

THE SCOPE AND VALUE OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Introduction:

- A. For years many have heard such statements as the following, "The Old Testament has been done away. Thus, in our Bible classes we are wasting our time if we study it."
 - 1. Such statements point up the need for a lesson on the value of the Old Testament.
- B. As Law the OT has been abolished (Col. 2:14), yet OT study is valuable.
- C. The OT is inspired of God and is as true as the NT.
II Tim. 3:16,17; II Peter 1:20:21.
- D. Other NT verses point out that the OT is valuable now.
 - 1. Paul refers to those things written "AFORETIME" as being written for our learning that "we might have hope". (Rom 15:4).
 - 2. In Thessalonica Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2).
 - a. What Scriptures?
 - 3. Bereans were commended for "examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

I. THE VALUE OF STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES IS SEEN AS WE OBSERVE HOW WE MAY USE THEM. THAT WHICH IS USEFUL IS VALUABLE.

- 1. Valuable as inspired history.
 - A. Account of creation (beginning) the World and Man.
 - 1. Record of God's dealing with man from Adam to the cross.
 - a. At least 4000 years of man's existence and obligations, first under the patriarchal system, then under the law from Sinai.
 - 2. Secular history does not present a clear, connected story of long ago as does the Bible.
 - B. The Old Testament is not only a book of HUMAN HISTORY, but also a record of man's REDEMPTION HISTORICALLY PRESENTED.
 - 1. The beginning of sin (man's fall), making redemption necessary.
 - 2. Progress of sin at work in the human race.
 - 3. Destruction of all but eight people.
 - 4. Another development period without God's interference.
 - 5. With Abraham and Sarah we see the beginning of the process of redemption promised. (Gen. 22:16-18).
 - 6. A long history of rejection of God by His people.
 - 7. Giving of the Law, a standard by which man could measure his righteousness, that it might become evident how impossible it is to earn one's salvation by works of the law; THEREFORE, the NEED OF REDEMPTION (Galatians 3:16-24).

II. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED ARE USEFUL AS EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE PRODUCT OF A DIVINE, AND NOT THE PRODUCT OF A HUMAN MIND.

- A. The birthplace of Christ. Read Matt. 2:1-6 in connection with Micah 5:2.
 - 1. Micah prophesied about 700 B.C. This prophecy was read by Jews hundreds of years before Christ was born.
 - a. What possibility is there of any man, by his own wisdom, predicting the birthplace of someone not yet born?
 - b. Illustrate with birth of acquaintance.
 - 2. Micah specified one of the smallest countries of then known world (Palestine).
 - a. In that country he designated one of the twelve provinces of the country, JUDAH, in which Christ should be born.
 - (1). In that small province, he pointed out to one small village, Bethlehem.
 - 3. Circumstances Prevailing at the time of Christ's birth were against the fulfillment of this prophecy because Joseph and Mary were not living in Bethlehem, but about 90 miles away in Nazareth Galilee. It was only because an edict had gone out from Rome concerning taxation which compelled Mary and Joseph at this particular time to go to Bethlehem.

- a. If conception had taken place 6 months sooner, normal chances would have been that Jesus would have been born in Nazareth.
- 4. Such a Prediction concerning something to take place 700 years hence is nothing less than the result of DIVINE REVELATION.

III. The Old Testament Contains Valuable Evidence That Jesus Is God's Son, Savior of Man.

- A. Peter said all the prophets bore witness of Jesus (Acts 10:34-43).
 - 1. Peter's Pentecost sermon referred to David's prophecies in the Psalms as evidence of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:25-36; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 110:1).
- B. Jesus told the Jews, "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life and THESE are they which BEAR WITNESS OF ME" (John 5:39).
- C. Phillip began in the Old Testament and preached Jesus to the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).
 - 1. His text was Isa. 53.
- D. In Paul's preaching he persuaded them "concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).
 - 1. Read Acts 17:1-3 of Paul in the Synagogue in Thessalonica.
 - 2. Read Acts 18:28, of Paul in Achaia.

IV. The Old Testament is Valuable in Making The New Testament More Meaningful.

- A. Jesus being "lifted up" compared to lifting up serpent (John 3:14,15).
 - 1. This refers to story in Numbers 21:4-9.
 - a. A lack of knowledge of this Old Testament story leaves John 3:14,15 meaningless.
- B. "For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ" (I Cor.5:17).
 - 1. Exodus 12:1-4 throws light on this verse.
- C. Read Hebrews 3:17-19.
 - 1. Numbers 14:2,11,22,23, and other Old Testament history makes this meaningful.
- D. In teaching the consequences of refusing to obey God, Jesus said, "REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE" (Luke 17:32).
 - 1. Genesis 19:1-26 makes Jesus lesson clearer.

