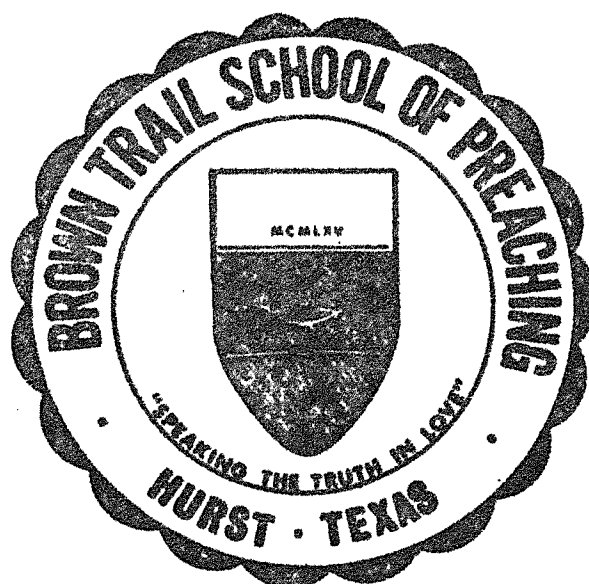


OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY III

(A GENERAL STUDY OF THE MINOR PROPHETS)



Eddie Whitten

A GENERAL STUDY
OF
THE MINOR PROPHETS

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THE MINOR PROPHETS

General Introduction

"A study of the prophets will enrich the life of anyone who applies himself to learn their teaching; it can only confuse those who would use their teaching as a basis on which to speculate about the future. An understanding of their teaching concerning the Messiah who was to come, will strengthen the faith of anyone who sees those predictions fulfilled in the New Covenant. An understanding of the political, social, moral and religious corruptions will give courage to the Lord's faithful today. The consequences of Israel's disobedience and an understanding of the principles on which God dealt with that disobedience, will help one better to read the signs of the times. The reading of one's newspaper, secular magazines, and listening to news reports of present-day world events will take on new significance to him.

This does not mean that one is to see God foretelling any specific event of today, or that He has in mind certain individuals of today. It means that one will come to see the principles upon which God dealt with the conditions of that day, and, on the ground of faith in God's immutability, he may conclude that God will act accordingly today."

--Homer Hailey.

I. Instructors Under the Old Testament:

"Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet." (Jeremiah 18:18).

"Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders." (Ezekiel 7:26).

1. Wise men--counsel. The function of these was to give counsel. First mention of such persons is that of a wise woman, 2 Samuel 14:1-24; also the second, 2 Samuel 20:16-22. The most outstanding wise man was Solomon. The books of wisdom are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Job.

"The wise men did not appeal directly to the conscience as did the prophets, but rather to the mind through counsel and argument, though their ultimate aim was to reach the conscience and through it influence conduct and life." --Eiselen: Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 14.

2. Priests--law. The special function of the priests was related to the law. Since the law was civil and ecclesiastical, their function was two-fold: First, to declare and interpret or teach the law; second, to tend the sacrificial duties of worship.

3. Prophets--word. The mission of the prophet was to communicate to Israel the divine word. Though they did predict, it may

he said of them, "So far as their work as a whole was concerned, they were preachers rather than predictors." --Knudson: The Prophetic Movement in Israel, p. 16.

II. Divine Origin of the Prophets.

One of the greatest passages in all the Old Testament, testifying to origin, work and accomplishments of the Prophets, is found in Deuteronomy 18:9-22.

Deuteronomy 18:9-22.

Vs. 9 -- Israel has not yet entered the promised land and is addressed as an individual. She is warned against the "abomination" of the heathen.

Vs. 10-11 -- Specifies the sins which Israel must avoid.

Nine superstitions and practices are mentioned and condemned.

1. "Pass through the fire"--this was done to obtain a revelation from a pagan god, or to avert some calamity, cf. 12:31.

2-4. "Augury--enchanter, sorcerer",--these represent three methods of divination. A "diviner of divinations" or "the one that obtaineth oracles", usually involving an oracle by drawing lots. Secondly, a "soothsayer" and finally "an observer of omens", cf. Num. 23:23.

5. "Charmer"--"believed to have magic power."

6. "Consulter with a familiar spirit," To seek advice or confer with one who has a supernatural attendant that protects and prompts.

7. "Wizard"--"A sorcerer," one possessed of magical influence.

8. "Necromancer"--One who "reveals the future by pretended communication with the spirits of the dead, magic in general, conjuration."

9. (vs 14), "Augury," "art of divination."

Vs. 12--Jehovah counted all such things as abominable.

Vs. 13--Israel was exhorted to be "perfect" before her God.

Vs. 14--God has "not suffered" her to so do, but (inferred) has other things for Israel.

OBSERVATION: Israel being forbidden to use the heathen sources of information would naturally wonder where she would find help and advice for her continued existence.

Moses answers in vs. 15-22.

Vs. 15--1. God raises up this prophet.

2. It is for Israel.

3. He will be from Israel.

4. He will be like Moses.

5. Israel must "hearken" unto him.

Vs. 16-18--Similarity of the prophet to Moses, yet

Moses was superior to prophets as a class, cf.

Deuteronomy 24:10; Numbers 12:1-8.

Vs. 18--The function of a prophet: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." cf.

Exodus 4:16. Aaron is Moses' mouth, Moses is

to Aaron as God, Ex. 7:1. Aaron was Moses' prophet. Hence a prophet is simply one who declares the mind, will, wish or command of one to another. Yet no prophet of God could speak without direct inspiration. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:20,21.

Vs. 19--Those who fail to hear the prophet shall perish as they are failing to hear God!

Vs. 20--Presumption of a prophet leads to damnation.

Vs. 21,22--The criteria for judging prophets, also see Deut. 13:1-5. A failure to produce on one hand, the producing on the other of signs.

OBSERVATION: From vs. 21, 22, we recognize that more than one prophet is involved, hence the entire prophetic system is founded on the principles contained in this passage; yet, vs. 15-18 speak of a peculiar prophet "like" Moses which involves more than just the office of a prophet.

That which is concealed in the Old is revealed in the New, cf. Jn. 6:14; 4:25, which speaks of "the prophet." Study Jn. 5:45-47; 5:43; 12:48,49; Matt. 17:5; Acts 3:23.

CONCLUSION: The origin of the prophets is truly Divine. The early prophets spoke the revealed will of God to His people and were forerunners of "the prophet" Jesus Christ, who was "likened unto Moses."

III. The Meaning of the Word "Prophet".

It is generally agreed that the etymology of the word presents difficulties. However, the use of the word in the Scriptures makes clear the meaning. Scripture is its own best interpreter.

1. "To boil up like a fountain (Hebrew). In both the Old and the New Testaments, a prophet is one who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit speaks the words and the thoughts of God, whether they relate to the past, to the present, or to the future."--Milligan: Scheme of Redemption, p. 298.
2. Probably "to bring forward or announce." --Eiselen, op. cit. p. 23.
3. "According to the uniform teaching of the Bible the prophet is a speaker of, or for, God. His words are not the production of his own spirit, but come from a higher source."--I.S.B.F. (See Jer. 23:16) (Ezek. 13:2,3).
4. "One who spoke in God's stead." --Knudson: Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 30.
5. The meaning of the word is more satisfactorily learned from its usage in Scripture. It is stated, Exodus 7:1, that Aaron was to be Moses' Prophet. In 4:16, it is said that he should be "thy spokesman. . . a mouth." The Hebrew prophet was an ambassador sent to make known the will and purpose of Jehovah to the chosen people, Amos 3:7,8. As such, he spoke for God, and was therefore more a "forthteller" than a "foreteller." Of course he

did foretell events, but that is not the basic meaning of the word.

6. Though "prophet" is the general term used in the O.T., other designations are:

- (1) Seer--This appears to have been the earliest term by which they were designated, I Samuel 9:9.
- (2) Man of God--I Sam. 9:6; I Kings 17:18.
- (3) Servant of God--(or of Jehovah)--I Chron. 6:49; I Kings 18:36.
- (4) Messenger of Jehovah, Isaiah 42:19.
- (5) Watchman--Ezek. 3:17.

"All these terms expressed the same fundamental idea--that of a mediator by speech between man and God. --Knudson: The Prophetic Movement in Israel, p. 30.

"Someone has said that there are two classes of preachers--the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who have to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say and who have to say it. Such are the prophets." Ibid., p. 65,66.

QUESTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

1. There are three classes of servants of God named in Jeremiah 18:18, and Ezekiel 7:26. Name Them.
2. What was the function of each of the above named servants (or offices)?
3. "So far as their work as a whole was concerned, they were _____ rather than _____."
4. In Deuteronomy 18:10, 11 there are nine superstitions and practices mentioned and condemned. Name them.
5. Complete the following: "Hence a prophet is simply one who declares the _____, _____, _____, or _____ of one to another."
6. Though the etymology of the word "Prophet" presents difficulties, the use of the word in the Scriptures makes its meaning clear. What is the fundamental meaning of "Prophet?"
7. Name the five other designations given for "prophets."

Hosea

The Prophet of Love

The house of Jehu, the fifth dynasty, held the throne of Israel when Hosea was called to prophesy for the northern kingdom. He was the son of Beeri, and in the opening statement of the prophecy he tells us that he labored during the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam II who came to the throne of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah and was contemporary with him for fourteen years. He was the most powerful representative of the Jehu dynasty. During his reign was fulfilled a prophecy spoken by Jonah (2 Ki. 14:25) in which he was victorious over the Syrians. It is possible that Hosea witnessed the fall of Israel which he prophesied in greater detail than did Amos.

The style of this prophet is metaphorical and figurative. His messages are exceptional in their variety of thought and emotional coloring. His feelings are intense and he is called "the weeping prophet" of Israel as was Jeremiah of Judah. By unusual imagery Israel is represented as the adulterous wife of Jehovah, but eventually will be refined and recovered. "Hosea had the temperament of the lyric poet, and many of his passages are odes or dirges pure and simple. In 'tragic pathos' he is unexcelled."¹

NAME AND PERSONALITY

The name Hosea, like that of Joshua and Jesus, which come from the same root, signifies "salvation," "help," "deliverance." Although it is not certain, his frequent allusions to Lebanon, Tabor, Samaria, Bethel, Jezreel and Ramah would imply he was a native of Northern Israel. He displays, in his many references to "Ephraim", a knowledge or acquaintance with the kingdom and its doings, that would indicate his nativity to it. "As a son of the soil he drew many of his simple and charming images from the fireside, the garden, and the farm. He was gentle, pensive, and inclined to melancholy, but frank, affectionate, and full of domestic feeling." "His book is both a prophecy and a poem; one of the most difficult, but at the same time one of the most evangelical of the Old Testament."²

HIS TIMES

In our study of the Major prophets we notice that Judah enjoyed three periods of revival under Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. In each instance for a time the sinful decline was checked and the people were restored to some sense of their sinful condition. But there were no revivals in Israel. From the beginning under Jeroboam, 'who taught Israel to sin,' idolatry was abounding and reached a frightful state during the dynasty of Omri, especially in the reign of Ahab.

There was no genuine interruption of this sinful decline. Idolatry was slightly checked by Jehu, but the people were too

thoroughly steeped in their apostasy. It was in this time of Jehu, that Hosea began his labors and his utterances picture the awful moral and spiritual degradation. Israel is represented as the adulterous, abandoned wife of Jehovah.³

Hosea dated his prophesying by giving the names of four kings of Judah and one of Israel. This reveals a remarkable length of prophetic utterance. His voice was heard in reigns which covered no less a period than one hundred and twenty-eight years. The probability is that he exercised his ministry between sixty and seventy years. The period covered was undoubtedly the darkest in the whole history of the kingdom of Israel. Political life was characterized by anarchy and misrule. The throne was occupied by men who obtained possession by the murder of their predecessors, and the people were governed by military despotism. Foreign alliances involved the nation in inextricable confusion. These alliances, moreover, resulted in the introduction of the corrupting influences of Syrian and Phoenician idolatry. The conditions were terrible in the extreme; luxurious living, robbery, oppression, falsehood, adultery, murder, accompanied by the most violent intolerance of any form of rebuke.^{4*}

There is a great deal of divergent thought surrounding the length of Hosea's ministry, ranging from a mere ten years, based on references to "Gilead" in 6:8 and 12:11, which seem to indicate that Hosea was ignorant of the Syro-Ephraimitic War in 734 B.C., to twenty-five years suggested by Robinson; thirty years

as submitted by W. J. Deane,⁵ to the sixty or seventy years above referred to by G. Campbell Morgan, and others, to an inclusive statement by Davidson who allowed that Hosea's prophecies "extended over a considerable period of Israel's history."

The Second Book of Kings informs us that upon the death of Jeroboam, internal feuds took place, rival politicians sacrificed the nation's interests to their own, princes became debauched, phantom kings were set up, and the national power became seriously weakened. Kings were cut off "a foam upon the water" (Hosea 10:7). Jeroboam was the last really strong man of Israel. Of the six kings who succeeded him only Menahem died a natural death. "Conspiracy" is the keyword of the history of the period. Zechariah reigned six months; Shallum, only one. In their desperation, they leaned first one way and then another to secure foreign help, paying tribute alternately to Assyria and Egypt, until they finally lost their independence and national autonomy. Unconsciously Ephraim became prematurely old. "Gray hairs" were here and there upon him and he knew it not (7:9). All classes of people became demoralized. Even the priests turned bandit and rejoiced in the sins of the people, because it increased their revenues. Things went from bad to worse, until the prophet exclaimed, "There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is naught but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out and blood toucheth blood" (4:1,2). The conditions were terrible! Religion sank into the most sensual

idolatry. Family life, especially, became dissolute. Upon it, accordingly, the prophet laid his heaviest indictment. To express their hopeless condition he uses the hateful word "whoredom" some sixteen times. As Davidson says, "Hosea lived during, perhaps, the most unquiet and turbulent times through which the country ever passed."⁶

HOSEA'S PREPARATION (Chap. 1-3).

In the first part of the book we have an account of the preparation of Hosea for the delivery of his messages, and in the second part a condensed epitome of his prophetic utterances. In the account of the training of the prophet for his work there are three distinctly marked movements--his domestic life and national conscience; his home tragedy, a revelation; and his dealing with Gomer, a command and a revelation.⁷

It is in his relation with Gomer that Hosea learns of the Majestic Love of God for his fallen people. Hosea is commanded of God to take for himself a wife. Morgan suggests that the statement, "When the Lord spake at the first," is a declaration made by Hosea long after the event, and looking back, he understood that the impulse which resulted in the ensuing agony of heart was also part of the Divine method of teaching him; that there is no reason to believe that Gomer was outwardly impure in the days when Hosea married her.⁸ Whether or not this be so, the heart-breaking fact of his domestic life was such to try the patience and tolerance to an extent unequaled by anyone short of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the very intent was to teach

Hosea God's burning love for an adulterous creation. "This discourse presents the prophet's relations with an unfaithful wife as an emblem of Jehovah's relations with Israel."⁹ Gomer bore him two sons and one daughter; a son, Jezreel, "Vengeance"; a daughter, Lo-ruhamah, "Uncompassionated"; and a son, Lo-ammi "Not my people"; their names pointing significantly to the judgments which would inevitably descend upon the house of Jehu. Gomer proved faithless to her marriage vows; becoming ensnared by the wild orgies of Baal and Ashtaroth, she deserted her husband for a paramour and fell into sensual slavery. But Hosea redeemed her for fifteen silverlings and a homer and a half of barley (3:2); thus from the bitterness of his own home trails the prophet learned of the unquenchable love of Jehovah.¹⁰

The method of his training for work may thus be summarized. Out of his communion with God in the days of prosperity he was able to see the true condition of his people. He was conscious that on account of their sin, the judgment of Jehovah threatened them; that on account of their obstinacy, mercy was not obtained and that the issue of all could only be that they should be a people cast out from their place, power, and privilege.

Out of his own heart agony he learned the true nature of the sin of his people. They were playing the harlot, spending God's gifts in lewd traffic with other lovers.

Out of that personal suffering he came to an understanding of how God suffered over the sin of His people, because of His undying love.

Out of God's love, Hosea's new care for Gomer was born; and in the method God ordained for him with her, he discovered God's method with Israel.

Out of these processes of pain there came a full confidence in the ultimate victory of love.

Thus equipped he delivered his messages, and through them all there sounded these deepest notes of sin, of love, and of judgment.¹¹

HOSEA'S PROPHETIC MESSAGE (Chaps. 4-14).

