



Minor Prophets 2
Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk,
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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MICAH

NAME: Micah

MEANING: Who is like Jehovah?

DATE: 725 B.C.

AUDIENCE: Judah and Israel

THEME: Punishment of Israel and Judah

SPECIAL NOTE: Birth place of Jesus foretold (5:2)

OUTLINE:

- I. Judgment.....Ch 1-3
- II. Comfort.....Ch 4-5
- III. The Way of Salvation.....Ch 6-7

LESSONS:

Pretensions of piety cannot atone for a lack of true righteousness in the heart.

Unscrupulous use of power, even though within the bounds of law, hurts God.

Courage comes to anyone who senses the presence of God in his life.

God's requirements are reasonable, His demands unchangeable and His love is tender and changeless.

A believer's life must match his confession.

Right doctrine and true worship without a virtuous life are empty.

MICAH INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

“Micah” means “Who is like Jehovah?” Although the words are not the same, the idea comes across in Micah 7:18. As he is concluding his book he says, “Who is a God like thee...” So he ends this book with a message that is similar to what his name means. That is really what the whole book of Micah is about; “Who is there that is truly like Jehovah?”

II. DATE.

735-700 B.C.

III. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK.

A. To outline God’s complaints against His people.

Exactly what God has against them. What they have been doing that is against His laws.

B. To tell them what He intends to do about their corruption.

IV. BACKGROUND.

A. Micah was God’s “Prophet of the Poor.” He was contemporary with Isaiah and prophesied during the reign of 3 kings of Judah; Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. His prophecies are directed to both the northern and southern kingdoms.

B. Social conditions:

1. Corrupt in administration of justice (2:2; 3:2).
2. Greed in religious leaders (3:9-11).
3. Avariciousness and cruelty of the people (2:8-9).

C. Religious conditions:

1. False prophets (2:11).

2. Soothsaying, witchcraft, superstition and idolatry (7:2,4-6).

D. Historical And Political Conditions:

1. The golden age of prophecy and the black age of Judah. It was a period of turmoil, strife, change and growth.
2. In 745 B.C. Tiglath Pileaser III began his conquest of the West. In 738 B.C. his army was in Syria and at the gates of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
3. Tired of Assyria's taxes, Israel and Syria pled with for Egypt to help. Jotham and Ahaz refuse to join with them. Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the king of Israel, go to war with Ahaz. They defeat him and sack the city of Jerusalem.
4. Ahaz calls for help from Tiglath Pileaser who defeats both of the kings. Ahaz is forced to go to Damascus and pay allegiance to Assyria and accept his place as puppet king.
5. Sargon, the new king of Assyria, came upon the West in 711 B.C. and afflicted terrible judgment upon nearly all of Philistia and Judah. Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem were spared.
6. At the death of Sargon in 705 B.C. Sennacherib came into power in Assyria. Egypt, Phoenecia, Philistia, Judah and some of the smaller kingdoms revolt. Sennacherib defeated every rebel and only the direct intervention of God saved Hezekiah and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19).
7. These were great and terrible times. God was leading his followers and working out his own purposes in the world.

V. MISCELLANEOUS.

A. The Sins of the Times Enumerated by Micah:

1. Oppression of the poor (2:2,8-9; 3:1-4).
2. Unscrupulous use of power (2:1ff; 3:10).
3. Lack of integrity (6:12; 7:2-6).
4. Reckless scorn of religion and careless about religion and openly mock those who are religious (3:5-8; 5:12-14).

5. False prophets (3:5,7,9-11).
 6. Greedy corruption in the church and state (3:8-12).
- B. Chapter Four - God's Plan for Judah:
1. Anguish.
 2. Suffering.
 3. Punishment.
 4. Exile.
 5. Return.
 6. A new kingdom of redeemed souls.
 7. The evangelization of the nations.
- C. Micah's Quartet of Evil Doers:
1. Land-grabbers (2:1,2,9; 7:5-7).
 2. Rulers (3:1-4; 7:3).
 3. False prophets (3:5,11).
 4. Priests (3:11).
- D. Micah's Great Texts:
1. Destruction of Jerusalem (3:12 cf. Jer 26:18).
 2. Prophecy of the Birthplace of the Messiah (5:2).
 3. Three major requirements of God's religion (6:8).
- E. Micah's Picture of God:
1. He is the judge (1:3,6; 3:12).
 2. He is the God of Ethical Righteousness (6:8; 2:1-2; 3:2-3,10-11; 7:2).

3. He is the God who loves peace (4:3; 5:5).
4. He is the God of hope and promise (7:7, 18-20).

MICAH EXPOSITION

CHAPTER ONE

- 1:1.** “Micah of Moresheth” means he is from a place called Moresheth which is 25 miles SW of Jerusalem. The names of “Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah” show us that Micah began his ministry some time right after Isaiah began his.

Micah is exactly opposite of Hosea. His prophecies are to Judah, but they include Samaria or Israel. Hosea’s was to Israel, but they included Judah. The fact that Hosea and Micah spoke to both Israel and Judah shows that God still considered both to be His people and still viewed them as His chosen race.

“Which he saw concerning.” A vision; an eyewitness account of history in advance.

- 1:2.** Micah begins with one of our key words, “Hear.” Immediately Micah, like Isaiah and Hosea, is dealing with God’s universal power.

“And let the Lord God be a witness against you” is one of the purposes of Micah. God is going to tell the people what it is they have done that He is displeased with. God is going to give them a lesson He wants them to learn.

There are three witnesses against Judah and Israel:

- a. “O peoples, all of you” - the Jews.
- b. “O earth” - Gentiles.
- c. “the Lord God” - Jehovah.

“The Lord from His holy temple” is speaking about heaven where judgment originates. The fact that it is holy causes us to expect it to be a rather harsh judgment. God is surrounded with holiness and lives in a holy place. His judgment is going to be against an unholy people.

- 1:3.** The statement “He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth” is like our saying, “He will awaken the sleeping giant.” He is coming forth from His place. Their wickedness has finally come to the point where God can tolerate it no longer.

“He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth” also means that God’s throne is the highest place. This is a rebuke aimed at Baal. God is say-

ing, “You go to these high places to worship a god, but My throne is higher than the highest place on the earth” (cf. Deut 12:11-14; Amos 4:13).

1:4. Apocalyptic terminology is used to illustrate the terribleness of God’s judgment. When He comes everything is just going to melt before Him like wax before a fire. Those in high places and those in low places will feel the heat of God’s wrath.

1:5. The first two lines of this verse say it all. God is going to come to punish, not to reward. Why? Because of their sins.

“The high place of Judah” refers to the shrines and high worship places for idols. Samaria was the capital of Israel and Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, so they are responsible for the sins of the people. They are responsible for the direction of the nation.

1:6. “Samaria” was formally a mountain fortress (Amos 6:1). But that fortress is going to become “a heap of ruins in the open country.”

“Planting places for a vineyard.” It is going to be cleared out like an area is cleared, plowed and leveled and made ready for planting.

“Lay bare her foundations” - buildings destroyed down to and including the foundations.

1:7. “All of her idols will be smashed.” Their hope was based on these gods, but when all of the idols are smashed whatever effectiveness the people believed they had will be destroyed.

“All of her earnings will be burned with fire”, earnings which she thought she was getting from Baal. Whenever they would receive a bountiful crop they credited Baal (cf. Hos 2:5).

“And to the earnings of a harlot they will return.” God looked upon their idolatry as “spiritual harlotry.” The same as in Hosea. Gifts given in spiritual adultery are the “hire of a harlot.” They will be captured, given to another false god and will again be the “hire of a harlot.”

1:8. “I must go barefoot and naked.” The Hebrew word for naked does not mean nude, totally without clothes. It means stripped of ordinary clothes.” “You are going to have to wear ‘rags’ is the idea.” They will wear “mourning clothes,” mourning and lamenting because of the terrible judgment of God.

"I must make a lament like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches." Jackals and ostriches made sounds familiar to these people. Apparently they were sounds similar to what a person might make when wailing and mourning.

- 1:9.** "For her wound is incurable." Her sin is so deeply entrenched she has gone beyond any hope of healing of redemption.

"Even to Jerusalem." Judah is going to receive this judgment too. Sin has "filtered" down into their society.

NOTE: Verses 10-12 list five towns north of Jerusalem and verses 13-15 list five towns south of Jerusalem. Therefore this equals all of Judah.

- 1:10-16.** These verses are one of the most unique sections in all of the Minor Prophets. It is a mournful dirge or song. Micah pictures the desolation with a series of "puns."

- 1:10.** "Tell it not in Gath (tell-town)." "Tell it not in tell-town." "At Beth-leaphrah (house of dust). "Roll yourself in the dust." "At the house of dust roll yourself *in* the dust."

"Tell it." Judah is to lose her king again (cf. 2 Sam 1:19-20).

- 1:11.** "Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir (pleasantness) in shameful nakedness."

"The inhabitant of Zaanan (going out) does not escape." "The inhabitant of 'going out' does not go out." "The lamentation of Bethazel (house of removal): He will take from you its support." "The lamentation of the 'house of removal:' He will take from you its support."

"He will take from you its support" = going into captivity.

NOTE: Micah does this all the way through this section.

- 1:13.** "Because in you were found the rebellious acts of Israel." Here is the key to this indictment. The people were being examined by the court and found guilty of "the rebellious acts of Israel."

"Lachish - she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion." The idolatry of Israel entered Judah first at Lachish.

"Harness the chariot to the team of horses." Flee!

1:14. “You will give parting gifts on behalf of Moresheth Gath.” Moresheth means “possession.” Literally, what this means is, “You will give parting gifts on behalf of the possession of Gath.”

“The houses of Achzib (false springs),” a place where one expects to find water, but does not. “The houses of Achzib will become a deception (in other words, it will be a disappointing brook) to the kings of Israel.” A dismal gift to one who is never to return.

1:15. “The one who takes possession (heir - K.J.V.)” refers to the new conqueror, Sargon king of Assyria.

“O inhabitant of Mareshah.” Mareshah means “possession.”

“The glory of Israel will enter Adullam.” Adullam is a cave, a wild beast cave.

1:16. “For they (your children) will go from you into exile.” You do not have any future when your children are being carried off into captivity. Micah is speaking as if the people have already gone into captivity.

CHAPTER TWO

NOTE: Chapter one is judgment pronounced. Chapter two tells why.

2:1. “Woe” is a word that reflects sorrow and affliction. The idea here is, “May sorrow and affliction be upon those who scheme iniquity.”

“Who work out evil on their beds!” These people are so entrenched in wickedness they cannot even go to sleep at night without thinking of schemes of oppression, and getting the people to sin. It is all planned out.

“They do it.” It is not just dreaming, it is laying plans and when the morning comes those plans are carried out. The last line tells you why.

“For it is in the power of their hands.” They do it because they have the power to do it. This is corruption of power! Their hand is their god, they know no higher power.

2:2. “They rob a man and his house.” Everything a man has is taken away. The people are so entrenched in oppression they do not even take time to see whom they are oppressing. They do not care as long as they get what they want.

2:3. “Therefore, thus says the Lord.” God is not going to tolerate the oppression any longer. The time has come when these individuals must answer for their actions.

God's yoke is heavy and will bend them low. They cannot escape, and will not escape!

"I am planning against this family." A family was forced to move and lose all it had. Now the one driving them away will be punished.

The "evil time" is when the Assyrians come. When they come there will be no one able to walk proudly because the Assyrians are going to completely humiliate them.

- 2:4.** "On that day they (the Assyrians) will take up against you a taunt." This is a "taunt" the Assyrians are going to place in the mouths of the Israelites! The captors will make up poems and songs about the Jews.

The Assyrians know the thinking of the Israelites so well. They have seen the Israelites oppress others, but when the "tables are turned" the Israelites cannot believe God would give their fields to the apostate. What a mockery they are making of the entire religious system, and what pitiful representatives they are of God.

- 2:5.** "Therefore, you (the Israelites who were oppressors) will have no one stretching a measuring line for you by lot in the assembly of the Lord." This is talking about an inheritance. You stretch a measuring line to see exactly how large the inheritance is. But there is no inheritance to measure.

The casting of lots was the way the land was divided by Joshua. But what has happened is the rich have come and taken all that away. Now nothing is going to be left. They shall no longer have any lot or portion in God's congregation.

- 2:6.** "So they speak out." The wealthy do not want to hear prophets speaking.

"If they do not speak out . . . reproaches will not be turned back." Preaching is what turns people from evil. Preaching has the potential of removing God's judgment. It is vital for the survival of the nation that the preachers preach truth and the prophets prophesy God's words (cf. Deut 32:8-9).

- 2:7.** "Is the Spirit of the Lord impatient?" They were accusing God of impatience. How long was it from the time of the divided kingdom until Assyria finally came and took Israel captive? 200 years! God had tolerated the abominations of Israel for 200 years! How many of those 200 years was Israel righteous? None! How could they say that God was impatient?!

"Do not My words do good?" God really *wants* to bless them, but who can be found who is "walking uprightly?" Who is righteous?

2:8. “Recently My people have arisen as an enemy” - as an enemy of God. “My people have become My enemies” is the idea.

“You strip the robe off a fellow Israelite.” Micah speaks often of “stripping” or “tearing” things from kinsmen (cf. 3:2-3; 7:2-3).

It seems this has a literal idea. They are taking off the robe or the garment, but that is not enough. Now they have to start peeling the skin off, too. He emphasizes that the one whom you are oppressing is a fellow Israelite, a brother. The one you ought to be caring for, you are oppressing.

“From those returned from war.” One returning from war is ready for peace. They wanted to be free from conflict but find attackers among their own people. They were fighting for their country, but then when they come back home they find their countrymen ready to attack them. They would attack soldiers coming back from war for their spoils.

2:9. “From her children you take My splendor forever.” The oppressors did not realize they were destroying their own nation by taking away the family unit. When the family unit is destroyed, the nation is destroyed. By doing this they are taking away the glory God wanted to receive from His people. God wanted a strong nation.

NOTE: The more preachers can do to strengthen the home, the better the church and the nation is going to be.

“Women” = widows.

“Her children” = orphans.

2:10. Compare Leviticus 18:24-36.

2:11. “He would be spokesman to this people.” Here is a person who speaks of wine and liquor, and the people listen. The prophet of God should be the person the people listen to (cf. 2 Tim 4:3).

2:12. Micah concludes the chapter with a brief message of hope. Even with all of the negatives and wickedness that was entrenched among the people he does provide some words of hope.

“The remnant.” This is the first time we have this key word.

“They will be noisy with men.” Noisy because they have come home. Because good times have arrived again. God is going to send His people into exile, but then He is going to bring them back. “I will gather, I will assemble them.”

- 2:13.** “The breaker goes up before them.” Is “the breaker” the Messiah that is going to break down the “wall” of sin? Or is he talking about one of the leaders of the exile such as, Zerubbabel, Ezra or Nehemiah? Probably one of the leaders of the return. And it may have its ultimate meaning in the Messiah.

“And the Lord at their head.” This is the reason why they interpret “the breaker” as being the Messiah. Micah cannot be accused of preaching judgment and doom here. He does offer some words of hope and a promise for the future.

CHAPTER THREE

- 3:1.** “Hear” - a key word. “Hear now, heads of Jacob.” Micah addresses the rulers.

“Is it not for you to know justice?” It was their responsibility to *know and practice* justice. But this was not the way it was (cf. v. 9).

- 3:2.** “You who hate good and love evil.” This summarizes it all.

“Who tear off their skin from them (the poor) and their flesh from their bones.” This is a figure of speech saying that the rulers have taken all the people had. These rulers were as bad as cannibals in the way they were acting (cf. Eccl 22:23-31).

- 3:3.** These are some of the most graphic descriptions of the wickedness and oppressions to be found anywhere in the scriptures. They had no morality at all. Whatever they wanted they were going to take until they had everything (cf. Zeph 3:1-5).

- 3:4.** “Then they will cry out to the Lord.” As always in the scriptures their positions are going to be reversed.

“Hide His face” = withdraw His mercy.

“Because they have practiced evil deeds.” When the Assyrians come with their oppressions, they will cry out to the Lord, but God is not going to hear them. As they have sown, they are going to reap. They have destroyed the helpless without mercy, so they are going to be destroyed without mercy. This is what Moses prophesied would take place (cf. Deut 31:17).

- 3:5.** Now he proceeds from the rulers to the false prophets. “Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets.” The prophets also contributed to the oppression of the poor; the very people whom you would have thought would have been preaching *against* the rulers!

“They cry, ‘Peace.’” As long as the people are supplying an abundance of material goods to the prophets, they have a good message of “peace” to prophesy.

“They declare holy war.” When the prophets are not properly compensated they use their “prophetic powers” to pronounce God’s wrath upon the people. They are no more God’s spokesman than somebody who is a prophet of Baal.

- 3:6.** “Therefore it will be night for you - without vision”, night so dark it is impossible to see anything.

“Without divination.” This word is always used to describe ungodly prophetic activity. It is never used, in the Bible, to represent true prophecy. The idea is that the true prophets will be gone and even the false prophets will be gone. God is going to completely remove any source that they may have which will provide them with a message from the gods.

“And the day will become dark over them.” When they desire a vision the most, it will be “night” to them. Complete darkness will surround them. When they want desperately to see truth and “the light,” then they are in the “blackness of night.”

- 3:7.** “The seers will be ashamed.” Seer is another word for “prophet” (1 Sam 9:9).

“They will all cover their mouths.” This was action done by a leper to show that he was unclean (Lev 13:45). It was also an action done to indicate mourning (Ezek 24:17).

“Because there is no answer from God.” This brings us back to v. 4 where he says, “He will not answer them . . . He will hide His face from them at that time.” There is not going to be any answer from God. He has hidden His face from them. Isaiah 59:1-2 prophesies the same thing. He says, “Your sin has separated you from you and your God and has hid His face from you.” Isaiah and Micah are both developing this idea of “being away from God’s face.” Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10, “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”

- 3:8.** “I am filled with power - with the Spirit of the Lord.” God is the One who fills the prophets with His Spirit to continue to preach.

“I am.” Emphatic - “I, I am!”

“To make known to Jacob his rebellious act.” This is the purpose of preaching. To convict people of sin, to get them to turn their lives to God.

NOTE: Micah is separating himself from the false prophets by saying, “God refuses to reveal truth to those who refuse to see and hear, those that are not trying to live their lives righteously. The true prophets, however, receive true revelation.”

- 3:9.** This refers to the rulers as they were most directly responsible for the people’s downfall. He moves just outside the city, then he leaves the city altogether, slowly but surely illustrating that God is “leaving town.” He is “pulling” out of the city altogether, then it is going to be destroyed. Also remember that in A.D. 70 when the Romans came down and destroyed Jerusalem, they also destroyed the temple. When they did that, the Sanhedrin no longer existed because the Sanhedrin was so closely tied to the temple. When there was no more temple, there was no more Sanhedrin, no more Sadducees (who made up most of the Sanhedrin).

“And twist everything that is straight” or “pervert all equity “ (K.J.V.). Literally “bend all that is straight.”

- 3:10.** Compare Habakkuk 2:12.
- 3:11.** Compare Ecclesiastes 10:19.
- 3:12.** They listen to Micah, see Jeremiah 26:16-19.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 4:1.** Verses 1-3 are the same as Isaiah 2:1-4.
- 4:2.** “That we may walk.” “Walk” is a key word.

“Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” We concluded the last chapter by saying Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. Now Micah gives a prophecy of prosperity and “good times.” Whereas in chapter three the text was dominated by the injustice of the people, now he talks about a Law that is “going forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” In opposition to the injustice there is going to be an established law. It is going to be active and participating in the everyday affairs of life (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; Heb 12:28; Lk 24:47).

- 4:3.** “Never again will they train for war.” The kingdom is not going to be established by carnal weapons. People have always thought force is the way to build kingdoms.

“He will judge” (cf. 1 Cor 6:1-3).

“Nation will not” (cf. Jn 18:36).

This prophecy is not repeated in the New Testament although almost every commentator will clearly identify this as Messianic prophecy. Since it was not clearly identified by a New Testament writer as prophetic, then we ought to be careful about doing it.

“It will come about in the last days” (v. 1). Normally, when you see this phrase, look for a Messianic prophecy of some kind (“in the last days”) because it is usually talking about the Messianic Age or the Last Dispensation. If it is Messianic it is saying, “The establishment of the church is going to be done, not with swords, but with peace. And it is going to be established and based upon law.” We know the word spread and went from Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world.

4:4. “And each of them will sit under his vine.” This describes good times. “And under his fig tree.” This is peace, security and safety.

4:5. This contains two more occurrences of the key word “walk.”

“Each in the name of his god.” While all the pagan nations walk in the strength of their gods, those who come to the mountain of Jehovah will walk in His strength (cf. Heb 12:20-24,28; Jn 10:27-29).

4:6. “In that day” - the same period as in verse 1.

“I will assemble the lame.” Perhaps these are the ones who are mentioned in 2:12; those who have been oppressed, but now are among God’s remnant.

4:7. “And the outcasts a strong nation.” Those who were cast into captivity are going to be brought back and made into a strong nation. That does not seem like the type of people you would want to build a powerful kingdom with. But that is what God is going to do (cf. Rom 11:5).

“From now on and forever.” It is a rule or kingdom that is never going to be destroyed (Dan 2:44). If that is the case, then Micah obviously is talking about the church because Daniel 2:44 is clearly talking about the church.

4:8. “Hill of the daughter of Zion.” This is referring to the spiritual watchtower from which Jehovah is going to watch over His people.

“Even the former dominion will come.” What is that “former dominion” they would be longing for? The Davidic Kingdom would be destroyed.

“The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.” Whenever the phrase “the daughter of Jerusalem” is used it means “the people of Jerusalem” (cf. Rom 1:16; Acts 2:39-41; 10:47-48).

- 4:9.** “Now, why do you cry out loudly?” He is picturing what is going to happen after they are carried off into captivity. “What are you crying about?”

“Or has your counselor perished?” They were poor leaders anyway so why are you crying out about the loss of them?

“That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?” In verses 1-8 Micah is thinking about the good times to come when leadership will be strong and the people will convert instruments of war into tools of labor. But before that happens, captivity must come.

“No king.” To lose the king would appear to be the loss of the promises to David.

- 4:10.** “Dwell in the field” meaning go to a place without walls. A place with no walls can provide no protection or security. It also means they have nothing to have pride in. These people took tremendous pride in the greatness of their cities, and the big thick walls they had built. “Go out of the city” - that place of security and pride - and go into the fields.

“And go to Babylon.” Babylon, during the time of Micah, was a weak vassal of the powerful Assyrians. Micah is prophesying 130 years into the future.

“There you will be rescued.” From Babylon God will restore them and bring them back. Judah will not lose the promises to David but captivity (punishment) must come first.

- 4:11.** “And now many nations have been assembled against you.” Presently there are many nations against the Jews, but the nation most directly against them is Assyria. These enemies were very anxious to see Jerusalem fall. Why? Because that was the last stronghold in Palestine. They believed if Jerusalem fell, they could possess the whole area, which was probably true (cf. Obad 12).

Israel’s enemies say, “Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.”

- 4:12.** “And they do not understand His purpose.” The enemies of the Jews did not understand the purpose God had in mind. They did not understand what He was doing. They were wanting complete destruction, but God was planning only a temporary judgment.

“He has gathered them” to fight against Judah.

4:13. This tells how God is going to empower His people to destroy their enemies. There will be a tremendous victory for God's people.

"Arise and thresh" as a harnessed ox (cf. Dan 2:44).

CHAPTER FIVE

NOTE: N.A.S.V. footnote tells us verse 1 is actually verse 14 of chapter four in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew text divided this better than the English text.

5:1. Since the "daughter of Zion" is going to do the threshing, he goes on to say, "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with the rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek."

The nation is going to be humbled. "The judge of Israel" refers to the king. Even though Zion will do some "threshing" in the future, it will be "threshed" first.

5:2. "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah." Bethlehem means "house of bread." Ephrathah means "fruitfulness." "The fruitful bread-house."

Bethlehem is five miles south of Jerusalem. This verse is quoted in Matthew 2:6, which shows us this passage is Messianic. This passage announced the birth-place of the Messiah. It also contains something the Jews did not understand.

"His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." This states the king would be One who has always been alive. When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" the Jews became very upset.

Micah turns from the immediate future of the coming captivity and prophesies the time of the Messiah. In verse 1 the king is suffering humiliation. He is the One who is to come. In verse 2 He is going to lead the people to victory. Micah presents a contrast. "Your king is going to lead you into captivity. This king is going to be a great Ruler in Israel. He is One who is "going forth from long ago, from the days of eternity."

5:3. "Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is labor has borne a child." Micah 4:10 talked about Judah being "a woman in childbirth." That is probably who he is talking about here. The woman who travails and gives birth to the ruler is "the faithful remnant." What would you think, historically, would be parallel with "the labor?" A woman must endure labor before she can give birth. "The labor" is "the captivity." After "the labor" is over, then the Ruler comes forth.

"She who is in labor" - the faithful remnant of Revelation 12:1-6.

“Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel.” This is talking about the fact that there will be a family of God again.

- 5:4.** “And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord.” God will be with Him. God will be His source of strength.

“In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God, and they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth.” He comes, He is powerful, He comes in “the name of the Lord.” Those who are His people will remain; they are going to be steadfast. The N.A.S.V. footnote reads they “live in safety.” This will happen as a result of His guidance.

- 5:5.** “And this One will be our peace.” Isaiah calls Him the Prince of Peace (9:6). Paul says, “He (Jesus) is our peace” (Eph 2:14).

“When the Assyrian invades our land.” It seems Micah is speaking of the future Assyrians, not the nation specifically, but the enemy of God’s people generally. We are still in the context of the time of the Messiah.

“And this One will be our peace, when the Assyrian . . . tramples on our citadels.” This is still talking about the same period of time. Assyria did not exist as a nation when Jesus was born. If he is talking about the time of the Messiah, the “citadels” could be, and probably is, a reference to the “church.” The “church” is going to have its “Assyrians,” its persecutors.

“Then we will raise against him.” In other words, from the people there is going to come opposition to the invaders.

“Seven shepherds.” Seven is a number in biblical numerology which represents perfection. A perfect number of shepherds. Then he says “eight leaders of men.” This is a number beyond what is necessary. If seven is perfect and you have eight, then you have one more than you need - beyond perfection. Do not think we have seven shepherds plus eight leaders of men which totals fifteen. He is saying, “Seven shepherds, yea, eight leaders of men.”

- 5:6.** “And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and He (the Ruler) will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory.” The real Assyrians succeeded in doing this, but the “spiritual Assyria,” the enemies of God, will fail because of the righteous king. Jesus will deliver His people from the evil one, their enemy.

“Sword” - spiritual sword (cf. Eph 6:17).

5:7. “Then the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples like dew from the Lord, like showers on vegetation.” The remnant is going to be that which receives refreshing and growth from God, like dew refreshes the earth and provides moisture. That is what is going to happen spiritually.

“Which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of men.” Nothing or no one is going to stop these blessings from the Lord from coming.

5:8. “And the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, among many peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest.” The lion is king of beasts. He will be “like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep.” A young lion in a flock of sheep would be the most powerful animal. He would dominate everything.

“Which, if he passes through, tramples down and tears, and there is none to rescue.” In other words, no one is going to be able to stop him.

5:9. “Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, and all your enemies will be cut off.” In view of the coming destruction Micah which has been talking about, these words were to provide a hope for better days to come. There is going to be a king that is truly a righteous king. One who is going to be able to lead the nation in a way that will bring prosperity and peace (cf. Rev 17:14).

Notice the repetition of the phrase “cut off” which begins with this verse (cf. vv. 9-13). In verse 14 we have the phrase “root out.”

NOTE: We are continuing the Messianic prophecy with the phraseology in verse 10.

5:10-11. No physical weapons in the spiritual kingdom.

5:10. “And it will be in that day,” declares the Lord, “that I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy your chariots.” These instruments of war will have no place “in that day.”

5:11. “I will also cut off the cities of your land and tear down all your fortifications.” The places of defense are going to be torn down. The places of pride are going to be done away with. Jehovah will be their pride. Jehovah will be their protection. Centers of wickedness will not be used as places of protection or refuge in the kingdom.

5:12. “I will cut off sorceries (witchcrafts-ASV) from your hand.” “Magical rites” is usually the way this word is interpreted. “And you will have fortune-tellers (soothsayers - ASV) no more.” “Soothsayer” literally means “cloud interpreters.” This still causes a bit of confusion for us. Do they mean “cloud interpreters” in

the sense of interpreting the formation of the clouds to predict future events? Or, do they mean that they claim to have some sort of a power with storms? Soothsayers were those who claimed the power in storms. This verse is saying all of the wicked foreign influences are going to be completely purged from the nation. The things that these other nations brought in, the sorceries, the fortunetellers and the graven images (v. 13) are all going to be done away. They are going to be “cut off.”

- 5:13.** “I will cut off your carved images and your sacred pillars from among you, so, that you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands.” Isaiah said this so many times, and now Micah says, “You are bowing down to something that you made.”

NOTE: Micah changes the terminology in verse 14.

- 5:14.** “I will root out your Asherim from among you.” When a tree is cut down, the stump dies. But these people have idolatry so ingrained in them, that He is going to have to “root it out” instead of just “cut it off.”
- 5:15.** “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations which have not obeyed.” Remember the Hebrew word for “obey” is SHEMA. That is the word used here. “On the nations which have not obeyed” (SHEMA).

CHAPTER SIX

6:1-5. As in a court of law.

- 6:1.** From the glory of the future in chapter five the prophet is returning to the present. These people had a lack of commitment and dedication.

“Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.” God has presented His case against them, now it is their turn. Respond! Give your defense! What do you have to say for yourselves? God is telling them to defend themselves as to why they acted as they did.

- 6:2.** “Listen, you mountains, to indictment of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth.” In this setting the mountains and the hills are the jury. Mountains were considered to be the enduring foundation. People believed mountains to be the strongest things in the creation.

“Because the Lord has a case against His people; even with Israel He will dispute.” This is His case; verse 3.

- 6:3.** “My people, what have I done to you, and how have I wearied you? Answer Me.” This seems to give an insight into what some of the people were saying. Some-

thing along the line of: “It is no wonder that we are not faithful to Jehovah, look how He has wearied us! He has worn us out with all of His rules and obligations.” God asks, “How have I done this?” But no charge can be brought against Jehovah.

- 6:4.** “Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt and ransomed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.” What He says is: “I delivered you from slavery, and I gave you very good leaders.”
- 6:5.** “My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered him.” God can turn cursings into blessings. Balak wanted Balaam to curse, but Balaam gave blessings instead (Num 22 and 23). And then He says,

“From Shittim to Gilgal.” Shittim was the last place the Israelites camped before crossing the Jordan (Josh 3:1). Gilgal was the first place they camped in the promised land once they had crossed over the Jordan (Josh 4:19).

NOTE: Verses 6-7 are Israel’s response.

- 6:6.** “With what shall I come to the Lord?” Notice that even though the nation is responding, the emphasis is on the individual. “With what shall I come to the Lord?” Not with what shall we come to the Lord, even though verses 1-5 have indicted the whole nation. Nations are made up of individuals.

“And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves?” These people are convicted. They see their guilt. Now they ask, “What does God want us to do? Does He wants us to offer Him burnt offerings or yearling calves?” This shows their ignorance of Jehovah. They really do not understand Him.

- 6:7.** “Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” They have forgotten so much of the Law they have no idea how to even approach God. And even though they are not mentioned, the priests are guilty because it was their responsibility to teach the people how to approach God. What they do is progress from the minimal (the burnt offerings and the yearling calves) to something that is a little bit more precious to them. “Thousands of rams” (that would be a tremendous cost) and “ten thousand rivers of oil” (that would be even more expensive). Then they ask, “Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts?” So they progressed from the minimal to the most precious, their own children. This underscores their ignorance. Does God want a child sacrifice? Is that what would be necessary to please Him? The answer from God is in verse 8.

6:8. “He has told you, O man, what is good (it is not sacrifices); and what does the Lord require of you . . .” He enumerates three things:

1. “but to do justice,”
2. “to love kindness,”
3. “and to walk humbly with your God.”

“Do justice” is to act towards God and man as the righteous law prescribes.

“To love kindness” is to have an affinity for or a strong attraction for showing compassion to man. You enjoy and love being compassionate, showing kindness. God wants you to grow into His kind of love.

“To walk humbly with your God” is to absolutely submit to the desires and will of God. This is considered by many to be one of the most comprehensive, all-embracing statements in all of the Old Testament. Must this be limited just to the Old Testament? He wants Christians to do these three things as well. The difference with us is that Jesus has come and has shown us how perfectly to do these things. Every single one of these points agrees with specific teachings of Jesus. Jesus talked often about being just, being kind to other people, and humility. In Matthew 18 when He says, “Whoever then humbles himself as this child . . .” these three points were fresh on His mind. He not only taught them, He lived them as well (cf. Deut 6:5).

6:9. “The voice of the Lord will call to the city (Jerusalem) - and it is sound wisdom to fear thy name.” The person who fears the name of God is wise. It is sound wisdom. Our world today tries to make the Christian seem a fool for believing God. But the fact of the matter is, it is sound wisdom to fear God’s name.

“Hear (a key word), O tribe. Who has appointed its time?” “Its time” is referring to the chastisement about to come. The judgment that is about to come is determined by the answers given to questions in verses 10 and 11. God will now testify against them.

6:10. “Is there yet a man in the wicked house, along with treasures of wickedness, and a short measure that is cursed?” The question rephrased; “Are you continuing to increase wealth by wicked practices?” The answer, unfortunately, is “yes.” Therefore, their consequences.

6:11. “Can I justify wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights?” The answer is, “No!” Everyone has to ask themselves that question. “Can I (not we), but can I justify wicked scales? The question is: “Are you continuing to cheat in business

dealings?” During ancient times there was no law of commerce. Business dealings were based on a favor. If you were going to buy something from someone, you trusted them to use weights that were fair and just. Because of that, there were some who abused the system and tried to obtain more money by using unjust weights.

6:12. “For the rich men of the city are full of violence.” They do not have just a little violence, they “are full of violence.”

“Her residents speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.” These people are so evil they cannot be trusted. They are guilty of more than cheating, they are guilty of lying and being dishonest.

6:13-15. “You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil.” They definitely are going to reap what they have sown! When it comes time to tread the olive, you are not going to be able to anoint yourself with the olive oil. When it comes time to tread the grapes, someone else is going to be drinking the wine. Judgment is coming!

NOTE: Verse 16 has reference to the worship of Baal and Asherah. Omri and Ahab were those who were directly involved in introducing the foreign Baalim and Asherim into Israel.

6:16. “The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; and in their devices you walk.” What a turn of events that is! This whole book has been trying to get them to walk according to the commandments of Lord, but now we see the truth. These people are zealous, religiously, but what they are zealous for are the Baalim and the Asherim. It is in those things that they walk. They obey the laws given by Omri.

“Therefore, I will give you up for destruction and your inhabitants for derision, and you will bear the reproach of My people.” Because of these abominations they are going to have to pay a price. Especially the leaders, whose example led the people into sin.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NOTE: Chapter seven is Jerusalem’s lamenting that there are no righteous people within her walls.

7:1-6. Micah confesses as if he were Israel.

7:1. “Woe is me!” “Me” is Israel, who is on trial.

7:2. “Each of them hunts the other with a net.” Their grief has no limitations. They are being hunted with nets. Instead of an upright life that shows kindness and concern for one’s fellow men, they are people who live only to oppress others.

7:3. “Concerning evil, both hands do it well.” These people are so well practiced in oppression they can do it with either hand.

“The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, and a great man speaks the desire of his soul; so they weave it together.” Oppression reaches its worst. Men of power are teaming together and when that occurs to whom are the poor and oppressed going to turn? You turn to “the prince,” he is wicked. You turn to “the judge,” he is wicked. You turn to “the king,” he is wicked. You go to “the prophet,” he is wicked. You go to “the priest,” he is wicked. Where are you going to go?

7:4. “The best of them is like a briar.” A briar is absolutely good for nothing. Even the least evil among them are hurting themselves.

“The most upright like a thorn hedge.” A thorn hedge is something so woven and tangled together there is no hope of untangling it. These people, in their wickedness, are like that thorn hedge.

“The day when you post a watchman, your punishment will come.” The reason a person posts a watchman is to watch for an attack. Micah is saying, “The day you post a watchman will be the day you are attacked. Your fears are about to come true.”

“Then their confusion will occur.” How confusing is it going to be? Look at the next verse.

7:5. “Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips.” Who lies in your bosom? Your own wife. You cannot even trust your own wife! The situation is so bad there is really no one you can trust.

7:6. “A man’s enemies are the men of his own household.” Even in his own home one finds enemies. This shows the foundation of society is completely gone. When there is no respect in the home the whole nation suffers. When the sons and daughters do not have respect for their parents, they are not going to have any respect for anybody. This sounds very much like today’s society (cf. Mt 10: 21,35-36; Lk 12:53; 2 Tim 3:1-5).

7:7-17. Micah confesses as if he were the spiritual remnant.

7:7. “But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation.” He is saying, “I am going to put my trust in Him. I am going to depend on Him. Let Him lead the way.”

“Wait for the God of my salvation” = faith, dependence and patience.

“My God will hear me.” Notice the assurance. Deliverance will come from no other source.

7:8. “Though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me.” Micah says, “I am in darkness right now, but in the future there is a light” (cf. Psa 27:1).

7:9. “I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him.” “I am going to take what I deserve and hope the Lord will be merciful to me” (cf. Lam 3:39-40).

“Until He pleads my case and executes justice for me.” Since no one else is going to be just, then I will turn my life over to God and let Him be the One who executes justice.

“He will bring me out to the light, and I will see His righteousness.” “I will see God’s right dealings. I will see His judgments.”

7:10. “Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, ‘Where is the Lord your God?’” This refers to 4:11 where the people were taunted by those saying, “And now many nations have been assembled against you who say, ‘Let her be polluted, and let her eyes gloat over Zion?’”

7:11. “It will be a day for building your walls. On that day will your boundary be extended.” The shame is taken away and rebuilding starts. Those who came back from Babylon built the city and temple again (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah).

7:12. “It will be a day when they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt . . . even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.” People will come from all directions to build a new Zion, to assist the Israelites in what they are doing. Spiritual Egypt is called out of the world (cf. Hos 11:11).

