un-redeemed

²⁶ Boice Expository Commentary: Nahum, Ch. 2.

sinner in the last days, if He is for you and has redeemed you by the blood of His only Son, then by God's wrath that was poured out on His Son on the cross becomes our consolation to be justified before Him in right standing because of the blood of Christ. For there is now no condemnation for anyone who is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

III. God's judgment defended (3:2-19)

As the prophet continues with his graphic description of the complete and utter ruin of Nineveh in (3:2-7), he gives the reason for the verdict in verse 4.

A. *The sin and wickedness of Nineveh demanded God's judgement (3:1-7) -*

1. *The evidence that demands a verdict (3:2-4)* - The evidence and condemnation against Nineveh were: Prostitution, sorcery, and manipulation. Nineveh's destruction came because of its seduction of the nations. Alluring promises of prosperity and protection turned out to be curses that entrapped the other nations like Judah in a demoralizing cycle of dependency and oppression.²⁷ This theme of Nineveh as a prostitute continues through v. 7 and its a theme found also in Revelation 17-18.
2. *The humiliating consequences of God's judgment (3:5-6)* - Because God is against Nineveh (v.5) there is nothing but humiliation for the city. Just like Nineveh abused its captives, exposing them in public ridicule, the Lord will publicly make a spectacle of her. Nahum's point is that consequences always follow sin. The Lord will throw "filth" and make Nineveh an abomination of desolation to all who view her. She will become so repulsive to those she had formerly seduced (2 Sam. 13:15). God's judgement will be a matching judgment for all her crimes against other nations.
3. *God's judgment provides hope (3:7)* - This hope is extended to the people of Jerusalem who could not suffer much longer under the yoke of the Assyrians. Jerusalem will now be free and will know the goodness and protection of God. But for Nineveh there will be no comforters for her. The Lord states "Where can I find anyone to comfort you?" There is none to be found.

B. *The nation's greatness cannot detour God's judgment (3:8-19) -*

1. *The Weakness of Nineveh (3:8-10)* - Nahum breaks into a taunting song that announces that human might is nothing before the wrath of God. They are no better than the city of "No-Amon" (No of the solar god Amon), also known as the Egyptian city Thebes. In it's hey day it was known as another Nineveh. Its size and grandeur. It had great wealth and power, yet it was overthrown as Jeremiah tells in Jeremiah 46:25 and Ezekiel 30:14-16. This happened some time before Nahum began to prophesy. It was captured by Sargon the Assyrian king and continued through Sennacherib's reign as the Egyptian sun set and the Assyrian star rose.²⁸ This example by Nahum was given to the Ninevites to help them see their own demise.

²⁷ W.P. Brown, Obadiah through Malachi, Westminster Bible Companion, p. 78

²⁸ John Phillips, Exploring the Minor Prophet, Nahum, p. 196.

2. *The doom of Nineveh (3:11-13)* - Prophets often illustrate doomed nations as drinking from the cup of God's wrath (Obadiah 16; Jeremiah 25:15-17, 27). The reeling effects of His judgment gave the perception that His victims staggering like drunkards (v.11). The destruction of Nineveh will come with ease (v.12) and her mighty troops will resemble women or little girls running in fear (v.13).
3. *The hopelessness of Nineveh (3:14-19)* - Nahum concludes his message of doom to Nineveh with another taunting song inviting Nineveh to shore up their defenses (vv. 14-17) and then speaks of the king's demise (vv. 18-19). The invitation to prepare is useless because Nahum knows that the fiery wrath of God will devour them and the sword He will use will cut them off (v.15). They will run to the mountains with no one to guide them or bring aid to them. There will be no healing for them because their wound is too grievous (v.19). Nahum foresaw the day when the destruction of Nineveh will be proclaimed throughout the world and those who hear it and will clap because they are the ones who have been abused by her wicked and evil ways.

APPLICATION: There is no reward for wickedness. There is only judgment. Anyone who falls away from the Lord and follows their own path of depravity and arrogant pride will experience the Lord's judgment unless they repent in time. Romans 1:18-32 would serve any person who suppresses the truth about God, who follow their own folly. God will give them over to their own lust and they will experience His full wrath in the last days. They are only worthy of death. Not so for those who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16), "*For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greek.*"

Arrogance and pride can not with stand the righteousness and avenging wrath of God. Just as much as God is just, He is good. His goodness is extended to those who take refuge in Him alone (1:7).

CONCLUSION: Kyle M. Yates has these practical lessons from Nahum.

1. There is a limit to the patience of God.
2. God is in active control throughout all the world.
3. God's wrath must be interpreted in terms of His love.
4. For nations and for individuals the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
5. The arrogance that indulges in senseless destruction of life and property angers God.
6. A nation built on pride, cruelty, force, and selfishness, cannot hope to have friends in the day of calamity.
7. In God's eternal purpose for the people of the world the destruction of one wicked city is but a small thing.
8. In the day of distress and anguish men who do not have a grip on God must suffer untold sufferings.

LESSON SEVEN: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Nahum

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: What is it that God hates the most among His people? What does God take delight in among His people?

-REFLECT-

2. What do we learn about God’s character in the first chapter of Nahum? (v.2-3, 7)
3. Though the Lord sent Assyria to discipline Israel and Judah, what is the consolation for Judah in God’s vengeance on Nineveh? (2:12-13, 15, 3:2).
4. From Nahum 2, describe how the Lord will destroy Nineveh? Why is the Lord so angry with Nineveh? (3:4)
5. What is the purpose of God’s destruction of Nineveh? (3:5-7)
6. What will be the reaction from Nineveh’s neighbors, including Judah? (3:19)

-REVEAL-

7. We know that the full counsel of the Bible tells us that God’s wrath will come upon His adversaries in the last days, what consolation is given to a believer, the one who takes refuge in the Lord (Christ) (1:7)?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 8: “Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is near”

OVERVIEW: The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah was God’s judgment on Judah. The prophet tells how “the day of the Lord” will be His wrath to destroy everything, man and beast, in the land of Judah, including, the city of Jerusalem (Ch.1). God’s judgement will also extend to Judah’s enemies and the world, including Nineveh (Ch. 2). Finally, the prophet concludes with God’s cause to destroy Jerusalem, but ends with a message of hope and praise that the Lord will save a remnant of Israel whom He will gather and restore their fortunes (Ch. 3).

THE BOOK, THE AUTHOR, THE PROPHET: Most prophets who were spokesman for the Lord communicated both God’s severe judgment and kind grace. It is in this contrast that we see God’s divine dealings with His own being constantly manifested. Zephaniah is no different. In fact, Zephaniah’s message may be more clearer as he presents God’s case to Judah the terror of His judgment and the tenderness of His divine love. Zephaniah sought reform in Judah and speaks to the corrupt and godless nation of Judah to repent or be destroyed. Even though Judah identifies themselves as God’s chosen people, this nation, by God’s own divine goodness can not endure anymore corruption. His goodness must give way to His just righteousness.

Zephaniah (the son of Cushi) was probably a member of the royal household through his great, great, grandfather, King Hezekiah (1:1). If this is true, this would make him the writing prophet with the most royal blood in his veins, except for David and Solomon.²⁹ His name means “Yahweh Hides,” “Hidden in Yahweh,” “Yahweh’s Watchman” or “Yahweh Treasured.” The confusion on his name stems from disputes by scholars of his name’s etymology. We know that he prophesied during the reign of king Josiah, the son of Amon (640-609 B.C.) which would mean that Zephaniah was written around 630-621 B.C. around the time of the Scythian invasion of 630 B.C. (Zeph. 2). He was also a contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk.

THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE: Zephaniah addresses the people of Judah who have become morally and religiously numb by the influence of the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon (cf. 3:1-7). These predecessors of Josiah had encouraged the people of Judah to depart from the Lord for ever 50 years. Thus, wickedness and corruption had become ingrained in them. God sent Zephaniah with His word to the Judeans that they needed to get right with the Lord in their hearts. He announces that God was going to send judgment on Judah for her wickedness. Yet, he assures the godly few in the nation that a remnant will be preserved and remain true to His promises concerning God’s covenant to bless the nations of the world through his descendants, Israel for the future. Perhaps Zephaniah 1:7 summarizes the book best in this single verse:
“Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near.”

²⁹ Dr. Thomas Constable notes on Zephaniah, Title and writer, 2nd paragraph.

THE BACKGROUND: Josiah's reign was generally a fairly peaceful reign. Following Assyria's capture of Samaria in 722 B.C., that empire began to decline. The Babylonians were now the dominant force in the region. They defeated both the Assyrians and Egyptians, including Nineveh in 612 B.C. with the help of the Medes and Scythians. Judah, benefited from this transition of power and Josiah was able to get rid of some Assyrian religious practices and extended Judah's territory north in to the tribal regions of Naphtali. In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, (622 B.C.), Hilkiah the priest had discovered the Law of Moses in the temple, and after Josiah read it, he instituted major reforms throughout Judah. He eliminated much of the display of idolatry in the land and revived the celebration of the Passover (2 Kings 22:4-25; 2 Chronicles 34:3-35:19). Unfortunately, his reforms did not change the hearts of most of the people. Therefore, the prophet Zephaniah was sent to have a long history of formal religion without a real commitment to Yahweh.

CENTRAL TEACHING: Zephaniah teaches that God desires to demonstrate His holiness and hence will be just in executing judgment on the world. Thus, Zephaniah stresses "the day of the Lord" (Ch. 1). In the end, God will be faithful to those few who remain faithful to Him, thus He will save a remnant and keep His promise and restore the fortunes of Israel, regathering them as a nation (3:20).

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Jesus is presented as the righteous Lord within Israel (3:5), the witness against the nations (3:8), and "the King of Israel, the Lord" (3:15).

CENTRAL VERSES: Zephaniah 1:18; 2:3; 3:17

CENTRAL THEME: God is sovereign over all the nations and punishes the wicked while vindicating the righteous on the day of Judgment. God punishes the wicked, but blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

OUTLINE:

- I. God's Judgment on Judah (1:1-2:3)**
 - A. Universal Judgment declared (vv.1-3)**
 - B. Specific Judgment on Judah announced (vv. 4-6)**
 - C. Imminent Judgment is at hand (vv. 7-18)**
 - D. Urgent call to repent (2:1-3)**
- II. God's Judgment on Gentiles (2:4-15)**
 - A. Nations to the West and East (2:4-11)**
 - B. Nations to the South and North (2:12-15)**
- III. God's Promise of Restoration (3:1-20)**
 - A. The Suffering of Zion (3:1-7)**
 - B. The Restoration of Zion (3:8-11)**
 - C. The Joy of Zion (3:12-20)**

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

I. God's judgement on Judah (1:1-2:3)

A. Heeding the Prophet's Warning:

1. **The Who:** Zephaniah begins his prophecy by telling who will bring judgment - God (v.2).
2. **The What:** Zephaniah then goes into specific details telling his audience God's plan of destruction. He states, "*I (God) will completely remove all things from the face of the earth*" -(v.2). This is probably one of the most explicit announcements of the total devastation of planet earth in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 24:1-6, 19-23). Hyperbole or not, it is God's plan for worldwide judgment. One thing about the Lord is that He does honor His word. The Lord proved that He was capable of doing this once before with the flood (Gen. 6-9). He also proved He is willing for the sake of mercy and righteousness to destroy the whole metropolis of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). The word "remove" in verse 2 means, "come to an end" or "to cease." However you look at verse 2, the Lord plans to bring total devastation on the earth.
3. **The Why:** Why will the Lord do this? Just like the messages of his contemporaries and predecessors, Zephaniah states, because of idolatry that has consumed Judah (vv. 4-6).
4. **The Whom:** Who will this judgment fall on? It will fall on the officials, princes, and inhabitants of Judah (vv. 7-13).
5. **The How:** How great will this judgment be? It will be so great that Zephaniah gives it the name, "*Great day of the Lord*" (vv. 14-18). It will be a day of wrath, trouble, distress, destruction, darkness and gloom, of clouds and thick darkness, of trumpet and battle cry (vv. 15-16). But notice again in verse 14, it is "near and coming very quickly." It will come in the vengeance of God's wrath that as Zephaniah describes will not only devour the earth, but done "in the fire of His jealousy" that will greatly terrify the earth.
6. **The Call:** Before God's judgment falls, there is time for repentance. Zephaniah gives God's call to Judah, "*Seek the Lord, All you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances*" (2:3). The prophet urges his "humble" audience who sought to be obedient to continue to seek Him in prayerful dependence. Zephaniah is appealing to a faithful, but small remnant (cf. 3:12; Isa. 11:4; Amos 8:4; Matt. 5:3). They needed this encouragement to continue in their pursuit of righteous behavior and place themselves under the sovereign hand of the Lord by hearing and obeying His word. If they did this, "*perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger*" (v. 3).

B. Understanding God's wrath:

1. *First question is why: Why is it God's plan to completely destroy the earth and reign down such horrific terror upon His chosen people and the gentiles?*
 - a) **Because "Yahweh" is a jealous God (v. 18).** He is jealous for His covenant and His chosen ones. God is not jealous as we would be jealous. Look at two

passages, Exodus 20:5 and Galatians 5:20. When we use the word “jealous” we use it in the sense of being envious of someone who has something we do not have. This jealousy could be rooted in one’s possessions, ability, or appearance. For instance, Adam and Eve were simply “jealous” of God because they perceived by Satan’s prompting that the Lord did not want them to be like Him “knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). They, in a sense, became jealous of God and took the fruit and ate it. They were as Galatians 5:20 would use “jealousy,” jealous with envy. God on the other hand is not jealous with envy, because someone has something he wants or needs, He has all things. He created all things. What would we have that God would be envious of. No, God’s jealousy is because He had instructed His people to worship Him alone and not any idol that was created by their hands in the image of any created thing above, on, or below the earth (Ex. 20:4-5). God’s is jealous when someone gives to another something that rightly belongs to Him. What belongs to God is the worship that belongs to Him alone. God is possessive of the worship that belongs to Him alone and as Ex. 20:4-5 points out, it is a sin to worship or serve anything other than God. When His people do, God becomes jealous. Jealousy is a sin when we desire something greater than God and we take our worship of God and give it to someone or something that it does not belong to. Therefore, the Lord is right to be jealous when His chosen ones gave their worship, praise, honor and adoration to worthless and lifeless idols made by their own hands. This is godly jealousy (1 Cor. 11:2).