Analysis of Hosea's book is well-nigh impossible; yet it bears throughout a distinctly personal stamp, being probably the carefully collected "notes" of many years. This much is clear; Chaps. 1-3 tell of the messenger; while chaps. 4-14 tell of his message. The first section is a sort of spiritual autobiography, half narrative, half prophecy, wrung from a heart which through the anguish of outraged human love has won its way into the secret of the love divine.¹² The second section deals with the sin so profusely indulged by Israel of backsliding. As the prophetic utterances of Hosea appear here, they are more the gathering of the notes or leading ideas of a long period of preaching. They fall into three distinct cycles, dealing with pollution and its cause, pollution and its punishment; and the love of Jehovah.¹³ Deane says, "The three stages of the connection with Gomer represent the feeling of God for the unfaithful Israel: there is first the hatred of the sin, and its stern denunciation; there is next the punishment of it in degradation and misery; and lastly there is pity for the repentant and assurance of ultimate pardon."¹⁴

Several have attempted to trace a chronological sequence in the excerpts of chapters 4-14, but it is better to allow that the great ideas expressed by the prophet were often repeated, and that order and sequence are almost ignored. As a matter of fact, the salient teachings of his entire book may be summed up under the three words complaint, condemnation, and consolation; the only progress of thought discernible being that of a general advance from (1) Israel's guilt, to that (2) of punishment, and (3) of final restoration.¹⁵

As there is no logical connection between the several portions of this section of Hosea's prophecy, it is impossible to draw out a regular argument for it. We can give only a summary of the contents of these "scattered leaves of a sibyl's book", as Bishop Lowth calls them. The prophet begins by denouncing the universal immorality of these "children of Israel," and their idolatry promoted by the priests, which led infallibly to moral outrages.¹⁶

In dealing with the pollution and its cause the prophet first preferred a general charge against the nation. Israel was summoned to attend and hear the word of the Lord because He had a controversy with the inhabitants of the land (4:1). The charge was made that there was an absence of truth and mercy and knowledge of God, and the consequent widespread existence of all kinds of evil. The result was to be seen in the mourning land, the languishing people, and the fact that man's dominion over nature was lost.

This pitiable condition resulted from the pollution of the priests. As the priests were victimized of the truth by their continual sinning, both they and the people became polluted with the shame of sensual lusts, harlotry, lack of understanding; they were destroyed for lack of knowledge. No wonder Hosea cried unto Israel that God had a controversy with the inhabitants of the land! God's controversy against Israel can be summed up by the one word 'whoredom.' Israel had done worse than adultery; she had prostituted herself before the baals of the land for hire, (2:12, 13). Religiously, the people were without knowledge (4:6; 5:4); as a result they were ignorant of God and His laws. Nominally, they paid homage to Jehovah; in reality they honored the baals, which brought Hosea to rebuke them severely (4:11-13; 8:4; 9:10; 10:1-3; 13:1,2).

Morally, their conduct was the very opposite to that which God desired; swearing, breaking faith, murder, stealing, committing adultery, deceit, lying, drunkenness, dishonesty in business, and other things as abominable (4:2, 11, 12, 18; 10:4; 13:1,2).

The two-fold cause for this widespread immorality: (1) the ungodly priests, with whom, as usual, false prophets were assisting. (2) the corruption of worship and its natural fruit in the lives of the people. 'Calf-worship' began to bear its corrupt fruit. The message of the book: Righteousness and Doom.

While Amos, as we will see, laid particular stress on the social injustices of his day, Hosea makes the religious cor-

ruptions of his time the center of his attack. He taught that corrupt worship lay at the root of their corrupted morals.¹⁷

HOSEA'S MESSAGE TO US.

One general lesson is taught by Hosea of ever permanent worth, namely, that inward corruption in a nation is more dangerous to its existence than their external enemies. And a kindred lesson closely related to this is: that the truest of all patriots is he who, like Hosea, identifies himself with his people, sorrows over their calamities as though they were his own, and repents for their sins as though he had committed them himself. Hosea's message, accordingly, is not out of date. The God of ancient history is the God in modern history. More specific lessons are the following:

1. The folly of sacrificing national interests to personal advantage (5:10, 11).
2. The penalty of condoning vice (4:13-19).
3. The rapid decline of a nation when the religious leaders become corrupt: like people, like priest (4:9).
4. The Memesis of neglecting God's law (4:6; 8:1, 12).
5. God's fatherly desire to show mercy. This word in the Hebrew is used by Hosea six times being translated by "goodness," "kindness, and loving-kindness. Hosea, accordingly, is correctly regarded as the Prophet of Love." To Hosea it included both love for God and for our fellow-men.¹⁸
6. Hosea 14 is the greatest chapter in the Bible for backsliders. Read the wonderful words of the Lord to backsliding Israel in Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them

freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." God's great heart is bursting with love, but our sins keep Him from telling us all that is there. As with Israel, you may know the joy of barriers broken down and love poured out. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily," (14:5). The dew speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit. See how God pictures His abiding joy in His people after they are healed.¹⁹

7. In 14:9, note the blessing, growth, stability, beauty and fragrance winsomely portrayed by Hosea, and see how your life measures up to God's provision. Underline the divine "I wills." May ours ever be the joyful privilege of observing Him, as the idol of the heart, and source of unfailing fruitfulness. With the dew of heaven falling upon us, we can grow as a green fir tree.²⁰
8. Hosea had as filthy a mess as is found anywhere in the Bible. The beastly degradation of the people was simply unbelievable. Yet Hosea labored unceasingly to make them see that God Still Loved Them.²¹ This is the challenge in our time; to labor in the face of seeming unbounding wickedness; (1) to retain our strength and faith, and (2) make the people see that if they will repent God Still Loves Them.

PASSAGES TO REMEMBER

1. "For I desire goodness and not sacrifice": (6:6) -- a passage which had special attraction for Jesus (Matt. 9:13; 12:7).
2. "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I cast thee off Israel?" (11:8) -- perhaps the most significant passage in the book!

3. "Let us follow on to know Jehovah" (6:3) -- a remarkable exhortation to spring from the eighth century B.C.
4. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (4:17) -- lest contagion be contracted!
5. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him and he knoweth it not" (7:9) -- a rarely suggestive epigram.
6. "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (8:7) -- Cf. Paul's exhortation in Gal. 6:7.
7. "I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted a strange thing" (8:12) -- inferring that in Hosea's time a voluminous religious literature was in existence.
8. "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us" (10:8) -- a graphic touch in the prophet's description of Samaria's ruin!
9. "It is time to seek Jehovah" (10:12) -- applicable to all generations in all time!
10. Notable epigrams: "Like people, like priest" (4:9); "Cut off as foam upon the water" (10:7); "drew them with cords of a man" (11:4); "I will be as the dew unto Israel" (14:5); "Ephraim is a cake not turned" (half-baked) (7:8). ²²

MEMORY VERSES - Hosea 2:23; 4:1-3; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 12:6; 13:11.

GENERAL OBSERVATION

1. Home -- uncertain, but most likely in Northern Israel.
2. Occupation -- uncertain, although well acquainted with the soil.
3. Marriage -- married an idolator who became a prostitute.
4. Characterization -- deeply emotional nature, rich in his affections, sympathetic to others.
5. Date -- 750-725 B.C. About five years following Amos.
6. Background -- Sum of the indictments against Israel is "Whoredom" -- worse than adultery; she had prostituted herself before the lovers of the land for hire. (2:12-13).
 - a. Religiously -- without knowledge;
 - b. Morally -- corrupt;
 - c. Politically -- broke bounds of authority and turned from God and sought alliances.
7. Message -- God is love, "loving Kindness" also, doom- emphasis on religious corruption. Righteousness and Doom.

OUTLINE

- I. Israel's adultery, chaps. 1-3.
 - A. Hosea and Gomer: Jehovah and Israel - Israel the adulteress and her children, 1:2-2:1.
 - B. Restoration of children of Judah and Israel, 1:10-2:1.
 - C. Chastisement of idolatrous Israel, conversion and final restoration, 2:2-23.
 - D. The prophet's symbolic marriage, chap. 3.
- II. Prophetic discourses: The ungodliness of Israel and its inevitable punishment, chaps. 4-13.
 - A. Jehovah's controversy with Israel, chaps 4-6.

- B. Israel's corrupt political condition and consequence, chaps. 7-8
 - C. Israel's religious and moral apostasy and its punishment, which included exile and destruction, chaps. 9-11.
 - D. God's faithfulness versus Israel's apostasy, chaps. 12-13.
- III. Israel's conversion and pardon, chap. 14.

HOSEA

Footnotes

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QUESTIONS ON HOSEA

1. Hosea could be described as "The Prophet of _____."
2. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of what kings of Judah? Of Israel?
3. Hosea was a prophet for the _____ kingdom.
4. What was the style of the prophet's writing?
5. As Jeremiah was of Judah, Hosea was called " _____
_____ " of Israel.
6. By unusual imagery Israel is represented as what?
7. What was the dominant characteristic of Hosea?
8. State the moral and spiritual condition of the people during the time of Hosea's ministry.
9. What are the extremes mentioned in regard to the length of Hosea's labors?
10. According to our study, what are the two major sections of the book of Hosea and the chapters of each?
11. What great lesson did Hosea learn through his relation with Gomer?
12. What were the names of Hosea's children which Gomer bore to him? What is the meaning of each?
13. Describe briefly the activities of Gomer.
14. What was Hosea's attitude toward Gomer in view of her actions?
15. What does the second section of the book of Hosea deal with?
16. Under what three words can the salient teachings of the entire book of Hosea be summed up?
17. God's controversy with Israel can be summed up by one word. What is that word?
18. What was the two-fold cause for this widespread immorality?
19. Name two great lessons of permanent worth that is taught in the book of Hosea.
20. "The God _____ ancient history is the God _____ modern history."
21. What is the overriding message of the book?

JOEL

The Prophet of Pentecost

Joel was a prophet of Judah, and the first of the great prophets to speak the message of Jehovah to the southern kingdom. It was a time when natural calamities had fallen upon Western Asia, and Joel deals with them particularly. He turns to spiritual account a frightful plague of locusts that devastated the land, followed by drought and famine.¹

Again, as with Hosea and others, there is a wide divergence in thought concerning the time of the prophet. Morgan acknowledges this difference by stating, "It is impossible to speak dogmatically concerning the date of his prophesying. Internal evidence makes it plain that he was one of the earliest, or one of the latest, of the prophets."² Moulton also contends that "It utterly refuses to connect itself with any time or event; hence the perplexity of historical critics, who at one time have been almost unanimous in proclaiming it among the latest, at another time among the earliest of biblical prophecies."³ There are some, however, that maintain that an earlier date should be assigned to his prophecy. Robinson says "There is one fact, however, which more than any, or all others together, helps to determine the date of the book, namely, its place among the Twelve. Both in the Hebrew Canon and in the Septuagint, Joel is grouped among the early, pre-exilic prophets; thus in the Hebrew Canon, the order is Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, etc.; that of the Septuagint, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, etc. Very obviously, therefore, the rabbis of antiquity regarded

Joel as one of the earlier prophets. This fact creates at once a strong presumption in favor of its early date. On the other hand, if the book were written late, near the time when the canonization of the prophets took place, it would seem strange that the framers of the Canon should have deemed him early!"⁴ He further relates fourteen additional reasons based on internal evidences which argues for an early date.⁵

NAME AND PERSONALITY

Nothing is known of Joel's birthplace or biography, his career and personality being shrouded in obscurity. Only a few inferences may be safely drawn from his writings. Such silence concerning God's spiritual agents is no uncommon occurrence in the Old Testament, for others are introduced in this semi-anonymous fashion; perhaps on purpose, that God himself, and not they, may have the glory.

Joel's name, in Hebrew "Yo-el," signifies "Jehovah is God," and therefore, like the name "Micah," seems to enshrine in it a brief confession of faith, reflecting possibly the piety of his godly parents. The name occurs frequently in the Old Testament, there being at least a dozen other men who bore the same.

It is probable that the prophet was a native of Judah, perhaps a citizen of Jerusalem, as he speaks familiarly of "Zion" and of "the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem" (3:1,6). From his prophecies it is very evident that he was not only a poet and a man of prayer, but a seer and a prophet

in the strictist sense; for, he preached repentance with divine emphasis, and announced (he being perhaps the first to do so) the coming of the great and terrible "day of Jehovah" (2:11,31).⁶

THE OCCASION OF THE BOOK

To understand the prophets we must know the historical setting of their prophecies. Their messages were delivered for the time in which they lived. While predictions concerned future times they had a vital bearing upon the people to whom they were spoken. A judgment predicted may not be visited upon them for years to come, but the conduct of the people who hear the message are responsible for that judgment. It is for them to save the nation from such a calamity. The prophet speaks from the standpoint of existing conditions, as well as from the standpoint of predictions fulfilled. Other predictions of a Messianic nature kept before the chosen people the great central fact of their national existence.

Following the reign of Jehoshaphat Judah rapidly declined as the good effects of that king's reformation disappeared in the apostasy of his son who married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of Israel. Judah was plunged into iniquity which continued until the time of Hezekiah. It was this state of things in which Joel lived, and it was to a people hardened in sin that he spoke the judgments of Jehovah.⁷

The prophecy of Joel is concerned with a natural calamity which had befallen his country, and from which, as his text, he educes a call to repentance, seeing in it the harbinger of the

great day of judgment.⁸ The burden of his message was the Day of the Lord. It seems to be one remarkable utterance rather than notes of a ministry covering a long period, as in the case of Hosea. A terrible locust plague which had devastated the entire country was the occasion of its deliverance. He spoke the things which were evident to those whom he addressed, the predicted an immediate judgment, and finally looked far on to the ultimate Day of the Lord.⁹ It is the view of some that the locusts were not real, and that the prophet is picturing such a plague as illustrative of the judgment of Jehovah. The literal view, however, is generally accepted. It was a real calamity that had befallen Judah the severity of which is vividly described by the prophet. So realistic is the portrayal that no strain is laid upon the imagination in seeing the particulars of that devastation. To this was added a drought that brought on a famine. So greatly were they reduced that, for want of materials, the offerings on the altar were suspended.¹⁰

THE ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

The Book of Joel is a single poem, the Rhapsody of the Locust Plague: a masterpiece of imaginative prophecy. Upon only two points of real life does the imaginative picture rest; and its connection with these is of the slightest. The basis of the first half is a locust plague; but the advance of the irresistible locust cloud is idealized into a march of mystic forces, described by the effect produced--

The land is as the garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness! --

but also with riddling suggestions of locusts:

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses;
and as horsemen, so do they run. Like the noise of
chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap,
like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the
stubble...And they break not their ranks: neither
doth one thrust another; they march every one in his
path; and they burst through the weapons, and break
not off their course.

For the latter part of the poem a basis is found in an item
of local geography--The Valley of Jehoshaphat: the name sig-
nifies "Jehovah's Decision," and suggests the shadowy Valley
of Decision in which "multitudes, multitudes" are seen by the
prophetic spectator as Jehovah makes his final combat with his
people's foes.¹¹

Most commentators see a natural division of the book into
two parts: the first part being chapter 1:2 - 2:17; the second
part being chapter 2:18 - 3:21. Dickson designates the two parts
as (1) The day of Jehovah's Judgment and Power, and (2) The
Response of Jehovah.¹² Under the first heading, or section
there is, of course, the plague of locusts. The overwhelming
preponderance of evidence is that this was a literal plague; that
there was, indeed, such an attack, and that Joel used this plague
as a vivid example of God's power and judgment of his displeasure
with Judah's sins. There is the terrible description of the total
devastation of the land depicting the totality of God's wrath
upon an impenitent, rebellious people. He uses the plague of
locusts as a symbol of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Then issues the plea for prayer and penitence on the part of the people that this terrible judgment not be pronounced upon God's people.¹³

The second half of the book is the division in which Jehovah speaks, announcing in solemn language the final doom of Israel's foes, and closing with a description of the glorious victory of the people of God. The first half of the book begins in gloom and closes in light; the second begins with judgment and ends with victory, the prophecy of the first part merging into apocalypse in the second. Really, but one great thought constitutes the prophet's entire message: One might label it "The Parable of Locusts," and what it teaches. The book of Joel is not made up, as so many other Old Testament books are, of the scattered "notes" of a long prophetic ministry extending over several years, but is rather occupied with a description of a single incident with its moral and spiritual application.¹⁴

The Key Phrase of the book is "The Day of the Lord," (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14).¹⁵ In looking toward the distant Day of Jehovah, Joel saw an intervening period of an entirely different character. This he first described, ending his message with a declaration concerning the Day of the Lord, which was the real burden on his spirit.

Of the intervening period, he declared that its initiation would result from the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. It would be characterized by prophecy, dreams, and visions. The signs of the end of this period and of the approach of the Day

of the Lord, would be "wonders in the heavens and in the earth." From the Terrors of the Day, such as called upon the name of the Lord were to be delivered.¹⁶

JOEL'S MESSAGE TO US

1. The fundamental teaching of permanent religious value in the book of Joel is the prophet's clear, definite, and as we think, original, conception of the "Day of Jehovah." As noted above, the phrase occurs five times in the book, and carries with it the thought of the ultimate day of Jehovah; a day of both terror and blessing; a day of vengeance and the year of the redeemed; the day on which the eternal principles of Divine righteousness and human duty will be demonstrated; the final day of reckoning. Joel announced this "day" to Judah; Amos, later on, announced it to Israel (Amos 1:2, 6:3; 9:11-15).

2. Out of this first great teaching grew others of a practical character, one of which was repentance (2:12-17). Joel exhorts his readers to repentance, promising that by it they may avert the day of terror. They respond to his exhortation and the plague of locusts is removed; and the material and spiritual blessings follow (2:18-32).

3. The other great teaching of the book is the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh (2:28, 29). As we read Acts 2:16ff, we see the fulfillment of this prophecy; "fulfilled," indeed, but not exhausted! It is a promise which was destined to receive a repeated and ever-increasing fulfillment. Peter in pointing to this prediction of Joel on that occasion, did not omit its terror.

