

FOREWORD

The New Testament clearly instructs us that Christ's death abrogated the law of the Old Testament and established the law of the New Testament. God now requires our favorable answer to the law sealed by the blood of Christ. Because of our firm conviction in this regard we are sometimes accused of not believing the Old Testament, an accusation we strongly deny. But except for a few sections that may be peculiarly appealing to each individual among us, our knowledge of the Old Testament is probably at a rather low level. Frequently the inspired writings of the New Testament remind us of the relations between God and man under the old covenant..."...now these things happened to them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition..." (I Cor. 10:11), or "...the things written aforetime were written for our learning...." (Rom. 15:4). To our shame we are also reminded that individually we spend so little time studying these things that happened, why they happened and how their results may be used as effective tools for our own edification.

Probably greatest among the passed over Old Testament books are the minor prophets. Hopefully this course may brush away some of our cobwebs of ignorance in this area. But a word of caution to those who may seek in the prophets words the headlines of yesterday, today and tomorrow. The rise and fall of empires, the automobile, the airplane, nuclear power, space ventures, etc. Such are generally read into rather than out of the prophets words. This course will not satisfy such whims.

Also a comment to those forces who decry the words of a book dating back between 2000 and 4000 years ago as having no relevancy in identifying, addressing, and solving the problems of space age man. How easily is man deluded by the grandeur and sophistication of the gadgets that surround him.

The only difference between the Israelite who coveted his neighbor's wife while riding in his oxcart and the business man contemplating fornication with the woman in the seat beside him while being whisked across the continent in a 747 is about 596 miles an hour.

The basic issues of life have remained unchanged since Adam. There is really nothing new about righteousness, truth, hope, love, joy, etc. on the one hand and wickedness, lying, oppression, hate, sorrow, stealing, murder, etc. on the other. Only the gadgets are new. The lessons in this series assume first, that the prophets' message addressed these issues as they related to the moral and religious conditions that prevailed in their day.

Oppression and injustice were as common as each dawning day. Men liked to hear words of assurance from their civil and religious leaders that "all's well". How much more pleasant is sacrifice than changing one's life. In moving figures of speech, the prophets address these issues as though it were today.

Man's attempts to control his political and economic destiny are as futile as a fighter flailing the air--it is God that controls these destinies. His word spoken through prophets is indestructible and knows not the bounds of time.

The books of the minor prophets also contain some messianic prophecies. All but Nahum and Obadiah are quoted or referred to in the New Testament. These prophecies and New Testament references will be addressed at appropriate times throughout the series.

As in all Bible courses the student should spend much time before his open Bible receiving instruction from God's Holy Word. In addition there are numerous secular writings which may sharpen the students interest, particularly in the area of historical background. A list of such titles immediately follows this section.

It should be remembered, however, that these are the works of uninspired men and women and are apt to reflect their subjective view of the material discussed.

Hopefully, you will count this study a most profitable learning experience resulting in a greater appreciation of God's love for man and His amazing grace.