7:13. “And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants, on account of the fruit of their deeds.” The only place prospering is where God’s people are. The rest of the earth is desolate.

“Earth” - Satan’s realm.

7:14. A prayer.

“As in the days of old” refers to Solomon’s days when they dwelt by themselves and lived in a fruitful land (cf. Num 23:9; 2 Cor 6:14-18).

7:15-16. God’s answer.

7:15. “As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt.” God responds to their prayer. “I will show you miracles” (cf. Jn 20:30-31).

7:16. Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might.” The power of the nation is gone. It is going to be very insignificant compared to the power of the Lord.

7:17. “They will lick the dust like a serpent, like reptiles of the earth.” God’s enemies are going to prostrate themselves before Jehovah. They will recognize and honor Jehovah (cf. Acts 4:12).

7:18-20. A doxology.

7:18. “Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?” Here the people respond again. God declares, “I am going to come and I am going to show you My power.” And they ask, “Who is a God like you? There is no One who can compare to God who passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession.” Micah is saying, “You cannot say, ‘God is like . . .’” because there is nothing that God is like. There is nothing or no one with which He can even be compared!

“He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love.” God thoroughly enjoys demonstrating loving kindness.

7:19. “He will tread our iniquities underfoot, yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” He has buried their sin so deeply they will never be found again. Sin can destroy mankind, but God is going to destroy sin (cf. Jer 31:33-34).

7:20. “Thou wilt give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which Thou didst swear to our forefathers from the days of old.” These promises found their fulfillment in Christ. In the second and third chapters of Galatians, Paul writes about “the unchanging love to Abraham.” Now it is all coming to fruition in Christ (cf. Lk 1:67-75).

NAHUM

- NAME:** Nahum
- MEANING:** Comfort, Compassion or Consolation
- DATE:** 625 B.C.
- AUDIENCE:** Judah
- THEME:** Destruction of Nineveh
- SPECIAL NOTE:** God's messenger can have righteous indignation.
- OUTLINE:**
- I. Nineveh's Doom Declared Ch 1
 - II. Nineveh's Doom Described..... Ch 2
 - III. Nineveh's Doom Deserved Ch 3

LESSONS:

There is a limit to God's patience.

A nation built on pride, cruelty, force and selfishness cannot hope to have friends in the day of its fall.

God still rules the world.

God hates brutality, violence and all wrong.

NAHUM INTRODUCTION

I. NAME.

Nahum means "Compassion."

II. PURPOSE.

To comfort and console the people.

III. DATE.

630-625 B.C. The book can be dated from two events referred to in its chapters.

A. Thebes (No-amon), a great Egyptian city of the ancient world, had already fallen (3:8). Thebes fell about 661 B.C.

B. Nineveh's fall was yet to come (2:13; 3:5-7,15). Nineveh fell about 612 B.C.

IV. THE PROPHET.

Nahum is from Elkosh - we have no idea where this was located. Some have said Capernaum is the renamed city for Elkosh - since Capernaum means "the village of Nahum." Nahum was a patriotic man. He loved Israel and his sensitive nature erupted at the godless cruelty of these inhuman warriors of Assyria. He could sense and see his Holy God dealing with this enemy. Righteous indignation raged within this prophet of God.

V. KEY WORDS: The Hebrew word CALACH for "completely destroyed," and the Hebrew word CARATH for "cut off forever."

VI. GENERAL.

Nahum revealed that Nineveh's days of grace were past. About 150 years earlier, Jonah preached to Nineveh when Assyria was experiencing difficult days, and his message produced repentance and salvation. In Nahum's day, the empire and its capital city were at the height of their glory. Nineveh's wealth and pride left no room for repentance.

The message is just the opposite of Jonah's. In Jonah we see God's forgiveness of the Assyrian capital. In Nahum, God announces and executes judgment. We do not know if his prophecy was published in Nineveh or just in Judah.

Nahum sees the judgment of God as being deferred, but now sure and final. Vengeance belongs to God! God is still in active control of this world. When he lifts his finger in judgment the greatest nation with the greatest and most elaborate defenses is doomed to fall. Nineveh will now learn this!! Great wealth and power are useless to save and no matter how strong one's army or defenses God can destroy it with one warrior if he chooses to do so. God personally digs the graves of the wicked. This certainly does not describe the personal attention we want from the Father.

This prophecy is against a nation that sought glory by war and oppression. Its theme is simply the overthrow of Nineveh. It makes it quite clear that God is not pleased with brutality, violence and wrong!

VII. CHARACTERIZATION OF NINEVEH.

"Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of her kings, no power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on its way to ruin. The kings of Assyria tormented the miserable world. They exult the record how 'space failed for corpses'; how unsparing a destroyer is their goddess Ishtar; how they flung away the bodies of soldiers like so much clay; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they burned cities; how they filled populous lands with death and devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with the corpses of their defenders and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kings and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities; how they employed nations of captives in making bricks in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs" (Farrar, pp. 147-148).

VIII. TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK.

A. About God (1:1-3,7).

1. A Judge who is jealous, vengeful, furious, ruthless, wrathful, great in power and will not acquit the wicked.
2. A Father who is slow to anger, good, a stronghold in the day of trouble and knowing them who trust him.

B. About wicked nations.

1. Condemned to utter destruction (1:8-9).
 2. Their names will be blotted out (1:10).
- C. God will dig their graves (1:14).
- D. No great wealth nor power can save them (3:8-19).

IX. GREAT IDEAS OF NAHUM.

- A. God rules in the kingdoms of men.
- B. God is a stronghold in the time of trouble (1:7).
- C. There are no strongholds secure from the vengeance of God.
- D. “The history of the world is the judgment of the world” - Schiller. Nations meet out judgment to nations. Nations reap what they sow. The wages of sin is death. Nahum is a book relevant in a world of dictators.

NAHUM EXPOSITION

CHAPTER ONE

1:1. “The oracle (burden - K.J.V.) of Nineveh” (Isa 13:1; 19:1; Hab 1:1; Mal 1:1; Zech 9:1; 12:1). This burden means to lift up the voice in proclamation. A heavy load is being laid on Nineveh through proclamation.

“. . . vision . . .” Nahum had seen what he was writing.

1:2. God is jealous and will not allow another to take His place. Jealousy of God (Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh 24:19; Zeph 1:18; 3:8).

The five-fold use of “the Lord.” He takes vengeance on His adversaries and reserves wrath for His enemies.

1:3. “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power . . .” (cf. Jonah 4:2). God is waiting for His perfect time to punish. God will not leave the guilty unpunished (Gen 15:16). The destructive power of Jehovah is characterized by a tornado and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

1:4. He will deliver the people like He did with Pharaoh - by drying up the rivers (Psa 106:9). Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon are regions noted for their fertility.

“Bashan” = pastures.

“Carmel” = mountains.

“Lebanon” = woods.

1:5. “Mountains quake.” Mountains were considered by ancient people as the most stable of creation. The earth itself, and all of nature, is thrown into convulsion because of Jehovah. This includes all nature and all mankind. Nobody or no nation can withstand all of the power described in verses 4-5.

1:6. “Who can stand before His indignation?” The implication is that even the great kingdom of Assyria, and Nineveh especially, will not be able to stand against God. The idea is of molten lava destroying everything before it. Nahum uses images which the people can relate to.

1:7. This is God’s other side.

- 1:8.** “He will make a complete end of its site.” This is complete annihilation. Nineveh never rose again. She was destroyed with an overflowing flood - the Babylonian armies used the aqueduct system to enter the city.
- 1:9.** “Whatever you devise against the Lord, He will make a complete end of it.” As a declaration to Assyria - “I will carry out My threat!” As a declaration to Judah - “I can handle any oppressor!”
- 1:10.** “Like tangled thorns.” These were thought to be something impregnable, but these hedges of thorns will not stop God. These people were feeling secure, but their security will be burned up as stubble (Jer 13:9-14; Hab 2:5). Jehovah shall light this fire!
- 1:11.** Nineveh was constantly devising things against the Lord. Nahum says that they were wicked counselors who were causing the people to devise things against the Lord.

“One who.” All of their leaders were personified as one person.

“Evil.” Literally “Belial” (cf. 1 Sam 25:25; 2 Cor 6:15).

1:12-13. To Judah.

1:12. Even though they are all full strength and many in number they will be cut off.

“Cut off” means “cut off, sheared or mowed.”

“Afflict you no longer” with Nineveh!

1:14. The Lord commands this. He will cut off their idols and images, and prepare their graves because they were contemptible (Ezek 32:22-23; Mic 1:7).

The Assyrian gods:

Ashur,

Nabu,

Anu,

Adad and

Ishtar (the goddess).

All of these idols will be cut off.

“Contemptible (vile - K.J.V.)” Literally “light in weight,” on God’s scale of justice.

- 1:15.** “Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news.” Isaiah 40:9 is a Messianic context which uses the same message. Judah must recognize that the reason Nineveh is going to fall is because of Him and nothing that they, the Jews, have done. He, Nineveh, is cut off completely and will never again rise to greatness. The immediate context = the messenger of Nineveh’s fall.

CHAPTER 2

- 2:1.** The word “scatters” can mean either to “shatter” or to “dash into pieces.” The one who has come up against you is Babylon. He tells them to man the fortress, watch the road, strengthen their back and summon all of their strength. Nahum is telling them to be ready because God’s wrath is coming (3:14 cf. 2 Sam 23:20).
- 2:2.** The whole nation (12 tribes) is used collectively here. The Lord will restore the splendor of Jacob - even though conquerors (Assyria) have devastated them (the Israelites) - the Lord will restore them (cf. Num 10:36).
- 2:3.** “The shields of his mighty men are colored red”, the color of blood. The Chaldean warriors dressed in red (cf. Ezek 23:14-15). The chariots shone because of the sun reflecting on all the armor. Even the cypress spears were shining because of the banding put around them.
- 2:4.** “The chariots race madly in the streets.” Their appearance was like many torches.
- 2:5.** “He remembers his nobles” - the king of Nineveh. They stumbled because they were so disorganized. A contrast with verse 1 - to get ready. They hurried to the walls and the mantelet was set up by oppressors - this was to deflect the arrows. These were small towers on 4-6 wheels in which men were protected as they would approach the walls.
- 2:6.** The gates (aqueducts) were overflowed and that broke through some of the walls of the city and the palace was dissolved.
- 2:7-8.** This shows that the city had no hope - the people were giving up. She was once a gathering place but now she is to be avoided.
- 2:9.** Directed to the invaders - they were told to gather the treasure (spoils of war), for Nineveh’s treasures were endless. This was a result of centuries of looting.

- 2:10.** The great city was emptied, desolate and laid waste. This pictures her as if her entire body was shaking to death. This was progressive worthlessness and progressive anguish (cf. Joel 2:6).
- 2:11.** The destruction of Nineveh was so complete that its location was not known for certain until the 19th century. Nahum asks, "Where is the lion's den?" Nineveh was destroyed in 612 by Babylon.

The whole family is mentioned as a metaphor. The lion (king of beasts) - the people of Nineveh thought they were the strongest in the world.

- 2:12.** Nineveh had killed others, taken care of her own as well as storing up treasures from their spoils in war.
- 2:13.** "Behold, I am against you" is a common phrase (Jer 21:13; Ezek 5:8). Nineveh's end had been determined by the Lord of Hosts (armies). Even the mighty chariot (the most fierce weapon of the day) will be burned up - a sword will devour your young and I will cut off your prey from the land and no longer will the voice of your messenger be heard (1:14-15; 2:13; 3:15). They are no longer contending with nations, they are contending with Jehovah!

CHAPTER THREE

- 3:1.** "Woe to the bloody city." This refers to all the people she has killed. Nineveh was completely void of any morals. She would break covenants to get her way - she was full of lies and pillage. Pillage is robbery with open knowledge. Her prey never departs - this means that Nineveh never grows tired of plundering others.
- 3:2.** Vivid descriptions of warfare; the noise of the whip, the noise of the rattling of the wheels, galloping horses and bounding chariots.
- 3:3.** The people who have been responsible for killing others were now being killed.
- 3:4.** "All because the harlotries of the harlot, the charming one." These harlotries were the treaties she was breaking with those she had deceived by pretending to be in love with them. This is the reason for her destruction.
- 3:5.** Because of this, the way she humiliated her prey, God was going to do the same to Nineveh.
- 3:6.** God will throw filth on her and everyone will see her.

- 3:7.** The people are going to flee from you and they will say Nineveh is devastated and no one will care about you. She is now being reviled and ridiculed. They (other nations) will shout for joy that she is destroyed so brutally. Who will comfort Nineveh?
- 3:8.** “Are you better than No-Amon? . . .” This was a city of Thebes. This Egyptian city was destroyed by Ashur-Banipal in 663 B.C. The Assyrians gloated over the destruction of the city.
- 3:9.** “Ethiopia was her might” - her southern border, and Egypt on her northern border. Put was her eastern border and Lubin was to her west (modern Lybia). This city had powerful borders but yet the Assyrians destroyed No-Amon.
- 3:10.** “Yet she became an exile; she went into captivity.” The Assyrian soldiers dashed the small children to pieces. This was about 663 B.C.
- 3:11.** As a drunken man who cannot walk you will walk. You will be hidden and will search for refuge.
- “Hidden.” Something brought to nothing and therefore hidden.
- “Refuge (strength - K.J.V.)” - a stronghold and hiding place.
- 3:12.** Even the surrounding areas which they used to protect the city will be shaken and its valuable fruit will be eaten up.
- 3:13.** “Your people are women in your midst.” Even the men appear as weak. All of her defenses are torn down.
- 3:14.** He tells them to get ready - strengthen your fortifications and put plenty of water close by. The walls of Nineveh were eight miles long and 100 feet high. The width was 50 to 100 feet thick - two to three chariots could ride abreast on them. It took thousands of bricks to build the wall.
- I will consume you as the locust - the idea of locusts is found in Joel 1:4; 2:25; Isaiah 33:4. All of their work will be of no avail. Multiply yourself - He is saying, “See if you can match the strength of the Babylonians.”
- 3:15.** “There fire will consume you.” The Assyrian king killed himself by fire instead of being killed by the Babylonians.
- 3:16.** “You have increased your traders more than the stars of heaven.” Trade routes from all parts of the world went through Nineveh.

“Creeping locusts (cankerworm - K.J.V.)” - the Chaldeans.

- 3:17.** “Your guardsmen are like the swarming locust . . . settling in the stone walls on a cold day.” The locusts, when their wings got cold, would crawl into the brick walls to get warm, and then when the sun came out they would flee.
- 3:18.** The leaders are dead, and the people have scattered.
- 3:19.** There is no relief for your wounds, and all the people are rejoicing because of your downfall. They clap their hands for joy because they see in the fall of Nineveh a measure of retaliation that was justified. This is not a book of hope and joy.

ZEPHANIAH

NAME: Zephaniah

MEANING: He Whom Jehovah Has Hidden

DATE: 625 B.C.

AUDIENCE: Judah

THEME: The Coming Day of Jehovah

SPECIAL NOTE: Restoration following destruction

OUTLINE:

- I. Look Within - Wrath coming on Judah 1:1-2:3
- II. Look Around - Wrath on all Nations 2:4-3:8
- III. Look Beyond - After Wrath, Healing..... 3:9-20

LESSONS:

One will become like the God (or god) he worships.

Earnest warning is greatly needed to draw us back to God.

God's purpose is not vengeance but salvation.

God's judgment falls upon all (individuals or nations).

Jehovah fulfills His purposes.

ZEPHANIAH BACKGROUND

I. DATE.

630 B.C. Twenty-four years before the day of the Lord comes.

II. THEME.

The approaching “day of the Lord.” He presents the terror of a people without God, but shows the tremendous tenderness of Divine love. Judgment was in the near future but all hope was not gone. He, as the other prophets did, emphasizes that God does not forget those who do not forget Him.

III. ALTERNATE OUTLINE.

- A. Threatenings and judgmentCh 1
- B. Warning and admonitionCh 2
- C. Encouragement and promiseCh 3

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

Some have suggested that Zephaniah was born during the killing time of Manasseh. Zephaniah gives his ancestry and goes back four generations to Hizkiah (Hezekiah) which would make Hezekiah his great, great grandfather, the godly king. It is with pride that he presents his ancestors as being men who loved and obeyed God. He, being of royal descent, was probably effective as he strictly denounced the leaders for their improper following of God’s ways.

Zephaniah prophesied in Judah during the reign of King Josiah. In the early days of Josiah, idolatry and its associated evils were rampant in the land. Josiah became king at age eight, when his father (Amon) was murdered. At sixteen he began to seek the Lord and at age twenty he began to purge the land of its idols.

While having the temple repaired, the long-forsaken “book of the Law” was found. Josiah’s response to its teachings was an extensive series of religious and social reforms begun in 621 B.C. (2 Kgs 22-23). It appears that Zephaniah prophesied just prior to these great reforms and probably helped to produce them.

His message came to a people who had forgotten how to worship God. The people had gone into the depths of sin and idolatry and seemed to be content in their sins. Even though king Josiah began a purge of the evils in the land, the reforms did not get down to the root of the problem which was their heart.

Josiah tore down the idols and graven images and destroyed their places of worship. This was good, but it did not go far enough. It was left up to Zephaniah and Jeremiah (Jer 3:6,10) to preach to the hearts of the people. They needed to see that the real problem was within themselves.

V. OCCASION OF THIS PROPHECY.

The ascending of Babylon into power.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS.

A. Religious and moral conditions:

1. Sweeping reform in the days of Josiah.
2. Though reform had restored the ritual it was only external.
3. Social injustice and moral corruption were wide spread.
4. Luxury and extravagance were seen on all sides.

B. Sins of Judah:

1. Religious syncretism (a blending together). Zephaniah attacks the nation for worshiping Baal (1:4) Milcan (1:5) and the Host of Heaven (1:5), while at the same time bowing down to and swearing by the Lord. Ahaz and Manasseh promoted such practices (2 Kgs 21:3,5; 23:11ff; Jer 7:17).
2. Wearing foreign apparel (1:8).
3. Leaping over the threshold, and being guilty of fraud and violence (1:9).
4. Fraud and violence (1:9).
5. Prophet, priest, prince and judge violent and wanton (3:3-4).
 - a. The princes are called roaring lions.

- b. The judges are called wolves at evening leaving nothing for the morning.
 - c. Prophets reckless and treacherous.
 - d. Priests profane the sanctuary and did violence to the law.
6. A continual attitude of indifference which considered the Lord as one who was not concerned with human behavior, either to reward or to punish (1:12). In contrast to the prophets, insists that the Lord will do justly (3:5).
 7. Jerusalem refuses to receive correction [Hebrew word - MUSAR] (3:2,7). She does not learn from history and she listens to no voice (3:2; cf. Jer 5:3; 7:28).

C. Zephaniah:

1. Seems to be an aristocrat; a wealthy, powerful person.
2. Shows little knowledge of the poor.
3. Does, however, denounce the royal household.
4. Seems to be familiar with Jerusalem itself. He spent a lot of his ministry there.
5. Seems to be angry, his message was a burning message of rebuke.

D. "Die Sire"

O day of wrath, O day of mourning
 See fulfilled the prophets warning
 Heaven and earth in ashes burning.

by Thomas of Celano 1250 A.D.

ZEPHANIAH EXPOSITION

CHAPTER ONE

1:1. “The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah . . . in the days of Josiah.” Josiah’s reign was 639-608. It is possible Zechariah wrote in the same year Jeremiah came on the scene.