Grace and judgment always move side by side. The fall of Jerusalem was the sequel of the Day of Pentecost. The whole thought is pre-eminently eschatological; yet it was meant primarily for the comfort of the people in the prophet's own time. Though there is no prediction of the Messiah in the book of Joel, it is through his prophetic teachings that he begins to bridge the chasm to the kingdom of grace.¹⁷

JOEL -- "JEHOVAH IS GOD"¹⁸

Memory Verse - Joel 2:28 - 32

I. General Observation

1. Date: 830 B. C. (Probable)
2. Occasion: Calamity from locusts, drought, fires.
3. Message: Doom of the nations - "Day of Jehovah"
to be one of destruction of the enemies
of Jehovah, but of deliverance for those
who trust in Him.

II. The Harbinger of the Day of Jehovah, 1:2-2:17.

1. Scourge of locusts, drought and fire.
2. The scourge, the forerunner of the day of judgment, 2:1-17.

III. The day of Jehovah, a day of blessing to Israel, a day of
terror to her enemies 2:18 - 3:21.

1. Blessings promised to Israel, 2:18-32.
2. Judgment on the nations, 3:1-16.
3. Glorification of the people of Jehovah, 3:16-21.

JOEL

Footnotes

1. Dickson Analytical Bible, John A. Dickson Publishing Co., Chicago: 1964, p. 1022.
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9. Morgan, p. 283.
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11. Moulton, p. 1419, 1420.
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14. Robinson, p. 31, 32.
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16. Morgan, p. 285.
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JOEL

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QUESTIONS ON JOEL

1. Joel could be called the Prophet of _____.
2. What is the greatest single evidence in favor of an early date for the book of Joel?
3. Joel was a prophet to _____.
4. What does the name "Joel" mean?
5. What is known of Joel's birthplace or biography?
6. What event was Joel perhaps the first to announce?
7. What was the moral condition of the people at the time Joel spoke the judgments of Jehovah?
8. What was the burden of Joel's preaching?
9. What natural calamity furnished the occasion for the deliverance of Joel's discourse?
10. Most commentators see a natural division of the book of Joel into two parts. What are these parts and how does Dickson designate them?
11. What did Joel use as a symbol of the great and terrible day of the Lord?
12. The key phrase of the book of Joel is, "_____."
13. What is the message of the book of Joel?
14. What will the day of Jehovah mean? to Israel? to her enemies?

AMOS

The Prophet of Justice

Amos was a native of Judah but prophesied for Israel. He was from Tekoa, a town in Judah about six miles south of Bethlehem, or about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. He was not a prophet by training, not trained in the regular prophetic schools. He said to Amaziah the priest, that while he was not a professional prophet, and not the son of a prophet, he was, nevertheless, divinely called to the prophetic office to deliver the message of Jehovah.

It was during the reign of Jeroboam II he was called to prophesy. Uzziah was then on the throne of Judah. His call occurred a few years after that of Joel, probably about 765 B.C. Under these two kings Judah and Israel enjoyed unusual prosperity. They were men of administrative ability, were able rulers. Under these conditions the predictions of Amos would meet with skeptical regard; he would be looked upon as an alarmist and a pessimist, but in less than fifty years his announcement of the doom of Israel was fulfilled.¹

By many Amos is supposed to be the earliest prophet whose writings have come down to us. He is one of the most forceful preachers of repentance and judgment of all the prophets of the Old Testament. As Cornill observes, "Amos is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit." His name signifies "burden" or "burden-bearer." Like Elijah, and other religious reformers, he was both the product and representative of his age. Stern, fearless, self-contained, a man of granite-make, he possessed a powerful well-

knit mind and a vivid imagination, and is one of the most arresting figures ever on the stage of Hebrew history. He was not only the first of the prophets who wrote down what he preached, but the pioneer of a new era.²

HIS HOME AND EARLY OCCUPATION

Reared on the edge of the desert, "among the herdsmen of Tekoa" (1:1), he was a rustic, like Micah; and, because his father's name is nowhere mentioned; it is inferred that he probably sprang from a poor and obscure family. He was a shepherd, and therefore, a natural-born preacher! He raised a peculiar breed of stunted, fine-wooled sheep; a breed small in size and ugly in appearance, but highly esteemed on account of their wool. He was also a dresser of sycamore trees (7:14).³ A "dresser" of sycamore trees is not, as we would suspect, one who pruned and cared for what we know, in our time, as a sycamore tree. This was the "Ficus Sycomorus" or Hebrew "shiqmah", the sycamore fig tree. A tree bearing fruit, like the ordinary fig, directly on the stem, but being of inferior quality.⁴ This is the same kind of tree spoken of in Luke 19:1-4, which Zacchaeus climbed in order to see the Lord. The fruit, in order to ripen, had to be bruised by pinching, and this was the task of one who "dressed" the tree. Thus, Amos lived close to nature.

HIS CALL TO PREACH

As a prophet of judgment, Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, was called from his flocks to proclaim a stern message of punishment upon Israel for her luxurious and self-indulgent ways. As a condemnation upon her sins she would be overthrown by a foreign foe.

National sin merits national judgment. Therefore the key verse of the book speaks of punishment (4:12). He believed God to be the Ruler of this world, and that all nations are responsible to Him, and that the measure of their responsibility is determined by the light each nation has. For Israel, this could be no excuse. For surrounding heathen nations (1-2:3), punishment is suited to respective crimes against moral codes, and no final hope is held out for them. But for Israel when truly adjusted to God's will and purpose there is the promise of full deliverance and prosperity under the House of David.⁵

His mission was particularly to North Israel. Accordingly, he repaired to Bethel, twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and there under the very shadow of the royal palace lifted up his voice in a vigorous and impassioned cry for justice.⁶

HIS MESSAGE

"Samaria must be destroyed!" This is the essence of his book. The nation is ripe for judgment. Amos is the first of the prophets to declare the doom of North Israel. On a high feast day at Bethel he opened his lamentation, crying, "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise" (5:2). That was the funeral dirge of the nation! Serious and grave indeed was the situation. The day of Israel's doom was come: The Day of Jehovah! He took up this idea where Joel had left off: beginning, "Jehovah will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem" (1:2).⁷ We do not know how long he remained in the city, though we are told that he refused to leave when commanded to do so by Amaziah the

idolatrous priest. Using a clever device to secure attention, he began by denouncing the surrounding nations for their sins. In his denunciation he came ever nearer to Israel, even denouncing their neighbor, Judah. With every person in the great crowd now alert to hear his work he poured forth the judgment of God upon Israel for their sins,⁸

The burden of his message is that of national accountability, which he delivered in a series of declamations against the nations as such; in set addresses to the chosen people; in a series of visions which deal with the coming judgment: and in a brief final work, prophetic of ultimate restoration.

The book falls naturally, therefore, in to these divisions: Declamation (1-2); Proclamation (3-6); Revelation (7-9:10); Restoration (9:11-15).⁹

1. The Declamations: These were a series of judgments that were to fall upon the surrounding nations. Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, The Children of Ammon, Moab, Judah, and finally Israel. In each of these nations transgressions were named for which they would be punished. Also, in each of these judgments, there appeared the awesome authority. "Thus saith the Lord."

2. The Proclamations: With the divine admonition "hear this work," Amos proceeded to deliver his special message to Israel in a series of three discourses. The first consists of a statement of Jehovah's verdict and sentence. It opens with a simple declaration that the privileged people were to be punished; their privileges were named, and their punishment announced. The

second discourse consists of Jehovah's summons to the people. It commences with a severe and terrible indictment of the women. He addressed them as "ye kine of Bashan," which description reveals the fact of the degradation of womanhood to mere animalism. A final summons to the people is uttered in which the call was made to revise their sacrificial offerings every morning rather than every year, and their tithe every third day instead of every third year. All this culminated in a great call, "Prepare to meet thy God." The third discourse was a description of Jehovah's judgment. This was a lamentation for "the fallen virgin of Israel," and its causes. He addressed two classes of sinning people: Those who desired "the day of the Lord," but who really did not: they were hypocrits. The second were the indifferent, those "that are at ease in Zion."

3. The Revelation: In this division the prophet gave a fivefold vision of judgment, introduced in the first four cases by the words, "The Lord God showed me." The last vision was that of Jehovah Himself. They were the visions of the locusts and their devastation, yet God arrested His judgment; the vision of fire and its destruction, yet God arrested His judgment; the vision of the plumbline, a test of the uprightness of the people. No intercession was made and doom was determined; the vision of the basket of summer fruit, indicating the imminence of the judgment. Jehovah declared that the end was come, that He would not pass by them any more. The final vision was that of judgment executed. In this there was no symbol, no sign. This message

is in two phases. First an announcement of judgment, irrevocable and irresistible; secondly, a declaration of the procedure.

Jehovah is seen standing by the altar, declaring the stroke of destruction to be inevitable, and all attempts at escape futile, because He has proceeded to action.

4. The Restoration: It is now declared that the reason of The Divine judgment is not revenge, but that it is the only way in which it is possible to usher in the restored order upon which the heart of God is set. The threefold process of restoration: First, preliminary, "I will raise up....that they may possess." Secondly, progress, "I will bring again the captivity...they shall build the waste cities...plant vineyards...make gardens." Finally, the permanent, "I will plant them...they shall no more be plucked up."

THE PERMANENT VALUE OF HIS MESSAGE TO US

In these brief sermons of the prophet may be found certain great fundamental truths of special eternal worth: for example,

1. Amos vindicates the moral personality of God, emphasizing that the essence of the divine nature is absolute righteousness.

2. Amos also taught that the most elaborate worship, if insincere, is but an insult to God: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (5:21); and, "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (5:23). Amos taught Israel that religion means much more than mere worship, and that it is not

the smoke of the burnt offering that is acceptable to God, but the incense of a true and loyal heart.

3. He further taught that there must be social justice between man and man: "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24). His whole message serves as a most fitting prelude to James definition of religion: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

4. Another great truth taught by Amos is the fact that privilege involves responsibility. Election to privilege is consequently only another name for election to duty!

5. Another is the meaning and purpose of calamity: "I have given you want of bread, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah" (4:6ff.). Every disaster is but a new call to repentance. (Luke 13:1-5).

6. And another, that warning is never obsolete. This great truth is taught practically throughout the entire book.

7. The necessity of personal conviction. Religion is a personal matter; likewise conviction; it cannot be inherited.¹⁰

Never has been better set forth the sure consequences of dishonesty in disregarding the claims of others, and of ignoring God in all human relationships. None have shown better than Amos the inevitable result of acting contrary to these divine principles in personal or political life, that in the end judgment will fall upon all unrighteousness.¹¹

SOME SPECIAL PASSAGES

1. "Shall two walk together except they be agreed?" (3:3).
2. "Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (5:25).
3. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (6:1).
4. "Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed" (9:13).¹²

AMOS -- "BURDEN BEARER" 13

Memory verses - Amos 3:3, 7; 5:24; 6:1-6

I. General Observations:

1. Home--Tekoah, a town of Judah (1:1), 12 miles south of Jerusalem--a wild desert country.
2. Occupation--A shepherd, "dresser of sycamore trees".
3. Date -- 765-750 B. C.
4. Background--great prosperity, moral and religious corruption--First great reformer.
5. Message--Doom! Repent or perish.
6. Teaching--True nature of Jehovah and relation between Jehovah and the other nations.

II. Outline:

1. The approaching judgment--Heathen's and Israel's sins, 1:3-2:16.
 - A. Punishment of the nations bordering the Holy Land, 1:3-2:3.
 - B. Punishment of Judah, 2:4-5 (Religious Apostacy).
 - C. Summons and punishment of Israel, 2:6-16.
2. Israel's crimes and her condemnations, 3-6.
 - A. Condemnation of the wealthy ruling classes for civil iniquities, 3:1-4:3.
 - B. Unheeded chastisements, 4:4-13.
 - C. Lamentations, denunciations, exhortations, threats of ruin, 5:1-17.

- D. The terrors of the day of Jehovah, 5:18-27.
- E. Woe upon the luxurious, self-confident, proud, 6:1-14.
- 3. The five visions of the prophet with their explanations.
 - A. Locusts, which mercy of God averts the catastrophe, 7:1-3.
 - B. Devouring fire, 7:4-6.
 - C. Plumb line, 7:7-9.
 - D. Basket of summer fruit, Ch. 8.
 - E. Smitten Sancturry, 9:1-10.
- 4. Promises of Bright Future--Messianic, 9:11-15.

AMOS

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AMOS

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6. Tenney, Merrill C., Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich: 1963.

QUESTIONS ON AMOS

1. Amos could be called the Prophet of _____.
2. From what town did Amos come? What was its location?
3. Amos prophesied for the _____ kingdom.
4. What was Amos' background as a prophet?
5. What king was in power in Israel when Amos began to prophesy? In Judah?
6. What is the probable date of the call of Amos?
7. What was the financial condition of Israel and Judah during the time of Amos?
8. "He is one of the most forceful preachers of _____ and _____ of all the prophets of the Old Testament."
9. What does his name signify?
10. What was some of the personal characteristics of Amos.
11. What was his personal background and occupation?
12. What was the task of a "dresser of sycamore trees?"
13. For what purpose was Amos called to prophecy to Israel?
14. What was the message Amos had for Israel?
15. Distinct from the message of Amos, what was the burden of his message?
16. What are the four divisions of the book of Amos and their chapter divisions?
17. List the seven fundamental truths of permanent value found in the sermons of Amos.
18. List the five visions of the prophet.

OBADIAH

The Censurer of Ridicule

Obadiah is without any personal history; however, his name, which means "worshiper of Jehovah," is suggestive. His was a very common name among the Semites, especially in post-exilic times. Attempts have been made to identify our prophet with some one of the dozen or more Obadiah's mentioned in the Old Testament. But his work evidently "was more important than the worker; and for the sake of the work, the author himself allowed his personality to slip into the background."¹

Since there is no personal history of Obadiah, it is impossible to accurately affix the date of his prophecy. The only ground on which it may be done is that of the capture of Jerusalem, to which reference is so clearly made. Certain passages in Jeremiah, apparently quoted from this book, make it probable that the capture referred to is that by Nebuchadnezzar.²

This brief, brilliant, prophetic cameo of only 21 verses is a sharp manifesto against Edom whose character and career, doom and downfall, Obidiah presents. The Edomites, or Idumeans, who were the descendants of Esau, were the proud, bitter, resentful neighbors and foes of Jacob.³ Although it is difficult because of the lack of historical background concerning Obadiah, many consider his prophecy to have been uttered before the fall of Jerusalem, and not after it. Some, in fact, consider Obadiah to be one of the first of the writing prophets, and the first to use the phrase, "thus saith the Lord." Others see his writing as

an account of that which had already transpired. Dickson says, "It sets forth the exultation of the Edomites over Judah at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is not a prediction of such an attitude to be fulfilled at a future time, but a statement of what has already occurred and for which she will be destroyed. If this be correct then the date of the prophecy cannot be prior to 586 B.C."⁴ Morgan says, "Obadiah had a vision of the attitude of Edom toward the chosen people in their calamity, and his message was delivered concerning them. It was not spoken to Edom, but to Israel, and was intended as a word of comfort for those who, loyal to Jehovah, were yet suffering with the whole nation."⁵

Thus, as far as the book itself is concerned, and its author: Nothing is known of Obadiah except for this brief, divinely inspired prophecy; the date of his writing is unknown and because of its difficulty results in dates varying from 845 B.C. to 586 B.C. There are even some who believe the book to be a four-part composite dating from sometime before 586 B.C. all the way to the Maccabean uprising around 186 B.C. Upon which all agree, however, is that the prophecy is a judgment of Edom, and of the restoration of Israel. Therefore, the important consideration seems to be the attitude of Edom which precipitated such harsh judgment and condemnation upon themselves as Obadiah presents, and to this consideration we now turn our attention.

EDOM

The ancient kingdom of Edom lay to the south of the Wadi Zered below the Dead Sea. Both the land and its people are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. Up to the present no written records from ancient Edom have been recovered so that our knowledge of this ancient kingdom comes from the records of the Israelites, Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians, and from archaeological discoveries in the area.

The Land of Edom

This was a mountainous and extremely rugged land mass about one hundred miles long extending from the River Arnon, which was the southern boundary of Moab, as far south as the Gulf of Aqabah. In width it included the mountains and fertile plateaus both to the east and the west of the Arabah, the great depression connecting the Dead Sea with the Gulf of Aqabah. The most important area was the plateau to the east of the Arabah. The highest point was Mount Seir which rises to about 3500 feet above the Arabah. In the days of the Hebrew monarchy the capital was Sela, which lay at the southern end of the secluded valley which eventually became Petra.⁶ The country stretches along the sides of Mount Seir, a rocky ridge, in the center of which is Mount Hor, where Aaron died and was buried. In this district Esau settled after his brother Jacob fled from him to Padan-aram. His descendants held the land and were called Edomites. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. they were a strong people having the protection of their natural stronghold. In the day of its

strength and pride it teemed with commercial activity as merchants passed through the land to India, but the caravans have ceased to take that route.⁷

Edom in the Old Testament

In the days of the Exodus, Israel sought to pass through Edom, travelling on the King's Highway but was refused permission (Numbers 20:14-21; 21:4; Judges 11:17, 18). Some kinship with Edom was recognized however (Deuteronomy 23:7,8). The prophet Balaam promised that Israel would one day possess Edom (Numbers 24:18). Under Jehoram Edom gained her independence (II Kings 8:20-22) but Amaziah later captured Sela their capital and killed many. His son Uzziah restored the port at Elath although this was lost in the days of Ahaz and never recovered. After 736 B.C. Edom became a vassal state of Assyria.