- b) ***Because “Yahweh” is a “consuming fire” (v. 18).*** Fire and jealousy are connected together when it involves God’s desire to be worship exclusively. We first see this mentioned in Deuteronomy, *“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”* -(Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 10:31). There is nothing questionable about the intent of this word, “consuming fire.” It means a fire that completely consumes or destroys. It is fueled by God’s jealousy when He is provoked by idol worship. His righteous anger is justified when His holiness is disrespected. It is God’s holiness that we see His consuming fire. It burns everything away that is not holy. Isaiah assures us that no amount of our own righteousness is sufficient to withstand God’s consuming and holy fire (Isa. 64:6). The only righteous One who was able to withstand God’s wrath is Christ the Lord. Paul writes, *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Cor. 5:21). All of God’s wrath was poured out on Jesus so that those who belong to Him would not have to suffer the fate of the Assyrians, Nineveh, Israel, Judah, and all the gentile nations. Hebrews 10:31 states, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* In the case of the inhabitants of Judah, *“Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord’s wrath”* (1:18a). Meaning, that the people would not be able to buy their way out on this terrible day of the Lord.

2. *Second Question: What is the purpose of God's wrath and consuming fire?*

- a) ***The removal of sin in the Land.*** Whenever we see God's act of judgment on the earth it is consistent with the removal of sin from the Land. God's judgment on Adam and Eve was to remove them from the garden and to work hard in being stewards on a imperfect earth now corrupted by sin and will be plague with thorns and the pain of child birth (Gen. 3:16-19). In the days of Noah the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great and exercise His judgment with a flood to rid the land of sin (Gen. 6:5-8). The purpose for the Israelites coming into the land of Canaan was to exercise God's judgment because the peoples sin was great (Gen. 15:16). Now, the Lord, because of complete disobedience will now remove His people who were addicted to rebellion against God (Zeph. 1:17).
- b) ***The starting over with a remnant.*** In all the cases above and more, we see where the Lord exercised His judgment and then He began a new with a remnant. Noah's family (Gen. 6), Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15; Gen. 50:20), and here, for those who would seek the Lord, Seek His righteousness, and Seek humility, "*perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger*" (2:3) and be the source of that remnant thread that God will begin again with who will honor, worship, and obey Him (Zeph. 3:10-20).

APPLICATION: The day of God's judgment is listed several times in as being imminent. Though it may seem far off, Zephaniah was clear that its coming was sure. He declared it to be "near" and "great" (1:7, 14). It will be a day of "wrath: (1:18) and a terrifying day no one will be able to escape (1:18b). This is an important reminder to us all because God's final judgment day as mentioned in Revelation seems far off. But for those like Judah who were persistent in sin judgment day is not only far off, but can even happen today if one is to persist in their sin. But, there is hope if one would only "seek" the Lord and His "righteousness" and "humility" (2:2). If we would simply just humble ourselves before the Lord, confess our sin, and repent from it and seek His righteousness, we too might be saved, "hidden" from "the day of the Lord's anger" (2:3).

II. God's Judgment on Gentiles (2:4-15)

Zephaniah warns his audience that God's judgment is not only for Judah, but for the gentiles too. These gentile nations are more commonly known as pagan peoples who have been hostile towards God. After God secures a remnant of His own He will reward them by allowing them to dwell securely in the land. "*They will pasture on it...for the Lord their God will care for them and restore their fortune*" (Zeph. 2:7). But first, the gentile nations will be destroyed.

A. Nations to the West and East (2:4-11)

- 1. ***The West:*** The nations or peoples to the west are listed as "Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron" to the west that represented the entire area of Philistia. They are to be "abandoned, desolate, driven out, and uprooted (v. 4). The Philistines (Cherethite's) also will be destroyed as Zephaniah announces "woe" on them. The powerful word of the Lord will be all it will take to "destroy" them to the point that they will be no

more (v.5). God promises that when He is done, the remnant of His people will pasture on the coast as He cares for them (v.7). Israel's encounters with the Philistines date back to the Patriarchs (Gen. 20-21:26).

2. **The East:** As to the peoples of the East, Moab and Ammon (vv. 8-11), Israel's confrontations with them goes back to the time of Moses (Num. 22-24) and during the times of the Judges (Jdg. 10:6-11:33; 2 Sam. 10:1-11:1). As the northern kingdom fell, the nations to the east began to plot against Israel. They in their pride showed their enmity towards God's people by casting insults and taunts (v.10) every given opportunity. Thus, the Lord declares that Moab will be like Sodom and Ammon will be like Gomorrah. Both of which were utterly annihilated as a perpetual desolation (2:9). They will be plundered by God's remnant and will inherit all they have (v.10)

B. Nations to the South and North (2:12-15) - These people or nations represent the rest of the world in the near east. Zephaniah list these as being Ethiopia (or Egypt) to the south and Assyria (more specifically, Nineveh) to the north.

1. **The South:** It is possible that Zephaniah's meaning here might be Egypt. Biblical Ethiopia occupied the territory now help by southern Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. The Ethiopians were the southernmost people known to the Judeans,³⁰ This judgment is brief and God promised to send His sword against them. We know this to have been done by Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated Ethiopia shortly after overrunning all of Judah in 586 B.C. (cf Ezek. 30:4-5, 9, 24-25). We do not know why the Lord declared this judgment, other than they must have disregarded the Lord the same as the other nations.
2. **The North:** Studying the other pre-exilic minor prophets, we are more familiar as to why the Lord declared judgment on Assyria and Nineveh. We know that because of the arrogant and brutal regard towards God's people and other nations, the Lord would make Nineveh a "parched and desolate" place (Nah 3). Instead of being a place where many people dwelled, only beast and birds will take up citizenship where this once wonder of the world existed (vv. 13-14). When at one time people who came to it admired its beauty and modern advances. Now when people pass by it they will "hiss and wave their hand in contempt" of her (v.15).

APPLICATION: It should be a comfort in knowing and being reminded once again that God is sovereign over all people and nations. He directed their paths then in the ancient times of the Old Testament days and even now. Even though nations rage against Him and His people, the Lord will avenge. Despite our own sin and shame, the Lord will one day cause those who take refuge in Him to dwell in the lands of His enemies, those who had contempt for Him and His chosen ones.

³⁰ Don Constable notes of Zephaniah, citing Patterson, Judgment Coming on Ethiopia, 2.12, p. 20.

III. God's Promise of Restoration (3:1-20)

The day of the Lord will not only be terrible when He destroys all those and the gods they worshiped, and who came against His people unwarrantedly, but the Lord once against cannot overlook the corruption in His own city, Jerusalem.

A. *The Suffering of Zion (3:1-7)* - This is the second time that Zephaniah announces “woe” (cf. 2:5). This time it is not on God’s enemies, but His own city, Jerusalem. The city had harbored oppressors (tyrants), rebels, and defiled people, who participated in ritual cleaning ceremonies by washing themselves with water and observed ceremonies of external sanctity, outwardly appearing to be pure. They were rebellious hypocrites. God’s charges against her were these: (3:2)

1. She obeyed no one. Not even the Lord.
2. She did not trust in the Lord.
3. She did not draw near to her God who could provide direction and guidance for her. God’s indictment falls on her princes (v.3), her prophets and priest (v.4). Therefore the Lord is right to carry out His justice on her and He promises He will not fail to do so (v. 5). Basically, the city had failed to follow God’s correction, now must be punished. This is important to note, because God is not impressed by appearances. He is more concerned about ones heart towards Him.

Full circle of God’s Judgment (3:8). Zephaniah’s announcement went out to the world (1:2-3), to Judah (1:4-2:3), on her neighbors (2:4-15), then centered on Jerusalem (3:1-7) and not back on the world (3:18). The people of Jerusalem are told to “wait” a little longer. The Lord would soon “rise up” as a devouring animal to consume His prey when He gathers nations and kingdoms that are wicked, including Judah - then pour out His wrath, His burning anger of indignation on them all. His fiery zeal will devour all nations because the world will again become thoroughly corrupt (as they were in Noah’s time).

ARE YOU PREPARE? Today the world is still waiting for the Lord to pour out His wrath on all nations. He has not yet done so because He is patient and is giving people time to repent (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). But that day will come (2 Pet. 3:10). This is the reason why believers today need to be holy in conduct and godly in character. Looking, waiting, being alert and expecting that day. That great and terrible day that the Lord predicts will take place during the Tribulation, before our Lord returns to set up His kingdom (cf. Zeph. 2:2; Zech. 14:2; Rev. 16:14, 16). Are you ready for that day when it should come?

B. *The Restoration of Zion (3:9-11)* - The final heat of God’s cleansing will serve as a cleansing of the nations (vv. 9-10). Just like Isaiah was given purified tongue (Isa. 6:7) so will He do also for the peoples of the earth and just as Isaiah served the Lord, so will the people serve the Lord “shoulder to shoulder” in the day (v.9). The descendants of the “dispersed ones,” the Jews, will bring Him offerings of worship from the furthest corners of the earth (v. 10). There will be “no shame” because of their past rebellion, for they will be humble before the Lord (v.11).

C. *The Joy of Zion (3:12-20)* - The joy of the people of God in that day will come from their “humble and lowly” hearts (v.12). This would be the characteristic of the “remnant” of Israel. They will do no wrong, tell no lies, nor have a deceitful tongue. They will no longer be oppressed and will rest in peace (v. 13). They will resemble a flock of sheep at peace, grazing and lying down with nothing to disturb them (cf. Psalm 23; Mic. 4:4). In that day there will also be loud rejoicing. Zephaniah describes it as a “Shout of Joy!” (v. 14). This is one of the most moving and awesome depictions of God’s people as it appears there is no hope to be found for them, yet the everlasting love and grace of God who will bring together a remnant of His own people and gather them together in heavenly bliss of earth - their sorrow will be turn into rejoicing. For their sin will be taken away. Their troubles will be taken away. No more judgments. No more enemies. The Lord will be their true King and will be in their midst (3:17). The Lord also promises to regather those who lived far away from Jerusalem. The outcast who were grieving because they could not travel to Jerusalem. Now, they will be gathered, but instead for annual “feasts” they will be coming together during the Millennium (Rev. 20; Ezek 45:9-46:24). Now, having gathering His people together the Lord will give them a “good” reputation and “restore” their fortunes (v.20).

APPLICATION: The Joy of the Lord is certainly the strength of the believer. When you witness the defilement of rebellious sin in God’s people, charged with contempt and spiritual adultery for their idolatrous and evil ways. Deserving only the fiery wrath of God, one can only rejoice when the Lord promises to restore His own in the likeness of His own righteousness and holiness. Anyone who has believed the message of the gospel of Christ should react in such joyful demonstration. For, we who have been saved have been spared God’s awful and terrible wrath of judgment that last for eternity. Instead, we have been given grace to believe in One who not only created us, and could take our lives, but also could send our souls to hell. Rejoice believer! Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the salvation He alone has given you the right to be called His child. His priest. His chosen one whom He sovereignly saved.

One more thing - for the sake of the world and the peoples who live in it - pray for the peace of Israel. Come quickly Lord, Come!

LESSON EIGHT: "Survey of the Minor Prophets: Zephaniah

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: Who is the Lord against and why is He so jealous to the point of seeking revenge?

-REFLECT-

2. What kind of prophet is Zephaniah? What makes him different than the others before him? (1:1)
3. What will be the extent of God's judgment on the earth? (1:2-3)
4. Who will God's judgment fall on? (1:4; 2:4-3:1) List the countries and cities
5. When will the Lord judgment come? (1:7; 14) and what will it be like? (1:14-18)
6. What is the only way of escaping God's judgment? (2:2-3)
7. What is God's plan for a future Israel? How will they be different in the end? (3:9-20)

-REVEAL-

8. What is your reaction to God's salvation in your life? How well do you express your gratitude when you realize He has saved for the terrible wrath and judgment of Hell? (3:14ff).

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 9: “Habakkuk: Embraced by Faith”

OVERVIEW: Habakkuk complained to God concerning the injustice in Judah (1:1-4). The Lord told Habakkuk that He was raising up the Babylonians (Chaldeans) to discipline His people (1:5-11). Habakkuk asked God how He could permit the wicked to triumph (1:12-17), and God revealed to him that though it appears the evil Babylonians will triumph, they will be punished for their own sins (2:1-20). God unveils for Habakkuk the horrors of the coming invasion (3:1-16). The prophet’s faith in God grows despite his fear of the judgment to come (3:18-19).

THE BACKGROUND: The Babylonians (Chaldeans) were now on the rise in becoming the new super power in the region. The Northern kingdom of Israel had passed out of existence (722 B.C.) with the invasion of the Assyrians who also passed away out of existence in (612 B.C.) by the Babylonians. Habakkuk, Judah, and its king lived during a time of increasing fear, corruption, and lack of faith in the Lord as they turn to Egypt for help instead of the Lord.

THE BOOK, THE AUTHOR, THE PROPHET: Habakkuk concludes God’s spoken word concerning the pre-exilic prophecies. Very little is known about the prophet, even his name is of uncertain origin. It may mean, “one who embraces” or “one who is embraced.” Luther thought it signified that Habakkuk embraced his people to comfort and uphold them. Jerome interpreted it to mean that he embraced the problem of “divine justice in the world,” which is the subject of the book.³¹ The content of the book which includes wisdom literature and a psalm of praise indicates that Habakkuk was a poet as well as a prophet. He is considered by some the philosopher (or free thinker) of prophets.³² Nevertheless, Habakkuk’s message is clear: God is holy, and He cannot look with approval on sin.