Bill Bryan

Bibliography to Minor Prophets

1. The Bible - II Kings 13-25; II Chronicles - Esther; Hosea - Malachi. This must of necessity be your No. 1 reference source.
- *2. The Minor Prophets, by Jack P. Lewis, Pub. Baker Book House
- *3. The Minor Prophets, by Paul T. Butler, Pub. Gospel Press
- *4. Preaching from the Prophets, by Kyle M. Yates. Pub. Broadman Press
- *5. Old Testament Books & Their Message in the Christian Age, 1961 Ft. Worth Lectures, Pub. Manney Co.
6. The Minor Prophets, by G. C. Morgan, Pub. Fleming H. Revell Co.
7. A Guide to the Prophets, by S. F. Winword, Pub. Jno Knox Press
8. Prophets for the Common Reader, by M. E. Chase, Pub. W. W. Norton Co.
- *9. Sacred History and Geography, by Don DeWalt, Pub. Gospel Press
10. A Companion to the Bible, by Abraham J. Feldman, Pub. Black Pub. Co.
11. The Prophets Pioneers to Christianity, by W. G. Williams, Pub. Abingdon Press
12. Background to the Old Testament, by Esther Kellner, Pub. Doubleday & Co.
- *13. Haleys Bible Handbook
- *14. Antiquity of the Jews, by Josephus
15. The Old Testament Speaks, by Carl Knopf, Pub. Ronald Press
16. Bible Dictionary
17. Bible Encyclopedia
18. Commentaries -
- * Barnes Notes
- Pulpit
- Adam Clark
19. Young's Analytical Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon
- *20. Archeology and Bible History, by Joseph P. Free, Pub. Scripture Press
- *21. Temples Tombs, and Hieroglyphs, by Barbara Morts, Pub. Cowan McCann Inc.
- *22. The Heritage of Persia, by Richard N. Frye, Pub. World Pub. Co.
- *23. Beggar to King, by Walter Duckat, Pub. Doubleday Co.
24. Vast number of books bearing prophets name in title.

The books listed above are available from a number of sources. Our church library carries a number of the titles. I'm sure all titles may be purchased from Christian Teachers. A number of the titles are available on a loan basis from the various Houston Public Libraries. Both the Rice University Library and University of Houston Library have extensive religious sections with books available for "in house" study during open hours. Books marked with an asterick (*) are available from my personal library on a limited loan basis of one week.

INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY OF THE

MINOR PROPHETS

1. In ages past God spoke through the prophets. (Heb. 1:1,2)
Their role in sacred history.
2. Distinction between Major and Minor prophets. Concurrency of their call to service.
3. Biblical period of Minor prophets: II Kings 14:25 through Nehemiah
4. Historical period of Minor prophets
 - a. Assyrian Period: 8th and 7th Centuries BC
Prophets: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum
 - b. Babylonian Period: 7th Century BC
Prophet: Habakkuk
 - c. Persian Period: 6th and 5th Centuries BC
Prophets: Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi
 - d. Period of prophecy unknown; Joel and Obadiah, possible as late as the 4th Century BC ; Joel may have been very early.
5. Jonah, Amos, and Hosea were primarily prophets of Israel; all the others were primarily prophets of Judah.
6. To help in your understanding of the conditions of the times and other interesting background information, study
 - a. The rapid succession of kings in Israel (II Kings 13:13 - 18:12) during the study of the prophets of Israel.
 - b. The reigns of such kings of Judah as Hezekiah, Mannaseh, Josiah, Jehoiachim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah when studying the prophets of Judah down through the Babylonian Period.
 - c. Learn something of the heroes of the return from captivity (Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah) when studying the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

AMOS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jeroboam II, King of Israel, II Kings 14:23-29

Uzziah (Azariah), King of Judah, II Kings 15:1-7; II Chron. 26:1-23

THE MESSAGE OF AMOS

1. Declaration of judgements against the nations, chapters 1, 2.
2. Declaration of Israel's sins and God's justice, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6.
3. Five visions which declare Israel's doom, chapters 7, 8, 9:1-10.
4. The promise of hope for a smitten people, chapter 9:11-15.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the political and social background of Amos' time.
2. Who was Amos, where was his home, who were the kings of Judah and Israel?
3. What were the sins of the Nations? of Judah? of Israel?
4. What is relationship of blessings (rights/privileges) to responsibility?
5. Is there any similarity between the sins of Amos' day and the sins of today?
6. What two concepts of "the day of the Lord" are presented? Are they appropriate today?
7. What is the explanation of the five visions of Amos?
8. Is the God of Amos a God of justice or of mercy?
9. Have all things foretold by Amos come to pass?
10. Which passage of Amos was most impressive or appealing to you?

HOSEA

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Instability of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) during the 25 years following the reign of Reoboam II.
2. Rapid succession of kings: Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hosea. II Kings 15:8 - 17:41.

THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

"Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom departing from the Lord." (Hosea 1:2) The explanation of this strange command is the message and central theme of Hosea.

1. The Prophet's Family/God's Family Chapters 1-3
2. The Sins of Israel Chapters 4-14
 - a. Lack of Knowledge
 - b. Spiritual Adultery and Whoredom
 1. Cause
 2. Results
3. God's Love for Israel as seen through
 - a. His call for repentance, 14:1-4
 - b. His willingness to court and win Israel back, 2:14-19
 - c. His willingness to love and forgive, 7:10; 14:4
4. The Messianic Importance

TO HELP IN YOUR STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING

1. What are some of the expressions used to describe Israel's departure from God?
2. What two things characterized Israel's religious corruption?
3. What was the appeal of Baal worship to Israel?
4. List some results of Israel's loss of knowledge of Jehovah.
5. List some things that caused Israel's unfaithfulness.
6. How did Hosea encourage Israel to see God's love?
7. What is it to know Jehovah?
8. Is the doom which Hosea threatens enexcapable?
9. What are some of the passages in the New Testament which are more fully understood with a knowledge of Hosea?

MICAH

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

II Kings 15:32 - 20:21 and II Chronicles 27:1 - 32:22
Prophet to the Southern Kingdom
Contemporary with Isaiah, prophet to the Northern Kingdom.

THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

1. God's punishment of the rebellious. Ch. 1
2. Moral and civil crimes condemned. Chapter 2.
3. Other crimes and punishment of the wicked. Chapter 3.
4. Amid such conditions a ray of hope for a remnant and a Messiah promised. Chapters 4, 5.
5. An exhortation to repent. Chapter 6.
6. Confession, prayer, and restoration. Chapter 7.

THINK BACK THROUGH

1. What were some of the sins of that day?
2. What motivates some men to be false prophets?
3. What is the task of a true prophet?
4. What fate was to be suffered by Israel and Judah?
5. What strange scene is described in the 6th chapter?
6. Does Micah oppose worship by sacrifice?
7. What three traits does God desire in his people?
8. Why must the Messiah come into the world?
9. What effect would the kingdom have on the world?
10. Is there a specific prophesy regarding the birth of Christ?

JONAH

1. Historical Background
2. More than just the story of Jonah and the whale (other miracles).
3. Its theme: God is the God of all People, as evidenced by:
 - a. His call to service, 1:1, 2
 - b. His chastisement of wayward servants, 1:15, 17
 - c. His plea to all nations, 3:3
 - d. His grace for the penitent, 3:10
 - e. His longsuffering for mankind, 4:10, 11
4. Relationship of its message to other peoples of other times.
5. Christ's reference to the book, Matt. 12:29-41; Lk. 1:29, 30.
6. Relationship of its message to the central theme of the Bible.

Give me your answer please:

1. Did Jonah really think he could get away from God by fleeing to Tarshish? Psa. 119:7-12 Where is Tarshish?
2. Why would God be concerned with the wickedness of Nineveh?
3. How is Jonah different from the other prophets?
4. How did the Ninevites respond to Jonah's preaching?
5. What was Jonah's reaction to their response?
6. What was God's purpose in providing shade for Jonah, then taking it away?
7. How did God compare Jonah's grief for the gourd to His concern for Nineveh?
8. In what direction does path of self-will always lead?
9. Have you ever run into a storm when fleeing or turning away from God?
10. What does God seek from all men?

ZEPHANIAH

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Prophet to Judah during the reign of Josiah. II Kings 21:1-26; II Chron. 33:1-25. May have been partially contemporaneous with Jeremiah. The times and lineage of Zepheniah, 1:1.