When Judah fell in 586, Edom rejoiced (Psalm 137:7). For her bitter hatred of Judah the prophets foretold her destruction.⁸ Subsequently, Edom, along with the rest of western Asia, fell to Nebuchadnezzar. In the post-Exilic period the Edomites were pushed northward by the Nabataean Arabs into the southern part of Judea where they became known as Idumeans. They were conquered by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler of the Jews (134-104 B.C.) and forcibly incorporated into the Jewish state. An Idumaean, Antipater, was appointed procurator of Judea, Samaria and Galilee by Julius Caesar (47 B.C.). Subsequently, Herod, his son, was crowned king of the Jews (37 B.C.). After the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), the Idumaeans as a people lost their identity.⁹

SUMMARY

Thus we have, in Obadiah, the briefest of the prophetic books. A calamity falling upon Israel has been aggravated by the malignant rejoicing of her neighbor foe, Edom. Israel is comforted in the thought of a future in which Edom will suffer judgment in her turn, and the kingdom will be the Lord's.¹⁰

The Key thought is found in verse 10. Because of the violence Edom had continually demonstrated against Jacob, their brother, judgment is pronounced. The Edomites had refused Israel passage through their country, and they had rejoiced over the capture and destruction of Jerusalem.¹¹ Continual hostility had been exercised against Judah through the years by raiding parties who struck and then retired to the practically impregnable city of Petra.

The theme of the book is the coming destruction of Edom. Nothing can save them from the judgment of Jehovah for their brutal treatment of the Israelites fleeing from the ruined city of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Edom is doomed but Israel shall be restored and blessed because "the saviours shall come up on Mt. Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the Kingdom shall be Jehovah's" (vs. 21).¹²

OBADIAH -- "SERVANT OF JEHOVAH" 13

Memory verses - Obadiah 1:3, 4, 11

I. General Information:

1. Date: 845 B.C.
2. Message: Fall of Edom because of cruelty.
3. Lesson: When neutrality is guilt, vs. 11.
4. Location: South of the Dead Sea.

II. Outline in Brief:

1. Utter destruction of Edom decreed, vs. 2-16.
 - (1) Announcement of the Judgment, vs. 2-9.
 - (2) Causes of the Judgment, vs. 10-14.
 - (3) Terrors of the Day of Jehovah, vs. 15, 16.
2. Exaltation of Israel, vs. 17-21.
 - (1) Restoration of a remnant, vs. 17.
 - (2) Conquest of Edom and surrounding nations, vs. 18-20.
 - (3) Jehovah's universal sway, vs. 21.

OBADIAH

Footnotes

1. George L. Robinson, The Twelve Minor Prophets, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich: 1926, p. 61, 62.
2. G. Campbell Morgan, The Analyzed Bible, Pickering & Inglis, London: p. 297.
3. Herbert Lockyer, All the Books and Chapters of the Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich: 1966, p. 202.
4. Dickson Analytical Bible, John A. Dickson Publishing Co., Chicago: 1964, p. 1034.
5. Morgan, p. 297.
6. Charles F. Pfeiffer, The Biblical World, A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich: 1966, p. 206.
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8. Pfeiffer, p. 206, 207.
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OBADIAH

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10. Thompson Chain Reference Bible, Analysis of Books, p. 203.

QUESTIONS ON OBADIAH

1. Obadiah could be called the _____.
2. What does the name of Obadiah mean?
3. What does Obadiah present in this brief, brilliant, prophetic cameo of only 21 verses?
4. What is the phrase that some consider Obadiah to have been the first to use?
5. Obadiah's prophecy was directed to _____ about _____.
6. Upon what do all agree concerning the prophecy of Obadiah?
7. Give a brief description of the location of Edom.
8. Give a brief description of the land of Edom.
9. The Edomites were descendants of _____.
10. What did Edom do when Judah fell in 586 B.B.?
11. What prominent New Testament character was a descendant of the Edomites?
12. The key thought of Obadiah is found in verse 10. It is:
13. The theme of the book of Obadiah is _____
_____.

JONAH

The Reluctant Prophet

This is in literary form a prophetic story, like the story of Elijah in the Kings, or the earlier part of the Book of Daniel. Its interpretation must therefore be based upon the action of the prophet, what he fails to do as well as what he does.¹

Jonah was the son of Amittai. There can be no reasonable possibility of doubt as to his identity with the prophet referred to in II Kings 14:25. These names, Jonah and Amittai, occur nowhere else in the Old Testament. It is evident therefore that Jonah exercised his ministry about the time of the accession of Jeroboam II. This would make him an early contemporary of Hosea and Amos.

The relation of the Hebrew people to foreign nations at this period was characterized by a strange contradiction. They were making political alliances with outside nations, while yet religiously they were bitterly exclusive. Both these attitudes were wrong in the measure in which they misinterpreted the Divine attitude and prostituted the Divine purpose. The book as we have it was undoubtedly written for Israel, and is a prophetic story.

In narrating his own experience in the matter of his commission to Nineveh, Jonah intended to teach his people the lesson of the inclusiveness of the Divine government, and thus to rebuke the exclusiveness of their attitude toward surrounding peoples.² Thus the book could be easily entitled the 'Condemnation of Exclusiveness.'

HIS BACKGROUND

Chronologically, Jonah is, perhaps, the earliest of all prophets, major and minor. He was the son of Amittai, a prophet, and was a native of Gath-hepher, in Galilee, of the tribe of Zebulun. Gath-hepher is north of Nazareth about four miles, and just southwest of Cana. He prophesied for the northern kingdom, Israel. Aside from the facts given in his prophecy concerning himself, all that is known of him is what is stated in II Kings 14:25, in which passage he assured Jeroboam II he would be victorious over the Syrians.³

HIS COMMISSION

When called by Jehovah to go to Nineveh and preach, the task was so repugnant to him that he fled "from the presence of the Lord," Jonah 1:3, 10, to Tarshish, or Tartessus, in southwestern Spain, resigning his prophetic work. In the sequel of the story, he frankly gives his reason for going westward, hazarding the sea which the Hebrews usually avoided, instead of eastward. "For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and repentest thee of the evil," 4:2. Doubtless he would have gone to Nineveh had he been sure that God would really destroy the city. But being a narrow patriot, jealous and vindictive, he could not see why God should wish him to preach to a people who stood eager to devour Israel. The true Christian on the other hand, desires the welfare even of his enemies, Luke 6:27, 28.⁴

He was commissioned to preach to the Ninevites, a great pagan city celebrated for its magnificence and corruption, and at that time was perhaps the leading city of the Gentile world. At that time Assyria was in a weakened condition, having suffered greatly from calamities, and was not exercising much influence in the affairs of the world. Under these conditions they would be more responsive to the message Jonah was sent to proclaim.⁵

HIS REACTION

Bearing in mind the national prejudice of Israel against all other people in the matter of religion, we can better understand Jonah's reaction to the undoubtedly God originated commission to preach to Nineveh. Believing in Jehovah as a loving God, they yet thought of Him as their God exclusively. The charge to deliver a message to a city outside the covenant, and one moreover which was the center of a power which had been oppressive and cruel, must have been startling to Jonah. He attempted to escape from his commission by resigning his prophetic office and fleeing from God's presence. His was an act of willful disobedience, wrought by the conflict of his own patriotic will and the will of God. He fully intended to forsake his heritage because of his knowledge of God's mercy toward the national enemy of his people and his country.

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian Empire was a World-Empire for about 300 years (900-607 B. C.). It began to rise to world power about the time of the division of the

Hebrew Kingdom at the close of Solomon's reign. It gradually absorbed and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Thus Jonah was called of God to prolong the life on the enemy nation which was already in the process of exterminating his own nation. No wonder he fled in the opposite direction, in patriotic dread of a brutal and relentless military machine which was closing in on God's people.⁶ No wonder the dubious distinction as "The Reluctant Prophet."

HIS PUNISHMENT

This little book contains one of the most familiar stories in the old Testament but one that is widely misunderstood. Unfortunately the very mention of the word Jonah provokes a smile, or even a sneer, because of his strange experience with the great fish of the sea. Indeed, the word Jonah has become for many people a sort of synonym for hard luck or misfortune. To many readers the beauty and the significance of the story are missed because of these popular notions.⁷

During his flight from God, a severe storm arose and the seamen questioned Jonah, who admitted that he was fleeing from Jehovah and was probably responsible for the storm.⁸

Jonah could not escape from God. All the forces of nature are at the command of God, and are pressed into service when need requires. The incidents of the storm are full of interest. In reading the account of it one cannot help feeling that Jonah, when he ultimately wrote the book which tells the story of his failure, had indeed learned the lesson which he intended to teach

others, for the men outside the covenant are revealed in such a way as to suggest how much of good was in them. Terrified by the storm, and at their wit's end, they nevertheless made every possible effort to save the life of Jonah.⁹

Our Lord made a typical use of two incidents in the Old Testament, one being the raising of the serpent in the wilderness by Moses, and the other, Jonah in the great fish. Why the case of Jonah should call forth more unbelief than any other miracle is beyond our comprehension. Why should one refuse to accept this and believe that our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead? If it is a question of credibility, is one more believable than the other, seeing that it is the same divine power that is operative in each?

Why should the preservation of Jonah in the fish be the subject of so much unseemly wit and sport? Why not indulge the same regarding the raising of the widow's son or Lazarus from the dead, the healing of the paralytic, or giving the blind man his sight? Surely these are not less remarkable than the case of Jonah. If one is unbelievable so are the others.

What is of greater moment is the fact that our Lord accepted the miracle of Jonah's preservation and used it as a type of His burial and resurrection. That signifies that if the one is discredited so should be the other.¹⁰

Jonah was an isolationist believing that salvation was of the Jews only, but in the belly of the great fish he learned the lesson of obedience to God and His pity for all men. This "most

beautiful story ever written in so small a compass," as Charles Reade called it, is eloquent with the truth of the futility of man's efforts to frustrate the divine purposes of grace.¹¹

HIS SECOND COMMISSION

Immediately following his miraculous rescue Jonah is given his commission again. In 3:1, the charge is repeated to Jonah to go to Nineveh. With a new sense of the authority of Jehovah, Jonah arose and obeyed.

Through all the streets of Nineveh he went to give the warning of Jehovah and to call on the people to repent. His words reached even the king himself, who "arose from his throne, and laid aside his robe from him, and covered himself in sackcloth, and sat in ashes." (3:6). The king called upon his people to fast and humble themselves before Jonah's God. Their cries for mercy were heard and God spared this wicked city of 120,000 people "who could not discern between their right hand and their left."¹²

HIS SECOND REACTION

The people repented at his preaching! And with their repentance came the repentance of God, so that the doom was averted, and the city was spared. At Jehovah's delay in executing judgment upon the wicked city, Jonah became vexed. He was vexed, not because he felt discredited in the eyes of the men of Nineveh, or because his professional standing as a prophet was ruined by the failure of his prediction, but because of God's clemency toward Nineveh; being willing to spare a city which would only continue

to harass and decimate Israel through war and the exaction of heavier and ever heavier tribute. In short, Jonah was vexed because of a narrow, selfish patriotism with which he was obsessed. In his despondency Jonah resembles Elijah, I Kings 19:1-18. But there was a difference between them: Jonah "was depressed with Elijah's despondency, but without Elijah's excuse; the difference between them being, as G. A. Smith has pointed out, that "Elijah was jealous for God; Jonah was jealous of God."¹³

With more the attitude of a disappointed and disgruntled child, Jonah was a revengeful, blood-thirsty, prophet-patriot, who preached with wonderful, even extraordinary success, yet without being able to see that he had succeeded. As example of his beligerency toward the Ninevites, he went without the city, built himself a booth and awaited its destruction. Again the overruling of Jehovah was manifest in the prepared gourd, the prepared worm, and the prepared sultry east wind. So great was the anger and anguish of the prophet that he fainted, and asked again that he might die. Jehovah repeated His question, but now with a new application, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" He who had been angry that the city was not destroyed, was angry that the gourd was destroyed, and he answered the inquiry by affirming, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."¹⁴

HIS CHARACTER

(1) "Sanctified in spots." Strange mixture of strength and weakness.

(2) Self-willed, 1:1-3.

- (3) Godly, 1:9.
- (4) Courageous, 1:12.
- (5) Prayerful, 2:1-9.
- (6) Obedient after Chastisement, 3:3, 4.
- (7) Bigoted and selfish, disappointed when the Ninevites repented, 3:4-10; 4:1.
- (8) Had too much concern for his reputation, 4:2, 3.¹⁵

HIS LASTING LESSONS

The motive of this story is very plain--to rebuke the spirit of exclusiveness of Israel, and its rejoicing over the calamities of outside nations. They thought Jehovah was for them, not for others. Jonah was afraid his message would arouse the Ninevites to repentance and that God in His graciousness would accept it and destruction would be averted. This was displeasing to Jonah. If he knew there would be no repentance and no mercy he would have gone to Nineveh when first commissioned. It was of the first importance that this spirit of exclusiveness be rebuked as it was in God's statement to Jonah.¹⁶

The one unmistakable message of the book is the concern of Jehovah for all peoples, regardless of race or nationality. We have here the message of "Foreign Missions" eight hundred years before the birth of Christ. As George Adam Smith says: "The trust which we find in the Book of Jonah is as full a revelation of God's will as prophecy anywhere achieves. That God has granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life is nowhere else in the Old Testament so vividly illustrated. This lifts the teaching of the book to equal rank with the second part of Isaiah, and nearest of our Twelve (Minor Prophets) to the New Testament."¹⁷

JONAH -- "DOVE"¹⁸I. General Observations:

1. Date: 800-760 B. C.
2. Message: Jehovah is the one Universal God -- Jews and Heathen.
3. Miracles:
 - (1) Preservation of Jonah in fish's belly.
 - (2) Gourd in a night.
 - (3) The worm.
4. Lessons:
 - (1) One cannot run from God.
 - (2) Easier to do God's bidding than to fight God.
 - (3) God's use of all incidents--effects of Jonah's mistake on the seamen.
 - (4) Opportunity comes when we least expect it. (Nineveh did not realize her need for God).
 - (5) Infinite love of heaven versus the selfish coldness of man.

II. Outline:

1. Jonah's call and flight to Tarshish, 1:1-16.
2. Jonah's miraculous preservation, 1:17-2:10.
3. Jehovah's second call - Jonah to Nineveh, Chap. 3.
4. A narrow prophet vs. a merciful God, Chap. 4.

JONAH

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4. George L. Robinson, The Twelve Minor Prophets, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1926, p. 70, 71.
5. Dickson, p. 1039.
6. Henry H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.: 24th Edition, 1965, p. 363.
7. H. I. Hester, The Heart of Hebrew History, The Quality Press, Inc., Liberty, Missouri: 1962, p. 279.
8. Ibid.
9. Morgan, p. 302.
10. Dickson, p. 1041, 1042.
11. Herbert Lockyer, All the Books and Chapters of the Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids: 1966, p. 203.
12. Hester, p. 279.
13. Robinson, p. 73, 74.
14. Morgan, p. 304.
15. Thompson Chain Reference Bible, "Analyses of Books," B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.: 1964, p. 204.
16. Dickson, p. 1042.
17. Hester, p. 280, 281.
18. Andrew M. Connally, Jr., "My Servants the Prophets," p. 3.

JONAH

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QUESTIONS ON JONAH

1. Jonah was the son of _____.
2. These names appear only one other time in the Old Testament. Where are they found?
3. Jonah exercised his ministry about the time of the accession of what king of Israel?
4. What other minor prophets were contemporary with Jonah?
5. Explain briefly the relation of the Hebrew people with foreign nations at this time.
6. The Book of Jonah could easily be entitled the " _____
_____."
7. Chronologically, what is the position of Jonah in relation to the other prophets, both major and minor?
8. Jonah prophesied for the _____ kingdom.
9. What is the location of Tarshish?
10. To what great city was Jonah commissioned to preach?
11. What was the belief of the people regarding the exclusiveness or the inclusiveness of God?
12. For how long was the Assyrian Empire a world power?
13. What connection does the Assyrian Empire have with the message of Jonah?
14. In view of this condition, what was Jonah's reaction to the commission of God for Him to preach to that empire?
15. Give a brief account of Jonah and the storm.
16. What was the response of Jonah to God as a result of the storm?
17. What did the people do when Jonah preached to them?
18. Complete: "Elijah was jealous _____ God, Jonah was jealous _____ God."
19. The overruling of God was manifest in the prepared _____,
the prepared _____, and the prepared _____.
20. In our study there were eight characteristics of Jonah listed. They are:
21. What is the one unmistakable message of the book of Jonah?

MICAH

The Prophet of the Poor

Micah, the sixth of the twelve, bore a name which in itself was a creed, the fuller and probably older form, Mikayahu, signifying "who is like unto Jehovah?" (Mic. 1:1; 7:18 Jer. 26:18). Like Michael, meaning "who is like unto God?" The name contains a challenge.

He is called "the Morashtite" (Mic. 1:1), having been born in Moresheth--gath (1:14), about 20 miles distant southwest of Jerusalem. Like Amos, he was a native of the country. He apparently had no love for the cities (1:5; 5:11, 6:9).