“Hezekiah (Hizkiah - K.J.V.) = king Hezekiah.

1:2ff. This begins a series of “I wills” all show disaster, but the book ends with hope, 3:18.

1:2. The Lord declares He will remove all things (cf. Jer 3:6ff.).

1:3. “I will remove man and beast . . . birds . . . fish.” Once again we see how creation itself suffers because of man’s sin (Rom 8). Man is the cause of God’s wrath and man deserves what he is getting (cf. Hos 4:3; Heb 2:9).

1:4. God’s destruction is shown by stretching out His hand against Judah. Baal is being worshiped in the Holy city, Jerusalem. God will cut them down along with the idolatrous priests - they are called Chemarim. They were appointed by Jewish kings to serve Baal. They were even from the Levitical family which should have been priests serving God. God will remove these priests as well as the priests who serve Him only (these priests were not being faithful in their service to God). Good lesson - an unfaithful preacher or teacher in the Church will go to hell right along with the denominationalists (cf. 2 Kgs 22:5 - including A.S.V. footnote).

1:5. Also two other classes of idolaters:

a. Star worshipers (Deut 4:19).

b. False swearers, those who have divided loyalties.

Milcon was king of the gods of the pagan nations (Ammonites) so they were swearing by the Lord and by Milcon. They considered all gods to be of equal significance.

1:6. “Those who have turned back from following the Lord.” These were priests who claimed to worship the Lord but worship the Baalim (plural word). They did not seek the Lord nor inquire of Him. They had no part of God in their lives.

- 1:7.** “Be silent before the Lord.” These boasters will be silenced someday. The reason they needed to be silent before the Lord was because the day of the Lord was near (Hab 3:20). He is saying, “If you will be silent and listen, you will know bad things are about to happen.” He has prepared a sacrifice - which is going to be Judah. He has consecrated His guest - which is all the nations that God called upon to destroy them (cf. Mic 6:1-5).
- 1:8.** It will come about on the members of the royal family and the rich on the day of the Lord’s sacrifice.
- 1:9.** Two interpretations of what “leap on the temple threshold” means:
- a. Some feel it refers to 1 Samuel 5:1-5 when the priests of Dagon would not walk on the threshold. They did not want to walk on their god which had fallen.
 - b. This was also a common expression to illustrate thievery. They were filling the Lord’s house with violence and deceit.
- 1:10.** “There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate” - the northern wall - see Nehemiah. Their enemies came from the north.
- “From the hills” from where they will look down and see their city crushed.
- 1:11.** “Mortar” - district of Jerusalem, a place where merchants sold their goods (v. 18). The Jews had become like Canaanite traders. Hosea warns them of this problem (Hos 12:7ff.).
- “All who weigh out silver” - money changers, bankers.
- 1:12.** They disregarded Jehovah and said they were not afraid of any distribution from the Lord. He will search Jerusalem with lamps (Jer 48:11).
- “Stagnant in spirit (settled on their lees - K.J.V.)” In making of fine wine, they kept pouring the best off and that which was left was the dregs, lees (cf. 2 Pet 3:3).
- These people imply that God is not going to do anything so they are not worried about it (Jer 5:1). This is a summary; the people’s hearts have become hardened (cf. Jer 10:5).
- 1:13.** “Their wealth will become plunder, and their homes desolate.” They will build houses but not live in them, and plant vineyards but never drink from them (cf. Mt 16:26; 1 Tim 6:7; Lk 12:13-21).

1:14. “Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly.” They will listen when they are led off into captivity. Even the strong, brave warriors are weeping like babies. It will be too late after the punishment is passed down from God (see Num 14:40).

1:15. Couplets which deal with the wrath of God:

- a. Trouble and distress.
- b. Destruction and desolation.
- c. Darkness and gloom.
- d. Clouds and thick darkness.
- e. Trumpet and battle cry.

Words which show God’s apocalyptic language:

- a. Clouds (Dan 7:13; Rev 1:7; Acts 1:10-11).
- b. Trumpets (1 Thess 4:13-18).
- c. Angels (Mt 16:27; 2 Thess 1:7-9).

Compare Joel 2:2.

This will be in the day of their fortified cities, the very cities they were proud of. Amos also has an emphasis on the word “citadels” which occurs twelve times. The high corner towers were reinforced so that even if the walls fell the towers would stand.

1:17. “I will bring distress on men.” God will do this - “I will.” God wants them to know it is not the Chaldeans who were doing this to them - He was.

“They will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord.” Their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung - worthless.

1:18. Their bribes will not help either. The whole earth will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy (Heb 12:29). He, not the Chaldeans, will make a complete end of all the inhabitants of the earth, not just Judah only.

CHAPTER TWO

2:1. Judah has allowed herself to sink so low her conscience is not affected (1 Tim 4:1-3). They have no shame (3:5,11,19; Jer 6:15).

2:2. He wants them to gather themselves together, to change now or they will die.

2:3. This is their alternative - to seek the Lord (Isa 55:8):

- a. Seek the Lord,
- b. Seek righteousness and
- c. Seek humility.

Humility is what will save them - he defines it in 2:3 - a humble person carries out God's ordinances. Humility describes the one who submits to the will of another. All of these convey activity on the part of the person. Righteousness cannot be found without one seeking for it. If you seek the Lord your enemies will not find you. "Perhaps you will be hidden" - remember Zephaniah means him whom the Lord has hidden (cf. Mic 6:8; Rom 12:11-13).

From verse 4 to the end of the chapter he condemns the rest of the nations.

North (vv. 13-15).

South (v. 12).

West (vv. 4-7) Philistine cities - Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron.

East (vv. 8-11) Moab and Ammon.

2:4. For Gaza. Azah will be abandoned.

2:5-6. These are places of heavy population, a sea coast will become as pasture land.

"Cherethites" Some of these Philistines had been a part of David's bodyguard.

"Caves (cottages - K.J.V.)." Literally "caves."

2:7. "The coast will be for the remnant." This is the small group of faithful people who return from captivity. 42,360 returned. "The Remnant" - the faithful few (1:4, 2:7,9; 3:13). They will be able to lie down and rest, and the Lord will take care of them. He will restore their fortune. This was fulfilled when they returned to the Lord.

2:8. The nations of the east mentioned (Num 22:23-24) and the taunting of the Moabites. They tried to enlarge their borders by stealing the land (Amos 1:13-15; 2:1-3).

2:9. “Surely Moab will be like Sodom and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah.” God swears by Himself, “As I live.” This confirms His intentions that both nations will be destroyed (cf. Heb 6:13).

Nelson Glueck, a Jewish archaeologist, has discovered 100's of cities that were desolated with salt pits. They would put salt on the land of the cities they did not want rebuilt.

2:10. “This they will have in return for their pride.” The basis for their sin was pride (Isa 16:6; Jer 29). Pride is the sin from which all others flow.

2:11. “The Lord will be terrifying them.” Jehovah *will be recognized!* He will not put up with their way of living.

“Starve all of the gods.” Idols come and go but Jehovah still lives and reigns!

“All the coastlands (isles - K.J.V.)”, even the remotest regions where men live.

2:12. He now goes to the south - to the Ethiopians. This was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezer conquered Egypt in the 38th year of his reign - 536 B.C. God refers to Nebuchadnezer as His instrument several times - My sword, My rod, My servant.

2:13. “He will stretch out His hand against the north” which is Assyria. Because of the power of the Assyrians, it is only through inspiration that such a prophecy could originate.

2:14. “Flocks will lie down in her midst.” Her = Nineveh. All of these animals are of the type that dwell only in desolate areas. They are unclean animals.

2:15. “This is the exultant city.” That once powerful city will now be made fun of. This was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezer destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C.

CHAPTER THREE

3:1. The tyrannical city, Jerusalem, has a woe pronounced on her (Jer 6:6).

3:2. Four main sins of Jerusalem:

a. She heeded no voice, the law, prophets or history.

- b. She accepted no instruction (MUSAR),
- c. She did not trust in the Lord and
- d. She did not draw near to her God, appeal to God for help (Jas 4:8).

Jerusalem and Judah were trusting in three things during this time:

- a. False gods,
- b. Military strength and
- c. Alliances with foreign powers.

Compare Israel in Amos 4:6.

3:3-4. Names of the four classes of leadership in Jerusalem Jehovah is going to condemn:

- a. Princes - they are roaring lions (1 Pet 5:8-9).
- b. Judges - they are wolves at evening - they are unfair, unjust - they leave nothing for the morning.
- c. Prophets (v. 4) - they are reckless, treacherous men. They could not have cared less about what they said to the people - this is the only mention of the prophets by Zephaniah.
- d. Priests - they have made a mockery of the sacrifice and temple worship. The priests were to be the ones to teach and interpret the Law.

3:5. “The Lord is righteous and He will not do injustice.” He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). When the sun rises in the morning we see the righteousness of the Lord.

3:6. These cities serve as a testimony that God will not tolerate sin. God had used other nations trying to teach Judah repentance.

3:7. “Accept instruction. So her dwelling will not be cut off . . .” (cf. Deut 9:4-5). Israel entered the promised land because the people in the land were so wicked that God wanted to use Israel to cast them out (Deut 28). But they were eager - anxious to corrupt (cf. Jer 6:16; 7:5-7).

3:8. The Lord says, “Wait for me.” He is appealing to the righteous few because He is going to come and bring retribution. Compare Isaiah “waiting for the Lord” passages (40:31; 42:4; 49:23; 64:4). To wait for the Lord is to put your trust in Him.

“The prey” The souls from among the nations who desire salvation shall fall to Jehovah as prey. Compare the Messiah’s portion (Isa 53:12).

3:9-13. Character of the Messiah’s redeemed.

3:9. The people needed purified lips (Jas 3). They use their purified lips to praise God, to call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him.

3:10. These people who are scattered will eventually come back and worship God. God *will* be worshiped, but He demands that it be done *according to His will*. Isaiah 66:20 - the nations try to get the Jews to come back.

3:11-13. The gospel of Christ will do this!

3:11. “In that day you will feel no shame because of your deeds” Their sins forgiven! The proud ones will be taken and you will never be proud again (1 Pet 5:6).

3:12. The remnant will be left - they will be humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord.

3:13. “The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies.” There will be no more deceit in the people’s mouths, but they will feed and lie down - like sheep - without worry. No one will cause them to worry.

3:14-20. This is a prophet of the Messianic Age. There is now reason to rejoice.

3:14-17. Joys of the Messiah’s redeemed.

3:14. Compare Zechariah 2:10; 9:9.

3:15. “The Lord has taken away His judgments against you.” He has cleared away your enemies. The king of Israel is in their midst. They were alright now. They would not have to fear disaster.

3:16. “In that day.” Their hands will not fall limp because of discouragement.

3:17. “The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior.” God is happy when people trust Him. He will be quiet in His love, He is very content with the spiritual attitude of the people.

- 3:18.** The people will not be able to keep the feast while they are in captivity; the reason for their grief.
- 3:19.** God will deal with their oppressors. God will gather the lame and the outcasts. These are the two groups usually killed first. The lame because of their handicaps, and the outcasts because they did not have the protection of the city walls (cf. Mic 4:6-7).
- 3:20.** “I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore the fortunes.” It was Jehovah who scattered (1:2-4) and it is Jehovah who will gather the faithful.

HABAKKUK

NAME:	Habakkuk
MEANING:	Love's Embrace, Heartener
DATE:	606 B.C.
AUDIENCE:	Judah
THEME:	The Problem of Faith in Perilous Times
SPECIAL NOTE:	How Can a Just God Use a Wicked Nation to Punish Israel?
OUTLINE:	I. Watch and See..... 1:1-2:3
	II. Stand and See..... 2:4-20
	III. Kneel and See.....Ch 3

LESSONS:

Faithfulness is the guarantee of permanence.

Evil is self-destructive.

The fact of Divine discipline.

When in doubt, turn to God and wait patiently for an answer.

Some problems cannot have a definite, direct answer.

We need to leave God's business where it belongs, WITH GOD!

HABAKKUK BACKGROUND

I. THE PERSON.

Very little is known about Habakkuk. We think he was a temple musician (3:19) which would mean he was a Levite (1 Chron 23:3-6). Habakkuk means “to embrace,” “to hearten,” or “to wrestle.”

II. DATE.

612-606 B.C. This would make him one of the last prophets to write before the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah and Ezekiel also go through this period of time. He is called by most commentators today “the questioning prophet.”

III. BACKGROUND.

When Habakkuk writes his book Nineveh no longer exists. Just as Nineveh had gloated over the destruction of No-Amon, now Babylon was going to gloat in her own victory over Nineveh.

IV. HABAKKUK’S PROBLEM.

Habakkuk deals with a problem that has faced most of God’s children at some time in their lives. The prophet questions how one can understand and justify the ways of God.

Unlike other prophets, Habakkuk was NOT concerned with warning the Jews of the need for repentance. The prophet had a problem in his own mind and the answer to his question is the theme of the book; How can God allow evil to triumph over good? (1:1-4).

Many times he had prayed and cried to God about the oppression of good, but he felt it had been to no avail. The prophet wondered why God allowed ungodly people to continue in their wickedness. He wondered when God would lift his hand and cause justice to reign on the earth. Would it ever? Does it now?

This book is different from the other prophetic books. In the other books we have the words of God addressed to the people. In Habakkuk the prophet represents the people; he addresses, and challenges God. He speaks to God on behalf of the people while the other prophets spoke to the people on behalf of God. In this book we see the problems that confront faith, but are made to see God is active on behalf of His own.

Habakkuk is concerned with finding out why tyranny and wrong are allowed to continue. He sees the problems of life and goes to the source of life for an answer. We have in Habakkuk the fact of discipline carried out against a nation. God is in active control, and makes clear that suffering in some cases is disciplinary.

Some have referred to Habakkuk as the “Doubting Thomas” of the Old Testament. By others he is called the “prophet of faith” (2:4).

We see that the book opens in GLOOM but closes in GLORY.

God will take care of the injustice in the world and is doing something about the wrongs in the world. GOD DOES CARE.

V. HABAKKUK THE PHILOSOPHER.

Habakkuk, like Zechariah and Haggai, calls himself “the prophet.”

Some say he was the disciple of Isaiah (Isa 8:16).

Tradition - the son of the Shunnamite woman (?).

VI. ALTERNATE OUTLINE.

- A. God’s judgment on Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Chaldeans (1:1-2:3).
- B. God’s judgment on the Chaldeans, the ungodly world power (2:4-20).
- C. Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment (3:1-19).

VII. ALTERNATE EXPANDED OUTLINE.

- A. God’s judgment on Judah (1:1-11).
 - 1. Habakkuk’s first question (1:2-4).
 - 2. God’s answer (1:5-11).
- B. God’s judgment on the Chaldeans (1:12-2:20).
 - 1. Habakkuk’s second question (1:12-17).
 - 2. Habakkuk’s vigil on the rampart.

3. God's reply.
 - a. The command which says, " Write plainly so that they can see while they run."
 - b. The time is not yet, but it is certain.
 - c. The difference between the one who lives by pride and the one who lives by his faithfulness.
 - d. Five woes:
 - 1) Woe to the plunderer for he will be plundered.
 - 2) Woe to the builder who engages in ungodly gain and cruelty.
 - 3) Woe to the builder who sheds blood to build a city with violence.
 - 4) Woe to him who treats conquered nations with cruelty and bloodshed.
 - 5) Woe to the idolater.

C. The psalm of Habakkuk (ch 3).

The prayer of Habakkuk the prophet according to Shigionoth. A dithyram-ic song.

1. Habakkuk's prayer (3:2).
 - a. Revive thy works in the midst of the years.
 - b. In wrath remember mercy.
2. A theophany.
3. The effects of God's great appearance on the prophet.
 - a. Fear.
 - 1) He trembled inside.

- 2) His lips quivered.
 - 3) His bones felt as if decayed.
 - 4) He trembled with dread waiting for the invasion.
- b. Calm resolution to rejoice in God though all material things fail.

VIII. TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK.

- A. The universal supremacy of God's judgment on the wicked.
1. Judah by the Chaldeans.
 2. The Chaldeans because of their wickedness.
- B. Faithfulness is the guarantee of permanency.
- Faithfulness means integrity, fidelity, steadfastness under all provocation.
- C. Evil is self-destructive.
- Tyranny is intolerable. In the nature of things it cannot endure but works out its own penalties.
- D. To solve the problem of divine discipline for his faithful fellow countrymen is the great aim of the book.
- E. The courage that the righteous can have in time of crisis.
- F. The fact of divine discipline (the nation suffering).

IX. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE.

- A. In every crisis God can be trusted.
- B. Evil has within itself the germs of death.
- C. We can see and understand God only when we rise above human doubt.
- D. The real purpose of religion is not to have all doubts removed but to be sure of God.

HABAKKUK EXPOSITION

CHAPTER ONE

1:1 “The oracle (burden - K.J.V.)” which he saw (cf. Nah 1:1).

1:2 “How long?” He wants to stir the people up. He has been calling upon the Lord for help but He does not seem to hear.

“Hear” - shemah (Deut 6:4). This, to the Hebrew, is a call for action. Habakkuk says, “I cry out to you.”

Key word, violence - CHAMAS – occurs in 1:2-3,9; 2:8,17(2). God’s people are committing violence against the law, and the Babylonians are doing violence to God’s people. He says, “Yet you do not save.” He is wondering why God is putting up with this destruction. Key word - why occurs in 1:3,13(2),14.

1:3-4. Why does judgment tarry?

1:3 “Why dost Thou make me see iniquity?”, all the bad things that are happening.

1:4 “Therefore, the law is ignored and justice is never upheld.” The righteous are so few and the wicked are so many they surround us, and the righteous become perverted.

1:5-11. These verses are God’s first response.

1:5 “Look among the nations! Observe!” God wants him to pay attention because He is going to use a pagan nation to pass judgment on His people.

“I am doing something in your days.” God works in all nations.

1:6 God names the people He has chosen - the Chaldeans. Habakkuk wonders why this wicked nation is chosen.

1:7 The Chaldeans were dreaded and feared. They made their own laws concerning war. They acknowledged no master and their “might makes right.”

1:8 “Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves.” They come from afar and so fast they appear as flying eagles.

“Their horsemen come from afar (spread themselves - KJV)” as hunters taking prey.

“Those who deal treacherously” = Baghdad. Brown, Driver, Briggs (p. 93) says, “to act or deal treacherously, deceitfully” (Mal 2:10-11,14,16).

Judah, or the faithful remnant, in comparison to the Chaldeans. But the question needed to be asked was, “What is the standard for righteousness?”

God’s judgment is not based upon how good others are, but is based on His word. This might also mean the righteous of verse 13 - the remnant.

- 1:14** “Why hast Thou made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things?”
Creeping things are caught in the net, and the fishermen do not want them. The Chaldeans, if they destroy us, will be like the creeping things in the nets - they are not wanted. And the Chaldeans have no other rulers to control them.
- 1:15** “The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net.”
They gather them together in the fishing net; they are glad and rejoice. This shows the total destruction of God’s people - all people will be gathered.
- 1:16** Because of their victory, they worship and offer sacrifice to their gods (v. 11).
- 1:17** Habakkuk asks if God will empty their net and slay nations without sparing. “Will you never stop them, Jehovah?”