V. Old Testament Contains Principles of Truth Not Limited To One Dispensation.

- A. Malachi 3:6 "I, Jehovah, change not". Since this is true, we can learn about God's love, goodness, patience, much better than we could if we studied only the New Testament.
 - 1. The great underlying principles of God's dealing with men are the same in all ages.
 - a. He has always required man to BELIEVE His Word, OBEY His Commands, and TRUST His Promises.
 - 2. The particular thing required, and exact promise to be trusted often differed in different ages, but the Principle of FAITH and OBEDIENCE remains.
- B. OBEDIENT FAITH of Abraham referred to by New Testament writers, (James 2:20-24).
 - 1. Old Testament Genesis 22; especially verses 12, 18.

C. Courage

1. Elijah and 450 prophets of Baal (I Kings 18).
 - a. God's preacher said to the Israelites who were halting between God and idolatry, "How long go ye LIMPING BETWEEN TWO SIDES? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21).
 - b. Result of Elijah's faith and courage--Israel turned to God.

D. Purity

1. Joseph--Gen. 39:9, "How can I do this thing and sin against God?"

E. Patience--Job

1. II Peter 1:6, add, patience.

VI. O T FURNISHES WARNINGS AND EXAMPLES OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE.

- A. Hebrews 10:26-31, New Testament warning based on Old Testament fact.
- B. In speaking of the rejection of the Israelites (God's nation), Paul said, "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

VII. Old Testament Provides Hope

- A. Romans 15:4
 1. I Kings 8:56 and Joshua 23:14 reveal that God's record is one of KEEPING PROMISES.
 - a. Thus, read Hebrews 6:13-20 (especially ver. 18-20).

CONCLUSION:

- A. The apostle Peter, in teaching on the importance of baptism (I Peter 3:21), referred to the Old Testament story of Noah's salvation by water (I Peter 3:20), and thus the destruction of others by the same water.
 1. Knowledge of Noah makes the point have meaning.
 - a. Will you act on that knowledge?
- B. Let us study the Old Testament.
- C. Let us study the New Testament.
- D. Remember the abiding principles (Faith and Obedience).
 1. Mark 16:16....

I N T R O D U C T I O N

PERIODS OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

BOOKS AND PROPHETS OF PERIODS

I. <u>Ante-Diluvian Period</u> : From Creation to the Deluge; traditional dates; 4004 - 2400 B.C.	Genesis 1:1 - 8:14
II. <u>Post-Diluvian Period</u> : From the Deluge to the Call of Abraham; 2400 - 2000 B.C. (tentative)	Genesis 8:15 - 11:32
III. <u>Patriarchal Period</u> : From the Call of Abraham to the Descent into Egypt; 2000 - 1880 B.C.	Genesis 12:1 - 50:26 (Job ?)
IV. <u>Egyptian Bondage</u> : From the Descent into Egypt to the Exodus; 1880 - 1450 B.C.	Exodus 1:1 - 12:36
V. <u>Wanderings</u> : From the Exodus to the crossing of the Jordan; 1450 - 1410 B.C.	Exodus 12:37 - 40:38 Leviticus: Numbers Deuteronomy
VI. <u>Conquest</u> : From the Crossing of the Jordan to the Settlement of the Tribes; 1410 - 1385 B.C.	Joshua
VII. <u>Judges</u> : From death of Joshua to the anointing of Saul as King. 1385 - 1053 B.C.	Judges Ruth I Samuel 1:1 - 7:17
VIII. <u>The United Kingdom</u> : From the Anointing of Saul as King to the Division of Kingdom; 1053 - 933	I Samuel 8:1 - 31:13; II Samuel; I Kings 1:1 - 11:43; I Chron. 10:1 - II Chron. 9:31 (Psalms, Proverbs, Eccl. Song of Solomon)
IX. <u>The Divided Kingdom</u> : From the Division of the Kingdom to the Fall of Samaria; 933 - 721 B.C.	I Kings 12:1 - II Kings 17:41; II Chron. 10:1 - 28:26.
Prophets of the Period of the Divided Kingdom	Isaiah 745-695; Hosea 760-720; Joel 830; Amos 751; Jonah 808-783; Micah 749-697.
X. <u>Judah Alone</u> : From the Fall of Samaria to the Fall of Jerusalem 721 - 586 B.C.	II Kings 18:1 - 25:30; II Chron. 29:1 - 36:23.
Prophets during the Period of Judah Alone	Jeremiah 626-586; Nahum 630; Isaiah 745-695; Habakkuk 607; Zephaniah 639-608; Obadiah 597-586.
XI. <u>The Exile</u> : From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Fall of Babylon; 586 - 536 B.C.	Ezekiel Daniel Book of Lamentations
XII. <u>Restoration</u> : From the Fall of Babylon to the Close of Nehemiah's Career; 536 - 400 B.C.	Ezra Nehemiah Esther
Prophets during the Period of Restoration	Haggai 520-516; Zechariah 520-516; Malachi 450-400

I and II KINGS

I. NAME

- A. The name comes from the kings, whose activities the books present.
- B. They tell one continuous story and originally were only one book.