Micah must have been a very striking personality. Possessed of strong convictions, he showed corresponding courage. The secret of his power is told in 3:8, "But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." As a true patriot and like every true preacher, he fearlessly uncovered sin and pointed to Christ. He was preeminently a prophet of the poor and a friend of the oppressed. His whole soul went out in loyal sympathy to the downtrodden. His unfeigned sincerity stands out in sharp contrast to the flattering teachings of his contemporaries, who, as false prophets, regulated their messages by their income (3:5).¹

He was raised up to prophesy both to Samaria and Jerusalem, but mainly to Judah; and as in all genuine prophecy, through present judgment future blessing appears. Dr. A. T. Pierson says

that the key word of the book is "Controversy," (6:2), and speaks of one portion as, "a little poem of twelve lines in Hebrew... one of the most exquisite things to be found in the entire Old Testament, and would alone be sufficient to prove that this Bible is the Word of God, for there is nothing like it in all the literature of men" (7:18, 19). How different our lives would be if only God was the Center and Circumference of all things, as He was to Micah to whom God was everything!²

Micah prophesied in the days of Jothan, Ahaz and early part of the reign of king Hezekiah. He was contemporary with Isaiah. He began his ministry after Uzziah's death, and it must have closed in the early part of Hezekiah's reign, for the idolatries which he rebuked were done away at Hezekiah's reformation. His message was peculiarly to the cities, as centers affecting the national thought and action. This he distinctly affirmed in his opening words. The prophecy is a declaration of a Divine program, and consists of three addresses, each beginning with a call to hear. Micah declared to those in authority in the cities, which were centers of authority, the messages of the One whose authority is supreme.³

His Times

According to the title of his book, Micah prophesied "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1), a date amply confirmed by internal evidence, and also by Jeremiah 26:18, which quotes Micah 3:12. Under Jotham, splendid luxury reigned. His ambition to build fortresses and palaces in Jerusalem cost

many a peasant's life. Under Ahaz, Judah was forced to pay tribute to Assyria, which, together with the cost of the Syro-Ephraimitic war of 734 B. C., fell as a heavy burden upon all classes. Both rich and poor suffered. The grasping, avaricious landlords used their power to oppress, confiscating the property of the poor and even evicting widows from their houses. Under Hezekiah, who attempted to reform the state, conditions became even more hopeless. Men ceased to trust one another, Jerusalem became a hotbed of factions and intrigue. The custodians of the law abused their powers; nobles fleecing the poor, judges accepting of bribes, prophets flattering the rich, and priests teaching for hire (ch. 2). Commercialism and materialism were supplanting almost the last vestige of everything ethical and spiritual. At such a crisis Micah appeared and attempted to call the nation back to God and to duty.⁴

His Message

Micah championed the cause of the poor against the oppressions of the rich. He loved his country, but was especially devoted to his own poor and oppressed people. He preached righteousness and justice with flaming words. His words were effective because the reasons for his passionate proclamations were so evident. He denounced corruption, injustice and false standards of religion.⁵

Moulton says of the three compositions that make up this book the first attacks social corruption and the delusive promises of the false prophets, insisting upon the purging judgment that must precede the glorious restoration. The last presents the eve of

this judgment: the corrupt in their despair, and the faithful-- "the man of wisdom"--to whom the judgment comes as deliverance. Between these stands one of the most exquisite morsels of prophetic literature: a dramatic scene hardly a page long embodying a single thought. A court of Judgment is before us: God is the plaintiff, Israel, the defendant: even a witness can be found in the Balaam who, coming to curse Israel, was forced to cry blessings on the object of Jehovah's care. In such a court who may preside as judge? It is the Mountains, the "enduring fountains of the earth," who listen to the plea; when the defendant Israel has with trembling refused to put in an appearance, it is the Mountains who pronounce judgment:

He hath shewed thee. . . what is good; and what
doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,
and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Justice, mercy and a sense of the presence of God--these are the enduring foundations of the spiritual world.⁶

Most all agree that Micah's message falls into three natural divisions. Hester designates these three divisions as (1) The doom of Jerusalem and Samaria (chap. 1, 2), (2) The transgressions of religious leaders (chap. 3-5), and (3) Jehovah's controversy with his people (chap. 6, 7).⁷ Morgan divides this book into three messages: A Message to the Nations concerning the Chosen (1, 2), A Message to the Rulers concerning the Coming One (3-5), and a Message to the Chosen concerning the Controversy (6, 7).⁸

Micah begins with a grand description of the coming of the Lord to judge Israel and Judah for their sins and idolatry, when

Samaria, as first in wickedness, shall be first to fall before the avenging enemy; and then a similar fate shall happen to Jerusalem and Judea with the deportation of their inhabitants. The sins of the grandees have brought this judgment upon them. There are found in them oppressions, injustice and violence. The false prophets only pander to their evil lusts, and lull them into false security; and the penalty of all this guilt shall be removal from their present home. But God will not cast them off altogether, for they shall yet one day be restored in triumph.

In the second part the prophet, showing the necessity of the judgment, rebukes the cruelty and rapacity of the great men; the false prophets who led people astray; the priests who taught for hire; the judges who sold to the highest bidder. As punishment for these sins, Zion the royal seat, Jerusalem the holy city, and the temple, the house of God, should be brought to desolation. But for this triple overthrow there shall be a triple restoration. The people shall return from captivity, and the Lord's house shall be raised on high, and the nations shall flock unto it to learn true religion; Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, increased and beautified. The Redeemer shall be born in Bethlehem; his kingdom shall extend to the ends of the earth; but all idolatry, all trust in the arm of flesh, must be removed before the great consummation shall occur.

In the last part, Jehovah is represented as holding a controversy or lawsuit with his people, justifying his conduct, and listening to their rejoinder, which is so far from being satis-

factory that judgment is pronounced upon them. Then Micah, identifying himself with the people, acknowledges the justice of the sentence, while he bewails its infliction; he repents of the sins which have occasioned this punishment, looks patiently to God, and puts his sole trust in him, and, in answer to his prayers, is rewarded by the promise of deliverance.⁹

His Lasting Principles

The particular sins which Micah condemned are:¹⁰

1. Idolatry, ch. 1:7; 5:13.
2. Evil plans and devices, ch. 2:1.
3. Covetousness, ch. 2:2.
4. Rapacity of princes, prophets and priests, ch. 3:2-11.
5. Witchcraft, ch. 5:12.
6. Dishonesty, ch. 6:10-12.
7. Universal corruption, ch. 7:2-4.
8. Treachery, ch. 7:5, 6.

All the prophets went to the heart of the matter in condemning the empty formality, the useless perfunctory performance of rites and ceremonies, but none of them stated it more clearly and forcibly than did Micah. cf. 6:7,8.

Some writers have very mistakenly gone to the extreme of saying that the priestly sacrificial system has no place with the prophets and by them was abandoned. Nothing could be more mistaken than such an interpretation of the prophets. The sacrificial system was divinely appointed to be continued and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. One of the last acts of our Lord was to celebrate the performance of these ordinances. They relied upon the mere doing of the thing in meeting their religious obligations, and ignored the fact that what invested the performance of these rites with

a true significance was the sincere spiritual attitude of the offerer. Micah would take the same position regarding religious acts of today that are devoid of true character because the heart is unrenewed and away from God.

Micah emphasized the fact that the Messiah is the hope of the world. That is true today, it will be true of the future. There is no other hope of the world. Education, culture, legislation, politics, cannot save the world. In the shifting of foundations, the breaking up of the moral, religious and social orders, with growing disintegration, the hope of the world is the Christ of every heart whose kingdom of grace and redeeming power shall extend from pole to pole.¹¹

MICAH -- "WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?"¹²

Memory verses - Micah 2:1; 4:1, 3, 4: 5:2; 6:8

I. General Observation:

1. Home--Moreseth-gath, 1:1, 14, a small town on the border between Judah and Philistia, southwest of Jerusalem.
2. Occupation--unknown.
3. Characterization--"I am full of the Spirit of Jehovah and judgment"-3:8.
4. Date--740-700 B. C.
5. Teaching--Insists of holiness of God, great summary of
Divine requirements, 6:6-8.

II. Outline.

1. Judgment upon Samaria and Judah, Salvation of remnant, 1-2.
 - (1) Judgment upon Samaria, 1:2-16.
 - (2) Causes which make judgment inevitable, 2:1-11.
 - (3) Return of a purified remnant, 2:12-13.
2. Contrast between present devastation and future exaltation, chapters 3-5.
 - (1) Present corruption, ch. 3.
 - (2) Messianic outlook, chs. 4,5.
3. Jehovah and Israel in controversy--ultimate settlement, chapters 6, 7.
 - (1) Case against Israel, 6:1-7:6.
 - (2) Utterance dealing with the ultimate settlement of the controversy, 7:7-20.

MICAHA

Footnotes

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2. Herbert Lockyer, All the Books and Chapters of the Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids: 1966, p. 205.
3. G. Campbell Morgan, The Analyzed Bible, Pickering & Inglis, London: p. 307.
4. Robinson, p. 95, 96.
5. H. I. Hester, The Heart of Hebrew History, The Quality Press, Inc., Liberty, Missouri: 1962, p. 286.
6. Richard G. Moulton, The Modern Reader's Bible, The MacMillan Co., New York: 1946, p. 1425.
7. Hester, p. 286.
8. Morgan, p. 307.
9. W. J. Deane, "The Book of Micah," Pulpit Commentary, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids: Vol. 14, p. ii., iii.
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11. Dickson Analytical Bible, John A. Dickson Publishing Co., Chicago: 1964, p. 1048.
12. Andrew M. Connally, Jr., "My Servants the Prophets," p. 9, 10.

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QUESTIONS ON MICAH

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1. Micah was preeminently a prophet of the _____ and a friend of the _____.
2. He prophesied to both Samaria and Jerusalem, but mainly to _____.
3. Micah prophesied in the days of _____, _____, and the early part of the reign of _____.
4. Micah was contemporary with what major prophet?
5. To what group did Micah direct his message particularly? and why?
6. The conditions of the time were terrible. Oppression of the poor was common. Micah appeared at a time when _____ and _____ were supplanting almost the last vestiges of everything _____ and _____.
7. According to Hester, what are the three natural divisions of the book of Micah, and their designations?
8. In the first division, for what will Israel and Judah be judged by the Lord?
9. In the second part, Micah rebukes what groups of great men? and for what?
10. In the last part, what is Jehovah represented as holding with his people?
11. Name **four** of the eight particular sins which Micah condemned.
12. What is God's answer to Micah's repentance and prayers for the people?
13. Quote Micah 5:2.
14. Quote Micah 6:8.
15. What fact concerning the Messiah did Micah emphasize?

NAHUM

The Prophet of Consolation

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;
and he knoweth them that trust in him. (Nahum 1:7)

The books of Jonah and Nahum should be read together. They both deal with the mighty city of Nineveh. In the order of the story presented, Jonah comes first, displaying Nineveh at its height of power, while Nahum pictures its fall.¹

His Home

Of the personal life of Nahum, practically nothing is known. In 1:1, he is called "the Elkoshite," that is, an inhabitant of Elkosh. Unfortunately, the location of this place is not known. One tradition, which cannot be traced beyond the 16th century A. D., identifies the home of Nahum with the modern village of Elkush, or Alkosh, not far from the left bank of the Tigris, two days' journey north of the site of ancient Nineveh. A second tradition, dating from Jerome in the latter part of the 4th century, locates Elkosh in Galilee. Others identify the home of the prophet with Capernaum (City of Nahum). A fourth tradition, which is found in a collection of traditions entitled "Lives of the Prophets," says "Nahum was from Elkosh, beyond Bet Gabre, of the tribe of Simeon." This would place him from the South which is more in harmony with the interest the prophet takes in the Southern Kingdom. However, no absolute certainty is attainable.²

His Date

Nahum's date is pretty clearly indicated by 3:8-10, which treats of the fall of No-amon, that is, Thebes in Upper Egypt, as already accomplished, and of the fall of Nineveh as shortly to take place. The former was captured by Assurbanipal in 663 B. C., and the latter by Nabopolassar in 606, or, as more recently discovered, 612 B. C. The Prophet's period would accordingly fall between these two limits.³ This is sufficiently definite, and there is practical unanimity concerning the date.⁴

Nineveh

The founding of the kingdom of Assyria dates from 1700 B. C. She became a powerful state, subdued nations and treated them cruelly. In matters of science and art these people were greatly inferior to the Babylonians; they did not have the creative instinct. Following the time of Jonah, having fallen into a weakened condition, her strength was revived.⁵ Nineveh was her capital. The city lay on the eastern side of the Tigris, opposite the modern town of Mosul. It was founded by Nimrod of Babylonia (Gen. 10:11), and was especially dedicated to Istar. It was the capital of Assyrian kings from 1100 B. C. to 880 B. C. and again after Sennacherib became king; being regarded as the chief city of the empire, as indeed it was.⁶ The city with its walls one hundred feet high and wide enough for three chariots to drive side by side on its top had remained unconquered for more than a century. Up to this time it had been impregnable.

It is said that outside this massive wall was a moat one hundred and forty feet wide and sixty feet deep, dominated by some twelve hundred defense towers.⁷ Such was Nineveh, the capital of the most powerful, sensual, ferocious, and diabolically atrocious race of men that perhaps ever existed in all the world. They were great besiegers of men; ever crying, "Siege, siege, siege!" Nahum declares the besiegers of the world will at last be besieged themselves (3:1ff.). Esarhaddon was Nineveh's last king. The Medes, with the Babylonians and the Scythians, first razed all the surrounding fortresses (3:12), and then beleaguered the city. The Ninevites proclaimed a fast of one hundred days to propitiate their gods; nevertheless the city fell. Ktesias described how the last night of the besieged city was spent in drunken orgies. To precipitate the catastrophe, the Tigris overflowed, breaking breaches in the walls...and the city was, of course, subsequently plundered of its rich spoil. Its destruction was made complete. All that remains today of the ancient city are those two great mounds. So complete were Nineveh's ruins that Xenophon scarcely recognized the site; Alexander the Great marched by, "not knowing that a world-empire was buried under his feet." Lucian wrote, "Nineveh is perished, and there is no trace left where once it was." The traveler Niebuhr, in 1766, passed over the site without knowing it. Only since Austen Henry Layard and Paul Emile Botta identified the site in 1842, has the city begun to be recognized by the modern world.⁸

At the time of the utterance of the prophecy, the Northern Kingdom had been destroyed, and the ten tribes dispersed. The prophet's message was to Judah. The Assyrian power was at its very height, and the descriptions given of it reveal its arrogance and habitual oppression of others. Nahum was not sent to Nineveh, as Jonah was. The time of such opportunity for her was forever passed. The message of Nahum was that of the full end determined.⁹

Nahum's Message

The purpose of the book was to pronounce Divine Vengeance upon the bloody city, and to console Judah with promises of future deliverance.¹⁰ This proud and cruel city had been involved in the sufferings of multitudes of people. She was to be repaid for all her sins. The judgment of God was come upon her.

Nahum means "compassion." His hatred for the cruel Assyrians can be detected in almost every sentence of his book. A holy and just God could not let this city live. Nahum's righteous indignation flashes like lightning in poetic utterances. God's wrath and vengeance are not to be thought of as the petty blunderings of men. When God is angry it is because of principle and not caprice. This city, guilty of cruelty, harlotry, brutality, oppression and rebellion against God, must reap the awful consequences. Nineveh mocked God and died.¹¹

Nahum's message sets in a clear light Jehovah's sway over the whole universe, and emphasizes the duty of nations as well as individuals to own His sway and obey His will. Disobedience

to His purpose and disregard of His rule will surely bring calamity and distress. "Assyria in His hands," says Kennedy, "becomes an object-lesson to the empires of the modern world, teaching, as an eternal principle of the Divine government of the world, the absolute necessity, for a nation's continued vitality, of that righteousness, personal, civic, and national, which alone exalteth a nation."¹²

Morgan divides Nahum's message into three sections: (1) the Verdict of Vengeance; (2) the Vision of Vengeance, and (3) the Vindication of Vengeance. In the first section the prophet preceded the announcement of the verdict by a section dealing wholly with Jehovah Himself. In this, we find, first, a declaration of His character, then a revelation of His majesty, and finally an affirmation of His method. As to His character, He is a God of vengeance and yet the central fact of His nature is that He is slow to anger. In the second section, having thus announced the verdict the prophet proceeded to describe the process of vengeance. He declared that the "hammer" had come up against Nineveh, and ironically advised her to prepare. He then gave in detail the process of Nineveh's destruction. I suggest that it falls into three clearly defined parts. First the conflict (3-5); secondly the conquest (6-9); finally the consummation (10). As a result of the vision of vengeance Nineveh "is empty, and void, and waste." "The heart melteth, the knees smite together." The last movement of the prophecy is devoted wholly to the vindication of Jehovah in His action with regard to Nineveh. Nineveh had re-

pented under the preaching of Jonah and had been restored, but having returned to her sins the day of repentance was passed, and doom was determined. Jehovah is slow to anger, but He can by no means clear the guilty.¹³

His Lessons For Us

Nineveh is a type of all nations that turn their backs on God. In our day, proud civilizations are staking everything upon the strength of manpower and machines and there is a terrible disregard of God. We find that Nineveh was overthrown because of her sin (Nahum 3:1-7), and that her great wealth and strength was not sufficient to save her. Oftentimes nations depend upon might and power to survive. They forget that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit," said the Lord of hosts (Zach. 4:6). The person or nation that deliberately and finally rejects God, deliberately and finally and fatally elects doom.¹⁴

Three important lessons, implicitly taught by Nahum, stand out as abiding: (1) the universality of God's government; (2) its retributive character; and (3) its subordination to his scheme of grace. Such lessons can never become obsolete. He shows plainly that Nineveh's destruction is not an act of capricious sovereignty, but the just reward of her iniquities. It is not Israel's pride that is at stake but God's honor; and it is not even the redemption of his people that is primary, but the vindication of their God. In other words, the great lesson of the book is that the mills of God grind "exceedingly small"; and that for nations as well as for individuals, "sin when it

is full-grown bringeth forth death." The joy of Nahum is not merely the human exultation of an angry patriot over a fallen foe, but rather the glad cry of an assured faith in the God of the fathers.¹⁵

NAHUM -- "THE CONSOLER OR CONSOLATION"¹⁶

Memory verses - Nahum 1:3, 7, 15; 2:10

I. General Observation:

1. Home--Elkosh (Probably in Judah).
2. Occupation -- Unknown.
3. Characterization -- Apoet, stately, orderly, impressive.
Just one great AT LAST! Nineveh falls and is gone.
4. Date -- 654 - 630 B. C.
5. Theme -- Destruction of Nineveh.
6. Teaching -- Divine vengeance and divine mercy.