It appears that Habakkuk was a Judean prophet with a levitical (priestly) background (3:19). The whole book claims to have been written by Habakkuk (1:1; 3:1). Some criticize that Habakkuk wrote chapter three because it is a psalm and not a prophecy. But, those who support Habakkuk’s writing explain that because of his levitical background. Levitical music existed long before Habakkuk’s time (1 Chron 25 and Amos 6:5). It would have been natural for someone with a levitical background to be interested in music and psalms (3:1, “Shigionoth” from Psalm 7) which Habakkuk labels as his prayer (3:1).

References in the book help us date Habakkuk shortly before 605 B.C.. His ministry years seem to be during the reign of Jehoiakim of Judah. This would date the book after the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.). Habakkuk is also written before the imminent invasion of the Babylonians - (1:6; 2:1) - (605 B.C.). Also, Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah who lived during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim (II Kings 22-24).

THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE: Habakkuk ministered during the reign of King Jehoiakim. During this reign the Israelites looked to Egypt and Assyria for help in view of the growing

³¹ See J. Ronald Blue, "Habakkuk," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1505.

³² George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 119.

Babylonian power when they should have been looking to God for help. Their failure in doing so becomes the burden and message by Jeremiah and Habakkuk. On a philosophical note, Habakkuk's message spoke of his concern that the sovereign Lord was not responding to Habakkuk's evil generation and its internal injustices. He voices his concern by questioning Yahweh in prayer (1:2-4). The Lord replied that He was working, raising up a nation that would punish His people for their covenant unfaithfulness (1:5-11). This raised another concern by Habakkuk that he took to the Lord in prayer, that is, how could the Lord use a more wicked nation than Judah to punish God's chosen people (1:12-2:1)? The Lord explains to Habakkuk that He would eventually punish the Babylonians for their wickedness too (2:2-20). So, in response, Habakkuk concludes his book with a psalm of praise. Extolling Yahweh for His wise ways. Thus, the purpose of the book was to vindicate the justice of God so God's people would have hope and encouragement.

CENTRAL TEACHING: The purpose of Habakkuk was to comfort the faithful in Judah with the justice of God's imminent judgment on the

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Christ is pictured as the Holy One (1:12), the one who justifies the righteous by faith (2:4), and the one who will some day fill the earth "with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (2:14).

CENTRAL VERSE: Hab. 1:2; 12; 2:18, 20; 3:16, 19.

CENTRAL THEME: Have faith in God, He's on His throne.

OUTLINE:

I. Faith's question (1:1-11)

- A. Habakkuk questions God concerning the corruption and injustice in Judah (1:2-11)
 - 1. Habakkuk's question (1:2-4)
 - 2. God's answer (1:5-11)

II. Faith's lesson (1:12-2:20)

- A. Habakkuk questions God's choice of the evil Babylonians to judge Judah (1:12-2:20)
 - 1. Habakkuk's question (1:12-17)
 - 2. God's answer (2:1-20)
 - a) God's indictment of Babylon (2:1-5)
 - b) God's sentence on Babylon (2:6-20)

III. Faith's response (3:1-19)

- A. Praying to God for revival (3:1-2)
- B. Praising God for His renown (3:3-15)
 - 1. His appearance (3:3-7)
 - 2. His actions (3:8-15)
- C. Pledging to God revered faith (3:16-19)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

I. Faith's question (1:1-11)

The prophet describes this book as an "oracle" (Heb. *masa*) or "burden." The word in Hebrew is a banking or financial word that indicates usury or exacting interest on a debt or loan. The burden that Habakkuk saw in his vision from the Lord was the imminent judgment on Judah and Babylon. Concerning this burden, the prophet asked Yahweh two questions and receives two answers. The first question concerns itself with the corruption and injustice in Judah. The second concerns itself with God's choice of the evil Babylonians to judge Judah.

A. Habakkuk questions God concerning the corruption and injustice in Judah (1:2-11)

1. **Habakkuk's question (1:2-4)** - *"How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and Thou wilt not hear?"* (v.2). The subject of Habakkuk's question is about the injustice and corruption taking place in Judah. Under Old Testament Law local elders met to settle disputes. There was no police force or national justice system. If elders took bribes, or if witnesses lied, the law was "ignored" (v.4) and justice was "never upheld." His question and complaint begins with "why are you not choosing to hear my prayer?" God is omniscient and hears all prayers, but Habakkuk seems to indicate the Lord has not given any evidence of hearing by allowing the continued "violence," "iniquity," and "wickedness" to continued surrounding the righteous and the result is "justice comes out perverted" (v.4).
2. **God's answer (1:5-11)** - *"For behold I am raising up the Chaldeans"* (v.6). - The "Chaldeans" here are the "Babylonians." In 621 B.C. the Babylonian (Chaldeans) were a subject people within the Assyrian Empire. The name "Chaldeans" derives from the ruling class that lived in southern Mesopotamia and took leadership in the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The last and greatest dynasty to rule Babylon was of Chaldean origin. Thus, the synonymous names (Chaldeans and Babylon). These are the descendants of Keshed, the son of Abraham's brother, Nahor (Gen. 22:22). Some modern Iraqis identify themselves as Chaldeans. In 625 B.C. Nabopolassar took the throne of Babylon and within two decades, crushed the Assyrians. It is interesting that God reveals this to Habakkuk as something to be "astonished" by and "wonderful" because God promises Habakkuk that he will witness God's handiwork among the nations. Something so wonderful, so good to be true (v.5). How great and powerful will this empire will be? Verses 6-11 describes them as:
 - a) fierce and impetuous (they were fast acting - haste) - v.6
 - b) seize dwellings not belonging to them - v.6
 - c) dreaded and feared - v.7
 - d) had their own original laws - meaning that they lived by rules they made up, rather than what was custom at the time - v.7
 - e) state of the art military - they are characterized simply in being excellent hunters that are fast and fierce - v.8
 - f) they love violence and their love for battle showed as they moved irresistibly forward in conquest - v.9

- g) none are a threat to them - they mock every fortress they come against and siege it with ease - v. 10
- h) their power though will be their undoing - for their god is their own strength. They worship power instead of the true God. This is the only reason God will hold them guilty - v. 11

APPLICATION: The opening verses in Habakkuk quickly reminds us how “astonishingly” easy it is for the Lord to raise up and bring down nations. Just in our own modern history we have seen the swift rise and fall of the Axis powers in the first and second world wars, the rise and fall of the soviet union in the cold war, the sudden surge of ISIS in the middle east and others. God can do this to nations and He can certainly do this to individuals too. God may seem strangely silent and inactive at times. He sometimes gives unexpected answers to our prayers. Sometimes, He uses strange instruments to carry out His will to correct His people.³³

II. Faith’s lesson (1:12-2:20)

Next Habakkuk questions God’s choice of the evil Babylonians to judge Judah. God, not power was Habakkuk’s god. The Lord’s revelation of what He was doing in the prophet’s day brings confidence and faith to his heart as he praises the Lord.

A. Habakkuk questions God’s choice of the evil Babylonians to judge Judah (1:12-2:20)

1. **Habakkuk’s question (1:12-17)** - As Habakkuk considered God’s plan to use the Babylonians to punish Judah, he was deeply troubled. His question is, “are you not Holy God?” “Will we not die?” “Yet, You appointed such evil people to judge Your chosen ones, Judah.” “Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil” - vv. 12-13. Verses 8-11 graphically portray ancient warfare, with swift cavalry attacks in the open, and earthen ramps built up against the walls of besieged cities. These attacking armies were hell bent on violence. The defeated foes were subject to torture, women and girls were raped, and even infants were speared or taken by the heels and swung against stone walls. The utter cruelty of the Babylonians appalled Habakkuk. Even more so, it had to repel the Lord who is Holy and too pure to allow, much less look upon such evilness. So the question - “why do you look with favor a people more evil than your own chosen ones to triumph over them?” (v.13). Habakkuk continues to make his point more clearer to the evilness of the Babylonians in that he describes them as fishermen who took other nations captive “with a hook” and “net” and rejoiced over his good catch. They give credit to their gods as they pictured their gods dragging a net in which their captured enemies squirmed. They worshipped and give credit to the tools they used to make their impressive conquests rather than exalting Yahweh (cf. v.11). These people had little regard for human life as fishermen have for fish. That God would allow this to continue seemed blatantly unjust to Habakkuk.

³³ See D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *From Fear to Faith: Studies in the Book of Habakkuk and the Problem of History*, pp. 15-18.

2. **God's answer (2:1-20)** - *"The the Lord answered me and said, 'Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run'" - (2:2).* Habakkuk had set himself to wait for God's answer (v.1). The answer came in a vision that he was commanded by God to write down (v.2) and whoever reads it is to run away.
- a) **God's indictment of Babylon (2:4-5)** - The vision starts off by stating that the wicked man never has enough (vv. 4-5). Thus, the wicked man is doomed to dissatisfaction. He is like the furnace of hell (sheol). The more he gains, the more fuel he adds and the hotter his wickedness becomes. The judgment for them is winning, but never be able to enjoy it. Like an unquenchable fire is their sin and judgment.
- b) **God's sentence on Babylon (2:6-20)** - The rest of the chapter describes God's sentence on Babylon as Habakkuk declares five woes upon Babylon.
- (1) **Woe 1: The taunting of Babylon (vv. 6-8).** As the Babylonians make their gains at the expense of others. they will be "taunted" and "mocked" and everywhere they turn, even in their wicked ways they will always fear because they know they have earned the hatred of others (v.6). What an awful judgment to know that others hate and fear you because of how you treated them and to know that you are truly alone despite the power you placed your trust in.
- (2) **Woe #2: The insecurity of Babylon (vv. 9-11).** The Babylonians are so driven by insecurity that they attempt to build up a nest egg of material gain and wealth. Like a vulture they seek a mountain cliff for safety. This is how the wicked live. Insecure, desperately trying to protect themselves, but never feeling at peace or safe enough to be secured.
- (3) **Woe #3: The bloodshed of Babylon (vv.12-14).** The Babylonian empire would not have existed if it were not for the "shedding of blood" (v.12-13). Babylon was built with "blood money" by the blood and sweat and tears of enslaved people. The city was founded upon injustice and without it, it could not have become what it had become. Though their glory is evil, it will be brief. In the end, God's glory, not the glory of the Babylonians will fill the earth (v.14). Babylon in Habakkuk's time was a Neo-Babylonian empire, but ever since Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), "Babylon" was symbolic in meaning as well as a literal one. Symbolically, it represented all ungodly peoples who rose up, in self-reliance, to glorify themselves and reach heaven by their own works. God destroyed the first "Babel" and destroyed the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. and what represents them will not continue when God destroys it when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up His new order in the Millennium reign (cf. Rev. 17-18).
- (4) **Woe #4: The disgrace of Babylon (vv. 15-17).** The Babylonians will receive the backlash of antagonism. Their own violence will be used against them in judgment as they get a taste of the cup of their own venom (v.15). As the Lord's right hand comes on them they will only be disgraced not honored (v.

16). They will be punished because of the bloodshed they caused to Lebanon: their land, town and inhabitants (v.17).

- (5) **Woe #5: The folly of Babylon (vv. 18-20).** Habakkuk denounces the folly of “idols.” They are unable to teach truth to anyone. They are utterly unworthy of one’s trust. The artifacts they made will never be greater than themselves, never greater than the glory and power of the Lord. Thus, there is no “profit” (v.18) only judgment (v.19) to the one who speaks to his own “piece of wood, stone” as their “teacher” because it is overlaid with “gold and silver” (v.19). There is no life, no breath, no glory, no power, no wisdom, and no giving of guidance. To the contrast, nothing can compare to the glory of the Lord (v.20). Habakkuk pictures the Lord in “His holy temple.” This image speaks of imminent judgment by God. There is only one response to the glory and power of God - “*Let all the earth be silent before Him.*” This image describes the breath that one makes before something awful, awesome, astonishing happens. It’s the hush of heaven before the Lord acts.

This chart might illustrate better Habakkuk’s Five Woes on Babylon (2:6-20).³⁴

HABAKKUK'S FIVE WOES (2:6-20)					
ELEMENT	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Invective:	v. 6	v. 9	v. 12	v. 15	v. 19a
Woe to the:	Plunderer	Plotter	Pillager	Perverter	Polytheist
Threat:	v. 7	v. 11	v. 13	v. 16	v. 19b
He will be:	Despoiled	Denounced	Destroyed	Disgraced	Deserted
Criticism:	v. 8	v. 10	v. 14	v. 17	vv. 18, 20
Grounded in:	Spoiling of the nations	Scheming against peoples	Surety of the knowledge of God	Stripping of man/nature	Supremacy of God

APPLICATION: The lesson of faith here reminds us that it is God who is all powerful, not the nations, kings, idols, or any created thing. Mark, in his gospel, records the time when Jesus calmed the sea simply with the command of His voice. “*And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘HUSH, be still!’*” - Mark 4:39. This is the power of God - that even the storm is hushed by the command of His word. Habakkuk seeing the glory of the Lord confronted Him with the fact that the judgment day of Judah was at hand. He was silent by the powerful words of the Lord that will soon come from His holy throne in heaven to clear the corruption and

³⁴ Dr Don Constable notes on Habakkuk, a chart he cited from Patterson p. 184

violence in the land, just as Jesus calmed the violent sea with the simple word “HUSH” of his voice.