CHAPTER TWO

2:1 Habakkuk says he has spoken all that was on his mind so now he is going to sit back and wait for God to respond. Notice the personal way in which Habakkuk was taking this:

- I. “I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,”
- II. “and how I may reply when I am reproved.”

2:2-20. Jehovah’s response.

2:2 God’s second response, “Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets.” A vision is an inspired revelation. The difference between inspiration and revelation is:

- I. Revelation - facts not previously known.
- II. Inspiration - recording of known facts (this is how to write, what to write).

Both are included in, "Record the vision." The vision is revelation and inspiration is how it is to be recorded (put it on tablets). Make it plain and simple and if you put it on tablets it will last. The tablets were usually located in a public place. Then the one who reads it could run and tell others or run and get out of town because the Chaldeans are coming.

2:3 The vision has not yet come to pass, but it is coming soon, and needs to be recorded so the people can be shown, when it is all over, the prophet (and God) was right.

"Tarries" - in man's eyes.

2:4 A person's real worth is distorted by pride. The righteous will live by His (God's) faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). A righteous man is not justified by keeping the law, but by his faith. Alternate translation - "the justified by faith shall live."

2:5 "Wine betrays the haughty man" Compare Proverbs 23:29-35. Wine deals with the treacherous in a treacherous way. Babylon is intoxicated with its power and success. Babylon is not staying at home, she is not satisfied with what she has. She is like death; death is never satisfied. Verses 4 and 5 are God's description of Chaldea (cf. Isa 29:9; 51:21).

NOTE: Five Woes:

- I. Verses 6-8.
- II. Verses 9-11.
- III. Verses 12-14.
- IV. Verses 15-17.
- V. Verses 18-20.

2:6 "Take up a taunt-song against him...and say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his - for how long?'" No one knows but God.

"Makes himself rich with loans?" The word "loan" is used in a sarcastic way - the nations Babylon was destroying said they would get their things back (Dan 5; Ezra 2).

2:7 "Will not your creditors rise up suddenly (literal translation is "those who bite you") and those who collect from you awaken?" You will become plunder for them.

2:8 God gives three charges against the Chaldeans:

- I. They looted many nations so, “All the remains of the people will loot you.” This was fulfilled by Cyrus the king of Persia when he entered Babylon in 539 B.C. - 23 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - II. Human bloodshed.
 - III. Violence done to the land.
- 2:9** The second of five woes. “Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house” (Jer 22:13). This one acquires his empire by plundering nations.
- “To put his nest on high” is to make it impregnable (Obad 3-4).
- 2:10** “Devised (consulted - KJV).” Literally “devised.”
- “You are sinning against yourself.” All of their efforts to strengthen themselves are only hurting them in the end.
- 2:11** “The stone will cry out from the wall, and the rafter will answer it from the framework.” These are the witness to what has happened.
- 2:12** The third woe - “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence!” They were building a city with slaves and killing the slaves who were doing the labor. Their blood cries out! (cf. Gen 4:10; Rev 6:10).
- 2:13** They were working hard for things that would not last; “toil for fire.” “And nations grow weary for nothing?”
- 2:14** “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord” (2 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Pet 3:3ff.). God’s word is the power and this is proved by the truthfulness of His prophecies. There is no place in the world where God’s fulfilled prophecy is not seen.
- 2:15** The fourth woe, “Woe to you who make your neighbors drink...to make them drunk .look on their nakedness.”
- 2:16** “You will be filled with disgrace.” Just as they had done to other nations they had disgraced, Babylon will make themselves this way. “The cup of the Lord’s right hand will come around to you (Jer 51:7; 21:15ff) and utter disgrace will come upon your glory.”
- 2:17** Beautiful Lebanon was totally destroyed! Its magnificent cedars were cut down, and even the animals were needlessly destroyed. Lebanon never recovered. But this was about to catch up with Babylon.

- 2:18** Images teach falsehood by promising what they cannot produce - a graven image is made of wood; a molten image is made of metals (cf. Jer 50:38; Isa 44:9-20).
- 2:19** The fifth woe, “Woe to him who says to a piece of wood ‘awake!’ to a dumb stone ‘arise!’” The classic attack upon idols is found in Isaiah 44:9-20.
- The idols might have been overlaid with gold or silver but they were still lifeless and useless.
- 2:20** He is talking about silently submitting to God’s rule or judgment. When you are in the presence of these idols you say, “Awake and arise,” but when you come before God you remain silent and listen to Him. Learn from God. Let Him be your teacher (cf. Psa 11:4; Zech 2:13).

CHAPTER THREE

- 3:1** A prayer of Habakkuk - his third response - a “shigionoth” is a highly emotional poetic psalm. It is stormy, martial and triumphant.
- 3:2** The Lord has answered all of his questions. Habakkuk replies, “I have heard... and I fear.” Fear draws him closer to God. He knows God’s wrath is completely justified, and hopes for compassion during the wrath.
- “Revive Thy work” (the work in 2:3) - to bring back life, like the raising of the dead.
- 3:3** “God came from Teman.” Teman is a city located in Edom and Mt. Paran was a mountain plateau west of Edom. The “selah” is a musical break - the instruments were to stop for a moment. This refers to Sinai and God’s earlier deliverances (cf. Deut 33:2).
- 3:4** God’s radiance was like the sunlight and His rays (lightning) were flashing from His hand (cf. Ex 34:29-30).
- “Hand” = from both of His sides, therefore His glory covers His omnipotence.
- 3:5** He sends out pestilence and plague, weapons of Jehovah.
- 3:6** “He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations... perpetual mountains...” “Perpetual” - OLAM - a long, indefinite period of time determined by God (Ex 31:16-17; 12:14; 30:8; 29:42; 40:15; Num 28:1-10). Mountains were shattered. “His ways are everlasting (OLAM).” The premillennialists and the

Sabatarrians use this OLAM as “everlasting” every time. How can something that is to be forever and ever be shattered? (Rom 7:1-9; Lk 2:22ff.).

God rules man and nature!

3:7 Cushan is Ethiopian. The Midianites dwelt east of Aqabah. The point is, these powerful nations, although hostile to Jehovah, were taken care of by God’s power. All oppressors of God’s people, including Babylon, will also be punished.

3:8 The Lord has worked many miracles on waters:

- I. Red Sea,
- II. Nile,
- III. Jordan and
- IV. Galilee.

God came with mighty power to bring salvation to His people. His anger was against the people, not any inanimate objects.

3:9 The soldiers would have a holder for their bow. “Were sworn” means “it will come to pass.” The rod has taken an oath to be true to its task (cf. Deut 32:40-43).

The “rods of chastisement” was Babylon.

3:10 Compare verse 6 - all of this is saying that nature is responding to the powerful voice of Jehovah. This points back to the flood.

3:11 The sun and moon are obedient. “Arrows” is used for God’s power (cf. Josh 10:11-14; Isa 13:9-13; Joel 2:1-2,10; 3:14; Amos 8:9).

3:12 God has done this in the past and will do it again.

3:13 Ultimate fulfillment is in the Messiah. This is an illustration of complete destruction over the head of the house of evil. God had fought for His people and He will fight for them again.

3:14 Here he is talking about the Chaldean king. In all that God does there is a purpose. When He punishes nations it is for good reasons. “Us” literally means “me.” God is identifying Himself with His people.

God turns Israel's enemies to fighting among and against themselves. The Medes and Chaldeans destroy Nineveh, then the Medes turn and destroy the Chaldeans.

3:15 All of this reflection on God's power changes Habakkuk's outlook. He turns all of his fears and anxieties over to God (v. 16ff.) and trusts in Him.

3:16 The reason his physical well being is crumbling is because Habakkuk must wait for the oncoming destruction. This shows that this chapter was written before 606 B.C. The Chaldeans have not come yet. This would be very hard, knowing what is going to happen.

"Inward parts trembled" means he is literally sick to his stomach. His bones do not even seem to be providing any structure for him; they feel decayed.

3:17-18. "Though...yet" = biblical hope.

3:17 Even though all of this is coming Habakkuk will exult in the Lord and rejoice in the God of His salvation. The final answer on how to feel while all of this is going on is to trust in the Lord.

Salvation from sins, and from an invading army, will come from the Lord if they give up. Like the Psalms, this (ch 3) was probably written for a choir.

3:19 This is victory on mountain tops, not fear and defeat in valleys!

HAGGAI

NAME: Haggai
MEANING: Festival, Festal, the Joyous One
DATE: 520 B.C.
AUDIENCE: The Remnant
THEME: Rebuild the Temple
SPECIAL NOTE: Complete Reversal of Attitude: Defeat to Victory

OUTLINE:

- I. A Message to Arouse (Build the House)..... 1:1-15
- II. A Message to Support (I am with you) 2:1-9
- III. A Message to Confirm (From this day I will
bless you)..... 2:10-19
- IV. A Message to Assure (In that day I will
make thee) 2:20-23

LESSONS:

Discouragement is no excuse to neglect duties.

The time to do a good work is now.

The basis for all successful teaching is, "Thus sayeth the Lord."

We are not to live in fine dwellings and allow God's work to lie in ruin.

No amount of holy service (church work) will cleanse us if we ourselves have not repented.

Practical problems call for plain and practical preaching.

Procrastination can be contagious.

HAGGAI INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROPHET.

Haggai means “festal.” It is unclear whether the name of the prophet is meant to have any connection with the theological import of the book. The book contains four oracles delivered in the second year of Darius, about 520 B.C. The prophet is mentioned as active during the time of the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra 4:24-5:2; 6:14-15. Haggai is one of the few books accepted as genuine by modern criticism.

II. BACKGROUND.

Only three prophets are from the post-exilic period: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied during the exile. All the rest were prophesying prior to the exile in Babylon.

Haggai begins his ministry about sixteen years after the first group of exiles return to Jerusalem.

Cyrus allowed Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar) to lead about 50,000 Jews (49,897) back to their homeland in 536 B.C. (2 Chron 36; Ezra 1).

These people began to rebuild the temple but soon became discouraged and quit (Neh 12). They had laid the foundation but abandoned the rest of the building until Haggai and Zechariah come along and encouraged them. The work is then completed in 515 B.C. (Ezra 6:14-15).

Haggai has been described as a man with one ambition. He preached to a poor, discouraged and frightened people. He attributed their lack of success in all areas of their national life to the single fact of their neglect of the temple. In a bold and authoritative manner he pleaded for the people to rebuild the temple.

Haggai spoke plainly, directly, briefly and tersely. His message is totally understood by the people. He is also one of the few prophets having the privilege of seeing his dream fulfilled. In his lifetime the temple was completed.

The challenge Haggai issued was aimed at the people's indifference. He sees the real problem in the people's lethargy. The problem he sees is that the people were working on their own homes rather than working on the temple! He succeeded in igniting the spark which set the flame burning in the hearts of the people to get to work and finish rebuilding the temple. He encouraged them to en-

sure all the hardships of the present with the assurance that better things were ahead.

Haggai realized the sin of procrastination, but also saw the obstacles of neighbors and famine God's people had faced. He saw the problems of fear and selfishness. He saw that the people had gotten out of the habit of worshiping God in the temple during the time of the exile and, therefore, had kept postponing the work which needed to be done.

Haggai does point out that neglect is wrong and restores in the people zeal and enthusiasm for the Lord's work once again.

Haggai and James both put emphasis on living holy lives daily as God wants us to live. The measure of one's faith is to be found in his doing what God commands.

III. IMPORTANT PHRASES IN THE BOOK.

Several phrases occur which give us an idea of the message of the prophecy.

- A. "Thus saith the Lord" indicates the source and the authority of the message.
- B. "Consider your ways" - a warning from God that some self-inspection and improvement is needed (1:5,7; 2:15,18).
- C. "The Lord's house" is contrasted with every man's "own house." This indicates the priority that must be placed on the house of the Lord and the work of the Lord.
- D. Oracles are addressed to Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest and the "remnant of the people." This emphasizes the responsibility and importance of the leaders to actually lead in doing God's work. It also reminds the people they are a "remnant" of a great nation which fell because of disobedience.
- E. "I am with you, saith the Lord." After stating that the people obeyed and feared before the Lord, God assures the people He is with them to prosper their labors (1:13; 2:4).
- F. "The work of your hands" (1:11; 2:17) is contrasted with "work on the house of the Lord" (1:14; 2:4).

- G. Messianic allusions. Haggai assures the people that the latter Glory of God's house will be greater than the former (2:6-9), that He will overthrow kingdoms and place Zerubbabel as a signet (2:14,23).

IV. **BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.**

- A. First deportation 606 B.C.

Treasures taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel was taken.

Jehoikim (?) taken.

- B. Second deportation 597 B.C.

Jehoichin and all rulers.

Zedekiah made king.

More treasures taken.

None but the poorest people remained.

2 Kings 24:10-20.

2 Chronicles 26:8-10.

Ezekiel 33:21 - Ezekiel taken into captivity.

- C. Third deportation 586 B.C.

Jerusalem walls broken down.

Houses and temple burned.

Rest of the people except very poorest taken.

All the valuables removed from the temple.

Two priests taken: Seraiah and Zephaniah. They were put to death at Riblah.

Gedaliah appointed governor (2 Kgs 25:1-21; Jer 40:60).

Jeremiah 25:8-13 predicted 70 years of captivity. 606-536 B.C. (cf. 2 Chron 36:17).

THE PERSIAN PERIOD.

Cyrus II king of Persia took Babylon in 539 B.C.

In 536 B.C. he issued a decree that the Jews who wanted could return to Jerusalem.

The first group left in 536 B.C. Zerubbabel was their leader. He was also called Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8 cf 2:2).

About 50,000 went.

Isaiah, 150 years prior, named Cyrus as the one who would release the people (Isa 44:28).

Fulfilled in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (also see Ezra 1).

The vessels and dishes from the temple were returned to be used in the rebuilt temple.

In 458 B.C. Ezra returned with 1,800 more people, and with gold, silver, counselors and princes (Ezra 8).

In 444 B.C. Nehemiah returned.

VI. EXTRA BIBLICAL SOURCES.

A. The Nabonaid Chronicles.

A clay tablet. A record of the activities of the last king of Babylon. It recorded the capture of Babylon by Cyrus.

B. The Cyrus Cylinder.

A baked clay cylinder about nine inches long. It shows Cyrus' policy of letting captive peoples return home.

C. The Behistun Rock.

Carved by Darius I to celebrate a military victory. This gave interpreters the key to the cuneiform languages.

VII. BIBLICAL SOURCES.

In 536 B.C. Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, and their brothers built an altar, offered sacrifices and celebrated the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

In 535 B.C. they laid the foundation of the temple. They faced much opposition and the work stopped.

In 520 B.C. Haggai began to preach. Haggai's main idea was to build the temple.

VIII. HAGGAI THE MAN.

He is credited with the authorship of some of the Psalms, notably in LXX of 137-138, 145-149, and in the Peshito (oldest Syriac version) with Psalm 125-126, 145, 148.

In the Midrash and the Talmud the legend is recorded of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi founding the Great Synagogue.

IX. SUMMARY.

The prophet assures the people that if they will get busy and do the Lord's work in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, the Lord will bless them and will be with them now and in the time to come.

HAGGAI EXPOSITION

Oracle of Religious Indifference and Admonition to Build the Temple.

First Message 1:1-15.

The Oracle 1:1-11

Superscription 1:1

1:1 Second year - 521 B.C.

First day of the sixth month - Elul, a minor fast day. (Our September/October.)

Zerubbabel - leader of the first return.

Joshua - high priest.

A Selfish and Indifferent People 1:2-6

1:2 Lord of Hosts occurs 26 times in a two chapter book.

This people not "My" people!

The time has not come. According to modern scholars the reason this statement is made is because the time of seventy years is being figured from 586 B.C., thus they have to wait until 516 B.C. However, the date of the book is 520 B.C. which refutes this theory.

House is a significant word in this book; the idea is of contrasting "your house" with "God's house" (cf. 1:4,9).

1:6 Five things to consider:

- I. You have sown much but harvested little,
- II. You eat but are not full,
- III. You drink but are thirsty and not drunk,
- IV. You wear clothes but are not warm and
- V. He who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.

These people are never getting enough to satisfy themselves. Do you think these people will turn to God as soon as they get their own houses built? No! Because their priorities are wrong.

Meager blessings due to improper attitudes.

God's Displeasure in Materialistic Ease and Indifference 1:7-11

1:8 The mountains - Lebanon (cf. Ezek 3:7).

House - the temple.

That I may be pleased. Our priority should be to please God, not ourselves.

1:9 Lies desolate - the temple is lying in ruins. God will not bless the people because of their attitude. If we will give to God, God will give to us.

1:10 Withheld its dew...withheld its produce. See how evil compounds troubles? Harder work is needed to accomplish the same amount of work.

1:11 A drought on

- I. The land,
- II. The mountains,
- III. The grain,
- IV. The new wine,
- V. The oil,
- VI. What the ground produces,
- VII. Men,
- VIII. Cattle and
- IX. All the labor of your hands.

Your hands. God is saying their hands are doing *their* work, but God wants them to be doing *His* work (cf. 2:17).

Historical Interlude..... 1:12-15

- 1:12 Remnant...obeyed. Compare Isaiah 10:21-22.
- 1:13 I am with you. When people change their attitude toward God, God will change His actions toward them.
- 1:14 They came and worked. The encouraging thing about preaching is that some people will respond (cf. 2 Tim 4:3-4).
- 1:15 Results in only 23 days (cf. v.1). Reverence and obedience go together.

Oracle of the Latter Glory of Jehovah's House.

Second Message 2:1-9

Builders Assured..... 2:1-5

- 2:1 The word of the Lord came by Haggai. Haggai is inspired by God.
Twenty-first of the seventh month - major feast day, last day of the Feast of Booths.
- 2:2 Son of - lineage of Zerubbabel and Joshua; the fourth time this is mentioned.
- 2:3 Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? This refers to Ezra 3:12. The former glory of the temple is gone; the price of sin.
- 2:4 Compare Ephesians 6:10.
- 2:5 My Spirit is abiding in your midst. Compare Exodus 29:45-46; Numbers 11:17, 25; 27:18).

The Temple's Future Glory 2:6-9

- 2:6 This verse is quoted in Hebrews 12:26-29. The Hebrew writer uses Haggai to illustrate proper and improper attitudes.
- 2:9 In this place. Jerusalem is where the final temple (the church) brings peace (cf. Isa 9:6-7; Eph 2:15-17).

Five things this temple lacked:

- I. Shikinah,

- II. Ark of the Covenant,
- III. Mercy seat,
- IV. Holy fire (perpetual fire) and
- V. Urim and Thummim.

Oracle of Restored Blessings Upon Completion of the Temple.

Third Message 2:10-19

The Behavior of the People Resulted in Their Uncleanness 2:10-14

2:10-13 Condemning questions.

2:12 Will holy meat make holy what it touches? No!

2:13 If the unclean touches what is clean will it become unclean? Yes!

2:14 Israel is an unclean people. Why? Compare 1:9.

Four things became unclean:

- I. The people,
- II. The whole nation,
- III. The work of their hands and
- IV. Their offerings.

Sanctification and Zeal Will Restore Prosperity 2:15-19

2:15 Consider. God is saying, "Think about it!"

2:17 Blasting wind - hot east winds.

Mildew - rotting crops.