II. Outline:

1. Decree of Nineveh's doom, 1:2-15.
2. Siege and Destruction of Nineveh, Ch. 2.
3. Nineveh's vices and inevitable doom, ch. 3.

NAHUM

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4. G. Campbell Morgan, The Analyzed Bible, Pickering & Inglis, London: p. 315.
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7. H. I. Hester, The Heart of Hebrew History, The Quality Press, Inc., Liberty, Missouri: 1962, p. 289.
8. Robinson, p. 110, 111.
9. Morgan, p. 315.
10. Thompson Chain Reference Bible, "Analyses of Books," B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.: 1964, p. 204.
11. Hester, p. 289.
12. Eiselen, I. S. B. E., p. 2111.
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9. Thompson Chain Reference Bible, "Analyses of Books," B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.: 1964.

QUESTIONS ON NAHUM

1. Nahum could be known as the _____.
2. Quote Nahum 1:7.
3. What is known of the personal life of Nahum?
4. The fall of what two cities substantially establishes the date of the book of Nahum?
5. What would be the approximate date of his book?
6. The book of Nahum pictures the fall of _____.
7. Ninevah was the capital of the _____ Empire.
8. How did the people of this empire compare to the Babylonians in matters of science and art?
9. What were the dimensions of the walls of Ninevah?
10. Who was Ninevah's last king?
11. To what extent was Ninevah destroyed?
12. Nahum's message was to _____.
13. What was the purpose of the book of Nahum?
14. Morgan divides Nahum's message into three parts. They are:
15. The person or nation that _____ and _____ rejects God, _____ and _____ and elects _____.
16. What are the three important lessons implicitly taught by Nahum?

HABAKKUK

The Prophet of Faith

We know but little about the man Habakkuk except by inference from his book. It is generally assumed that he lived and worked in Jerusalem. We know that he lived in the eventful years at the close of the seventh century before Christ (610-600 B. C.). He could see the passing of Assyria and the coming of Babylonia to the place of supremacy in his world. He probably was an eye witness to the first ravages of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar.¹

This book, with its strongly lyrical character, is preeminent for its literary beauty. The prophet himself, who was one of the Levitical choristers (3:19), had a style nearer The Psalms in structure than any of the prophetic writings. Opening in gloom and closing in glory, the best part of the book is made up of a conversation between God and Habakkuk, who has been called "The Prophet of Faith," (2:4 with Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). Yet, somehow Habakkuk could not square his faith in a good and righteous God with the facts of life as he saw them. Hence his "Why?"²

His Times

Again, we find that God is dealing with a faithless, rebellious people. During the reign of Josiah there had been a measure of restoration, but this had really proven superficial. Now, likely during the reign of Jehoiakim, Judah had again returned to their pernicious ways. If Habakkuk prophesied about 600 B. C. he lived under

King Jehoiakim. The pious and well-meaning Josiah had been slain in an attempt to stop the advance of Egypt against Assyria. With his death the brief era of reform came to an end. After a reign of three months, Jehoahaz was deposed by Pharaohnecho, who placed Jehoiakim on the throne. The latter was selfish, tyrannical and godless. In a short time the deplorable conditions of Manasseh's reign returned. It was this situation that caused the prophet's first perplexity: "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save" (1:2).³

This book of prophecy is here presented as a single literary composition which may be entitled, "A Rhapsody of the Chaldeans." The historical situation needs no further defining than the recognition of the political horizon of the Chaldeans as a world power trampling down the nations. To the pious Israelite the first suggestion this brings is of a power for judgment on the unpunished sin around him. But the reflecting prophet sees a further mystery: How can a righteous God use an impious conqueror for the punishment of sin less wicked than his own? The divinely given solution of this problem is the same thought which Jeremiah expresses by calling Babylon the "hammer" of God (50:23), an instrument of providence for the destruction of evil, to be itself destroyed when its work is done.⁴

The Book

In this book we have a man of faith asking questions and receiving answers. A comparison of 1:2 with 3:19 will give an indi-

cation of the true value of this book. Opening in mystery and questioning, it closes in certainty and affirmation. The contrast is startling. The first is almost a wail of despair, and the last is a shout of confidence. From the affirmation of faith's agnosticism we come to the confirmation of agnosticism's faith. The book is a movement from one to the other. The door of exit and entrance is 2:4. The former part is a pathway leading thereto, and the latter is the highway leading therefrom.⁵

The book opens with the prophet in perplexity over the mystery of unpunished evil in the world.

The first two chapters are mainly composed of a dialogue between Habakkuk and Jehovah:

(1) The prophet complains to God that he sees sinful violence on every hand, yet no punishment is visited upon the evildoers, 1:1-4.

(2) He receives a reply revealing the divine plan of using the Chaldeans as a swift and terrible instrument of judgment upon the wicked nations, 1:5-11.

(3) Still the moral problem is unanswered in the mind of the prophet. How can a holy God use these wicked heathen to waste and continue forever? 1:12-17.

(4) The prophet ascends his watch-tower to look over the world. He receives the reply of Jehovah, and is told the Purpose of God is soon to be fulfilled, and is encouraged to wait for it, 2:1-3. Then follows the sentence that has been a watchword in the church; "but the just shall live by his faith." 2:4.

(5) Content with the new light received, the prophet utters a series of five woes against "the dishonesty" (2:6); "the covetous-

ness (2:9); "the bloody building enterprises" (2:12); "the Debauchery" (2:15), and "the idolatry" (2:18-20) of the great world-power.

(6) Finally he utters a sublime prayer (or psalm of praise), speaking of the majesty and glory of Jehovah and declaring his unwavering trust in the divine plans, ch. 3:1-19.⁶

His Permanent Teaching

The two facts emphasized by this prophet are the doom which ultimately overtakes the tyrant, and the moral security enjoyed by the righteous. This prophecy is remarkable for its moral and spiritual insight, and its rich and varied beauty of form and expression.⁷

Habakkuk was content to enunciate one single great truth, but one so great that it has since become not only the motto of Judaism but also of evangelical Christianity--the doctrine of justification by faith (2:4). It may be resolved into several component elements.

1. The fact of divine discipline. The constant riddle of the Old Testament is "not the survival of the fittest but the suffering of the best." In Job it was the suffering of an individual; in Habakkuk, that of a nation.

2. The fact that evil is self-destructive. With singular arrogance the Chaldeans were blind to the fact that they were but the rod of Jehovah's vengeance. Tyranny always carries within it the seeds of its own destruction.

3. The fact that faith is the condition of life. "The righteous shall live by his faith." This is the great teaching of Habakkuk. "Faith" to the prophet meant more than simple trust. The form..conveys, as the use of the word elsewhere in the Old Testament warrants, the idea of the temper which trust produces,

namely, faithfulness, steadfastness, firmness, persistency, endurance, patience, even loyalty. And "life" to Habakkuk meant not mere national prosperity, but moral security, even in the midst of calamity. In other words, a living faith determines destiny: abiding in life and surviving in judgment. Habakkuk as a philosopher travelled all the way from doubt to a higher faith.⁸

Habakkuk has been called the prophet of faith. He possessed a strong, living faith in Jehovah; but he, like many other pious souls, was troubled and perplexed by the apparent inequalities of life. He found it difficult to reconcile these with his lofty conception of Jehovah. Nevertheless, he does not sulk. Boldly he presents his perplexities to Jehovah, who points the way to a solution, and the prophet comes forth from his trouble with a faith stronger and more intense than ever. It is in connection with his attempts to solve the perplexing problems raised by the unpunished sins of his countrymen and the unlimited success of the Chaldeans that Habakkuk gives utterance to two sublime truths:

1. Jehovah is not interested in Israel only. The Chaldeans are punished not merely for their sins against Judah, but for the oppression of other nations as well. Being the only God, He cannot permit the worship of other deities. Temporarily the Chaldeans may worship idols, or make might their god, they may "sacrifice unto their net," and burn incense "unto their drag," because by them "their portion is fat and their food plenteous"; but Jehovah is from everlasting, the Holy One, and He will attest His supremacy by utterly destroying the boastful conqueror with his idols.

2. Faithfulness assures permanency. Faithfulness is with the prophet an external thing; it signifies integrity, fidelity, steadfastness under all provocations; but this implies, in a real sense, the New Testament conception of faith as an active principle of right conduct. A living faith determines conduct; religion and ethics go hand in hand, and especially in the hour of adversity a belief in Jehovah and unflinching reliance upon Him are the strongest preservers of fidelity and integrity. Faith without works is dead; faith expresses itself in life. As an expression of living faith, 3:17-19 is not surpassed in the Old Testament.⁹

HABAKKUK -- "ARDENT EMBRACE"¹⁰

Memory Verse - Habakkuk 3:17-19

I. General Observation:

1. Home -- Unknown.
2. Occupation -- Unknown.
3. Characterization -- Puzzled by the nature of Jehovah.
Questioned as to the why? of life's problems.
4. Date -- Around 600 B. C.
5. Characterization of the book:
 - (1) Prophet addresses God, not God the prophet.
 - (2) God's use of the nations.
6. Lessons:
 - (1) Universal supremacy of Jehovah.
 - (2) Faithfulness is the guarantee of permanency.
 - (3) Evil is self-destructive.
 - (4) Divine discipline.

II. Outline:

1. The prophet's two-fold perplexity and the Divine solutions, 1:2-2:4.
2. Taunt song over the downfall of the Chaldeans, 2:5-20.
3. A prayer: Petition, gratitude, confidence, Chap. 3.

HABAKKUK

Footnotes

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1. Habakkuk could be called the "Prophet of _____."
2. Again, in the book of Habakkuk, we find that God is dealing with a _____ people.
3. Under Jehoikim's reign, the deplorable conditions of Manasseh's reign returned. This caused Habakkuk's first perplexity. What was it?
4. What was the historical situation concerning the Chaldeans at the time of Habakkuk's prophecy.
5. What was Habakkuk's second perplexity?
6. What is the physical makeup of the book of Habakkuk?
7. The first part of the book is a wail of despair. What could be the description of the second part?
8. Habakkuk swings from gloom to glory, from mystery to certainty, from despair to confidence. What verse in this movement is the "door of exit and entrance?"
9. Of what is the first two chapters of the book mainly composed?
10. Name the five woes discussed in Chapter 2 of Habakkuk.
11. What is the sentence from Hab. 2:4 that has been a watchword in the church?
12. In his permanent teaching, what are two facts emphasized by the prophet?
13. What are the component elements of the one single great truth of the book of Habakkuk?
14. Even though Habakkuk had a strong faith in God he was troubled and perplexed. Why?
15. Because of the foregoing perplexities and his meditation in his attempts to solve them Habakkuk gives utterance to two sublime truths. What are they?

ZEPHANIAH

The Prophet of Promise

The name "Zehpaniah," which is borne by three other men mentioned in the Old Testament, means "Jehovah hides," or "Jehovah has hidden" or "treasured."¹ Zephaniah was a descendant of Hezekiah, king of Judah. In point of time his prophecy falls between that of Micah and Nahum. It was delivered about the time of the beginning of the labors of Jeremiah (626 B. C.), in the first part of the reign of Josiah. Since the death of Micah the kingdom of Judah seems to have enjoyed a state of peace and quiet, a sort of lull before the storm that was soon to break over Western Asia including Palestine.²

This prophet, unlike Micah, was of aristocratic lineage. Some scholars hold that he was related to Josiah, who at the time was king of Judah. If so this background enabled him to speak effectively on the sins of his time.³

Zephaniah, who from the subscription of his prophecy was a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, was one of the earliest to urge a return to the prophetic principles of Isaiah and Micah after the long period of national apostacy brought about by Manasseh's policy.⁴

HIS TIME

Zephaniah lived at a crucial time in international affairs. The Assyrian rulers, who for more than a century had dominated southwest Asia, were now declining in power. Babylonia, under Nabopolassar, was soon to gain the supremacy in this area of the world. Although Nineveh did not fall until 612 B. C., Babylonia was the dominant influence as early as 625 B. C., the date of

Zephaniah.⁵ Only the earlier part of Josiah's reign furnishes a suitable occasion for the prophecy. Evidently at the time of its delivery an enemy was threatening the borders of Judah and of the surrounding nations. But the only foes of Judah during the latter part of the 7th century meeting all the conditions are the Scythians, who swept over Western Asia about 625 B. C. At the time the prophecy was delivered their advance against Egypt seems to have been still in the future, but imminent (1:14); hence the prophet's activity may be placed between 630 and 625, perhaps in 626. If this date is correct, Zephaniah and Jeremiah began their ministries in the same year.⁶

It will be recalled that the chief event in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, was his reformation. This was a nationwide movement backed by the deepest conviction of the young king. It is likely that Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and even Habakkuk and Nahum, supported the reforms of Josiah. The discovery of the book of law in the repairing of the temple and the deep religious enthusiasm that followed must have furnished an inspiring situation for the work of a young man like Zephaniah. The young prophet had accurate knowledge of conditions in the city of Jerusalem where he probably lived all his life. His stern denunciations of the sins of the people and his impassioned cries for repentance have given him the name "puritan."⁷

HIS BOOK

The key phrase of the book mentioned fourteen times in the first chapter is The Day of Jehovah. The great and only theme of Zephaniah is the coming "day of Jehovah." when the Lord would

reveal himself in his fulness to the whole world, judging evil doers and fulfilling his great purposes of redemption among men. But judgment is not regarded by Zephaniah as an end in itself; it is rather a means of making Jehovah known to the world and the ushering in of his kingdom of salvation. His theme, accordingly, is little less than "the consummation of the world's history."⁸

This is the simplest and most typical example of the "Doom Form" of prophecy, presenting the familiar topic, The Day of the Lord, in a Divine word of denunciation and threatening (here presented as prose) interrupted at intervals by lyric passages seconding, celebrating, or otherwise dwelling upon successive points in the speech of Deity.⁹

The book is exceedingly somber in its tone, and is filled with threatenings and denunciations; but the sun breaks through the clouds in the last chapter, and the prophet foretells the coming of a glad day, when the Hebrews shall become a praise among all the people of the earth. The following synopsis briefly expresses the contents of the book:

- (1) The announcement of coming judgments upon Judah, ch. 1.
- (2) The call to repentance, ch. 2:1-3.
- (3) Judgments threatened upon surrounding nations, ch. 2:4-15.
- (4) A woe pronounced upon the sinners of Jerusalem because of their corruption and spiritual blindness in continuing in wickedness, in spite of all the judgments meted out to the heathen nations, ch. 3:1-8.
- (5) A universal judgment foretold which only a godly remnant should escape, ch. 3:9-13.
- (6) The future glory of Israel, when Jehovah shall deliver his people, and cause them to become famous throughout the earth, ch. 3:14-20.¹⁰

The continuous movement of the book is notable. It begins with an impending day of wrath for Judah: It is called the Great Day of God, a day of terror, about to break on Judah and the surrounding nations, ch. 1:1-2:3; then continues with a day of wrath for the nations, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia and Assyria, ch. 2:4-3:8; then closes with the Promise; the coming of a "Pure Language." The calm after the storm.¹¹

His book is a short one, having only three chapters with a total of fifty-three verses, it is made up largely of dark pictures but expresses the conviction that there is always hope and even joy for those who fully trust Jchovah.¹²

Note the ascending scale in the crowning passage of restoration, cleansing, victory and joy. No wonder the closing section has been described as the sweetest love song in the Old Testament ...What revelation of the heart of God is more exquisite than this? There is nothing comparable to the picture of God singing for joy over His people. Yes, we have a God who sobs over sin but sings over those who forsake their sin. The careful reader will note the "He wills"--He will save, rejoice, rest and joy. See too, the "I wills"--I will undo, set, bring and make. The book ends showing the place of defeat to be the place of victory (vs. 19); also the unlimited influence of those who are fully yielded to the God who loves and cares (vs. 20).¹³

HIS PERMANENT TEACHINGS

The book of Zephaniah, though small, is nevertheless, valuable. By many it is undervalued, and by most passed by as comparatively barren of pulpit texts. On the contrary, it is of

abiding value, and as a book should not be estimated by its size.