III. Faith’s response (3:1-19)

- A. **Praying to God for revival (3:1-2)** - Habakkuk’s faith was tested and taught. His faith gives way to a triumphant expression in a hymn of praise to the person of God who revived His work and renown both in His appearance and actions. All he asks is that the Lord “*in wrath remember mercy.*” (v.2).
- B. **Praising God for His renown (3:3-15)** - Habakkuk moves from petition to praise in his prayer. He recalls God’s great power and pardon in bringing the Israelites from Egypt through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. This is the prophet’s response of faith in that, if God was able to do that, then, the prophet was confident that the Lord would deliver the Israelites from the Babylonians and reestablish them in the land.
 1. **His appearance (3:3-7)** - Notice how poetically the prophet, like a psalm, describes the appearance of the Lord.
 - a) *His splendor covers the heavens* (v.3). Like the sun after sunrise. This self-manifestation of His glory filled “the earth” with “His praise” (fame). “Glory” here describes the prime kingly authority and references of God’s supreme sovereignty over all creation and history. The reference of “the Holy One from Mount Paran” is how the prophet describes the Lord in this verse.
 - b) *His radiance is like the sunlight* (v.4). The power of God seems to flash from His fingertips as “rays” of light stretch from the rising sun (cf. Ex. 34:29-30, 35).
 - c) *Before Him goes pestilence and startling power* (v.5-7). Habakkuk saw, not the plague that devastated the Exodus generation on the plains of Moab (Num. 25), but God Himself, burning in anger, His elemental power shaking the foundations of the earth, coming from Sinai to execute the judgement the Law required.
 2. **His actions (3:8-15)** - Habakkuk now changes from describing the manifestation of God’s wondrous power and glory to His actions on earth. From beginning to end, Israel’s God is shown to be the victor over all peoples, nations and the champion of those who place their faith in Him alone. In a series of visions, the prophet tells about the enraged God that swept the earth clean of sin by the Genesis flood (vv.8-10). Then, in another vision the prophet sees God in His wrath, who cast plagues on the Egyptian people and comes as a mighty warrior to overthrow Egypt’s armies and delivers His people from slavery (vv. 11-15). Each of these visions were to show Habakkuk what it means to be disciplined by the hand of God.
- C. **Pledging to God revered faith (3:16-19)** - “*I heard and my inward parts trembled...*” (v.16). Finally, Habakkuk understands. He is ready to commit himself by faith to what the Lord has in store both for the Babylonians and his own peers, the people in Judah. His pledge is to “wait quietly for the day of distress” (v.16). There is nothing that the prophet can do but to watch, wait, and observe as this raging power in the east arises up to bring

the day of God's distress and judgment on Judah. This is the "oracle." This is the "burden" because of the compound interest built against Judah has now come to be settled. The debt must be paid. It must be cleared. The prophet's faith goes deeper, yet, because the prophet knows he too must suffer with his peers by the hand of God through the instrument of the Babylonians. He tells about how there will be no food because the produce of the land will fail and he will starve along with his people (v.17). Yet, by faith and His confidence in the Lord, the prophet will rejoice - for He knows the source of His salvation (v.18). God is his strength. Habakkuk has faith that he will be enabled to walk through the perilous times - "*He has made my feet like hinds feet, and makes me walk on my high places*" (v.19).

APPLICATION: Faith as the writer in Hebrews states is: "*...is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" - (Hebrews 11:1) Habakkuk's faith was built on the "assurance" and "conviction" that even though he carried the burden of knowing the fate that awaits Judah, including himself, that the Lord is his "strength" and "salvation" (v.19).

CONCLUSION: Lawrence Richards gives this final word concerning Habakkuk's faith: "When a nation is judged for its sin, the righteous and wicked suffer. The one with faith is not immune to the troubles that are common to mankind. But, as the prophet caught sight of a mountain goat (hinds feet) picking its way on a mountainside, unmindful of the danger of a fall, he realized a wonderful truth. Resting in God, the believer remains secure, whatever his circumstances."

LESSON NINE: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Habakkuk

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: How do you express your gratitude to the Lord for rescuing you from His eternal wrath to come on those who do not believe?

-REFLECT-

2. God’s judgment on Judah is severe and complete: Why is God so bent on pouring His judgment out on His own people? (vv. 1:4-6).

3. When and what will the day of the Lord be? Who is it for? (1:7-18)

4. What is God’s instruction to avoid His wrath? (2:1-3)

5. When will the Lord’s judgment come? (1:7; 14) and what will it be like? (1:14-18)

6. God’s judgment is not only for Judah, who else does it fall on? (2:4-15) and what is the reaction of those who pass by Nineveh? (2:13-15).

-REVEAL-

7. Again, like the first question, after reading this book, what should your response be to the Lord who has triumph over you through Christ (3:14). Who is the Lord in your life (3:17) what promise does He have for His people? (3:20).

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 10: “Obadiah: ”

OVERVIEW: Edom is punished as nations come against her, pillaging and slaughtering her people for her arrogance (vv. 1-9) and for the violence she directed against Judah (vv. 10-14). All nations will be judged on the Day of the Lord and their lands will be occupied by God’s own people (vv. 15-21).

THE BOOK, THE AUTHOR, THE PROPHET: Obadiah is the writer of this book (1:1) based upon its citation by Jeremiah 49:7-22 (cf. Obad. 1-9), early Jewish teaching, and its basic unity. His name means “servant of Yahweh” or “worshipper of Yahweh.” The time of writing is uncertain. Some say it was written early during Jehoshaphat’s time (9th B.C.), others support a later date perhaps during the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C.). The late date I believe is better supported internally and from other Old Testament sources for we know Jerusalem is destroyed in verses 11-14 and fits the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.) which is also known in Psalm 137:7; Ezek. 35:5; Lam. 4:21 and that the Edomites “stood aloof” (v. 11) and did not help their brothers.

THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE: The theme of this book is about the complete destruction of Edom. It was written to Judah to comfort them that the Lord was in fact going to destroy Edom for its sin against Israel and God (v.10) and reveals some aspects of the Day of the Lord and the Kingdom of God.

THE BACKGROUND: Edom vs Judah begins with a venomous family feud that goes back to the days of Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25-36). Esau’s descendants settled in Edom, a land south of the Dead Sea about one hundred miles long and fifty miles wide. This land was well watered and allowed the Edomites to conduct shrewd trades, make raids on neighboring peoples and retreat to their strongholds for safety. The heights of the plains east of the Dead Sea ranged from 4,000 to 5,700 feet and made the land arrogantly defensible. The defenses of stone fortresses contributed to the pride of Edom reflected in this book, “*Who can bring me down to the ground?*” (v.3). The places of Sela (Petra), Teman, and Bozrah were the fortified citadels that served as places of security in war.³⁵



³⁵ “Preaching from the Prophets”, Kyle M. Yates, Broadman Press, p. 169.

Edom was always antagonistic to Israel, despite their brotherhood as sons of Isaac. It was the Edomites that refused passage to the Israelites through their territory at the time of the Exodus (Num 20). When Israel was battling for the conquest of Palestine, Edom fought against Israel. David subdued the land and Solomon continued to hold it in subjection. During the days of Ahaz the Edomites rebelled. Judas Maccabaeus drove them out of Southern Judah in 164 B.C. John Hyrcanus forced them to accept Judaism. Later, they became known as the hated Idumeans of the New Testament and gave to the Jews the Herod family. After Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. they disappeared from history.³⁶

Many of the prophets directed their message against Edom because of their self-sufficiency and pride as the root of their sin. There are many passages in the Old Testament that site Israel's dealings with the Edomites that are historical and prophetic.

Historically:

- Gen. 25-36 (Esau and Jacob)
- Num. 20:14-21
- Deut. 2:1-8 (Exodus)
- 1 Sam. 14:47 (King Saul)
- 2 Sam. 8:14 (David)
- 2 Kings 8:20-22 (Jehoram)
- 2 Chron. 20:10-23 (Jehoshaphat)
- 2 King 14:7; 2 Chron 25:11-13 (Amaziah)
- 2 Chron. 28:17 (Ahaz)
- Psalm 137:7; Lam. 4:22 (Fall of Jerusalem)
- Psalm 83:1-6 (General)

Prophetic:

- Isaiah 11:14; 34; 63:1-6; Jer 49:7-22; Ezek. 25:12-14, 35; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12; Mal. 1:2-5.

CENTRAL TEACHING: God punishes those who are hostile towards His people and promises future restoration and blessing for Israel.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: The book pictures the Messiah as both Savior and possessor of the kingdom (v.21).

KEY WORDS: Obadiah uses different racial and geographical terms in his message. They either identify Edom or Judah. The names reflect the ancestors such as “Esau” (Edom) and “Jacob” (Judah). The places “Teman” (Edom) and “Mount Zion” (Judah).

CENTRAL VERSES: Verse(s) 4, 10, 12, 15

CENTRAL THEME: The present destruction of Judah's enemies and the future restoration of Judah.

³⁶ “

OUTLINE:

- I. The Day of Edom's Destruction (vv. 1-14)**
 - A. The Certainty of Destruction (vv. 1-9)**
 - B. The Cause for Destruction (vv. 10-14)**
- II. The Day of the Lord (vv. 15-21)**
 - A. A Day of Judgement on All Nations (vv. 15-16)**
 - B. A Day of Triumph for Judah (vv. 17-18)**
 - C. A Day of Inheritance for Judah (vv. 19-21)**

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 concerning the order of the resurrection. In it he speaks how God set aside the first man (natural) to make the second man (spiritual) first:

“The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL. (cf Gen. 2:7) The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.” - 1 Cor. 15:45-49.

The reason I begin with this passage is because we see in the Old Testament the cases of this mystery in Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Reuben and Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim. Related to this is Esau who figures a type of the flesh and Jacob who is a type of the new man learning to overcome by discipline. The end of the Old Testament where God summarizes concerning the two families, *“I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau” - (Mal. 1:2-3).*³⁷

In God's dealing with the history of man, we see how God explicitly chose Jacob over Esau. Before the twins were born, God chose Jacob saying, *“The elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23)*. Was this elective grace, yes, but it's not about reprobating Esau to hell, but how the Lord chose Jacob to manifest His grace through His generations to preserve the promise of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Therefore, the Lord made Esau subject to his brother and as H.A. Ironside states, *“it was the setting aside of the elder and the giving of the birthright to the younger, thus reminding us that God ever sets aside the first man to make the Second Man first. (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-49).*³⁸ Israel's relationship to their kindred brothers from Edom finds its root in this history of grace.

As we know so well, it is through Jacob that we have the people and nation of Israel. It is through Esau that we have the Edomite people and eventually those who would be later called “Idumeans” from which the Herod family would come from.

³⁷ The Minor Prophets, H.A. Ironside, p. 126.

³⁸ “”

Just like the relationship between Jacob and Esau had been antagonistic, so have their descendants been towards one another. As stated above in the background, the two peoples would strive against one another to the point that eventually through David and Solomon's reign the Edomites are subject to Jacob's clan. In the end, we will see that the Lord finally condemns, punishes and destroys the Edom for their "aloofness" and "violence" towards Israel and stand by as their brothers are attacked and conquered by strangers (v.10).

I. The Day of Edom's Destruction (vv. 1-14)

A. The Certainty of Destruction (vv. 1-9)

1. *"an envoy has been sent among the nations - (v.1) -* The news about this "envoy" or "messenger" came from a report that "we" (God's people) heard. The message reported that God was sovereignly and supernaturally summoning a coalition of nations to come against to defeat, destroy, and occupy Edom's territory.
2. *"Behold, I will make you small among the nations;" - (v.2) -* The mark against Edom's national character was pride (Hb. *zadon*). It comes from a verb meaning to boil up. It pictures water that boils up under pressure in a cooking pot. Likewise, the proud person is like a bubble that thrusts itself up but is hollow. It's the same Hebrew word that occurs three time in the account of Esau, the father of these Edomites (Gen. 25:27-34). Edom's pride was in their defenses. They thought they were superior because they inhabited a lofty region: Mt. Seir. They convinced themselves that they were invincible. (see vv. 2-3).
3. *"'From there I will bring you down,' declares the Lord." - (v. 4b) -* The Edomite population was built on a great ridge of the mountainous land opposite of the Dead Sea. These ranges were in heights of 4000 to 5700 feet in elevation. It was a natural defense that contributed to their national sense of pride. Its because of their pride that the Lord declares that He will tear it all down - even if they make their defenses as high as "nest among the stars." So the prophet speaks of how the Lord will do this. They will be pillaged by thieves and robbers (v.5) and they will "ransack" all their "hidden treasures" (v. 6). They will be betrayed by their allies, thus, Edom would not only deceive herself, but her trusted allies would also "deceive" her (v.7). They would do what would be considered in the ancient Near East the most despicable act - breaking a covenant with a covenant partner (cf. Ps. 55:20; Amos 1:9). Their allies would become their worst enemies. This disloyalty towards them would come on them by surprise, like an "ambush."
4. *"destroy wise men from Edom..." - (v. 8-9) -* Not only will the Lord destroy their fortresses and take away their treasures, but He also has plans for both their "wise men" and "mighty men." God will destroy their leaders. "Teman" was a prominent town in central Edom and "mount of Esau" is Mt. Seir, the mountain God gave Esau and his descendants to inhabit (Deut. 2:5). The invasion is certain. The destruction is certain (v.8), so also, is the "slaughter" of the people of "Esau" (v. 9).