THE MESSAGE OF ZEPHENIAH

1. Jerusalem and Judah denounced 1:2-6.
2. Classes of Offenders Identified 1:8-13.
3. The Day of the Lord 1:14-18 (1:2-3a) The Major Theme
4. A plea for Repentance 2:1-3.
5. The Bordering Nations denounced 2:4-15.
6. Jerusalem's Impending Calamity 3:1-8.
7. A remnant restored 3:9-20.

WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?

1. What significance may be attached to Zephaniah's tracing his lineage through four generations?
2. Do you recall a phrase used by Zephaniah denoting a particular time that was similarly stated by another prophet in our previous studies?
3. What does "settled on their lees" mean?
4. Is there any condition common to the times of Zephaniah and today?
5. What spiritual condition poses the greatest threat to the Lord's cause?

NAHUM

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Probable date, sometime between 663 and 606 BC.

If so then during the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah, kings of Judah.
Contemporary with the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah.

THE MESSAGE OF NAHUM

Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will uncover thy skirts upon thy face; and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. (3:5).

1. Identification 1:1.
2. The qualities and attributes of Jehovah 1:2-8.
3. The overthrow of Nineveh decreed and the peace of Israel assured 1:9-15.
4. The seige and capture of Nineveh foretold 2:1-7.
5. The plunder and destruction of the city 2:8-10.
6. The end of Nineveh's ferocious army 2:11-13.
7. The repetition of Nineveh's doom and its cause 3:1-7.
8. A taunt at the city's inescapable defeat 3:8-10.
9. A picture of Nineveh's utter destruction 3:11-19.

SOME SIGNIFICANT TRUTHS OF NAHUM

1. God rules the kingdom of men.
2. God is a stronghold in the time of trouble.
3. There is no stronghold secure from God's vengeance.
4. Nations reap what they sow - the wages of sin is death.
5. God has an end beyond which His patience will not be extended.

HABAKKUK

BACKGROUND:

Prophet to Judah. Date of writing 626 to 598 BC (612-10????).

Discussion between Habakkuk and God.

Theme: Effort to justify the ways of God to Judah. A consolation to a people upon whom God's judgment shall soon descend.

THE MESSAGE OF HABAKKUK

1. The problem of "how long" shall God allow lawlessness to go unchecked, 1:1-4.
2. The answer - Chaldeans shall be God's avenging tool, 1:4-11.
3. How can God tolerate the Chaldean treachery. 1:12, 2:3.
4. Many woes to them that deal treacherously, 2:4-20.
5. A vision of God's impending judgment against Judah, 3:1-16.
6. Hymn of faith, 3:17-19.

LET'S KEEP THESE THOUGHTS BEFORE US:

1. The riotous state of evil in Judah.
2. Delayed judgment will fall with crushing force in the form of a Chaldean invasion.
3. Will the righteous suffer with the unrighteous?
4. A remnant will be preserved.
5. Though a world power used by God, the Chaldean victors denounced for their:
a. unholy ambitions; b. barbaric policies; c. shameless treatment of nations; d. defiant attitude toward idolatry; e. greed.
6. Would you say Habakkuk's Shigionoth is really dithyrambic?

DOES HABAKKUK HELP US THINK POSTIVELY IN SUCH PRACTICAL AREAS AS:

1. God never stifles a sincere questioner.
2. Some problems cannot be given a definite and direct answer.
3. In every crisis God only can be trusted.
4. The short view is apt to be clouded, if not in fact false.
5. When faith is swept off its feet, it rises on wings.
6. Evil has within itself the germs of death.
7. God's relationship with us becomes more meaningful when we rise above the fog of human doubt.
8. That God is sympathetic to human suffering.
9. The underlying principle of religion is not to allay all doubts but to show that God is real.
10. In dealing with doubt God invites us to turn to him and wait for his answer.

HAGGAI

BACKGROUND:

Almost 100 year elapse between the writings of Habakkuk and Haggai. The Chaldeans, as prophesied have besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of God and have taken into captivity Judah. (586 BC). Now, after 55 years of captivity, the Jews were allowed to return to rebuild the city and the Temple. Their eagerness to rebuild the house of God soon cooled and they became more interested in building their own houses. Sixteen years after their initial return Haggai came upon the scene with a message from God.

THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI - recorded in four discourses covering a period of four months, August to December 520 BC.

First Discourse, 1:1-15:

1. The indifference of the people regarding the Temple.
2. The people are aroused to action.

Second Discourse, 2:1-9:

1. Haggai's words of encouragement.
2. The second Temple compared with the first.

Third Discourse, 2:10-19:

1. Neglect of duty will affect the national interest.
2. Changed conditions and divine favor.

Fourth Discourse, 2:20-23:

1. Zerubbabel to whom God Assures
 - a. Honor
 - b. Protection
 - c. Safe keeping

CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH - DO YOU BELIEVE.....

1. Difficult duties should be faced courageously and without delay?
2. A stern call to duty is a good tonic?
3. The God-given message will result in action?
4. We are not to live in fine dwellings and allow God's house to live in ruins?
5. When material considerations crowd out God's house and worship, our wealth costs too much?
6. In the serious and lasting effects of evil?
7. In the futility of human effort and endeavors when separated from spiritual emphasis?
8. The best test of oratory is found in whether or not words stimulate action?
9. That man's full obedience to God is a necessary condition of approach to Him?
10. That outward splendor does not necessarily constitute true glory?

ZECHARIAH

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Return from exile begun under Zerubbable about 538 BC.
Returned exiles, mostly young men with a few old men, began reconstruction.
A good beginning followed by 16 years of opposition and indifference.
Haggai comes to scene in about 520 BC and rekindles interest in rebuilding.
Zechariah now adds his voice of urgency to carry on to completion.
As a result of both prophets efforts, reconstruction completed in about 516BC.

THE MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH:

1. A call to repentance 1:1-6.
2. The night visions 1:7; 6:8.
 - a. The horsemen among the myrtle trees 1:7-17.
 - b. The four horns and the four smiths 1:18-21.
 - c. The man with a measuring line 2:1-13.
 - d. The high priest before the angel of the Lord and Satan, 3:1-10.
 - e. The golden candlestick and the olive trees 4:1-14.
 - f. The flying scroll 5:1-4.
 - g. The woman sitting in the barrel 5:5-11.
 - h. The four chariots and the two mountains 6:1-8.
3. A coronation 6:9-15.
4. Questions about fasting 7:1-7.
5. Oracles of encouragement 8:1-23.
6. The triumph of Zion through her Messiah 9:1; 10:12.
7. The good and the foolish shepherds 11:1-17.
8. Victory for Judah through the Lord's aid, Chapters 12, 13.
9. The Day of Jehovah, Chapter 14.

SOME INTERESTING REFLECTIONS:

1. The oral laws of the priests (regarding fasting) 7:2-7.
2. Satan appears as the accuser to bring men's failings to the attention of God 3:1f; I Chron. 21:1; Job 1:7ff; 2:1ff.
3. The Lord will be king over all the earth, and his name one. 14:9; John 17:20-25.

MALACHI

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Hebrew word malachi means "my messenger". No firm date can be affixed to the book, although most authorities agree the writer dealt with much the same problems prevalent during the day of Ezra and Nehemiah. Internal evidences indicate it is a time of careless priests (1:6, 2:9), skepticism (2:17, 3:14), intermarriage (2:11-16), polluted sacrifices (1:7-10), ruled by a governor (1:8), and after Edom's destruction (1:1-5). Many of the same conditions are specifically dealt with by Nehemiah. Many therefore conclude Malachi and Nehemiah were contemporary.

THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI:

1. The central theme of the book - God has and still does love Israel, in spite of all her sins.
2. There are two extensive lists of accusations: a. those against the priests; and b. those against the people.
3. A series of dialogues wherein a. an assertion is made; b. a question or denial is raised, usually introduced by "Yet ye say"; and c. an elaboration of the original assertion with additional facts and illustrations concludes the dialogue.
4. The fabric of the book is woven around seven examples of a. the charge, b. the reply, and c. a refutation of the reply.
 - 1) I have loved you 1:2, 3.
 - 2) You have despised my name 1:6, 7.
 - 3) You have been faithless 2:10-16.
 - 4) You weary the Lord with your words 2:17.
 - 5) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes 3:7.
 - 6) You have robbed me 3:8.
 - 7) Your words have been stout against me 3:13.
5. The righteous encourage one another 3:16-18.
6. A warning to the wicked and an encouragement to the righteous 4:1-3.
7. Final exhortations to the obedient 4:4-6.

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. How did the prophet prove God's love for Israel?
2. What contribution does Malachi make to the marriage and divorce question? How does this compare with New Testament teaching on the subject?
3. Why did Malachi cry for the temple door to be shut?
4. Compare the marks of a true priest with the priests of whom Malachi wrote.
5. What is the final destiny of the wicked? of the righteous?

JOEL

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Joel is silent in regard to his time, his place, his country, his tribe, his family mentioning only that he is the son of Petheul. His writings bear evidence that he was a prophet in Jerusalem. Most authorities place the time either before 800 BC or after 500 BC. The word of the Lord came to him and he willed only to be the voice which uttered it.

THE MESSAGE OF JOEL:

1. The land desolate and mourning 1:1-10
 - a. Old men
 - b. Revellers
 - c. Priests
 - d. Husbandmen
 - e. The whole people
2. The judgment advancing 2:1-10.
3. Repentance at the last moment 2:12-27.
 - a. The Lord
 - b. The people
 - c. The priests
4. The goodness of God 2:18-31.
 - a. Relief and restoration
 - b. Afterward
5. The Day of the Lord for the nations.
 - a. In the valley of Jehoshophat 3:1-13.
 - b. In the valley of decision 3:14-17.
 - c. The holy mountain and eternal peace 3:18-21.

THINKING BACK:

1. What one sin does Joel specifically mention?
2. How may all sin be likened to this one?
3. How extensive was the curse upon the land?
4. What did Joel call upon the inhabitants to do?
5. Who was called upon to attend the solemn assembly?
6. What benefits does Joel ascribe to repentance?
7. What passages of Joel are given notoriety in the New Testament?

OBADIAH

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

There are 13 Obadiah's mentioned in the Old Testament, whether the prophet was one of the other 12 is unknown. His name means "servant of the Lord". The date of his writing is also unknown. Most authorities agree that it was very early, 850 BC or very late, 312 BC. Obadiah along with Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Songs of Solomon and Ecclesiastes are neither quoted nor alluded to in the New Testament. It is not known whether he spoke retrospectively or prospectively in condemning and referring to certain sins of Edom. Many similarities are noted between the words of Obadiah and other Old Testament writers. Obadiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Jeremiah, and the author of Psalms 137 portray the sins and ultimate doom of Edom. Please review the similarity between the following listed passages:

Obadiah 1	Jeremiah 49:14
Obadiah 2	Jeremiah 49:15
Obadiah 3, 4	Jeremiah 49:16
Obadiah 5	Jeremiah 49:9
Obadiah 6	Jeremiah 49:10
Obadiah 7	Jeremiah 49:7

THE MESSAGE OF OBADIAH:

1. Announcement to Edom of their impending doom and the completeness of their destruction, verses 1-9.
2. The crimes of Edom which have brought God's judgment upon them, verses 10-16.
3. The restoration of down trodden Judah, verses 17-21.

BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS:

1. Locate Edom on a map and determine its geographical relation to the Jewish nation.
2. Learn the origin of Edom, its people and its territory.
3. List several interesting highlights concerning the relationship between the descendants of Esau and the descendants of Jacob.
4. Pin point as accurately as possible the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy against Edom.