Here are some of its permanent teachings:

1. The constant necessity of warning (1:14-16).
Zephaniah sets all modern teachers an example of how men should be confronted with the stern realities of the moral world.
2. The profoundly earnest moral tone which pervades the entire book. Zephaniah is deeply sensitive of the sins of his people, and of the moral need which impels Jehovah to visit them with discipline and judgment.
3. The spiritual natures of God's kingdom (3:14-20).
While there is no explicit reference to a personal Messiah in Zephaniah's prophecies, yet we may well believe that whatever the prophet himself saw in this apocalyptic vision, his words look forward to the Great Deliverance wrought by Christ. Most remarkable is the fact that his conception of the heavenly kingdom includes all mankind.¹⁴

ZEPHANIAH -- "JEHOVAH HIDES"¹⁵

Memory verses: Zephaniah 1:12; 3:17

I. General Observation:

1. Ancestry--Unique, Hezekiah, the prophet's great-great-grandfather.
2. Home--evidently Jerusalem, "This place" (1:4).
3. Occupation--unknown.
4. Characterization--The fires of hell--repentance too late, now comes wrath.
5. Date--during Josiah's reign, 639-608 B. C.
6. Teachings and Lessons--Jehovah is the God of the universe; Day of Jehovah; Universalism, terror upon all.

II. Outline:

1. Judgment upon all the world, Judah in particular, 1:2-18.
2. Exhortation to repentance and perseverance, 2:1-3:8.
3. Promise of the happiness of God's people from among all the world, 3:9-20.

ZEPHANIAH

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ZEPHANIAH

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QUESTIONS ON ZEPHANIAH

1. Zephaniah was a descendant of what king of Judah?
2. Zephaniah's prophecy falls between that of what two other Minor Prophets?
3. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of _____, king of Judah, and was contemporary with the prophet _____ about _____ B.C.
4. This was a critical time in international affairs. What world power was declining, and what empire was rising in power?
5. Who were the only foes of Judah in the latter part of the 7th century?
6. What significance do these foes hold in respect to the date of Zephaniah's prophecy?
7. What was the chief event in the reign of Josiah?
8. As a result of his having lived in the city of Jerusalem probably all of his life, what was Zephaniah's position concerning the conditions there?
9. What was the name given Zephaniah because of his stern denunciations of the sins of the people?
10. The key phrase of the book of Zephaniah, mentioned fourteen times in the first chapter is, "_____."
11. What is the great and only theme of the book of Zephaniah?
12. What is the tone of the book of Zephaniah and with what is it filled?
13. What is the essence of the last chapter in relation to the rest of the book?
14. The continuous movement of the book is notable. Give a brief summary of the three sections in this movement.
15. What are the three permanent teachings noted in Zephaniah?
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)

16. Give the three-point outline of the book of Zephaniah.

103 B

(1)

(2)

(3)

HAGGAI

The Prophet of the Temple

The foregoing studies in the Minor Prophets brought us to the time of the Babylonian Exile. Israel and Judah passed away as independent states. The long years of the Exile have run their course; the edict of Cyrus has released the captives and they are now at liberty to return to their own land. They are urged to do so, to re-establish their national institutions and rebuild the Temple, the central fact of their religious life.

Haggai is the first of the three Post-exilic Prophets. He returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel who conducted the first expedition, but we have no knowledge regarding him apart from the facts given in his prophecy and the book of Ezra. These two books should be studied together. The Jews upon their return set up the altar of sacrifice and were at work on the foundations of the Temple when they were interrupted by their adversaries. For many years nothing was done. In 520 B.C., sixteen years after they were released by Cyrus, Haggai stirred them out of their indifference and the work on the Temple was resumed. Thus there is no difficulty in placing the time of Haggai's prophecy. Two months later he was joined in his prophetic labors by the prophet Zechariah.¹

It is noticeable that for the first time a Gentile date is given. Darius reigned during the years 521-519 B.C. For the understanding of the conditions in which he exercised his prophetic ministry the book of Ezra must be studied; a tabulation of the leading events in connection with the return from Babylon will help us thus to place his prophecy:

B. C. 536--Return from Babylon under Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:1-4).
Altar built. Sacrifices offered. Feast of Tabernacles.

B. C. 535--Foundations of the Temple laid. Opposition of
Samaritans and cessation of building.

B. C. 520-519--Prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. The
people recommenced building.

B. C. 515--The Temple completed.

Thus it will be seen that the work of rebuilding the Temple
had ceased, and in order to stir up the leaders and people to
their duty in this matter these messages were uttered.²

HIS MISSION

An entirely new era is before us: The Hebrew Nation has
changed into the Jewish Church. Politically subject, Israel
enters upon a new existence as a religious community, with the
Temple service as the center of its life. It is the mission
of Haggai to bring the authority of prophecy to support the new
order of things. He stimulates the flagging zeal of the Temple
builders, and makes this service the righteousness on which
their prosperity is to depend. And he gives formal prophetic
recognition to Zerubbabel, the princely leader of the returned
exiles, as occupying the position from which the exile had de-
posed Jehoiachin.³

The attitude of the people deserves note at this point. In
the mission of restoration on the part of anyone, the mental
condition of those to be restored governs to a great extent the
avenue of approach of the restorer. The remnant that had return-
ed from captivity were selfishly pre-occupied with their own

dwellings than in rebuilding the Lord's house.⁴ His chief objective was to stimulate and encourage the Jews in their big undertaking of reconstructing the temple and of re-instituting their worship. This undertaking was a heroic one and oftentimes the people grew discouraged and were prone to lose hope. The prophet contends that their crops were poor and their general condition depressing because they had neglected God's house and had been forgetful of their duties to Jehovah. They were weary and despondent in spirit and had no peace and happiness because of wrong relationship with God. Their other leaders apparently were not able to move the people to action, so God called the prophet Haggai to speak his message to the ruler, the priest and the people.⁵

HIS EFFECT

Of the three prophets of the Restoration, Haggai not only preached but practiced for Ezra tells us that Haggai lent a hand in the rebuilding of the temple (5:1, 2, 6:14). Although spurred by the prophet's appeals to the conscience of the people, and by his reproaches to work with a will, the community of returned exiles rallied to Haggai's inspired words. As a writer, his style is plain, simple and curt. He lacked the brilliance of imagination many of the other prophets possessed. Probably born at Babylon during the Captivity (although some disagree), this Lord's messenger was raised up for a work required at the moment, and that work he accomplished quickly and well. Four years after his call, the temple was completed and solemnly

dedicated. After delivering his first message, Haggai was joined in his ministry by a young prophet named Zechariah. A man of action, Haggai was steadfast, unmoveable, abounding in the work he had to do.⁶

THE BOOK

The book of Haggai comprises four discourses, which make natural divisions, and are accurately dated. The first, uttered on the first day of the sixth month of Darius's second year, contains an exhortation to Zerubbabel and Joshua to take in hand at once the rebuilding of the temple. The people are sternly reproached for their indifference, which they think to excuse by affirming that the time for this work has not yet come, while they expend their energies in increasing their own material comfort. The prophet shows them that the barrenness of their land and the distress which they suffer are a chastisement for this neglect, ch. 1. The following month witnesses the second address, wherein the prophet comforts those who, contrasting the new with the former temple, depreciated the present undertaking, and assures them that, although its appearance is humbler, the glory of the latter house shall far exceed that of the former, because of the splendid donations of princes, and because of the Messiah's presence there, ch. 2:1-9.⁷

The third discourse, chapter 2:10-19, was delivered on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, exactly three months after the work of building had been resumed, contained, like the first discourse, a rebuke to the people because of their inertia, and an assurance that their neglect of the temple had tainted their

whole moral life. This discourse in part is couched in the form of a parable, vss. 11-14, by means of which he shows them how a single taint of guilt contaminates everything they do. On the other hand, if they will push forward the work of the reconstruction, Jehovah will again bless them and fruitful seasons will follow their renewed zeal.

Chapter 2:20-23, delivered on the same date of the third discourse, comprises the fourth. In it was announced that in the approaching catastrophe when "the throne of the kingdoms" will be overthrown, Zerubbabel shall be established as the representative of the Davidic dynasty, the object of Israel's patriotic hope, God's honored and trusted vice-gerent--yea, the precious "signet" on Jehovah's hand.⁸

PERMANENT LESSONS

The result of Haggai's preaching was a great victory. To persuade a whole people to make pecuniary sacrifices, and to postpone their own private interests for the sake of a public sanctuary, was no easy task. Among the lessons from Haggai of permanent value are the following:

1. The Divine origin of all successful preaching. Perhaps the most striking sentence in all Haggai's writings is that found in 1:13, "Then spake Haggai Jehovah's messenger, in Jehovah's message to the people." Repeatedly the prophet tells us that "the word of Jehovah came" unto him; "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts," many times. It is on the ground of such conviction, that Haggai ventures to exhort his people to "Consider their ways."

2. The contagious character of the sin of procrastination.

By a somewhat unusual parable contained in 2:10-19, he teaches that while holiness is not contagious, unholiness is. "The faint aroma of sanctity coming from their altar sacrifices, was too feeble to pervade the secular atmosphere of their life." He argues that while a healthy man cannot give his health to another by touching him, a sick man may easily spread contagion to those about him. In other words, he tells them there is a "dead thing" among them, namely, the fact that Jehovah's house lieth waste, and that by treating it indifferently they have become unclean and contaminated.

3. The church the religious center of the world. In 2:7, 8, he says, "I will shake all nations: and the precious things of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts." Thus the prophet attaches almost sacramental significance to the temple.

4. Messianic royalty and kingship. Haggai's concluding word of promise is that Jehovah will take Zerubbabel his "servant" and make him "as a signet," whom he has chosen," 2:23. In the prominence Haggai gives to the temple and Zerubbabel, we have a harbinger of the greater glory of the second temple through Jesus Christ.⁹

HAGGAI -- "FESTIVAL OR FESTIVE"¹⁰

Memory Verse - Haggai 2:4

I. General Observation:

1. The man--older than Zechariah, his contemporary, cf. Haggai 2:3, and Zechariah 2:4.
2. Date--520 B. C.
3. Background same as Nehemiah and Ezra, (Babylonian captivity).
4. Characterization--Considered practical needs of the moment, restore the temple, all else secondary. Further notice his constant claim of divine origin.
5. Lessons:
 - (1) Faithfulness is directly connected with material prosperity.
 - (2) Discouragement, however profound is no reason to neglect God-given duties, even when encompassed with difficulty.
 - (3) When a good work needs to be done, now is the time to do it.
 - (4) Thus saith the Lord is the basis of all good preaching.

II. Outline.

1. Message of rebuke for religious indifference, and results, ch. 1:2-15.
2. Glory of the new temple, 2:1-9.
3. Completion of the temple a guarantee of new blessings, ch. 2:10-19.
4. Exaltation of Zerubbabel, ch. 2:20-23.

HAGGAI

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1. Haggai is the first of three _____ prophets.
2. Haggai prophesied in _____ B.C., sixteen years after the return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.
3. What other prophet joined Haggai two months later?
4. What book should be studied in conjunction with Haggai which furnishes the background for Haggai's prophecy?
5. Haggai could be referred to as the _____
_____.
6. Following the Babylonian exile, the Hebrew Nation had changed into what kind of organization?
7. What was Israel's political stature at this time?
8. What was the attitude of the people at the time of Haggai's prophecy?
9. What was the "chief objective" of Haggai?
10. How long was it before his objective was completed?
11. The book of Haggai is comprised of four _____.
12. What is the content of the first of these divisions?
13. What is the content of the second of these divisions?
14. What is the content of the third of these divisions?
15. What is the content of the fourth of these divisions?
16. Among the lessons from Haggai of permanent value are the following:
 - (1)
 - (2)
 - (3)
 - (4)
17. Give the four-division outline of the book of Haggai.

ZECHARIAH

The Prophet of Visions

The association of Zechariah with Haggai has already been seen. Of the prophet himself we are only sure that he was the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). In the book of Nehemiah reference is made to a priest named Iddo (12:4) and to his son Zechariah (12:16). If these references are to the same persons, Zechariah was also a priest.¹

Zechariah was probably Haggai's junior (cf. Zech. 2:4; Hag. 2), and a man of unusual, almost unparalleled, vision. Being a priest as well as a prophet, and the head of a "father's house," his influence was very great. His name, indeed, hints of special endowment; his name in Hebrew meaning, "he whom Jehovah remembers."²

It is natural to read together the books of Haggai and Zechariah; their authors are fellow-workers in the great task of rebuilding the Temple after the return from exile. Their prophecies make a series arranged in the same methodical way, each with an exact date and introduction. What Haggai has done Zechariah carries further. The new prophecy that has arisen Zechariah links to the prophecy of the old era, thus emphasizing the continuity of the national existence by the recovered stream of prophetic revelation. While he brings words of encouragement to Zerubbabel, he further, on the authority of a prophetic vision, crowns the High Priest Joshua, making for this new era the priestly and the regal authority equal: "he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." And again, what Haggai had touched in a single work Zechariah reiterates with varied modes of prophetic emphasis: that the old times of fasting and trouble are passed a-

way, and such blessings are in store for Jerusalem as shall make the new dispensation far surpass the old.³

HIS TIMES

The earliest date in his book is "the second year of Darius," which is known to have been 520 B. C., and the latest is "the fourth year" of the same king's reign (1:1, 7; 7:1), but it is quite possible that the prophet continued preaching and exhorting until at least the Temple was completed. At the time of the beginning of his prophesying (520 B. C.), there were repeated upheavals and commotions throughout the length and breadth of the Persian Empire. The statement, in Zech. 1:11, that "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest," was true only in the sense that all opposition to the Jews in rebuilding their Temple was at an end.⁴

Zechariah's keen enthusiasm for the rebuilding of the temple kept the people at the task of finishing the work. Serious crop failures and business depression among the Jewish people had made them so discouraged that only Haggai's blunt and consistent hammering kept them at the work. They needed a new voice. Zechariah's was that one.⁵

HIS BOOK

Like Haggai, Zechariah saw the sinful condition and religious indifference of his people, and uttered stirring exhortations which aided in the rebuilding of the temple.

But his prophecy had a broader scope--he looked down the ages and beheld the coming of the Messiah King and the dawning of a brighter day for Zion.⁶

Zechariah does not condemn the people but presents in glowing pictures the presence of God to strengthen and help. He especially encourages the governor, Zerubbabel, who was conscious of his own weakness. Hear what Zechariah says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (4:6). He promised that the mountains of difficulty would be removed.⁷

The first part of the book is carefully dated, and contains prophecies closely related to those of Haggai, having practical bearing upon the work of the Temple building. The latter part of the book is undated, and deals with three distinct events in the history of the people. The time was all-important. The Messiah had been promised through the chosen nation. Prior to the Edict of Cyrus that nation was practically dead, and, indeed, was being buried in its captivity. This is clearly evidenced by the smallness of the remnant who had interest and enthusiasm enough to return. Yet through this remnant the coming of Messiah was made possible, as to a human channel. This fact gives us the clue to the difference between the first and the second parts of the prophecy of Zechariah. In the first he urged the people to build the Temple by prophecies which showed the far reaching effect of such work in the coming and Kingdom of Messiah. In the latter part he dealt more in detail with certain events leading toward that great future.⁸

ANALYSIS AND CONTENT

His book has fourteen chapters and is made up of three obvious sections. (1) The first (1-6) is a series of visions intended to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. (2) The second (7-8)

is an appeal to practical activity. (3) The third (9-14) is a "disclosure of destiny," a revealing of the future of Israel. There is a critical problem connected with the authorship of the last section. Critics are almost unanimous in holding that this section was written much later and perhaps by another author. Be that as it may the general value and purpose of these last six chapters is not affected.⁹

Containing more Messianic prophecies than any of the other minor prophets, Zechariah can be termed "The Prophet of the Advent." He saw the promise of a sudden and decisive intervention of God on behalf of His people, and thus painted in glowing colors their blessedness. But the prophet makes it clear that if divine promises are to be enjoyed, divine precepts must be obeyed.¹⁰

The book may thus be analyzed as follows:

Chapter 1:1-6--an introduction, delivered in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. It strikes the keynote of the entire book, and is one of the strongest and most intensely spiritual calls to repentance to be found anywhere in the Old Testament.