B. The Cause for Destruction (vv. 10-14)

1. *“Because of violence to your brother Jacob” - (v. 10)* - The destruction of Edom is not only because of their arrogance and pride, but also because of their crimes against Judah, their brother. This is the statement of God’s charge against Edom. The Edomites had cursed the people whom God had purposed to bless (Gen. 27:40-41; Exod. 15:15; Num. 20:14-21; Deut. 2:4; Judg 11:17-18; 1 Sam, 14:47-48; 2 Sam. 8:13-14; 1 Ki. 11:15-16; 1 Chron. 18:11-13; Ps. 60 etc). In doing this, they had accumulated God’s wrath on themselves. If you recall in the covenant given to Abraham that the Lord “will bless those who bless” Israel and will “curse” those who “curse” Israel (Gen. 12:3).
2. *“...you stood aloof...” - (v.11)* - The Lord explains His charge against Edom was because of their treachery against Judah. They joyfully stood and watched as Israel’s invader conquered Jerusalem and lost its self-rule (v.11). God charged them guilty because they stood “aloof” and did not lend a helping hand to their brother. The Israelites were commanded by God to extend a friendly and brotherly attitudes towards Edom (Deut. 2:4,5; 23:7) because Edom is their brother. God reinforced the seriousness of Edom’s sin by condemning how they “gloated” over Israel’s day of misfortune. The point being is that blood ties should have taken more precedence over covenant relations. Not only did they stand and watch them being destroyed, the Edomites also struck down their fugitives (v. 14) as they stood at the fork of a road and waited to cut down the Israelites. This could have been during the time when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (2 King. 24:13-16; 25:4-17; 2 Chron. 36:18,20; cf. Ps. 137:7 etc.).

APPLICATION: The lesson learned here is that the Lord takes seriously the relationship bonds. Relationships with Him first and then with our brothers. Another lesson here is that the Lord takes seriously the promise of His word. Gen. 12:3 was a covenant that the Lord made with Abraham a very long time ago, but that covenant promise is no less stronger than the first day God made it with Abraham. The Lord is committed to His Word, so should we. One other lesson taken from this passage is that pride and arrogance should have no place among God’s people. it causes one to be self dependent rather than God dependent.

II. The Day of the Lord (vv. 15-21)

The “day of the Lord” usually identifies events that will take place at the end of history (Isa. 7:18-25). One way to understand “the day of the Lord” is to view it as a span of time rather than a single day. It is a period of time when God will personally intervene in history and directly or indirectly accomplish some specific part of His plan and will. The phrase is used nineteen times in the Old Testament and five times in the New Testament. The “day of the Lord” in the Old Testament can mean an imminent event to happen specifically to the nations surrounding Israel and the people of God too. It is characterized as being imminent, near, and with expectation (Isa. 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Joel 2:1; 3:14; Zeph. 1:7). It can refer to both a near and far fulfillment as some judgments have already been fulfilled in some sense (Isa. 13:6-22; Ezek. 30:2-19; Joel 1:15;

3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14-18) while others refers to divine judgments that will take place toward the end of the age (Joel 2:30-32; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:1,5).

It is not only a time of judgment, but it's also a time of salvation when God will deliver the remnant Israel, fulfilling His promise that "all of Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26), forgiving their sins and restoring His chosen people to the land He promised to Abraham (Isa. 10:27; Jer 30:19-31; Mic 4; Zech 13). In the end, God will humble the arrogant will of man when the Lord will be exalted in that day (Isa. 2:17, Phil 2) with the ultimate fulfillment when God will bring an end of history as we know it on earth with His wondrous power and will punish forever evil and fulfill all His promises.³⁹

A. A Day of Judgement on All Nations (vv. 15-16)

1. *"For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations"* - (v. 15) - Up to this time, the prophet has only spoken of God's imminent judgment on Edom.
 - a) *Extension of God's judgment:* The Lord extends judgment on His day. He declares judgment on all nation - perhaps the people from Negev, Philistines, Ephraim, Samaria, Benjamin, Gilead (v.19), Zaraphath and Sepharad (v. 20). But, this also could mean those nations today too - United States, Soviet Union, China, etc.... There is not one nation in the history of the world that has not been judged by the Lord. All men will die. That is our destiny, and after death - will face judgment (Heb. 9:27).
 - b) *Nearness of God's judgment:* Notice also something about this judgment - it "draws near." Keep in mind that Obadiah's words were spoken some 500 years before Christ (if you hold to a late date of this book), which means, the prophet spoke these words some twenty-five hundred years ago. Obadiah is speaking not only of a judgment near for Edom, but also near for all nations. The Bible's definition of "nearness" is more what we would understand by the word, "imminent." It can occur at anytime. We believers today can relate to this because we know for over two thousand years we have been waiting for Christ return. It's near, it's imminent, but it doesn't mean it will be immediate.
 - c) *Cup of God's judgment:* *"Because just as you drank on My holy mountain"* - (v. 16) - The Lord warns Edom and all nations that *"your dealings will return on your own head"* (v.15b). Edom had her day on God's holy mountain in Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded and took away Israel's sovereignty. Obadiah describes Israel's enemies as drinking there in celebration of their dominion over the Israelites (cf Exod. 32:6; 1 Sam. 30:16). They were intoxicated in their dominant victory, yet it will be the Lord who will vindicate His people when He will make them drink the cup of His wrath and they will be destroyed as if they never existed (v. 16b). Ever since Nebuchadnezzar removed Israel's sovereignty in 586 B.C., it initiated the "the times of the Gentiles." This is a time from Babylonians to the time when Christ will come again and set up His throne on the earth. Several places in Old Testament speak to this (Ezek 30:3; Dan. 2:31-45; 7:

³⁹ "Understanding End Times Prophecy" by Paul Benware/Logos Bible Software.

1-27; 8:1-26). We are now and have been living in the time of gentiles since the days of Obadiah when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. This period will end when Christ comes again at this glorious return and rules on the earth for one thousand years. For now, this is the domination of the gentiles.

B. A Day of Triumph for Judah (vv. 17-18) - *“But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape.” - (v. 17).* - The prophet now contrast the different fates of Israel and Edom. Israel will be restored, while Edom will face judgment. This reference of “those who escape” refers to those Jews and Jerusalem in the future day of the Lord who will eventually become holy at the second coming of Christ. It will be at that time that the “house of Jacob” will consume the “house of Esau” as a “fire” that consumes Edomites. There will be no Edomites left (cf. vv. 8-9). This prophecy will find ultimate fulfillment during the judgment of the nations. On the day of the Lord. When Christ returns (v.18). This will be the end of all Gentile powers and nations that dominated Israel. Perhaps, if the Jews had received Christ as their Messiah, He would have begun to rule shortly after His crucifixion and resurrection. Since they still rejected Him, the final judgment of the nations that the prophets predicted is still future.

C. A Day of Inheritance for Judah (vv. 19-21) - *“The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion” - (v. 21).* - The summary of Obadiah’s message concludes with Israel as the judge of her enemies. Israel’s kingdom will extend over the whole promised land as God intended. The Jews, who by then, who acknowledge Christ as Messiah will rule over those who formerly opposed them. This will complete the conquest of the land that Joshua began but did not finish. Israel will finally inherit all the land promised by the Lord, including Edom. This prophecy ends with Christ, the Messiah setting His kingdom on His throne on Zion’s mountain where He will rule over all the nations of the world. The Christ babe who once became the personal focus of Herod’s hostility, who tried to kill Jesus in his infancy, who also is a descendant of Esau and the Edomites, this Christ babe will be ruler over all while the enemies of Israel, including the Edomites will experience destruction themselves for trying to kill not only Jesus, but His people too.

APPLICATION: Obadiah believed that God is in active control of every phase of His creation and will. It is God’s joy to carry out His purpose on all nations and to look with special favor His chosen people: *“I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau” - (Mal. 1:2-3).* Our lesson from this message is that judgment will come to all who do not love the Lord and trust in Christ Jesus as Savior and Sovereign Lord. Even though God’s judgment seems far away and has been delayed, take note, His judgment is near. Now is the time for salvation - today is the day. Do not test the Lord and wait. Trust in His ways - repent from your sin - believe upon Christ Jesus as Lord - for anyone who calls upon the Lord will be saved. The end is coming - are you prepared for judgment?

LESSON TEN: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Obadiah

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: How ready was Habakkuk to commit himself for what the Lord had in stored for Judah and Babylonia, how ready and committed are to the Lord for what He has in stored for believers and non-believers in our future?

-REFLECT-

2. Obadiah’s message concerns who? (v.1) - What is God’s plan for Edom? (vv. 2,4) and Why? (v. 3)

3. Who will the Lord use to bring an end to Edom? (v. 7)

4. What was God’s main charge against Edom? (vv. 10-14)

5. As in other minor prophets, when will the day of God’s judgment come and on who? (v. 15)

6. What promise did the Lord make through Obadiah concerning Israel? (vv.17-21)

-REVEAL-

7. The day of the Lord is both judgment and salvation - both are certain, both are near - are you ready for it when it happens?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 11: “Haggai & Zechariah”

This will be a two part study surveying both “Haggai and Zechariah.” These two minor prophets are two of three remaining minor prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi being the third) that come from the period known as the post-exilic period. This was the time after a remnant of Israel was led into captivity by the Babylonians around 607-586 B.C. and remained for seventy years until the Babylonians fell to the Persian armies in 539 B.C. as promised by God through the prophets Jeremiah (29:10) and Daniel (ch. 9). The first group of captives were allow to return to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. to rebuild the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel, then Ezra and Nehemiah. All this took place under the reigns of the Persian kings, Darius (Haggai and Zechariah) and Cyrus (Malachi). This second temple would be greatly smaller compared to Solomon’s temple in the past and Herod’s in the future. The message from God through Haggai and Zechariah is to call the rulers and people to resume the rebuilding of the temple after sixteen years of interruptions and to look forward to the kingdom of God that will be established when it will fill His people with joyful expectation regarding that day.

The chart below is a fly over time line from the period of captivity to the four hundred years of silence before Christ.

CAPTIVITY & RETURN										
BABYLONIANS (Nebuchadnezzar/ Belshazzar)			PERSIANS (Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes II, Darius II)							
				Zerubabel		Esther		Ezra	Nehemiah	
Daniel	Ezekiel					Haggai Zechariah			Malachi	
606	597	586	539	538	536	520	516	458	445	Beyond
1st captivity	2nd captivity	Temple destroyed	Babylon falls to Cyrus	First return of Jews	Temple foundation laid	work on Temple resume	Temple finished			400 yrs of silence

NOTE: I will be combining the studies of both prophets (Haggai and Zechariah) since both are similar in time and in content.

	HAGGAI	ZECHARIAH
OVERVIEW:	Haggai message criticizes the Jews who returned to Jerusalem for building their own homes, yet God's temple remains in ruin (1:1-6). Their financial hardship has been a message from God that they have not placed Him first in their lives (1:7-11). The rulers and priest immediately respond and begin the work to complete the temple of the Lord (1:12-15). Haggai faces the perplexity to encourage those who saw the temple in its former glory and encourages the builders that God's glory will be greater than the former temple (2:1-9). Haggai then gives a word of blessing concerning the Temple's sanctity (2:10-19) and then give the promise of hope by using Zerubabel as a symbol of the Messiah to come who will bring hope to Israel's remnant (2:20-23).	Zechariah records his visions and encourages the people to reinstate the priesthood, and other religious laws that were forgotten during the 70 year exile. He then gives hope and encouragement concerning the coming Messiah who will set His throne up and rule as the mighty Branch, the High Priest, who will offer up the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world (chapters 1-8). The final chapters are prophetic and apocalyptic. Zechariah judges neighboring enemies and declares the first coming of the Messiah who will be mounted on a donkey (9:9), betrayed (11:12), and crucified (12:10). Then he writes about the Day of the Lord at the second coming of Jesus when He will descend from heaven the same way he left in Acts 1:11, in the clouds (14:4).
AUTHOR/BOOK	Haggai, "festal" indicating that he might have been born on a major feast day. He was a contemporary of Zechariah the prophet and Zerubbabel the governor (1:12, 13, 2:1, 20) and Ezra 6:14. The Date of writing was during the post exilic period (520 B.C.)	Zechariah, "Lord has Remembered", si the son of Berechian, grandson of Iddo, priest who led Levites (Neh. 12:4) and younger contemporary of Haggai (Ezra 6:14). Though some opt for a later date in the 2nd and 3rd centuries because of a supposedly different style of writing and references to Greece (9:13) and to the defeat of Tyre and Sidon by Alexander the Great (9:1-14) in 330 B.C., evidence supports a date in 518 B.C. for chapters 1-8 and 480 B.C. for chapters 9-14.

	HAGGAI	ZECHARIAH
AUDIENCE / OCCASSION	To the remnant who returned about 538 B.C. to begin working to rebuild the Temple around 536 B.C.. But because of discouragement and indifference the site lay idle for sixteen years before God stirred up the people through Haggai's and Zechariah's ministries.	Like Haggai, Zechariah wrote to the remnant who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon and who were discouraged by the size of the temple that they remembered from its former glory (Ezra 3:12). His message was to encourage them that this little beginning showed a promise of greater things to come (Zech 4:10).
BACKGROUND	Cyrus, Persian king had issued a decree that the Jews could return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1f). Around 50,000 took on this challenge and opportunity to return to the land (Ezra 1, 8). They settled in and around Jerusalem (Ezra 1:11; 7:7).	Very similar background to Haggai. The dating reported by both prophets in opening chapter is the difference of 2 months (Haggai being the first).
CENTRAL TEACHING	Challenged the remnant to rebuild the Temple now that they were back in Palestine after 70 years of captivity.	Encouragement showing that God was at work in the world restoring Israel to their spiritual inheritance in preparing for the coming Messiah.
CHRISTOLOGICAL	Jesus is represented as the Restorer of the Temple's glory (2:7-9) and the Overthrower of the kingdoms of this world (2:22) and a signet ring for Israel (2:23).	Jesus is represented as the Angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous Branch (3:8), the Crucified Savior (12:10) and the Coming King (9:9).
KEY VERSES	1:4; 5-6; 2:9	1:3; 7:13; 9:9; 13:9
CENTRAL THEME	Never weary in the well-doing of God's service for God's promises are for tomorrow.	God will complete His purpose of establishing His Kingdom on earth and will fill our joy in that glorious day of the Lord.