2:18 Consider. God is saying, "Think about what has happened to you since your attitude became wrong." God had struck down everything they had done.

2:19 Consider what has happened since the foundation was laid:

- I. No surplus seed and
- II. Trees were fruitless.

But God says, "Do not worry about planting. Take care of My house first and then I will cause everything to grow."

Oracle of Renewed Promise of Salvation and Exhortation of Zerubbabel.

Fourth Message..... 2:20-23

2:20 Four and twentieth day - two sermons in one day.

2:22 By the sword of another (brother - KJV). Compare Habakkuk 3:14.

2:23 Signet. The last sermon is a personal note for Zerubbabel.

Compare Matthew 1:12-13.

ZECHARIAH

- NAME:** Zechariah
- MEANING:** He Whom the Lord Remembers
- DATE:** 520 B.C.
- AUDIENCE:** The Remnant
- THEME:** Rebuilding the Temple Only the First Step
- SPECIAL NOTE:** Apocalyptic Nature
- OUTLINE:**
- I. The Chosen People and the Temple.....Ch 1-8
 - II. The Messiah and His Kingdom.....Ch 9-14

LESSONS:

- God will cleanse and exalt those who serve Him.
- God's Spirit will see that God's work is completed.
- To be with God means to be a winner. Gloom means defeat and doom.
- The kingdom of God shall have a worldwide reach.
- The Messiah is due eternal glory.
- God does, and will always, rule.

ZECHARIAH BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I. Zechariah the man.

- A. His name means “He whom the Lord remembers.” The significance of the name serves as a reminder that God remembers His captive people and has mercy on them.
- B. Ezra tells us that both Zechariah and Haggai preached at the same time (cf. Ezra 5:1-3; 6:14-15). He is one of 29 different persons in the Bible carrying this name. Zechariah was born and reared in Babylon and was among the group which returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Neh 12,4,16).
- C. Son of Berechiah and grandson or great grandson of Iddo.
- D. Called “the seer,” and calls himself “the prophet” as Habakkuk and Haggai did.

II. Zechariah the book.

- A. Zechariah contains many visions and a great deal of apocalyptic symbolism. It shares its apocalyptic nature with the books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation.
- B. Written during the reign of Darius I.
- C. This is the longest and most difficult of all the Minor Prophets.
- D. Theme: Rebuilding the temple only the first step.

This is seen in the fact that the exiles were allowed to leave Persia. Jehovah is king over the whole earth. Jehovah wanted the exiles to focus upon His holy city, Jerusalem. The focus was to be primarily on the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Alternate themes:

- 1. Jehovah is in control of the universe.
- 2. Return to Me that I may return to you.

- E. The word “Jerusalem” is used in this book in both a literal and a spiritual sense. When it is used literally it refers to the physical city God wants His people to work on. When it is used spiritually, it is a symbol of God’s people.
- F. Key words: “Lord of Hosts,” and “Jerusalem.”
- G. Key concept: “Return,” compare 1:3.
- H. The nature: Encouragement and consolation.
- I. Haggai deals more with the physical rebuilding, and Zechariah with the spiritual rebuilding.

He, just as Haggai, encouraged the people to complete the difficult task of rebuilding the temple. Zechariah wants the people to fully understand that they are not alone. He tells the people that God’s presence is with them and he wants this message to strengthen them and help them to go forward.

Zechariah makes it a point to tell the children of God the time is soon coming when God’s promises are to be realized. He tells them God never has and never will let them down. Even though the tunnel of time seems dark and it seems there is no hope, He helps them, and us, to see that the eye of faith will always see the light through the darkness.

He was younger than Haggai and continued his ministry for a year or so beyond that of the older prophet.

Haggai rebuked and admonished while Zechariah encouraged and looked to brighter days.

Their work was fully complementary and compatible. They had never heard of a “generation gap.”

- J. Teachings of the book:
 1. “Return unto Me” (1:3-4). This is the prophet’s inspired plea for the people to return to Jehovah and not just to Jerusalem.
 2. “I am returned unto Jerusalem.” This is God’s way of assuring His people that now is the time when He will again pour out grace instead of punishment.

3. "The Lord shall yet choose Jerusalem." This phrase, too, indicates the special favor the Lord will show Jerusalem.
4. Joshua and Zerubbabel stand out in this book as well as in Haggai. Joshua is called back from sin to righteousness so that he will have access to Jehovah. Zerubbabel is assured God's spirit is with him to accomplish the work which the Lord commanded. Both are seen as symbolic of the messianic priest-king who will someday shepherd the people of God.
5. "The Branch." This is a term used to describe the cryptic figure of the messianic hope.
6. "In that day." This phrase occurs numerous times, especially in the closing chapters of the prophecy. It refers to the time in the distant future in which God will bring His blessings to their full completion on Jerusalem, His holy city, His faithful people.

K. Fasting:

Prior to the exile, only the Day of Atonement was observed as a required fast in Judaism. The other holy days on the Jewish calendar were feasts. Individuals might choose to fast as a sign of grief (2 Sam 1:12) or penitence (Dan 9:3-4).

After the exile, four other annual fasts began to be observed (Zech 8:19). At some point in Jewish history, the people began to think that fasting would gain an automatic hearing before God (Isa 58:3-4).

Zechariah stressed the important truth that fasting apart from obedience and total surrender of one's heart is useless (Zech 7:4-14). The mere FORM of godliness can never be substituted for its ESSENCE.

ZECHARIAH EXPOSITION

The Night Visions **1:1-6:15**

Call to Repentance **1:1-6**

Iddo returned with Zerubbabel (cf. Neh 1:4). Is this the grandfather of Zechariah? We do not know.

1:3 Return. We must return to God first!

1:4 He is using history as a teacher.

1:6 As the Lord of hosts proposed to do. The people are saying God was right in what He did.

They did not listen. Compare Deuteronomy 28:15.

THE EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS OF ZECHARIAH

Eight Visions (1:7-6:8).

I. The Horse Patrol (1:8-17).

God's agents are continually monitoring the events on earth.

II. The Four Horns* and the Four Craftsmen (1:18-21).

God has plans to punish the enemies of His people.

*Four Horns = Four Powers.

III. The Man* With the Measuring Line (2:1-13).

God intends once again to dwell with His people.

*The man is discouraged to measure.

IV. Satan and the High Priest Before God (3:1-10).

God will forgive His people despite their many sins.

V. The Seven Lamps and Two Olive-Trees (4:1-14).

God's blessings will be with those who do His work.

VI. The Flying Scroll (5:1-4).

God still intends to punish those who disregard Him.

VII. The Woman in the Ephah (5:5-11).

Sin must be completely removed from God's people (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-18).

VIII. The Four Chariots (6:1-8).

God's will is certain to take place. He *will* redeem His people.

These visions have now come full circle. In the first vision Israel wanted God to stir up the people. In vision number eight God is stirring up the people.

NOTE: These visions all convey the same basic message: God has always loved His people, and He will reward those who return to Him.

Zechariah 1:17 - "Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

The Horse Patrol..... 1:7-18

1:8 Night - often called the night visions.

Sorrel - we do not know exactly what color this is.

Angel...Man...Angel of the Lord = Angel of Jehovah..... 1:9-11

1:9 What are these? What do they represent, not what are they?

1:10 To patrol (walk to and fro - KJV) - "to walk about through" the earth.

1:11 Earth is peaceful and quiet (sitteth still...rest - KJV) - Darius is ruling in peace.

1:12 Seventy years - 606-536 B.C. in Babylon. The temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and rebuilt in 516 B.C. (cf. Jer 25:11-12).

1:14 Jealous. This word occurs twice in this verse for emphasis. It shows how jealous God is for His people.

Jerusalem and Zion. These terms, as used here, are synonymous.

1:15 They = Judah.

Are at ease, finding everything peaceful and quiet. This is not good. The people are to be maintaining their relationship with God, not letting religion become secondary.

They furthered the disaster (helped forward the affliction - KJV), making God more and more angry.

1:16 A measuring line - a rebuilding plan.

1:17 Threefold promise of blessings:

- I. My cities will again overflow with prosperity,
- II. The Lord will again comfort Zion and
- III. Again choose Jerusalem.

NOTE: All eight of these visions are designed to convey the idea that Jehovah is Lord of hosts.

The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen 1:18-21

1:18 Four horns. We do not know if these “four horns” represent four kingdoms as in Daniel or not. If they did, they could possibly be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia. However, “four” is a complete world number.

Horns = power.

1:19 What are these? Zechariah asks, “What is that?”

Scattered. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia were instrumental in doing this to the people.

1:20 Craftsmen (smiths - KJV) - craftsmen is better.

1:21 No man lifts up his head. They were ashamed of who they were.

NOTE: God has craftsmen who will begin work on the kingdom in a constructive manner.

God rules among the nations!

A Man With the Measuring Line2:1-13

2:2 To measure Jerusalem. The man with the line is to determine the boundary of Jerusalem.

2:4 Without walls. They will be able to expand without walls.

2:5 Wall of fire - a spiritual city.

Glory. This is an important word (cf. Hag 2:3-7). Zechariah is saying to the people, "Do not be discouraged."

2:6 Ho there! = give heed!

2:7 Zion = spiritual Jerusalem.

Daughter of. This is usually used in a derogatory sense. What is being said is, "Get away from the daughters of Babylon" (cf. 2 Cor 6:17-18).

NOTE: Verses six and seven are Hebrew parallelism. They are both saying the same thing.

2:8 After glory - to get glory for God by taking vengeance on the nations.

The nations which plunder you. God is saying, "I do not like anyone who touches My people."

Apple of His eye. The Hebrew word literally means "gate of the pupil." This is very sensitive! (cf. Deut 32:10; Psa 17:8; 19:8). To English speaking people, "apple of His eye" better conveys the idea of something precious.

For he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye. Think about God's relationship with His people. Zechariah is saying, "You were always the apple of God's eye, but the justice of God demands that you be punished."

2:9 I will wave My hand over them. Compare Isaiah 11:15; 19:16.

Their slaves (to those that served them - ASV). Jehovah will fight for His people.

Slaves (them - ASV) - the Jews.

Plunder. Compare Habakkuk 2:6-8.

The Church 2:10-13

2:10 Sing. Knowing that God will fight for you is indeed good news to sing about.

2:11 Many nations. In the book of Zechariah some prophecies are specifically for that time and others are future, culminating with Christ.

That day - the day of return.

Compare Isaiah 2:2-4; Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22.

2:12 Holy land. This is the only time in the Bible that Palestine is called the "holy land." This represents wherever Jehovah dwells.

2:13 He is aroused. Things are about to happen!

Holy habitation - the place where God dwells (cf. Hab 2:20). Man has a tendency to listen to many voices. We must, however, listen to God. These people were listening to the voices of the enemy. What voices do we listen to? The Child Psychologist who says "Do not discipline your child," or do we listen to God? (cf. Prov 13:24). Or perhaps the voices of sexual enlightenment?

Joshua and Satan Standing Before the Lord..... 3:1-10

3:1 Joshua represents all of the priesthood which in turn represents all Israel.

Satan - adversary or accuser (cf. Job 1:6ff; 2:2ff.). In the book of Job "sons of God" = angels. The scene in Job is the same as the one in Zechariah only this time it is Joshua. No one in the Hebrew religion was higher than the high priest, and that is where Satan begins his attack. Priesthood and leaders were usually instrumental in the demise of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 23:11).

Satan wants Jehovah to reject Joshua and, in so doing, all of Israel. Hence, Israel would be denied the favor of God. If Satan can pull Joshua down, he wins the battle.

3:2 Chosen Jerusalem. This is a significant term (cf. 1:17; 2:12). God is choosing Jerusalem as His holy city once again. This vision does not involve only the man Joshua, but the whole nation as well.

The fire = Babylonian captivity.

A brand plucked from the fire - as a nation:

1st - Physical and

2nd - Spiritual.

Compare Amos 4:11 and Jude 9,23.

3:3 Filthy Garments. Compare Isaiah 64:6. Filthy garments make one unclean, thus, if the high priest is unclean, then the nation is in serious trouble.

CORRUPTIONS FOUND IN THE PRIESTHOOD

- I. Priests made no distinction between clean and unclean (Ezek 22:26). Allowed the people to eat and sacrifice those things that were against the will of God.
- II. Promoted ignorance (Hos 4:6).
- III. Priest were feeding off of the sins of the people (Hos 4:8).
- IV. They taught for hire. Micah 3:11. For more references on priests see Jeremiah 2:26ff; 5:30ff.

NOTE: More sermons must be preached on the priesthood. God says Christians are priests today, therefore, we should learn from the Old Testament what is expected of priests.

3:4 He spoke - the angel.

Filthy garments - God's forgiveness of people's sin. A physical thing is taking place to convey a spiritual message.

I have taken your iniquity away from you. Only Jehovah can do this therefore, the angel = Jehovah.

3:5 I said. Zechariah is really getting involved in the vision.

Put a clean turban on his head...and clothed him - Jehovah's response to Satan's accusations. God is a forgiving God.

Compare Exodus 28:36-38; 19:5-6.

3:6-7 Admonished (protested - KJV). Joshua is given two solemn charges. If he will keep them he will be allowed to have responsibility in three areas.

THE TWO CHARGES:

- I. Walk in My ways (personal) and

II. Perform My service (be faithful in caring out your priestly duties).

NOTE: On the day of atonement the high priest first offered sacrifice for himself (cf. Heb 8:3; 10:1ff.).

THE THREE RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Judge My house (direct worship),

II. Charge of My courts (keep the courts scriptural, no idols, etc. See that worship is done according to the will of God) and

III. You will be qualified to stand in the presence of God. Today, Christians can stand in the presence of God because of Jesus.

Among these who are standing by - among angels, but not on their behalf. This will also be a place free from idols and idolatry.

3:8 Your friends - fellow priests, now and in the future.

Symbol (sign - ASV). Access to God through the priests will find its ultimate fulfillment in "the Branch," Jesus Christ.

The Branch. A branch is something that grows out of tree. So it is with Jesus. Christ grows "out" of the priesthood (cf. 6:12; Isa 4:2; 11:1-10; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15).

For more references concerning "the Branch" (see 6:12; Isa 4:2; 11:1; 53:2 [tender plant]; Jer 23:5; 33:15).

3:9 Stone - King of Jerusalem.

Set before - ultimate realization in Christ.

Seven eyes - all seeing, the care of God; represents the completeness of God's watchfulness.

Remove the iniquity - sins are forgiven. Christ will forgive all sins. This is the opposite of what Satan wanted to be given to Joshua.

3:10 In that day - probably the day the Messiah rules and assumes His priestly duties.

Every one of you invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree - Peace, protection, safety and security (cf. 1 Kgs 4:25 - safety; Isa 36:16 - peace; Mic 4:4 - protection, security. Also cf. Jer 31:31-34).

The Seven Lamps and the Olive Trees.....4:1-14

- 4:1** Awakened from his sleep - probably a result of the first four visions (cf. Dan 8:18,27).
- 4:2** Seven spouts (pipes - KJV). This is a picture of God constantly supplying His people.
- 4:4** My lord. It is interesting that Zechariah should call the angel “my lord.”
- 4:5** No, my lord. Zechariah was not a priest, thus he was not familiar with the duties and functions of priests. The lampstand represented the fact that God’s word will always be with the people.
- 4:6** Said to me - an encouraging word to a discouraged Zerubbabel. God is saying, “Don’t be discouraged, Zerubbabel, the problem will soon be like a mountain that has been laid waste.”

Not by might - not by physical strength.

Nor by power - nor by wealth, prestige, intimidation, etc.

- 4:7** O great mountains - any and all obstacles that would get in the way.

Top stone - the topmost stone that holds a building together. The topmost, the very last and the finishing stone.

- 4:9** Will finish it. This will be a sign that the Lord has come.

The Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. The angel of the Lord will assist Zerubbabel.

- 4:10** Seven - eyes of the Lord. Compare the last part of the verse. The eyes are glad when they see the “plummet” in the hand of Zerubbabel.

Plumb line (plummet - KJV) - a measuring device, such as a level.

- 4:12** Second time. The angel did not answer Zechariah the first time.

Empty the golden oil from themselves? Zechariah sees olives dripping with oil.

4:14 Two anointed ones - in context, Joshua and Zerubbabel. Also both in one = Christ (cf. 6:13):

- I. Priest (cf. Ex 30:30) and
- II. King (cf. 1 Sam 10:1).

The Flying Scroll 5:1-4

5:1 Flying scroll. Ancient Hebrews wrote on leather or parchment which was rolled on a stick.

5:2 Twenty cubits...ten cubits - approximately 30' x 15'. The significance of the symbol is obscure. Possibly represents the precise demands for holiness as given by God. It is the size of the holy place.

5:3 Steals...swears - dealing with two specific sins. The thief and the liar, both will be purged away.

Land (earth - KJV) - literally "land." The land of God's people wherever they are.

5:4 Thief...swears falsely. As the thief violates the rights of others by entering, so God is going to violate the thief's rights. The one who swears violates the right of God because he swears by the name of God. In other words, the thief does injustice to man, but the one who swears does injustice to God.

It will spend. The curse will spend the night.

The Woman in the Ephah 5:5-11

5:6 Ephah - a basket approximately seven gallons in size. The ephah and its contents represent the people of wickedness throughout the land.

5:7 Lid (talent - KJV) of lead. The woman could not lift the lid without help.

"Woman sitting in the ephah". The basket was large enough to hold a woman.

5:8 This is wickedness. Immoral women = wickedness (cf. Isa 1:21; Hos 2:5).

5:9 Wings of a stork - strength; strong, durable wings of a migratory bird.

5:11 Shinar. Compare Genesis 11:2, designated a land of evil. Evil must be fully removed from God's people and the complete separateness must be maintained throughout all time.

The Four Chariots6:1-8

- 6:1** Mountains were bronze (brass - KJV) - strong, impenetrable mountains.
- 6:2** Red - blood and war. Compare Revelation 6:1-8.
Black - misery; something bleak and depressing, such as, famine, economic depression, etc. (cf. Rev 6: 5-6).
- 6:3** White - victory. Compare 6:1-2.
Dappled (grizzled - KJV) - victory over a number of bad things, such as the sword, famine, evil beasts and pestilence (cf. Ezek 14:21; 6:1).
- 6:4** What are these, my lord? - God’s protecting providence.
- 6:5** Four spirits (winds - KJV) of heaven - come from God. Psalm 104:4 and Hebrews 1:7 tell us “winds” are God’s messengers.
- 6:6** North country - Babylon, Assyria, Medo-Persia. A black horse is going to bring judgment on the people of the north country. Why? (cf. Isa 14:6; 47:6).
South country - Egypt, Edom, enemies of God’s people.
North and south together represent all heathen powers.
- 6:7** Strong ones = Dappled horses. Compare verse 3, willing to do more than what God required.
Patrol (to and fro through - KJV) the earth - granted to the dappled horses what they wanted to do.
- 6:8** Compare Isaiah 26:9; 55:11 and Haggai 2:6.
NOTE: The red horse is left out of this section. The red horses could be the “strong ones” of verse seven.

The Crowning of Joshua Typifies the “Branch” Who is the True Priest-King6:9-15

The Crown Provided.....6:9-11

- 6:10** Hildai, Tobijah and Jedaiah...where they have arrived from Babylon. The three men have just arrived from Babylon.

6:11 Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown. Gold and silver were taken from them to make crowns.