Section I. Chapters 1:7-6:15--a series of eight symbolic night visions, followed by a coronation scene, delivered two months after the corner stone of the Temple had been laid (Hag. 2:18, Zech. 1:7). These eight visions were intended to encourage the post-exilic colony in Jerusalem to continue and complete the construction of God's house.¹¹ These visions were:

1. The Man among the Myrtle Trees, and the Drove of Horses, ch. 1:7-17. These were heavenly couriers teaching God's special care for and interest in his people, saying, "my house shall be built" vs. 16.¹²

2. The Four Horns and the Four Carpenters, ch. 1:18-21; teaching that Israel's foes have destroyed themselves, and that there is no longer any opposition to the building of God's house.¹³
3. The Man with the Measuring Line, ch. 2--teaching that God will restore His people to such an extent that the material confines of Jerusalem will not hold them and that the city's walls will no longer be necessary for, nor capable of protection for them.¹⁴
4. The Cleansing of the High Priest, ch. 3--Filthy garments clothing the High Priest, and representing Israel's sin, are removed, replaced, and the Branch, Christ, introduced.¹⁵
5. The Golden Candlestick, and the Two Olive Trees, ch. 4--sets forth Israel as fulfilling the Divine intention. The candlestick was the symbol of Israel as the light-bearer amid the darkness. The two Olive trees refer in the first place to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the governor and the priest, and thus finally to the offices of priest and king as they would be realized and fulfilled in the Person of the Messiah.¹⁶
6. The Flying Roll, ch. 5:1-4--Wicked governments receive God's curse in this unique picture.¹⁷
7. The Ephah, ch. 5:5-11--The ephah is the symbol of commerce and the woman, according to the distinct declaration of the prophecy, is the personification of wickedness. The vision teaches that even in the administration of restored Israel the spirit of lawlessness will still exist, but that it will be restricted in its operation.¹⁸
8. The Four Chariots, ch. 6:1-8--suggests finally that in the day of restoration the administrative forces of righteousness will be spiritual.¹⁹

These visions are followed by a coronation scene (6:9-15), in which Joshua, the high priest, is crowned and made typical of the Messiah-Branch-Priest-King--the most composite and complete portrait of the Coming One to be found in the Old Testament.²⁰

Section II. Chapters 7,8--The prophet in his reply to the Bethel deputation emphasized that Israel's fasts, commemorating four historical events since the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C., shall, instead of fasts, become festivals, and that many nations shall join with them in seeking the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem.²¹

Section III. Chapters 9-14--Contains predictions concerning a period of the History of the Jews, and a vision of the Ultimate Triumph of God's Kingdom.²²

ABIDING LESSONS TAUGHT BY ZECHARIAH

1. How the drooping faith of a community may be revived through the preaching of a sincere and earnest prophet, who, though no genius, is possessed of "a soaring faith." Hiding himself in the message of the Lord.

2. How the rebuilding of God's house was an indispensable condition of a better era (1:16). There can be no permanent social blessedness without the church!

3. How Israel's contest was really with Satan, their spiritual enemy, rather than with neighboring nations (3:1). Satan is always the chief assailant of the church.

4. How fasting and even feasting are nothing in themselves; for neither of these caused or averted Israel's Exile; what God requires of his people is the doing of justice and mercy, truth and righteousness (8:16, 17).

5. How the rebellious flock will mourn, so soon as they acknowledge that they are at war with God.²³

ZECHARIAH -- "JEHOVAH REMEMBERS"²⁴

Memory Verses - Zechariah 6:12, 13; 9:9, 10

I. General Observations:

1. The man--Zechariah came up to Jerusalem from Babylon under Zerubbabel, Neh. 12:4, 16. He was both prophet and Priest, prophesying contemporary with Haggai, Ezra, 5:1; 6:14.
2. Date--Chs. 1:8 520-516 B. C. -- Chs. 9-14 great diversity

II. Outline:

1. Messages of Exhortation, consolation, and encouragement, chs. 1-8.
 - (1) Call to repentance, 1:2-6.
 - (2) Eight night visions and their interpretations, 1:7-6:8.
 - (3) Symbolic crowning of the high priest, Joshua, 6:9-15.
 - (4) Relative importance of ceremonial and moral requirements, chs. 7, 8.
2. The final triumph of the Kingdom of Jehovah, chs. 9-14.
 - (1) Oracles dealing with the establishment of the new theocracy, chs. 9-11.
 - (2) Utterances concerning the future of the people of Jehovah, chs. 12-14.

ZECHARIAH

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2. George L. Robinson, The Twelve Minor Prophets, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids: 1926, p. 147.
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12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Morgan, p. 344.
15. Mears, p. 330.
16. Morgan, p. 345.
17. Mears, p. 331.
18. Morgan, p. 345.
19. Ibid.
20. Robinson, p. 151.
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ZECHARIAH

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1. If the references to Iddo and his son Zechariah in Nehemiah 12:4, 16 are to the same persons in the book of Zechariah, then Zechariah was also a _____.
2. Haggai and Zechariah were fellow-workers in what great task, and when?
3. Besides bringing word of encouragement to Zerubbabel, Zechariah also performed what significant act on the authority of a prophetic vision?
4. What is the earliest date mentioned in the book of Zechariah?
5. At the time of the beginning of Zechariah's prophecy, what was the condition of the Persian empire?
6. What was the moral and religious condition of the children of Israel at the time Zechariah prophesied?
7. Instead of condemning the people what does the message of Zechariah present?
8. Quote Zechariah 4:6.
9. The prophecy of Zechariah is divided into _____ parts.
10. What is the central thrust of the first part?
11. In the analysis of the book of Zechariah there is an introduction and three sections which we discussed. Give the chapter and verse divisions of these sections and the general content of each.
12. What was the intent of the eight visions noted in Section I of Zechariah?
13. List the eight visions of Section I.
14. By what were these eight visions followed? Describe.
15. List three of the five abiding lessons taught by Zechariah.
16. What does the name "Zechariah" mean?

MALACHI

The Prophet of Preparation

Nothing more is known of Malachi than the book which bears his name reveals. The word Malachi means "messenger," and this has given rise to the supposition that it is a title rather than a name. While it is probable that Malachi was indeed the actual name of the prophet, its significance is most suggestive, for throughout the prophecy the burden of the message of Jehovah is supreme, and the personality of the messenger is absolutely hidden.¹

Levi is referred to as "the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (2:7), John ~~the~~ Baptist was to come as God's messenger; and our Lord as "the messenger of the covenant" (3:1). Thus the name was a description of office. The spiritual life of the people was at a low ebb, and many of the evils against which former prophets had protested were again rampant. Malachi was sent to denounce practices dishonoring to God and His worship, and to strengthen the hands of Nehemiah in deliverance of the people from all abuses. Thus, "Robbery of God" is the sad keynote of the book. While idolatry had vanished, the people in their backsliding state were hypercritical and guilty of hollow formalism and complaining scepticism.²

The connection of this prophecy with the work under Ezra and Nehemiah is evident. The abuses against which Malachi made his protest, namely a polluted priesthood, mixed marriages, and failure to pay tithes, were those which existed during the time of Nehemiah. Malachi is mentioned neither by Ezra nor Nehemiah; probably, therefore, he prophesied after their time. It would seem as though the special evils, which they set themselves to correct, still existed side by side with correct outward observances.³

THE PROPHET'S TIMES

Opinions vary as to the prophet's exact date, but nearly all scholars are agreed that Malachi prophesied during the Persian period, and after the reconstruction and dedication of the second temple in 516 B. C. The prophet speaks of the people's "governor" (Mal. 1:8), as do Haggai and Nehemiah. The social conditions portrayed are unquestionably those also of the period of the Restoration. More specifically, Malachi probably lived and labored during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. Serious abuses had crept into Jewish life; the priests had become lax and degenerate, defective and inferior sacrifices were allowed to be offered upon the temple altar, the people were neglecting their tithes, divorce was common and God's covenant was forgotten and ignored; just such abuses as we know from the Book of Nehemiah were common in his day (cf Neh. 3:5; 5:1-13). Yet, it is doubtful whether Malachi preached during Nehemiah's active governorship; for in Mal. 1:8 it is implied that gifts might be offered to the "governor," whereas Nehemiah tells us that he declined all such. On the other hand, the abuses which Malachi attacked correspond so exactly with those which Nehemiah found on his second visit to Jerusalem in 432 B. C. that it seems reasonably certain that he prophesied shortly before that date, that is between 445 and 432 B. C.⁴

The great problem of his day was the maintenance of the worship of Jehovah and thus safeguard the integrity of the nation. It was the only way by which the chosen people would be kept from the idolatry of the nations about them. Intermarriage with these peoples was a serious danger and it was with this defection Nehemiah

had to contend. These are the conditions under which Malachi labored, and by this prophecy we have a clear view of the moral and religious life of that time.⁵

HIS STYLE

Some critics have characterized Malachi's style as "pedantic, forced, and barren;" ...In contrast with some other prophetic works, Malachi's writings may be considered to be prosaic, and to hold an inferior position, but they have an excellency and originality of their own which acquit them of all such charges as those above. The great peculiarity of the style consists in the use made of interrogation and reply. A dialogue is introduced between God and the people or priests; the questions of objectors or complainants are stated, amplified, and finally answered with withering scorn by the mouth of the prophet. Thus he is rather a reasoner than a poet; he exhibits the calmness of the practised orator rather than the fire and energy of earlier seers. But there are tokens that he is still influenced by the ancient prophets, and with all his methodical and artificial forms he models himself upon his predecessors. Simple, smooth, concise, his diction is easy to understand; if he does not rise to the grandeur and power of other prophets, he is always polished and elegant, and at times even remarkably eloquent. The sketch of the ideal priest (ch 2:5-7) is a passage of eminent beauty; and there are a few other places of equal excellence.⁶

Whether Malachi ever delivered as sermons the contents of his book is difficult to say. In any case the substantial elements which compose it are closely knit together, being the work obvious-

ly of a legal pleader and of a moral reasoner who had a definite and detailed plan of argument. His style is doubtless inferior to that of some of the preexilic prophets, yet he possesses a vigor and force which they seldom surpass. This style was novel among the Jews. It is known as the didactic-dialectic method. First he makes a charge or an accusation; then he fancies some one raises an objection, which he next proceeds to refute in detail, substantiating the truth of his original proposition. Seven distinct examples of this peculiar method of (a) affirmation, (b) interrogation, and (c) refutation are to be found in his little book (the expression "Yet ye say," 1:2, 6, 7; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13, occurring eight times).⁷

This debating, lecture-like style is peculiarly characteristic of Malachi. He shows clearly the influence of the schools, and is on the way to the Talmud. Besides, his employment of "also" (1:13) and "again" (2:13), which is equivalent to our "firstly" and "secondly," is additional evidence to the same effect. Yet, notwithstanding the mechanical uniformity under which he labors and the abrupt transitions which he makes from one theme to another, his prophecies are full of vigor and forcefulness, and he drives home old truth with singular originality and earnestness. His book may be fairly classed as the most argumentative of all Old Testament prophecies.⁸

THE CONTENTS OF HIS BOOK

His book, composed of only four chapters, contains severe denunciations of social evils, strong rebukes for the hypocrisy of the priests, as well as prophecies of deliverance and of better

days ahead. The prophet insists that God's acceptance of men's offerings and service is conditioned upon the sincerity and purity of the life of those who made them. The people had robbed God not only in tithes and offerings, but they had withheld from him their loyalty and their love. If the people gave to God what rightfully belonged to him, abundant blessings should follow. It demanded, however, not only formal offerings, but purity of heart and sincerity of spirit.

"Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (3:10)

"And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jehovah of hosts." (3:10, 12).⁹

The prophet begins by showing Jehovah's love for Israel, and proving it by recalling to memory the differing destinies of Jacob and Esau, how that the descendants of the latter had suffered ruin and desolation, while the Israelites had experienced favour and protection in the past, and should be still more blessed in the future (1:1-5). Yet they had not responded to his love; yea, the very priests had been foremost in offending him, by polluting his altar and offering unworthy sacrifices; these offerings God wholly rejects, demanding such pure offering as that which shall be presented in the time of Messiah. But the priests have performed their office in a mercenary spirit, and have learned to despise the worship of God; therefore unless they repent, they shall be punished

with curse and rejection; and then, to demonstrate how far they have erred from the right path, the prophet sketches the portrait of the true priest, such as God would have him to be (1:6-2:9). In defiance of the Law, and regardless that they were thus profaning the covenant, they had repudiated their own legitimate wives in order that they might marry the daughters of the idolatrous heathen. The Hebrew wives had wept and laid their cause before the Lord, and he hears them, and will vindicate his own institution (2:10-16). The third part introduces God as the God of judgment. The people had thought to go on their way unpunished..Did the people complain that God was tardy in executing his promises? Let them see the cause in their own transgressions, their many rebellions against his authority, their neglect of tithes and offerings. If they did their duty, he would reward them with fertility and abundance. They had dared to say that it was a vain thing to serve God; they had confounded good and evil; but the Lord cared for the pious, and would bring them to glory, while he condemned the wicked as stubble to the fire. Therefore let all men observe the Law of Moses, and let them look for the coming of the great day of judgment, and the gracious appearance of the Lord's messenger Elijah the prophet (2:17-4:6).¹⁰

The following is a brief synopsis of the book:

- I. Dark Side of the Picture. The sins of a dishonest, ungrateful people, and an unfaithful priesthood.
 1. Robbing God.
 - (1) By failure to respond to Divine Love, ch. 1:2.
 - (2) By dishonoring God's name, ch. 1:6.
 - (3) By presenting blemished offerings, ch. 1:7, 8, 13, 14.

- (4) The priests, by evil example, becoming stumbling-blocks, instead of spiritual leaders, ch. 2:1-8.
- (5) By honoring sinners, ch. 2:17; 3:15.
- (6) By selfishly withholding tithes, ch. 3:8.
- (7) By justifying impiety, ch. 3:14.
- 2. Social Sins.
 - (1) Treacherous dealing with brethren, ch. 2:10.
 - (2) Inter-marriage with the heathen, ch. 2:11.
 - (3) Divorcing wives, ch. 2:14-16.
 - (4) Sorcery, impurity, oppression, ch. 3:5.

II. The Light Side of the Picture.

Glorious Promises:

- (1) Of the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant, ch. 3:1-4.
- (2) Of the outpouring of a Great Blessing, ch. 3:10-12.
- (3) Of the saints becoming Jehovah's peculiar Treasure, ch. 3:16-18.
- (4) Of the dawning of a New Day in which righteousness shall triumph, ch. 4:2, 3.
- (5) Of the appearance of a Spiritual Reformer before the Day of the Lord is ushered in, ch. 4:5, 6.¹¹

HIS ABIDING MESSAGES

Malachi's message has a permanent value for us as well as an immediate value for his own time. He was an intense patriot, and accordingly his message was clean-cut and severe. His primary aim was to encourage a disheartened people who were still looking for Haggai's and Zechariah's optimistic predictions to be fulfilled. Among the lessons of abiding value are the following: (1) That ritual is an important element in religion, but not as an end in itself. Tithes and offerings are necessary, but only as the expression of sincere moral and deeply spiritual life. (2) That a cheap religion avails nothing, and that sacrifices given grudgingly are displeasing to God. Better a temple closed than filled with such worshippers. (3) That divorce and intermarriage with heathen idolaters thwarts the purpose of God in securing to Himself a peculiar people, whose family life is sacred because it is

the nursery of a "godly seed." (4) That there is eternal discipline in the Law. With Malachi, no less than with Christ Himself, not one jot nor tittle should ever pass away or become obsolete.¹²

SUMMARY AND EPILOGUE

With Malachi the prophetical scriptures of the Old Testament close as with Nehemiah Old Testament history ends. From Jonah, the first of the literary prophets, to Malachi is an extended period embracing the history of Judah from the reign of Uzziah and that of Israel from the reign of Jeroboam II, to the fall of both kingdoms, through the period of the Captivity and for a hundred years of the Post-exilic Era, a period of nearly 400 years.

How earnestly and faithfully these great souls delivered to Judah and Israel the messages of Jehovah in reproving, instructing warning, exhorting and comforting the people. How clearly and particularly they announced the facts relative to the coming Messiah--the time of His coming, His birth and birthplace, labors, sufferings, death, resurrection and king of His universal and everlasting kingdom. No nation has ever brought forth a body of men in any sense comparable with these prophets of Jehovah.

How fitting it is that Malachi should seal up the book of Old Testament prophecy by such a clear statement of the coming of the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Sun of Righteousness, and thus give the last prediction of Him with whom the Evangelists begin the Gospel history. This last ray of light, with all preceding Messianic rays, will illumine the four centuries from Malachi to Matthew and rest at last upon the babe in Bethlehem's manger.¹³

MALACHI -- "MY MESSENGER"¹⁴

Memory Verses - Malachi 3:1; 4:4, 5

I. General Observations:

1. Date--445-432 B. C.
2. Style--as of the scribes: First an assertion or charge; second, fancied objection raised by his hearers, and finally the prophet's refutation of their objections.
3. Message or lessons:
 - (1) Ritual only important as it depicts sincere moral and deeply religious life.
 - (2) Cheap religion avails nothing.
 - (3) Divorce and remarriage hated by God.
 - (4) Eternal discipline in the law.

II. Outline:

1. Prologue: Jehovah's love for Israel, 1:2-5.
2. Condemnation of the priest's faithlessness, 1:6-2:9.
3. Condemnation of mixed marriages and divorce, 2:10-16.
4. Condemnation of religious indifference and skepticism, 2:17-4:3.
5. Closing admonitions, 4:4-6.

THE END

MALACHI

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1. How much is known about the prophet Malachi?
2. What does the name Malachi mean?
3. What was the condition of the spiritual life of the people at the time of Malachi?
4. For what purpose was Malachi sent to prophecy?
5. What is the "sad keynote" of the book of Malachi?
6. What were the abuses against which Malachi made his protest?
7. According to our study, what was the great problem of Malachi's day?
8. Malachi was rather a _____ than a _____.
9. Where is the sketch of the ideal priest found?
10. Malachi's style of teaching was known as the _____ -
 _____ method. Seven distinct examples of this peculiar method
 are to be found in his book. What is this method?
 (a).
 (b).
 (c).
11. Quote Malachi 3:10.
12. What does the book of Malachi, composed of only four chapters, contain?
13. List the two Roman numeral points in the Brief synopsis of the book of Malachi.
 (1)
 (2)
14. Give the four abiding messages of the book of Malachi.