II. WRITER

- A. Nothing certain is known regarding who wrote these books.
- B. Jewish tradition ascribes the work to Jeremiah.

III. CONTENTS

These books contain the history of Israel and Judah from the end of David's reign to the Babylonian captivity, about 450 years. Since the material presents one story, we consider them together.

- A. The reign of Solomon, 40 years. (I Kings 1-11).
 - 1. David's charge to Solomon: "Keep the charge of Jehovah." (I Kings 2:1-9).
 - 2. Solomon's wise choice: Prayer for wisdom. (I Kings 3:4-15).
 - 3. Building of the temple by Solomon. (I Kings, Chs. 5-8).
 - 4. Solomon's greatness. (I Kings, Chs. 9, 10).
 - a. He began in glorious splendor.
 - b. He flourished for a time with wealth, peace, happiness.
 - c. He had many tributaries. Israel was at its height.
 - 5. Solomon's downfall. (I Kings, Ch. 11).
 - a. Cause: wealth, foreign wives, idolatry.
 - b. Result: division of the kingdom.

The golden age of Israel was attained during the reigns of David and Solomon. It was a period of religious advance and witnessed a development of national consciousness. Here also we have the beginning of Hebrew literature as reflected in David's Psalms and Solomon's Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song)
- B. Revolt of the 10 northern tribes (I Kings 12). The causes were:
 - 1. Lack of national unity in the United Kingdom.
 - 2. Excessive taxation necessary to maintain Solomon's court.
 - 3. The folly of Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor.
- C. The divided kingdom, 253 years (I Kings 12 to II Kings 17).
 - 1. Israel: 10 tribes on the north of which Ephraim was chief.
 - a. There were nineteen kings in all. Jeroboam being first.
 - b. Religious summary.
 - (1) Jeroboam set up his own priesthood, established two national sanctuaries (Dan and Bethel), and introduced calf worship.
 - (2) Ahab, influenced by his wicked queen, Jezebel, introduced the worship of Baal.
 - (3) Efforts at revival failed and idolatry became rampant.
 - c. Political summary.
 - (1) Israel started with good advantages.
 - (2) Activities were spasmodic with no steady progress.
 - (3) Internal strife was brewing almost constantly.
 - (4) Alliances with heathen powers proved fatal.
 - (5) Foreign invasions weakened the kingdom.
 - (6) Israel finally was taken into Assyrian captivity.
 - 2. Judah: 2 tribes on the south, Judah and Benjamin.
 - a. Later joined by Levites and others. (II Chron. 11:13-16)
 - b. Twenty kings during the 388 years, Rehoboam being first.
 - c. Religious summary: More faithful to God with many reforms.
 - d. Political summary: faithful to house of David; prosperous at first; constant threats from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Israel. Heathen alliances paved the way for Babylonian captivity.

I and II Kings (Continued)

NOTE: Fraternizing with pagan influences causes men and nations to decline.

D. Kingdom of Judah (continued)

1. Meaning of the term: Period of Bible history following the fall of the ten tribes, during which Judah continued as a kingdom.
2. Time covered: 135 years, B.C. 722 to B.C. 587.
3. Scriptures covered: II Kings, Chs. 18-25; II Chron. Chs. 33-36).
4. The period covers the last seven of Judah's twenty kings. It is marked by increasing idolatry and gradual apostasy.
 - a. Manasseh reigned for 55 years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and idolatry was again introduced.
 - b. Amon likewise did evil and idolatry flourished. He was killed by his own servants. The people in turn killed the servants and made Josiah king.
 - c. Josiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah. He did right in the sight of the Lord and was the last king to walk in the ways of David. Josiah introduced many reforms. He destroyed idols, repaired the temple of God, and commanded the law, which had been lost, to be read to all the people.
 - d. Johohaz did evil in the sight of the Lord, was dethroned and carried as a captive to Egypt.
 - e. Jehoakim did evil in the sight of the Lord, "very evil". He became a tool in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Daniel and the three Hebrews (Dan. 1:1-7) were carried to Babylon at this time.
 - f. Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) also did evil in the sight of the Lord. During his reign Jerusalem was besieged and pillaged by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiachin was taken as a captive to Babylon, along with Ezekiel and 10,000 other Jews.
 - g. Zedekiah is described as "very evil". During his reign, Jerusalem was besieged and suffered a long famine. Zedekiah was captured, his sons were slain before his eyes, his own eyes were put out and he was taken to Babylon. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the invaders from Babylon. All the valuables, the sacred vessels of the temple; and the best people were taken to Babylon. Only a few of the poorest people were left to dress the vineyards.