	HAGGAI	ZECHARIAH
OUTLINE	REBUILD THE TEMPLE I. Message 1: Recommit (1:1-15) II. Message 2: Reassurance (2:1-9) III. Message 3: Reminder (2:10-19) IV. Message 4: Restorer (2:20-23)	FINISH THE TEMPLE I. Sanctuary Visions (1-6) II. Service Messages (7-8) III. Savior's Burden (9-14) A. Rejected (9-11) B. Reigns (12-14)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT: “HAGGAI” - Rebuild the Temple

INTRODUCTION: Haggai is addressed to Zerubbabel (the Governor) and Joshua (the High Priest) who were appointed by Cyrus and Darius to lead 50,000 Jews back to Judah after seventy years of captivity to rebuild the House of the Lord (v.1). Zerubbabel was an heir to the Davidic throne through Jehoiachin (Jeconiah in Matt. 1:12). Joshua was a levite and a descendant of Aaron the first High Priest (Ezra 3:2,8). This first wave of Jews returned to Judah in 538 B.C. (18 years before Haggai spoke) and settled in and around Jerusalem. When they returned they found the once fertile land stripped of its former glory and as they worked to repair the land, they were met by a series of natural disasters that led them to despair because the land would not yield any fruit. But, there was a reason for this - they neglected the work in rebuilding God's house, thus the Lord judged them for this.

MESSAGE 1: August, 29, 520 B.C. - “RECOMMITMENT” - (1:1-15)

THEME: Recommitment to rebuild the temple.

EXPLANATION:

- A. **RETRIBUTION:** The lack of commitment to the Lord showed in the Jews low priority in rebuilding the “house of the Lord” - (v.2).
1. Haggai tells them to “consider your ways” twice (vv. 4,7) as a way to awaken them from their lack of commitment. Because they neglected the Lord's house, the Lord withheld from them the fruitfulness of the land. He even withheld the rains. This was His judgment on them for not making His house top priority (vv. 6-11). They even used the funds they brought with them on a futile effort to make the little community self-sufficient. In all this they had forgotten their call to put God first and were not satisfied because there was not enough to eat, drink, clothed, and financially save (v.6).
- B. **REPENT:** So then, Haggai exhorts all the people to get up and rebuild the Lord's House so that the Lord may be pleased and be glorified by the work (v.8).

- C. **RESPONSE:** The people responded positively to Haggai's message as all the people (Zerubbabel and Joshua included) recommitted themselves to the work on the house of the Lord. As the people obeyed, the Lord worked in their hearts as His Spirit stirred within them (v.14) and within a month the work on the temple was resumed.

APPLICATION: This message is a reminder that our call and commitment to the Lord should always be first and that whatever we do in word or in deed should be done all for the glory of the Lord (Col. 3:17).

MESSAGE 2: October 17, 520 B.C. - "REASSURANCE" - (2:1-9)

THEME: Encouragement for rebuilding the temple.

EXPLANATION:

- A. **COMPARISON:** The people had been at worked almost two months when Haggai received another message from the Lord. This message was to reassure the Jews that even though that those who remembered the former glory of Solomon's temple, this temple, though smaller, will be greater than the glory of Solomon's temple (v.9)
- B. **COURAGE:** Though discourage, Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people (v.4) were encouraged by the prophet's message because the Lord was with them, just like He was with them in Egypt (vv.4-5). His presence will be in the form of His abiding Spirit in their midst, so they had no reason to fear (v. 5). For the Lord will cause the nations to donate their wealth to help with the funds to rebuild the temple (vv. 6-8).
- C. **CONTRACT:** The Book of Ezra tells us how God solved the issue of funds and the issue of objection of the rebuilding by the people of the Land who tried to stop it (Ezra 5:1-17). After searching the Persian Empire records, it showed that Cyrus commanded that the temple be rebuilt and the present king, Darius, stated that the full cost was to be paid by the royal treasury through taxes collected in the Trans-Euphrates province (Ezra 6:1-12). God's promise that the silver and gold was His encouraged the people to continue on. Not only will His presence be with them, but also His peace (v. 9). This was God's contract with His people.

APPLICATION: God provides all that we need to complete the task He has called us too. We can be reassured that if God is for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31).

MESSAGE 3: December 18, 520 B.C. - “REMINDER” - (2:10-19)

THEME: Reminder concerning Holiness

EXPLANATION:

- A. **POINT OF LAW:** Haggai begins his third message (v.10) asking a couple of questions concerning what it meant to be holy (vv. 12, 13). Before the exile, it was believed by the Jews that Jerusalem was safe because God’s temple was there and God would protect the place He chose for His name to dwell. This was a false presupposition. Now that the new temple was being built, Haggai uses the Law to point out their flawed thinking and helps them to understand that God’s holy temple could not make the people holy. They are not to put their hope in their own supposed holiness and in the supposed holiness of the house of God. (v.14).
- B. **POINT OF HOLINESS:** What then would be their basis of hope? God’s grace. The goodness of God on us is not because we deserve it, and not because His presence makes us holy, but because He simply chooses to “bless us” (v.15).
- C. **POINT OF OBEDIENCE:** Since the temple could not make Judah a holy community, what could? When they demonstrate through obedience in building the temple and readiness to put God first, freed the Lord to give them gracious and unmerited blessings. Even more, the Lord committed Himself to do this (vv. 15-19).

APPLICATION: The blessings we receive from the Lord are not merited, even when we are fully committed to Him in obedience. No, the blessings from Him is the evidence of God’s unmerited grace on us (Eph. 1:1; 2:8-10).

MESSAGE 4: December 18, 520 B.C. - “RESTORER”

THEME: The promise of Divine blessing on the future horizon.

EXPLANATION:

- A. **THE POWER:** This message was to Zerubbabel (v.21). Even though he was of royal line, was not the king of Judah, he only represented it. Judah was still under the control of the Persian Empire which had 120 provinces throughout the near-east. Though Judah is insignificant in Zerubbabel’s day, one day God will act in His mighty power and overthrow all gentile kingdoms, including ones like Persia (v. 22). This is reminiscent of Jesus’s second coming when He will come to overthrow all His enemies and shake the heavens and earth from it’s foundations in Revelation 19-21.
- B. **THE PERSON:** The Lord calls Zerubbabel “my servant” (v.23). Isaiah used this term to reference the “Messiah” (Isa. 41:8; 42:1; 49:5-6; 50:10 etc.). The word “chosen” also refers to the chosen ONE from among His people (cf. 1 Ki. 11:13; 1 Ch. 28:4 etc). Haggai is not

pointing to Zerubbabel as the “chosen One” but merely pointing out that He was in the line of Christ (Mt. 1:12-13) and pointed forward to Him (v.23).

- C. **THE PROMISE:** The promise of the “signet ring” (v.23) corresponds to the crown, the throne and scepter of Israel’s king. The promise here is that Zerubbabel represented the uninterrupted and resumption messianic line which was not cut off by the exile which was ushered in by Josiah’s sons. God’s promise here is not only to rebuild the temple, but the kingdom that will be possessed by David’s greater Son - Christ Jesus our Lord.

APPLICATION: The promises of God go far and beyond we could ever think of imagine. Even though Haggai begins on a down note - it ends with the hope and assurance to come for all who will believe in the promised One from Heaven - Jesus, the Son of God - King of Heaven and Israel.

CONCLUSION: Lessons from Haggai

1. Be obedient to God’s commission of service.
2. Keep the Lord first in your life.
3. Finish what God has called you to do.
4. Be encourage that the Lord is with you when you obediently serve Him.
5. God is faithful to provide the means for service.
6. Holiness is not dependent upon the church as a building or the church’s works, but on the unmerited grace of God.
7. Be focused on the divine promise of God for eternity.

SURVEY OF THE TEXT: “ZECHARIAH” - Finish the Temple

INTRODUCTION: Zechariah, whose name means, “Lord as remembered” is the younger contemporary of Haggai. His name denotes “hope” as he looks at the future for the Jewish people during the coming centuries of pagan empire, and the age of the Messiah. Both Haggai and Zechariah dated two months from each other. Haggai was recorded in the second year and sixth month of Darius’s reign, while Zechariah was recorded two months later on the eighth month. The task of Zechariah is the same as Haggai’s exhorting the people to rebuild the temple, yet his message is also to encourage them to complete it as seen by his eight visions about Zion’s sanctuary and four messages about Zion’s services and the burden about Zion’s Savior.

OPENING APPEAL: (1:1-6) - “Return to Me...that I may return to you” - (1:3) - This appeal by the Lord is one of the most strongest in the Old Testament. It calls for repentance because the people still have not heeded the prophets and have failed to live according to the will of God. The prophet is clear that the judgments of God are real - “don’t be like your fathers” (v.4) - and the only way to have the favor of God on them is to repent and obey His call (vv. 5-6).

I. SANCTUARY VISIONS (Ch. 1-6)

PURPOSE: The purpose of these visions were to show Israel's future among the nations and their spiritual restoration by God. They were given to encourage the tired workers who were discouraged and skeptical. These words of assurances were to help them further in the completion of the temple.

VISION	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Angelic horsemen (1:7-17)	God's providential activity among the nations to return His people to Jerusalem so they can rebuild their Temple.	God's Providence
Four horns and Smith (1:18-21)	Symbolizes the four world powers under whose dominion Israel was to come.	God's Power
Man and measuring rod (2:1-13)	Illustrates God surveying the land for the remnant to reinhabit	God's Protection
Joshua the High Priest (3:1-10)	Christ in the Temple interceding for Israel so that Satan would not destroy her (cf. Rev. 12).	God's Prayer
Lampstand and olive trees (4:1-14)	The renewed light of Israel among the nations is dependent on the oil of the Holy Spirit (cf. 4).	God's Presence
Flying scroll (5:1-4)	The judgment of God's Word would fall upon the Jews because they broke His commandments.	God's Punishment
The Woman in the basket (5:5-11)	The purging away of Israel's idolatry by her captivity in Babylon, the seat of idolatry.	God's Purification
Four chariots and horses (6:1-8)	These are God's providential agent who oversee the events of the nations to assure Israel's return to their land and reconstruction of the Temple.	God's Priest & King
APPLICATION:	We can be encouraged that the Lord will accomplish His purpose in the history of man, not by our might, but by His Spirit, "says the Lord" - (Zech. 4:6-7).	

II. SERVICE MESSAGES (Ch. 7-8)

OVERVIEW: A delegation from Bethel comes and ask about fasting (7:1-3), God rebukes them (vv. 4-7) and calls for commitment to justice (vv.8-14). God reassures His favor on Israel (8:1-17). Israel will know the joy in worship (vv. 18-23).

"Fasting" - in the Old Testament, fasting had a religious purpose. For those desperate in prayer (2 Sam. 12:16-22), or in deep sorrow (1 Sam 31:13). Fasting might indicate repentance as in Joel 2:12-15. It was also associated with the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29,31) as it commemorated the solemn character of the Holy Day. The practice of fasting meant going without food from sunrise to sunset.

The fasting in Zechariah 7-8 looks at the motives of fasting and God makes it very clear that He is more concerned that His people live righteously for Him and be Holy for Him, rather than with ceremonial or formal fasting.

MESSAGE 1: “Motives for True Religion” - (7:1-14)

THEME: God questions the motives of the fasting of His people and what He would desire is justice and kindness over formal religious practices.

EXPLANATION: During the fourth year of Darius’s reign, Bethel sent a delegation (Sharezer and Regemmelech- v.2). The question of fasting comes up comes up (v.3). Here is the Lord’s message to them:

- A. FALSE MOTIVES: (vv. 5-7)** - Zechariah delivered God’s message concerning fasting - more specifically, concerning what their motives were in practicing fasting these last seventy years - “*was it actually for Me that you fasted*” -(v.5). The point of the message was “were you really sorry for your sins - or just sorry you got caught.” Were you fasting for repentance sake - for the guilt of your sins that caused the exile? or was the grief self pity, a selfish expression of that previous generation that deserted God in the first place?
- B. TRUE MOTIVES: (vv. 8-10)** - The prophet then delivers a message that focuses on covenantal faithfulness and why the people’s fasting meant nothing to God.
 - 1. Here is what God desires from true religion - “*Dispense true justice, and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother and do not oppress the widow or orphan, stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another*” - (v. 9-10). - James comments on this that the practice of true religion is this, “*the pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*” - *Jms. 1:27*.
 - 2. Here is why God declined their religion - because of their unfaithfulness to Him, disobedience and unrighteousness that led to the Babylonian exile because the (pre-exilic forefathers) refused to follow the Lord (vv. 11-14).

APPLICATION: God would rather that we focus on a lifestyle marked by justice, mercy, and compassion, rather than formal spiritual practices that do nothing for us, others and the Lord.

MESSAGE 2: “Motive of Divine Love” - (8:1-23)

THEME: This message concerns God’s motivation of His Divine love in restoring Israel and to dwell in their midst.

EXPLANATION:

A. DIVINE MOTIVATION: (8:1-15) - The Lord expresses His “zeal” for Zion is great (v. 2). His zeal is so great it is filled with wrath. In this He promises that one day - on the future horizon that He will return to Zion and will dwell in her midst (v.3). Thus the city will be known as Truth and it’s mountain Holy. His love for this city will motivate Him to fill its streets with healthy, happy people (vv. 4-5). He will bring all the Jews who are dispersed around the world back home (vv. 7-8) and He will make the land productive once again (v. 12) and fulfill His Abrahamic covenant that His people will be a blessing to all nations (v. 13). This is God’s purpose for Jerusalem and Judah and instructs them not to be afraid (v. 14-15).

B. DIFFERENT MOTIVATION: (8:16-23) - Returning to the question of “fasting,” the Jews are told there will be a reversal of their mourning and position in the world when it comes to fasting. The people’s mourning will be turned into joy. Their low position will change and they will be a source of blessing to the Gentile nations, for all peoples will join them by coming to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

APPLICATION: It is so easy for many of God’s people to fall into some kind of formal religious practice, especially one that preys on the emotion. We have a great promise from the Lord that is motivated by His Divine love for His own. He is the One who turns our sorrow into everlasting Joy.