Crown - a two-tiered crown, interwoven - therefore plural "crowns."

Set it on the head of Joshua. The crowns were to be placed on the head of the high priest. The significance of this scene is found in verses 12-13.

The Typification 6:12-15

Compare Homer Hailey's commentary.

6:12 Joshua was a type of "He who is to come (Jesus)."

PROPHECIES OF JESUS AS PRIEST-KING:

Priest

Hebrews 4:14
Hebrews 5:9-10
Hebrews 7:1-22 (Psa 110:4)
Hebrews 8:1
Hebrews 2:17; 3:1

King

John 1:49
Revelation 19:16; 17:14
John 18:37; 12:15
Hebrews 8:1
Matthew 2:2; 21:5; 27:11
Luke 1:32-33; 23:2
John 12:15
Revelation 1:5
Isaiah 9:6-7; 2 Samuel 7:12-13

The Idea of the Kingdom

Luke 22:27
John 18:36
Colossians 1:13
Revelation 1:6
(Cf. Mt 28:18)

He will branch out. Compare Isaiah 53:2.

He will build. Compare 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 2:21-22 and Hebrews 3:6.

6:13 He shall build the temple. Compare Revelation 4:11.

He shall be a priest. Compare Hebrews 7:17 and Revelation 3:21.

Counsel of peace will be between the two offices. Whatever is happening in this scene, the significance is that Christ will be both priest and king (cf. Eph 2:14,17).

KING AND PRIEST (Zech 6:12-13).

He shall build the temple	1 Corinthians 3:16
He shall sit on His throne	Acts 2:34ff
He shall rule on His throne	Hebrews 1:8
He shall be priest on His throne	Hebrews 4:14; 8:4
He sits, rules and is priest on His throne now	Psalm 110; Hebrews 5:6-10; Revelation 3:21; Zechariah 6:12-13; Hebrews 6:2; 7:1-3

Christ is priest after the order of Melchizedek, therefore, He is king and priest at the same time, at this time, now - in heaven.

6:15 Far off. Some say this refers to the Jews, but more than likely it refers to the Gentiles (cf. Eph 2:13-19 and the article by Homer Hailey).

Salvation was conditional for the Jews also!

The Question of Fasting7:1-8:23

Fasting Versus Obedience.....7:1-7

The Question: “Should I weep in the fifth month?”7:1-3

7:1 Fourth year. It has been almost two years since the night visions. 518 B.C.

Chislev - late December or early January.

7:3 Abstain (separating myself - KJV) - fastings.

The Answers, “Should you not hear the words of Jehovah?”7:4-7

7:5 Fasted...fifth. The fast in the fifth month commemorated the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kgs 25:8ff; Jer 52:12).

Seventh month. The fast in the seventh month perhaps commemorated the murder of Gedaliah (cf. Jer 41:1ff.).

Was it actually for Me that you fasted? Because they were fasting did not mean God approved of their fasting. There was nothing sinful with these fasts, but what was wrong was they were being done for selfish motives. In their self pity they had established several fasts.

7:7 Are not these the words which the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets?

Verbal, plenary inspiration!

If your fathers had listened there would be no need for these fastings.

The Requirements of Jehovah 7:8-14

Consider the Forefathers 7:8-10

God's Requirements Had Not Changed..... 7:9-10

7:9 Has - note the past tense.

Kindness and compassion. Compare Micah 6:8 and Isaiah 58:6-7.

Each to his brother. The Jews had lost a sense of brotherhood, of unity, of a nation.

7:10 Oppress. These people were constantly looking for ways to make money, and they did not care who was going to be the object of their devices.

Widow. Even today people hover over widows like vultures, thinking they are easy prey for making money. They might find somebody who is not only depressed, but vulnerable to whatever schemes they might have.

Orphan. They do not have any place to really call home and, if they have anything, it can easily be taken.

Stranger. Strangers are the same way. They are in a land that is not theirs and they do not know the people.

Poor. They could be oppressed by having to work for wages far below what should be paid. This is what the people had been doing.

Forefathers' Disobedience 7:11-14

7:11 Turned a stubborn shoulder. The people pulled away from God like a stubborn ox.

7:12 Hearts like flint (adamant stone - KJV). This is the crux of the problem, they were as hard as a diamond. Their hearts were not soft toward the word of God. If it could happen to them, it can happen to us.

Sent by His Spirit. Compare 2 Timothy 3:16.

7:13 And it came about - the inevitable consequence when one disobeys God.

They called and I will not listen. The people turned a deaf ear to God. God will turn a deaf ear to them.

7:14 The land is desolated behind them. Sin has an impact upon the land (cf. Rom 8:18-25).

The point is: God has brought the remnant back and the temple is being rebuilt, so why fast?

The Restoration by Jehovah.....8:1-23

There are sixteen claims for inspiration in chapter eight.

Rejoicing in Redemption.....8:1-8

8:1-2 Then the word of the Lord of hosts came saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts. Is this not rather strange? Why is it necessary to repeat the thought? Could not God just as easily said, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts?" This is an Eastern literary style of repetitive writing (cf. v.18).

8:2 Thus says the Lord of hosts - a recurring phrase (cf. 4,6,7,9,11,14(2),19,20,23). Occurs eleven times in this chapter.

Jealous is also a key word. God's jealousy for His people is rekindled.

8:3 Thus says the Lord. Compare verse 17 and 1:2-4. Zechariah, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is saying the Lord of hosts is the source of this message.

I will return. God had left! (cf. Ezek 11:23).

City of Truth. What was Jerusalem called before? (cf. 7:10). Now she will be called "city of Truth," just the opposite to lies and oppression she is known for now.

Truth. This is a word that dominates the chapter (cf. vv. 8,16,19). God is saying, "Be truthful with one another. Be a people of truth."

The Holy Mountain. Jerusalem literally sat on a mountain. The idea of God's "holy mountain" really becomes beautiful when we read Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4,18-19; 11:23. The thought in these verses is that Jehovah is leaving His holy sanctuary. Some things tend to become beautiful and precious when we have lost them or know that we are going to lose them. Here, however, in Zechariah, God's glory is coming back.

8:4-5 A description of what the city will be like when Jehovah returns. A safe, secure, peaceful city for young and old alike. But this is conditional (Deut 28).

8:6 If it is too difficult (be marvelous - KJV). Compare verses 4-5 - unbelievable, impossible. To think that this could not happen is not to trust in the power of God.

8:7-8 These verses are also conditional.

8:7 I am going to save My people from land of the east and from land of the west - the first of three promises God makes to His people.

NOTE: "East...west" - a Jewish expression meaning the whole earth.

8:8 They will live in the midst of Jerusalem - the second promise.

They will be My people and I will be their God - the third promise.

In truth and righteousness. These promises, however, are conditional on whether the people are living in righteousness and truth.

Peace for the Seed.....8:9-17

8:9 Let your hands be strong. Compare verse 13. Hands that are weak do not work for God. Righteousness and truth require strong hands and strong lives.

You who are listening - not like their fathers did.

In these days - days of Haggai's and Zechariah's prophesying.

8:10 In those days - days of rebuilding (cf. Hag 1:6-11).

8:11 God is lifting His curse (cf. Hag 2:19).

8:12 The land will yield its produce. The land becomes productive once again.

8:13 O house of Judah and house of Israel. Some of both tribes were present.

Let your hands be strong. God is behind the rebuilding of the temple, therefore, there is no reason for the people to be fearful (cf. Jer 30:3).

8:14-15 If God could keep His promises before, He can also keep them now.

8:15 Do not fear! The final conclusion! This is a recurring phrase. The point is that God has already done what He said He would do (cf. Rom 9:22).

8:16-17 Four requirements.

8:16 I. Speak the truth to one another. This is the first of two positive requirements given to the people by God. If Jerusalem is going to be called “the city of Truth” then “truth” must begin with her people.

II. Judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates - the second positive requirement. God is saying, “If you want these good things to come to pass then do these requirements.”

8:17 III. Let none of you devise evil in your hearts against another. When a person lies there is something wrong in his heart. This is the first of two negative requirements.

IV. Do not love perjury - second negative requirement. This could refer to an oath taken in the name of a false god, or an oath taken that one has no intention of keeping.

a = d and b = c.

The idea of “evil” and “false oath” is not a new idea to Zechariah (cf. 5:3). Here we have two groups of people - the thief and the liar.

For these are what I hate. Compare Proverbs 6:16-19.

Fasting Shall Be Joy, Gladness and Cheerful Feasts..... 8:18-23

8:19 Fourth...month. This fast commemorated the breach in the wall.

Tenth. This fast commemorated Nebuchadnezzar’s coming against Jerusalem (cf. Jer 52).

Fasts that commemorated something negative were now to be replaced by joy. There was no longer a breach in the wall, the temple was not in ruins nor a siege of Jerusalem, therefore, instead of a fast the people were to have a feast. Do not mourn, celebrate!

Love truth and peace. God is saying, “Do not love what I hate” (cf. v.17 - false oath).

8:20 Peoples will come as the result of loving truth.

8:20-22 A great text for evangelism! When Christians live as they must, people will notice (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

8:22 Mighty nations = people with strong desire to worship God.

8:23 Ten men - full, complete, a large number. Other passages dealing with the number ten: Genesis 31:7; Numbers 14:22; Nehemiah 4:12; Job 19:3; Daniel 1:20.

Will grasp the garment of a Jew. This despised people were being used as a means to find God. It is not what you do but what you are that will bring people to God.

In searching for salvation the world will turn to the Jews.

Prophecies of World Powers and God's Kingdom.....9:1-14:21

Zion Delivered by Her King, the Messiah9:1-10:12

Judgment - Fall of the Heathen World9:1-7

This is a proclamation against the enemies of God's people, and is used to encourage His people. This begins the third vision.

First Vision - eight night visions (chapters 1-6).

Second Vision - glorious Jerusalem (chapters 7-8).

Third Vision - burdens against the enemies of God's people (chapters 9-11).

Burdens against Israel (chapters 12-14).

9:1 Burden = an oracle. The Hebrew word means "something that weighs on one's shoulder."

Land of Hadrach. We do not know where this land was located. It could be in the area of Damascus.

The eyes of men to watch God's workings.

9:2 Tyre and Sidon - Phoenician cities. Tyre was the capital of Phoenicia.

9:3 Tyre . This name was used as a hyperbole to symbolize great wealth.

9:4 The Lord will dispossess her - through Alexander the Great.

She will be consumed with fire. Compare Ezekiel 22.

9:5-6 Ashkelon...Gaza...Ekron...Ashdod - major Phoenician cities.

9:7 I will remove:

I. Blood from her mouth...detestable things - idolatry will be removed.

II. Remnant (chieftain - KJV)...clan (Jebusite - KJV) - become a part of Judah.

God will completely abolish the nation of Philistia. (History proves He did!)
There were no known Phoenicians remaining by the time Jesus was born. They had been completely absorbed into other nations by that time.

Messianic King and His reign 9:8-10

9:8 Returns - a key concept of this book.

9:9-10 These verses are a prophecy.

9:9 Rejoice. Faithful people of God are to be a joyous people. Why?...

Your king is coming to you. Compare Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.

Daughter of. Here is one of the few times this term is not used in a derogatory sense. It is the faithful (cf. note on 2:7).

Mounted on a donkey. This is significant because since the days of Solomon kings had always ridden upon horses. This speaks to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom.

9:10 Chariot. These were not needed because God is the one saying, "Peace."

Ephraim - used to symbolize the ten tribes.

A world-wide kingdom not ruled by force.

Victory - Sons of Zion Over Sons of Greece 9:11-17

9:11 As for you - the faithful remnant.

Your prisoners - the exiles.

From the waterless pit - where they were cut off from God.

9:12 Return (turn - KJV) - our key word again.

I will restore double to you - punishment fulfilled, now blessings!

9:13-15 Jehovah is pictured as a mighty warrior. This section may have reference to the intertestamental period when Antiochus Epiphanes wreaked havoc upon Jerusalem.

9:13 Against your sons, O Greece. God's ways versus Greek philosophy and ways.

9:14-15 This is the Lord's battle.

9:14 Storm winds (whirlwinds - KJV) like tornados. On a number of occasions God used the weather to bring about His will (cf. Isa 21:1; 66:15; Amos 1:14).

9:15 Sling stones. These were stones that had been cast but had missed their mark.

Altar. The altar would usually be drenched with blood because of the sacrifice of many animals.

The blood of God's enemies will be as a sacrifice on the altar. This refers to the Maccabean wars.

9:16-17 These verses show Christ's system as victorious over the Greek philosophy and religions.

9:17 Make the young men flourish. Young men will be strong.

New wine the virgins. This speaks of one who has beauty and charm.

Redemption - For the People of God 10:1-12

There is not a break of thought here.

10:1 Ask. Prayer shows dependence on God.

Storm clouds. Literally: lightening, thunderbolts.

10:2 Teraphim - household gods. (cf. Gen 31:19,30-35).

Teraphim...diviners...lying visions - three sources of "divine" guidance in ancient times. This kind of guidance was "vain" guidance.

They...they - Israel and Judah.

10:3 Shepherds...goats refer to the kings of the heathens.

Majestic (goodly - KJV) horse - horse of war. Compare 9:13 and Job 39:19-25.

10:4 Them - Judah.

Cornerstone. In ancient buildings this stone was crucial. It held the building together. Christ is the crucial stone to the church (cf. Eph 2:20).

Tent peg (nail - KJV). A nail is used to hang something on or secure something with, and in this context it carries the idea of one who can be depended on.

Bow of battle. Everything, all defense, is available from God.

10:5 Riders on horses will be put to shame. Compare Judges 1:19 (iron chariot); Psalm 20:7; 2 Samuel 8:4 (David); 1 Kings 9:19 (Solomon was the first Hebrew king to effectively use the chariot). No matter what major weapon of war the enemy had, it could not stand against God's people. Zechariah is saying, "You will be more glorious than any weapon of war." Righteousness exalts a nation. These people are on God's side. Therefore, it does not matter if the enemy has chariots, they will lose.

10:6 I will answer them. Their cries and pleas shall be heard (cf. Jer 30:3).

10:7 A remnant of Israel will also enjoy the final Messianic kingdom.

10:8 I will whistle (hiss - KJV) for them - a bell or whistle used to gather bees to a swarm.

10:9 Scatter (sow - KJV). This is to plant, NOT to scatter!

10:10 Egypt...Assyria. All lands holding Jews bondage will allow them to return.

No room can be found for them. Therefore they will be a multitude (cf. Isa 49:19-20).

10:11 Jehovah is in control!

10:12 His name = His authority.

NOTE: Contextually, these words are encouragement for those who will return as well as to those who have already returned.

The Good and Foolish Shepherds 11:1-17

Lamentation 11:1-3

The final judgment upon the political and religious systems of the Jews in 70 A.D.

11:1 Lebanon - symbolic for northern Palestine. The enemies of God's people will come through Lebanon as they approach for war. This is a sarcastic statement.

Cedars - inferior trees to those of Lebanon.

Allegory of the Good Shepherd 11:4-14

11:4 Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter - the people being destroyed by foreign masters.

11:5 Go unpunished (hold themselves not guilty - KJV) - claiming they are being blessed by Jehovah.

11:6 No longer have pity the inhabitants of the land. Bad times are coming soon.

Land...land - "earth" is better.

I shall not deliver them. God rules among the nations.

11:7 Favor (beauty - KJV) speaks of God's favor of the people.

Union (bands - KJV) refers to the union of Judah and Israel.

11:8 Three shepherds - literally "under-shepherds." Those who shepherded God's people, the false prophets, did a poor job. We do not know who these shepherds were, but we do know they were annihilated.

Them...their - the people.

Their soul also was weary of me - did not like Zechariah.

11:9 I will not pasture you (feed you - KJV). God said this because they were a stubborn people.

The people have rejected the Prophet/Shepherd, so He rejects them.

11:10 Because of this verse some people think this book is out of chronological order. It must be remembered, however, that this vision is trying to let the people “see” into the mind of God.

Covenant - that they should not hurt His people (cf. Isa 24:5).

All the peoples - all nations.

11:11 The afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord. While watching the people being carried off into captivity, the poor, left behind say, “Yes, we remember God said this would happen.” A remnant understood!

11:12 Thirty shekels of silver. This was a insult to the shepherd (cf. Ex 21:32; Mt 26:15). It is as if you had asked someone to pay you for a job you had done and they paid you only a penny.

What are Jehovah’s services worth? This is the greatest of insults! This is the price of a gored son or daughter (a slave!).

11:13 I was valued (prized - KJV). Ultimately it was God who was insulted.

Threw them - a way of saying, “Throw it away” (cf. Mt 27:3-10). A public display of God’s contempt.

NOTE: Jesus attributes this saying to Jeremiah when it was Zechariah who recorded it. Why would Jesus do this? There are at least two reasons:

- I. During the time of Jesus scribes would group scrolls together and give them a title. Hence, Jesus refers to the scroll of Jeremiah which contains the writings of Zechariah.
- II. Since there is no mention of a potter’s field in Zechariah, Matthew is getting his key idea from Jeremiah 18:2-3. The ancients had a rule that when a combination of two ancient quotes were given, the two of them were always attributed to the major writer. In this case it would be Jeremiah.

11:14 I cut my second staff. When the staff had been broken, God’s people were left without His favor. Now they are left without the unity of God.

Allegory of the Foolish Shepherd..... 11:15-17

11:15 A foolish shepherd. When you reject Jehovah, you get Satan’s leaders!

11:16 A shepherd. Whoever this shepherd was, he represents one who does not care about the people. They were selfish and uncaring leaders.

Tear off their hooves - a Jewish expression meaning that one is to get everything they can. It also stands for a small amount of meat left on the hoof.

11:17 Worthless shepherd. This shepherd is going to receive from the Lord what he has earned. He will be maimed and blinded.

His arm. The arm should have protected them.

His right eye. The eye should have watched over them.

The “Future” - Israel’s Future in Turning to the Lord.....12:1-13:6

Israel’s Conflict and Victory..... 12:1-9

12:1 Israel. This “burden” concerns Israel; Israel under the Messiah.

Forms the spirit of man within him. This passage tells us God gives men their spirits.

12:2 Jerusalem...Judah - all spiritual Israel. Compare Isaiah 51:17,22-23; Jeremiah 25:15; 51:39 and Habakkuk 2:16.

12:3 In that day. This is a recurring phrase (cf. vv. 4,6,8,9,11; 13:1,2,4; 14:1,4,6,8-9, 13,20-21). This phrase speaks of the future. Because of this phrase, chapters 12-14 are heavily Messianic.

Heavy stone - not Christ but compare Romans 9:33; Galatians 5:11 and 1 Peter 2:8.

Severely injured. There will always be enemies against God’s people, but they will hurt only themselves in the long run.

12:4 I will strike. This is speaking of God’s protection for His people. Jehovah will be the power of His church.

12:5 Clans (governors - KJV, chieftains - ASV) - elders of the church.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is where the leaders should be, out among the people.

Through the Lord of hosts, their God. Ultimately the leaders will know their strength comes from God.

The elders derive their strength from the members who get their strength from God, therefore unity and victory.

12:6 Jerusalem. The people will ultimately realize protection is found in God's city.

The church is the last world power.

12:7 Save the tents of Judah. The idea is that God will save all the faithful, not just those who are in the holy city. This is God's way of keeping the people humble. It carries the idea of unity.