III. SAVIOR’S REIGN (Ch. 9-14)

OVERVIEW: This last section of Zechariah is greatly messianic. The prophet tells how this coming Messiah will be rejected by His own and about His reign over Israel and the world.

(NOTE: The content of this survey is taken from Norman Geisler’s “A Popular Survey of the Old Testament” - p. 296-7.)

A. REJECTED SAVIOR (9-11) - The First Coming of Christ.

One of the most frequently cited passages in the Bible is in this section - the prediction of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem of Psalm Sunday, just before His crucifixion (9:9 cf. Matt. 21:5; Mk. 11:1-10; Lk 19:28-40; Jn. 12:12-15). But He was rejected by His own and “became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slain for those who trafficked in the sheep” (11:7). Indeed he would be betrayed for “thirty shekels of silver” (11:13; cf. Matt. 26:15: 27:9).

B. REIGNING SAVIOR (12-14) - The Second Coming of Christ.

When Christ returns the Jews will “look on him whom they have pierced” (12:10 cf. Rev. 1:7). And “on that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (13:1). “Behold, a day of the Lord is coming...For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken...Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on the day so battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east” (14:1-4; cf. Acts 1:10,11). And “the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one...Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths” (14:9, 16). In short, after the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 16:12-21), Christ will judge the nations (cf. Matt. 25:31ff) and He will set up His messianic kingdom and reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6).

APPLICATION: This message is certainly good news of hope for those of us on this side of the cross and who await Jesus’ second coming, but it also must have been a source of great news for those Jews who have lived through the seventy years of captivity, sent back to rebuild and finish the temple, tired, worn out, poor, defeated and deflated. The glorious hope of the King stricken who becomes the King triumphant is still for all of God’s people a great reminder that one day the Lord will stand on His holy mountain when He returns and transforms the land until it at last is holy to the Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, Come quickly!!! Amen!

CONCLUSION: Lessons from Zechariah

1. Fasting and mourning are useless unless one’s heart is pouring itself out to God.
2. God desires from His people justice, kindness and compassion for those who can not care for themselves.
3. All God’s people must maintain a hopeful and optimistic outlook - knowing that God cannot fail.
4. The hope of the believer is in Jesus Christ and His righteousness. That hope will be fulfilled on the day the Lord will make all things new and holy unto Himself when He returns and reigns over the earth and His people.

LESSON ELEVEN: “Survey of the Minor Prophets: Haggai & Zechariah

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: Even though the promises in Obadiah are for Israel, what encourages or concerns you concerning the “Day of the Lord” that draws near for all the peoples on the earth?

-REFLECT-

2. HAGGAI: What was it that the Lord wanted His people to consider? What task remained unfinished? (Hag. 1:2-8)
3. HAGGAI: How did the people respond to God’s condemnation? What did He promise to them? (Hag. 1:12-14)
4. HAGGAI: How were the builders encouraged by the prophet’s message to continue to rebuild the temple? (Hag. 2:4-9).
5. ZECHARIAH: Zechariah exhorts to do what unto the Lord? (Zech. 1:2-4)
6. ZECHARIAH: By what means will God accomplish all things for His people? (Zech. 4:6).
7. ZECHARIAH: Tell in your own words what Jerusalem will be like in the future when Christ returns? (Zech. 14:16-21).

-REVEAL-

8. One of the issues in Zechariah centered around “fasting” (cf. Zech. 7), what motivates you to serve the Lord and are you motivated formal religious acts or acting out the righteousness of God by how you serve others?

SURVEY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

Lesson 12: “Malachi - God’s Messenger”

OVERVIEW: Malachi declares that the Lord loved His people (1:1-5) yet His priests despised Him (1:6-2:9) and His people dishonored Him (2:10-17). Thus, the Lord will purify them through judgment (3:1-5) and urged them to show repentance by their tithes (3:6-12), talk (vv. 13-15), and promises to bless those who fear Him (vv. 16-18). Malachi closes his message with a clear image of the Day of the Lord (4:1-4) and the promise of Elijah’s return (vv. 5-6).

THE BOOK, THE AUTHOR, THE PROPHET: Malachi, whose name means, “my messenger” or “missionary” is credited with the writing of this book. The dispute concerning authorship is over whether the name “Malachi” is the name of the prophet or just simply a messenger of God. The Hebrew treats the name as a proper name and so it is probably the name of the prophet. One Jewish tradition claim it was written by Nehemiah, but Malachi is traditionally supported as an individual person and prophet who presented God’s message to His people. It is supported by it’s claim, unity, and contents of the book as well as by the bulk of Jewish teaching.⁴⁰

THE DATE: Malachi was more likely written around 430-420 B.C. while Nehemiah was in Babylon. For instances, the temple was already completed in 516 B.C. (1:7, 10; 3:1). It was also during the time of Persian rule. The word “pehah” in (1:8) is Persian for “governor.” Being that there were sins to denounce, it could not have been during Nehemiah’s time, because those sins were corrected when he was present (Neh. 13). Then, finally, the dating probably took place when Nehemiah was back in Babylon following 433 B.C. (Neh. 13:6,7).

THE AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE: Malachi was one of the post-exilic minor prophet along with Haggai and Zechariah, and was the last prophet and writing chronologically in the Old Testament. The message was to the remnant a few generations after the Temple was built. The spiritual fervor of this generation was depleting among the priest and the people were backsliding. It definitely was a time of moral and social decline.

THE BACKGROUND: The first group of around 50,000 Jewish exiles returned from Babylon captivity under Sheshbazzar and Zeribbabel’s leadership in 537 B.C. Ezra 1-6 records their experiences. Haggai and Zechariah ministered to these returnees in 520 B.C. and urged them to rebuild the temple. Zechariah’s ministry may have continued beyond that year. The events recorded in the Book of Esther took place in Persia between 482 and 473 B.C. A second group of 5,000 Jews returned in 458 B.C. under Ezra’s leadership. Ezra sought to beautify the temple and institute reforms that would purify Israel’s worship (Ezra 7-10). Nehemiah led a third group of about 42,000 back in 444 B.C. and the events recorded in his book describe what happened between 445 and 420 B.C., including the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall.

⁴⁰ “A Popular Survey of the Old Testament” by Norman L. Geisler, p.297

About a 100 years had passed since the return of the Jews to the land. The city of Jerusalem and the second Temple had been built, but enthusiasm had worn off. At the time of Malachi, he “and his contemporaries were living in an uneventful waiting period, when God seemed to have forgotten His people enduring poverty and foreign domination in the little province of Judah.”⁴¹ Though the Temple had been built, nothing was exciting was taking place to indicate that God’s presence had returned to fill it with His glory as Ezekiel indicated would (Ezk. 43:4). Also, generations were dying without receiving the promises (cf Heb. 11:13) and many were losing faith.

CENTRAL TEACHING: Malachi rebuked Israel’s social and moral decay, thus warning the backsliding remnant.

CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING: Christ is presented as the messenger of the covenant (3:1), the refiner’s fire (3:2), and the sun of righteousness (4:2).

KEY WORDS: “Lord of hosts (24 x’s), “But yet you say” (7 x’s), Return/Repent (3 x’s),

CENTRAL VERSES: 1.2; 3.1,2; 4.2, 5

CENTRAL THEME: There is purging by God’s own hand for those whose life has backslidden. Malachi speaks to the religious decline, social debasement, moral defection, and to material dissipation, which the coming Messiah will purge by His refiner’s fire as His people prepare for His coming.

STRUCTURE: The structure of Malachi is mostly in the form of a question and answer format. There are at least seven rhetorical questions that Malachi disputes and then ends with a concluding message of hope and judgment.

We have not discussed this much, but Malachi is a perfect example of a Hebrew literary form called “chiasm.” A “chiasm” which is also called “chiasmus” is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order. The result is a “mirror” effect as the ideas are “reflected” back in a passage. Each idea is connected to its “reflection” by a repeated word, often in a related form. The term comes from the greek letter “chi” which looks like our letter “X”.

⁴¹ Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary, p. 211.

CHIASTIC OUTLINE:

- A. Superscription (1:1) Yahweh has a message for Israel.
- B. First Debate (1:2-5) God's love spares the righteous and condemns the wicked.
- C. Second Debate (1:6-2:9) God condemns the act of improper worship, withholding of offerings, promise of reversing blessing, and His greatness among the nations.
- D. Third Debate (2:10-16) The Lord is witness to marital fidelity and Judah is unfaithful.
- E. Fourth Debate (2:17-3:6) The Lord is witness to marital fidelity and Judah is unfaithful.
- C. Fifth Debate (3:7-12) God condemns the act of improper worship, withholding of offerings, promise of reversing blessing, and His greatness among the nations.
- B. Sixth Debate (3:13-4:3) God's love spares the righteous and condemns the wicked.
- A. Closing Challenge (4:4-6) Yahweh has a message for Israel.

STUDY OUTLINE:**I. Opening Statement: - (1.1)****II. First Question: Divine Love - (1.2-5)****III. Second Question: Defiled Worship - (1.6-2.9)**

- A. Priests' sins (1:6-14)
- B. Priests' warning (2:1-9)

IV. Third Question: Debased Society - (2.10-16)

- A. Mixed marriages (2:10-12)
- B. Divorces (2:13-16)

V. Fourth Question: Defective Morals - (2.17-3.6)**VI. Fifth Question: Defined Repentance - (3.7)****VII. Sixth Question: Defiant Response - (3.8-12)****VIII. Seventh Question: Displayed Attitudes - (3.13-4.3)**

- A. The Arrogant (3.13-15)
- B. The Humble (3.16-4.3)

IX. Concluding Message on Hope and Judgment - (4:4-6)

SURVEY OF THE TEXT:

The message of Malachi is not only important for the people of his day, but also for those of us who worship the Lord today. It is not a message for the pagan, but for the worshipper of God. In that, we cannot truly honor God in our worship and in our daily lives if our heart, soul, mind and strength is not fully dedicated to Him alone. Malachi questions his generation to evaluate their relationship with the Lord and then points to ways worshippers can honor the Lord on His terms, not ours.

- I. Opening Statement: (1.1)** - The opening statement is just simply stating that the Lord has a message (Oracle - “burden”) for the people of Israel. It is important to note that the prophet, “Malachi - ‘My Messenger’” is not the source of this message, God is. As with all the prophets, as we have learned at the beginning of our lessons, a prophet is God’s messenger, His spokesman on His behalf communicating a message from Yahweh (cf. 2.7; 2 Tim. 4.2; 2 Pet. 1.20-21). 47 of the 55 verses in Malachi are personal addresses of the Lord.

APPLICATION: The application in just this one verse speaks volumes to how we approach the word of God. This speaks to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. It should be the most basic tenet of the Christian faith. To say that Scripture is sufficient means that “the Bible is all we need to equip us for a life of faith and service. It provides clear demonstration of God’s intention to restore the broken relationship between Himself and humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior through the gift of faith. No other writings are necessary for this good news to be understood, nor are any other writings required to equip us for a life of faith.”⁴²

- II. First Question: Divine Love** - *“How hast Thou loved us?” (1.2-5)* - Malachi’s message begins with the Lord’s declaration of His Divine love for His people Israel. It begins very much like many of those gospel tracks that state, “God loves you and has a wonderful purpose for your life.” For Israel, this was true. God truly loved Israel with an everlasting love. This love is reflected and bounded to His covenant He made with Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3). It is a covenantal love and bond that can not be separated on God’s part. This speaks to God’s faithfulness to His own. Yet, His love is disputed by some for the prophet rhetorically asked, “how hast Thou loved us?” (v.2). This dispute is based on God’s love for Jacob and His hatred towards Esau (cf. Gen. 25:23). God’s love here for the Jewish people (Jacob) is seen by how He has restored them to their homeland. But, the Edomites (Esau) He continues to displace from their lands by the Nabateans, and the territory had become a wasteland inherited by jackals. This was God’s divine judgment on a people who had been hostile to God’s chosen people and merited punishment (cf. Ex. 17:8-16; Jud. 3:12-13; 1 Sam. 27:8; Obad). So the prophet tells them “your eyes will see this” and you will praise the Lord (v.5).

Some may raise the question concerning God’s choice to love Jacob and hate Esau. God chose to bless Jacob because Jacob valued the promises that God had given his forefathers, whereas Esau did not (cf. Gen. 27). Yet, still God’s choice is not determined by man’s

⁴² gotquestions.org / “What is the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture? / First paragraph.

decision, even though man is still responsible for their own decisions, God had already predetermined the twins and their descendants destinies (cf. Eph. 1.3-5, Rom. 8.28-30). Human beings have a measure of freedom, and it is genuine freedom. We know this to be true because a just God holds human beings responsible for their choices (cf. Gen. 3). Yet, how humans can be genuinely free, to the extent that we are free, and how God can still maintain control is probably impossible for anyone to fully comprehend. The bottom line is that God chose to bless Jacob to the extent that He did not choose to bless Esau.

APPLICATION: Today, if you challenge God saying, “How have you loved us?” Look to the cross. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” - (Rom. 5:8). Listen here, the Lord’s decision to bless us with His Divine love is not based on whether we would seek Him first, for none of us sought the Lord (cf. Roms. 3:10-18), it really is the Lord who pursued and first loved us (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-19), more specifically, (v.19). Therefore, there may be times, like the people in Malachi’s time that you may question whether God loves you. Just grasp on to the truth and praise the Lord Who can never stop loving those He calls His own. Those whom He demonstrated His own love for on the cross, a love that will never let go. Our response is to see how the Lord has loved you and praise and magnify Him for the work He has done in your life (cf. v. 5).

III. Second Question: Defiled Worship - *“How have we despised Thy name?” (1.6-2.9)* - As the first section ends with a statement of God’s greatness, this second statement opens with a question about why Israel’s priests did not honor the Lord.