All glorying will be in God (cf. 1 Cor 1:31).

12:8 Angel of the Lord - a clearer passage calling God the angel of the Lord.

All of our strength is in God.

12:9 All the nations. All are equal in God's care.

Spirit of Grace and of Penitential Lamentation 12:10-14

12:10 God is speaking.

Whom they have pierced. Compare John 19:37 and Psalm 22:16-17.

12:11 Great mourning. When one realizes what was done to God's only Son, those who are truly God's people will repent and mourn. As in the day Joshua died.

Hadadrimmon...Migiddon - probably refers to the death of Josiah (cf. 2 Chron 35:20-25).

Hadadrimmon - a small town south of Megiddo.

12:12-14 All! All, whether great or small!

12:13 Shimeites - grandsons of Levi (cf. Num 3:17-18).

12:14 Itself...themselves (apart...apart - KJV) signifies a time of great loneliness. The people will be depressed.

A Fountain of Grace Opened for Salvation..... 13:1-6

13:1 In that day - the day the Son was pierced (cf. 12:10).

Fountain - the blood of Jesus. Jesus' blood blots out sin (cf. Jn 4:13-14; 1 Jn 1:7; Heb 8:12).

13:2 Cut off...idols. Compare verse 9; 14:9.

From the land - out of true Israel, out of the true church.

Land. Notice he does not say "earth." He uses prophetic language to talk about the Christian era.

Unclean spirit from the land - a period during the time of Christ.

NOTE: This verse says God will do three things:

- I. Cut off the names of idols,
- II. Remove prophets from the land and
- III. Remove unclean spirits from the land.

Satan's power is often displayed when God's power is displayed. Notice:

<u>God's power</u>	<u>Satan's power</u>
Creation	In the garden
Moses	Egyptian magicians
Christ	Demons
Apostles	Demons

When there is a surge of God's power, Satan also puts forth his power. But when God removes His power, He also removes Satan's power. Therefore, Zechariah, in this passage, is telling us these things have ceased (cf. 1 Cor 13:8ff.). This does not mean that some will not still prophesy (cf. v. 3).

13:3 Still prophecies. Since prophecy has been removed, anyone claiming to be a prophet is a liar.

You have spoken falsely. They testify that he is worthy of spiritual death.

13:4 Will each be ashamed because their prophecies fail.

Hairy robe. This tells us how a prophet would look (cf. 1 Kgs 19:13,19; 2 Kgs 1:8). Prophets will no longer put on this type of clothing in order to deceive.

13:5 Not a prophet. When his prophecies fail he will try to lie and claim that he never was a prophet.

13:6 This is a difficult passage for there is no historical background to help us determine what it means.

And one will say to him - Him is the pierced of 12:10 and not the false prophet of verse 5.

These wounds - possibly received because of false prophecy.

House of my friends. The prophet is saying it happened by accident in the house of a friend (cf. v. 3).

NOTE: Some think verse 3 is giving parents permission to kill their children.

Judgment of Purification and Jerusalem's Future Glory 13:7-14:21

The Shepherd's Flock Scattered 13:7-9

13:7 My Shepherd - Jesus (cf. Jn 10).

My Associate (fellow - KJV) - one who is of the same nature as another. God is referring to Jesus as being of the same nature as He is, divine. He is equal in essence (divinity) with the Lord of hosts! (cf. Jn 10:30).

Scattered. The shepherd is struck down, and the sheep are scattered. This refers to the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 1:8).

Against (upon - KJV). Notice: this is not "against." This is something good, not bad; it is to protect (cf. Isa 1:25; Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27; Acts 2:23).

13:8 Two parts - the majority.

The third - again, only a remnant.

13:9 Refine. Compare 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12.

Gold. Refined by the trials of Christianity, one will come out as pure gold.

Call. They will then call upon Jehovah and they will know who their God is.

Judgment and Deliverance 14:1-5

14:1-3 Refers to the Entire Messianic Age, But There is Always a Remnant.

14:1 Divided refers to refinement by fire.

14:2 City will be captured. It is possible this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem - the people of God.

The rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. This does not fit with the destruction of Jerusalem. In apocalyptic language it a way of saying hard times are coming (cf. Rev 13:7; Dan 7:21).

14:3 Fight. Jehovah was fighting for His people.

14:4-5. Compare Hebrews 4:16 and 2 Peter 2:9.

14:4 Mount of Olives - footstool of God.

14:5 Azel. We do not know what this is.

Earthquake. Compare Isaiah 29:6 and Amos 1:1.

NOTE: Verses 3-5 are talking about God protecting His people by making a valley for them to hide in. God always provides a way of escape (cf. 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 4:16; 2 Pet 2:9).

Salvation 14:6-11

14:6 Will be no light - a day of distress (cf. Joel 2).

14:7 There will be light. This is speaking of hope. When evening comes there will be light. This may refer to the crucifixion of Jesus, a time of distress, but there is still hope (cf. Jn 14:18; Heb 13:5).

14:8 Living waters - waters of salvation (cf. Jn 4:13-15; 7:38; Rev 22:1ff.).

Eastern sea - Dead Sea.

Western sea - Mediterranean Sea.

Summer as well as in winter. Waters of salvation will flow at all seasons, during times of goodness and during times of persecution.

14:9 King. Compare 9:9-10. The kingship of Jehovah is through Christ.

Compare Deuteronomy 6:4 and Ephesians 4:5.

14:10-11 Plain = all of the earth lowered (humbled), but Jerusalem (the church) is exalted.

14:10 Geba - north of Jerusalem.

Rimmon - south of Jerusalem.

To a Jew this would mean the city is as large as it has ever been. In apocalyptic language this is saying God's kingdom will be full and complete (cf. v. 11).

Destruction of Enemies 14:12-15

14:12-15 Plague = all God's enemies being defeated.

14:12 Against Jerusalem - against God's people.

Stand - while they were still living.

14:13 Great panic. This condition had described Jerusalem at one time (cf. Mic 7:2-6).

14:14 Wealth of all the surrounding nations. Everything the nations around them have will be at the disposal of Israel.

God will still provide all of the church's needs.

14:15 Horse...mule...camel...donkey - possibly animals used against Israel in war. Again, this is referring to God's protection of His people.

Conversion of the Nations 14:16-19

14:16-19 **A Remnant Will Turn to God, All Others Shall Be Cursed.**

14:16 All the nations. The time will come when converted Gentiles will unite with Judah to worship God.

Feast of Booths (Tabernacles - KJV) held on the seventh month. Commemorated the wilderness wanderings. It was, however, also a time of rejoicing because the people were delivered from bondage. Therefore, this was an appropriate feast as it would remind them of their bondage (cf. Lev 23; Rom 6:12ff.).

14:17 No rain. Only in Christ will one receive blessings (cf. Eph 1:3).

14:18 Egypt - symbolic of the enemies of God's people.

14:19 Punishment of all the nations. All who fail to keep God's commandments will be punished.

Unholiness Removed; Holiness unto Jehovah Established 14:20-21

14:20 HOLY TO THE LORD. High priests wore this on their turbans. The significance of the bells on the horses is that everything having to do with God will be holy. This is using something designed for war for a nobler purpose.

Bowls before the altar. The bowls will be sanctified.

14:21 Canaanite - one who was unclean.

SUMMARY: Everything and everyone in the church will be sanctified to the Lord. This includes:

- I. Worship,
- II. Work and
- III. Saints.

MALACHI

NAME:	Malachi
MEANING:	My Messenger
DATE:	444 B.C.
AUDIENCE:	The Remnant
THEME:	Israel Must Be Spiritually Strengthened
SPECIAL NOTE:	Use of Rhetorical Question and Answer
OUTLINE:	I. Condemnation of Unfaithful Priests 1:1-2:9 II. Condemnation of Divorce and Mixed Marriages..... 2:10-16 III. Condemnation of Religious Indifference..... 2:17-4:6

LESSONS:

Divorce is an abomination to Jehovah.

Insincerity in worship insults God.

The people suffer when the preacher fails to study and teach all of the truth.

God will not accept what is left over.

Like preacher, like congregation.

Our giving is a barometer of our spiritual growth.

God loves a pure, clean and happy home.

Each person must decide for himself whether the day of the Lord will be a day of terror or a day of joy.

MALACHI INTRODUCTION

I. Malachi - meanings in the name.

- A. The name Malachi means “My messenger.” It may or may not be the name of the prophet who wrote the book. The term is used specifically in 3:1 to refer to the messenger whom God will send before Him to purify the people and to change their sinful hearts.
- B. This messenger is called “Elijah” in 4:5-6. The future “messenger” of the covenant is contrasted with the priests of the prophet’s own day who were supposed to be the “messengers” of the Lord, but were instead turning people away from Him both by their words and actions.

II. Malachi - the book.

- A. Background.

Malachi did the work of prophesying to the exiles who had been in Judah for over 100 years. Thus, there is a one hundred year gap between Zechariah and Malachi. The last thing we know was that Zechariah was doing a good work.

What happened during this interval of time? The people had grown complacent. Why? Because they felt the promises of God to bless His people were never realized. Malachi finds the people have reverted back to their former spiritual lethargy and indifference. Priests were lax and wicked, offerings were being neglected, divorce was common, and justice was being perverted.

They were right that God’s promises did not take place, but they had forgotten that God’s blessings are conditional.

This is a period of disillusionment, disappointment and decay in Jerusalem. The people were neglecting their temple duties and dues.

Immorality in Jerusalem was rampant, sordid and corrupt. Malachi speaks directly to the cause of the decay, a lack of love. The people had love but not for Jehovah. Malachi sees that there was a form of worship but also that it was without any value because it was powerless. These people cannot be “God’s people” just because they have an external relationship to the congregation.

The people have a callousness which came about because of the death of real love. They are even deadened to sin which is a natural outcome when people lose their love for God. They were surprised and shocked that God would find fault with "His people." The people were questioning the love of God because of their difficulties and the prophet placed the blame on them where it belonged. It was the sin of the people, not the lack of divine love, which was the root of their problems.

They pretended to know everything but were woefully lacking in knowledge as to what God expected of them. They are a true picture of a "dying church."

Malachi was the last writing prophet to serve Jehovah under the Law of Moses.

B. Key Words:

1. "Lord" - 46 times.
2. "Says the Lord" - 25 times.
3. "Offering." The idea of offerings brought to God is prominent because of the book's concern with the priests. Offerings 1) must not be of inferior quality; 2) must not be offered with dishonesty; or 3) without cost to the offerer. Offerings were not acceptable if 4) the life of the offerer was sinful and 5) filled with rebellion (cf. 2 Sam 24:24).

C. Recurring Phrases:

"Yet you say." Compare 1:2,6-7,12-13; 2:14,17(2); 3:7-8,13-14.

"My covenant" is mentioned numerous times, mostly in connection with the tribe of Levi. The special arrangement between God and His priests had been violated. They had violated their covenant with their wives (2:14) and the nation had, as a result, violated their covenant. It is to this covenant, with God, that a good "messenger" should call His people back.

"Deal treacherously" is a recurring phrase and means to be "faithless" or to "live faithlessly." It is terminology which describes the violation of a trust between God and the priests, between priests and their wives, and between priests and the people.

D. Commitment Versus Contentment.

Were the people committed to serving God or content with what they were doing?

Every child of God will make an offering to God (cf. 1:7-8(2),9,10,11,13; 2:12-13; 3:3-4,8).

Will it be the best?

God said to follow His commands (4:4) but the people said God did not care how they served (3:14).

E. Method of Teaching.

Malachi's intense love for the people and Jehovah moved him to speak out with great urgency. He used a style of teaching and writing known as the "didactic-dialectic" method.

First: An affirmative is made.

Second: An objection is raised.

Third: The objection is refuted.

Compare Malachi 1:2-3,6-7; 2:10-17; 3:7-8,13-14.

This method became universal in the synagogues and Jewish schools of instruction.

F. Divorce.

The heartache of unjustified divorce and remarriage! Both the Old and New Testaments made provision for divorce and remarriage in one extreme case (Deut 24:1-4; Mt 5:32; 19:9). The free practice of divorce and remarriage is the mark of a society which has turned away from God. God's severe attitude toward all who tamper with his divine institution is evident (Mal 2:14-15).

MALACHI EXPOSITION

INTRODUCTION: Opening appeal based on God's love for His people - 1:1-5.

Love Asserted 1:1-2

Malachi. This name was given because of his function (cf. 3:1).

1:2 I have loved Jacob...I have hated Esau (v. 3). Compare Romans 9. In the context of Romans, how did God hate Esau? Esau was not in the lineage of Christ, therefore many material blessings came to Jacob.

God's love was all around them but they could not see it. They were back in the promised land, had their farmlands back, etc.

Was not Esau Jacob's brother? - as nations.

Love Demonstrated 1:3-5

1:5 Magnified beyond the border of Israel! God's people could see God's hand in things outside of their borders, but not inside their borders.

Priests Warned 1:6-2:9

Sin of Carelessness in Duties 1:6-2:4

1:6 0 priests. The focus of the book is on the leadership of the people.

Despise My name - not honoring God's name.

1:7 Food (bread - KJV). Compare Leviticus 21:6.

Table of the Lord is to be despised. Did they actually say these words? Probably not, but what they were doing was offering defiled food on the altar.

1:8 This is a common comparison. It goes along with offering God the second best. God will retaliate.

1:9 Entreat God's favor. How can God be pleased with those who totally disregard Him? This is why Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24).

God never takes worship lightly. These people knew their sacrifices had to be without blemish.

1:10 Would shut the gates - close the doors so none could come in. This is exactly how God feels about some “churches of Christ” today.

I am not pleased with in you...nor will I accept an offering from you - a summary of what has gone before and what is coming after.

1:11 My name. This phrase is used three times in this verse for emphasis. God is saying that what has been done has not been done for His name (glory) (cf. Heb 13:16; Phil 4:10 with Rev 3:15-16).

Incense - compare with prayers in Revelation 5:8.

Offering that is pure -compare with “fruit of the lips” in Hebrews 13:15-16.

1:12 It - My name.

Despised (contemptible - KJV). Compare verse 6. They felt worship was contemptible.

1:13 Tiresome (weariness - KJV). Not only were they giving their second best, but the people were saying that they were getting tired of worship but they believed God was pleased with their worship anyway.

Should I receive that from your hand? God is asking, “Should I take what they are offering?” The answer - No!

1:14 Vows it. Compare Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.

My name is feared among the nations. The nations have more respect for God than His own people. Just because God is their God does not mean He will accept their worship.

CHAPTER TWO

2:2 You do not take it to heart! God is saying, “You are not taking my commandments seriously.”

Curse your blessings - blessings turned to curses (cf. Deut 28:9,15).

2:3 Refuse (dung - KJV) upon your faces...the refuse of your feasts represents defilement. Many times after we have worshiped on Sunday mornings, I wonder

if God does not do the same thing with our offerings because we do not worship as God would have us to do (cf. Lev 16:27).

2:4 Covenant. Malachi now begins a new section that will have the word “covenant” in it. God’s covenants are conditional.

With Levi - As the federal head of the priests.

Sin of Laziness in Teaching.....2:5-9

2:5 My covenant. Compare Numbers 25:10-13.

As an object of reverence (fear - KJV). Compare Proverbs 9:10.

2:7 Messenger. Malachi is the messenger when the priests should have been the messengers of God.

Men (they - KJV) = the people.

2:8 Covenant of Levi. This is the covenant that the priests should have made with God.

Three charges against the priests:

I. You have turned aside from the way,

II. You have caused many to stumble by the instruction and

III. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi.

2:9 Showing partiality (respect of persons - KJV). Do leaders of God’s people show partiality? (cf. Acts 10:34).

People Warned2:10-4:3

Warned Against Treachery2:10-16

2:10 We = Israel.

Deal treacherously. The idea is a violation of a trust. They are unfaithful.

2:11 Mark the things God loves and hates in the book of Malachi.

God loves –

You,
Jacob and
Sanctuary.

God hates –

Divorce,
Esau and
One who covers garments with iniquity.

Daughter of a foreign god - idolaters (cf. Ex 34:14-16).

2:12 The law is for all equally!

2:13 Weeping. “God, why do You not answer my prayers?”

2:14 For what reason (wherefore - KJV)? Why is God doing this?

2:15 We have a way of separating the physical and the spiritual. We say that the way I treat my wife has nothing to do with my spiritual life. But it does!

Let no one deal. Not only must you not treat your wife treacherously, but you must not let anyone else do it either.

God wants man to have one wife!

2:16 I hate divorce (putting away - KJV). This was spoken to a people who had the right to give a bill of divorcement to their wives.

Covers his garment. It was characteristic of the people to be this way.

Warned of Judgment.....2:17-3:6

2:17 Where is the God of justice? “I am barely earning a living while the wicked prosper. Where is the justice in that?” (cf. Psa 73). There *is* a God of justice.

This is an introduction to the rest of the book.

CHAPTER THREE

3:1 My messenger. Who is truly the messenger of God? This is a prophetic way of introducing John the Baptist (cf. Isa 40:3; Mt 3:3; 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 3:4; 7:27; Jn 1:23).

Also = Elijah (4:5).

His temple = spiritual temple, the church.

3:2 Like a refiner's fire...fuller's soap. John the Baptist is going to tell some people to be clean (righteous) who do not want to be clean (righteous).

3:3 Sons of Levi. The work of John the Baptist will lead people to be "sons of Levi" in the true sense of the term. It will be done through the power of Jesus.

3:4 Compare 2 Chronicles 7:1-3.

3:5 Do not fear Me. Any sin can *and will follow* this sin!

3:6 I, the Lord, do not change. The people had said God had changed, but God had not changed. God is immutable.

O sons of Jacob. For these people it appears as if God had changed because He will consume them.

Warned to Repent.....3:7-12

3:7 Return to Me. Compare Zechariah 1:2-4. Could Malachi have been familiar with the writings of Zechariah?

How shall we return (wherein shall we turn - KJV) - as if they had not sinned!

3:8 You are robbing Me. If a man were going to steal from someone it would seem that he could be more selective in whom he would steal from.

Offerings - heave offerings. A little irony here. The people had given only a small amount. They had not "heaved" anything.

3:9 Compare 2:2; Amos 2:2 and Haggai 1:6.

3:10 Pour out for you a blessing. God is saying to the people that they thought they could gain by holding back on their offerings. But it did not work. So now He is saying, try the other way (cf. Mk 10:28).

Blessings until it overflows. "You will have torrents of blessings" (cf. Ezek 36:11).

3:11 Compare Amos 4:9 and Haggai 2:17.

Warned of God's Wrath.....3:13-4:3

- 3:13 Arrogant (stout - KJV) = hard, harsh, violent.
- 3:14 This was spoken as if they served the Lord for wages.
- 3:15 Compare Isaiah 5:20.
- 3:16 Compare Revelation 20:12.
- 3:17 Compare Zechariah 9:16 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 4:1 Compare 2 Thessalonians 1:8 and 2 Peter 3:7.
- 4:3 Compare Romans 8:37 and Revelation 17:14.
- All Warned 4:4-6**
 - To Observe the Law of Moses 4:4**
- 4:4 Moses My servant. Moses wrote the Pentateuch by inspiration!
 - To Look for “Elijah” 4:5-6**
- 4:5 Compare 3:1.
- 4:6 Compare Matthew 23:28.

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