A. Priests’ sins (1:6-14) - Malachi confronts the priests for failing to honor the Lord. Their response was a cynical and with a question of denial. “Who us? How have we despised the Lord? (cf. v. 6). Therefore, the prophet reveals three ways they have despised the Lord.

1. They disrespected the altar of God by placing defiled food on it (v. 7). Leviticus 1-6 describes clearly how sacrifices were to be offered. Their lack of careful observance of God’s law show disrespect for God.
2. They disrespected the sacrificial offering of God by presenting crippled animals for sacrifice (vv. 8-9, 13-14).
3. They disrespected the worship of God by calling it a tiresome burden (v. 13). The heart was truly not into serving the Lord in worship. They lost all sense of God’s presence and were merely going through the motions of worship.

B. Priests’ warning (2:1-9) - Now Malachi presents a warning of judgment from the Lord to the priests. “If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart...I will send the curse upon you” (vv. 1-2). The defilement of worship of the priests and any curse by God on them was bound to affect the people of Israel too. This is because the priests have caused many to stumble (v.8). A priesthood that failed in its mission of serving God and instructing the people would surely be punished.

APPLICATION: When believers today being God's priest (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9) have fallen in the way of the priests in Malachi's day, we need to confess now and return to the Lord. We need to focus again on God's love for us in Christ and ask the Lord to fan the flame. We need to return to our first love and devotion to the Lord (cf. Jer. 2:2; Rev. 2:4-5).

IV. Third Question: Debased Society - "For what reason?" (2.10-16) - This next section the Lord addresses the entire nation of Israel. God's concern here is the people's indifference towards God's will. They were blaming their social and economic troubles on the Lord's supposed injustice and indifference to them (2.17).

- A. Mixed Marriages: (vv. 10-13)** They were being unfaithful towards one another, especially their wives, whom the husbands were apparently abandoning for foreign women. These practices in life profaned the temple and the Mosaic Covenant (2.10b-15a). The Lord's exhortation to them was to stop their treachery toward one another (2.15b-16).
- B. Divorces: (vv. 14-16)** On this subject we learn Lord's position on divorce. "For I hate divorce" (v.16). The emphasis here is love for and relationship with people. The Israelites were not to break their marriage covenants, because a person who divorces his mate to marry an unbeliever brings disgrace upon himself. Divorce constitutes covenant unfaithfulness, breaking a covenant entered into the God Himself witnessed (v.14). Thus, it becomes an ungodly thing to do since Yahweh is a covenant-keeping God. He keeps His promises. For one to divorce his or her spouse is to do something that God Himself does not do. It is considered ungodly by God's standard and a practice He hates. God's warning - "let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth" (v. 15).

APPLICATION: Divorce has come up once before in Hosea. Even though the Bible gives limited grounds for divorce in the case of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) and abandonment (1 Cor. 7:15) by an unbeliever, it is still not the course of action one is encouraged to take. Grounds for divorce is an opportunity for reconciliation. The message of Hosea and the prophets too is that the Lord had grounds for divorcing Himself from the people of Israel He chose. A people who broke their covenant relationship with God by following after foreign gods. Yet, the Lord, being the covenant-keeping God chose to reconcile Himself with His people. We see the Lord in the New Testament also being a reconciling God, who as Paul writes, speaking of Christ, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross.." (Col. 1:19-20). For one can not practice the two greatest commandments and seek divorce at the same time. For if one truly loves the Lord with all their heart, they would truly love their spouse regardless the situation. If one continues to pursue divorce without Biblical grounds to do so, regardlessly, showing themselves not to be a lover God, thus, showing themselves one to be a pagan and unsaved.

If this has been your course, seek forgiveness from the Lord and confess your sin to Him and seek forgiveness from your spouse and if at all possible, seek to reconcile the marriage.

V. Fourth Question: Defective Morals - *“How have we wearied Him?”* - (2.17-3.6) -

Malachi recorded the complaints by the people. His response is that all your words “Have wearied the Lord” (v. 17). Malachi tells the people that the Lord is fed up just as much as they are. In response to Malachi’s claim, they responded hypocritically because they believed that the Lord could never become weary (Isa. 40:28). That may be true, yet the Lord expresses being annoyed by the people complaints. God was not weary from the complaints, He was tired of the Israelites speaking as they did.

What was it that the Lord was tired of? He was tired that they were saying that He (God) delighted in them, all the while saying that “everyone who” did “evil” was acceptable to Him. They had become so calloused in their conscience that they lost their perspective for right and wrong and assumed that because God did not intervene, He therefore approved of their sin. This challenged God’s justice. If they were breaking His law and He was just, He surely must punish them. Their return to the land indicated to them that He was blessing them, and He promised to bless the godly in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:1-14). Thus, the Lord promises to motivate them, in that if the people failed to change in their dealing with one another, unpleasant things were about to happen. (3.2).

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger” (3.1) - This is God’s answer to one of their questions, *“Where is this God of justice?”* (2.17). Malachi warns them that the One you desire is going to come. But, when He comes, He will be like a “purifier” who will clear the way and who will be able to “endure the day of His coming?” (3.2). When the Lord comes He will first “purify” the sons of Levi (the priesthood) like a refiners fire does with gold and silver, so will the Lord burn up the impurities of the priests, and as a laundryman’s soap, He will wash them clean (3.2-3). It will be only then that the sacrifices and offerings unto the Lord will be acceptable (v.4). Then the Lord will draw near and quickly judge His people (v. 5). All those who practice the types of sin forbidden: sorcery, adultery, lying, oppression of employees, widows, and orphans, mistreatment of aliens, even all forms of irreverence for, and unbelief in Him. This was His answer to their claim that He was unjust (2.17).

APPLICATION: We too look forward to the day of the Lord’s coming (second coming), but are we ready? We can not do anything to speed up the coming of the Lord, but the one thing we can do is prepare ourselves for His appearance. One thing we can be certain about, the Lord will come one day - do not be a target of His judgment delight in the day as one who delights fully in the Lord with no regrets.

VI. Fifth Question: Defined Repentance - *“How shall we return?”* - (3.7) - From since Israel’s

early history, the people have always been a stubborn and obstinate people. The Lord prescribed for them to walk in His covenant, but they have disobeyed and now the Lord calls on them to return to Him with the promise that if they did, He would return to them (Deut. 4.30-31; 30.1-10).

How are they to return? The prophet doesn’t answer this question, he only tells them why they need to return to the Lord. Perhaps the reason Malachi doesn’t answer their question is because their interest was not in repentance but a self-serving declaration of innocence. In

effect they are saying, “What need do we have to return since we never turned away to begin with?

Yet, the Lord promises that if they would just simply return to Him, He would return to them.

APPLICATION: When we are confronted with our sins today, do we serve ourselves and make excuses? We know our sin, we just simply need to return to the Lord and by doing so, He promises to return to us. James writes to a different generation of Jews in the New Testament by exhorting them to: “*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you*” (Jms. 4:8). But in doing so, one must “submit to God and resist the devil” (Jms. 4:7).

VII.Sixth Question: Defiant Response - “*How have we robbed Thee?*” - (3.8-12) - Malachi introduces a blunt question “Will a man rob God?” “Stealing means not only taking what is not yours, but keeping back for yourself what belongs to someone else.”⁴³ Their response defiantly, “What? How could you accuse us of such thing?” Malachi points out that they are condemned by God with a curse as a whole nation (v.9) because they were abusing His generosity and were “robbing” God.

So, Malachi instructs them that they were to “bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house,” - (v.10). In the temple there were special rooms devoted to storing the gifts the Israelites brought (cf. 1 Ki. 7.51; Neh. 10.38; 13.12). The food in the storehouse was for the priests and for the Lord Himself. Thus, the Lord through His messenger urged the people to “test” the Lord by doing this.

God’s promise was to test their obedience to Him. By bringing the full tithe the Law required would test His faithfulness to His promise.

Tithing in the Old Testament by the patriarchs preceded the Mosaic Covenant (Gen. 14:20; 28:22). They gave 10 percent. No percentage is given in the New Testament to Christians. The Spirit and Heart of giving in the New Testament is actually for one to give their all unto the Lord. This giving marks this age of grace, the Lord leaves the amount we give back to Him unspecified and leaves it up to us. Those who are grateful for the Lord’s grace in their lives are simply instructed to be generous and to give joyously, not knowing what the right or left hand is doing. One example of giving beyond what is required by 10 percent is look at the in-gathering in Acts 2:37-47 how they all had everything in common and no one was in need.

APPLICATION: The results of generous giving unto the Lord is not to be blessed with more things, but being a good steward with what the Lord has given you and the blessing of helping others. It’s the blessing that the kingdom of God is expanding, the resource for the gospel to be preached abroad globally, the ability to care for those who can not care for themselves, its the whole body of Christ having all things in common and not being in need, being together with sincere hearts, praising God as He adds daily those who are being saved.

⁴³ Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Malachi 3:8, Olive Tree Bible Study

VIII. Seventh Question: Displayed Arrogance - *“What have we spoken against Thee?”* - (3.13-4.3) - The Lord now identifies the sinful attitude that lay behind the people’s failure to tithe. This complaint shows the hardness of the people’s hearts.

A. *The Arrogant (3.13-15)* - *“You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God’* (v.14). - The people have spoken arrogantly against the Lord and wanted proof, so the Lord gives them proof. The Lord points out that they have complained that serving Him and obeying Him did not benefit them (v.14). Their sin here is a lack of trust in God. To them, God is represented as being unfair and the keeping of His law seemed like a useless exercise.

B. *The Humble (3.16-17)* - So the Lord looks to the faithful. Malachi pictures God as listening to those who fear Him. These faithful ones were speaking to one another (perhaps like those in the in-gather of Acts 2), what they were saying we do not know, but the Lord knows and that what’s important. He not only knows but remembered them in His book. This idea of God’s keeping written records appears frequently in Scripture (Ex. 32.32; Ps. 69.28; Isa. 4.3, Dan. 12.1; etc). Perhaps its the expression written in Isaiah 49:16: *“Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”*

C. *The outcome (3.18-4.3)* - *“For behold, the day is coming”* (4.1) - In the end, God’s people will be His very own. He will spare them and will correct all wrongs and punish all wickedness. This is speaking in term of the end time (eschatological) that looms very large in the Old Testament prophets. It will be apparent that there will be a distinction between those who serve God and those who do not. The day of the Lord is to come like a “burning furnace” and all evil doers and the arrogant will burn up like the chaff. Those who fear His name, “the Sun of Righteousness” will rise with “healing in tis wings” (v. 2). Obviously this is a reference to Christ and those who trust in Him alone for salvation and who will be kept safe in the wrath to come on that judgment day and will rise up with Christ and will be with Him forever (1 Thes. 4.13-17; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 19-21).

APPLICATION: Does it truly pay to serve God? Our motivation to serve the Lord should not be based on what one gets out of it. If you attend church to get something, you come with wrong motives. If you serve the Lord to get something, you serve with wrong motives. Worshipping and serving God is an act of sacrificial worship. It is our reasonable act of service. We are in a since, His servants, slaves that have been bought with a price from sin and death to serve a new master of grace and peace. Romans 12.1-2 states: *“...present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable.”*

There is no place for arrogance in the kingdom of God, only sincere hearts that fear the Lord and desire what is acceptable to Him as we yield and submit ourselves to the One who saved us by His grace.

IX. Concluding Message on Hope and Judgment (4.4-4.6) - This short segment will be the final closing words of the prophets and the Old Testament. After this, God will close the Old Testament and it will be 400 hundred years before He will speak again.

- A. *Remember the Law: (v. 4)*** - Like Moses' closing words before his death, Malachi's final words are a command for the people of Israel to remember the Law and to be on the alert and look for Elijah to come before that great and terrible day of the Lord. Moses spoke 14 exhortations to remember the Law that God had given them. Why the reminder concerning the Law? Because Israel had forgotten and disregarded God's Law. The Pentateuch was still God's Word to His people.
- B. *Promise from God: (vv. 5-6)*** - To prepare the people for the great day of judgment, the Lord promises that before that day He will send Elijah back. Some interpreted that John the Baptist was Elijah, but the angel of the Lord told the Baptist's parents that he would minister in the power and spirit of Elijah (Lk. 1.17). What John the Baptist did for Jesus at His first coming, preparing the hearts of people to receive Him, the latter-day Elijah will do for Him at His second coming. This is probably referring to the two witnesses in revelation (Rev. 11:1-13). These men will do miracles as Elijah and Elisha did. This forerunner that Malachi mentions will cause many Jews to believe in the Messiah as many did in Elijah's day. They will unite over belief in Him.

APPLICATION: These final words serve simply to remind us the importance the TRUTH of God's Word and how God VALUES His Word. The Word of God must be first and foremost in the heart of the believer. As stated in the beginning, it must be taken as being sufficient for all applications of our lives. God's word is breathed by God Himself (2 Tim. 3.16). The Psalm writer tells us that: *"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes"* - Psalm 19:7-8

Do not underestimate the power of the Word of God and His promises and His judgment. His Word is perfect, sure, right, pure. Thus says the Word of God.

LESSON TWELVE: "Survey of the Minor Prophets: Malachi

Study Questions

-REVIEW-

1. In review of the last session: In studying Haggai and Zechariah, what confidence do you have in God that all things and times are in His hands?

-REFLECT-

2. What promise, the evidence, and response to the declaration of God's love for His people? (Mal. 1:2-5)
3. What was the sin of the priests against God? (Mal. 1:6-2:9)
4. What was the sin of the nation of Israel? (Mal. 2:10-16)
5. What is God's promise to correct wickedness in Israel? How will God respond to His people and what will He be to the wicked? (Mal. 3:1-7)
6. How were the people robbing God and what was their general attitude towards Him? (Mal. 3:8-15)

-REVEAL-

7. Do you fear the Lord? Are you ready for His return? (Mal. 3:16-4.6)