IV. THE WORK OF THE PROPHETS.

- A. During the period covered by I and II Kings, the prophets were very active. Both the writing and the non-writing prophets did most of their work at this time.
- B. The messages of the prophets were provoked by the kings, most of whom were wicked and unwilling to obey the voice of God.
- C. As God's spokesmen, the prophets: Urged the nation to return to God; predicted Israel's captivity; pointed to the coming Messiah.

V. MESSAGES OF I AND II KINGS

- A. Human governments fail.
 1. Cause: Lack of respect for God.
 2. Evidences: Loss of national ideals; insensitive conscience.
 3. Results: The people are conquered, captured, cast away.
- B. Divine government succeeds. This fact is seen in:
 1. God's purpose: Revealed in the promise to Abraham.
 2. God's persistence: Reflected in repeated promises, warnings.
 3. God's power: Reflected in repeated promises, warnings.
- C. No man can serve two masters, God and Baal.
- D. Sin always brings on captivity, death. (Cf. Rom. 6:23).

J O E L

I. TITLE

It is named for its chief character, Joel, which means "Jehovah is God".

II. THE PROPHET

Verse 1 gives us all that we know of his personal history. He was the son of Pethuel, and probably prophesied in Judah. (2:15-17). The date is uncertain, probably around 800 B.C., during the time of Joash in Israel and Amaziah in Judah. He seems to have been one of the earliest of the prophets, if not the earliest. His references to the temple have caused some to think that Joel was a priest.

III. STYLE

Joel's style is smooth and flowing. Unlike Hosea and Jeremiah, he did not seem to have any inward struggles.

IV. PURPOSE

To warn the nation of the need for humility and repentance and the certainty of coming judgment. At the same time, Joel seeks to keep the heart of the people faithful to the promises of God by reminding them of the coming salvation and of the destruction of their and God's enemies.

V. SUMMARY

- A. Occasion:
 - 1. Four successive plagues of insects (1:1-4; 2:25).
 - 2. An unprecedented drouth (2:23).
- B. Cause of the plagues:
 - Sins of the people.
- C. Chief emphasis:
 - 1. Rewards of the righteous.
 - 2. Punishment of the wicked.
- D. Chief value:
 - Optimism, expressed in restoration of penitent Israel.
- E. Outstanding prophecy:
 - 1. Joel 2:28-32.
 - 2. Quoted by Peter in Acts 2, and began to be fulfilled on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection.

VI. EXERCISES

- A. Memorize Joel 2:12
- B. List the Messianic passages found in Joel and discuss what each foretells of the gospel age.
- C. Be familiar with Acts 2, and be able to relate Peter's use of the prophet Joel in his sermon on Pentecost day.

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE.

- 1. Disasters serve to turn men to God and prepare their minds for God's instruction.
- 2. An awakened sense of dependence upon God makes for humility.
- 3. Judgment is inevitable. No individual need hope for escape.
- 4. The character of the judgment day depends on the attitude of the heart. It may be a day of terror or a day of blessing.
- 5. The broken heart is the only sound heart.
- 6. God can "restore the years the locusts have eaten".
- 7. Great calamities call for a nationwide season of prayer.
- 8. Genuine repentance gives God a chance to send blessings instead of calamities.

J O N A H

I. THE TITLE

The book is named for its chief character, Jonah, which means "dove".

II. THE PROPHET

All that we know about Jonah, besides what is told in this book, we learn from II Kings 14:25. He was the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1), and a native of Gath-hepher (II Kings 14:25), a village of Zebulun. Hence he belonged to the Northern Kingdom. Jewish legend represents him as being the son of the widow at Sarepta whom Elijah restored to life, and the youth whom Elisha sent to anoint Jehu, king of Israel. Nothing is known of the time and place of his death. An old tradition says he was buried at Gath-hepher, whereas modern tradition places his supposed tomb near Nineveh.

III. THE DATE

The date of the prophecy is hard to determine. One view of II Kings 14:25, where Jonah prophesied the success of Jeroboam II in his war with Syria, places the prophecy in or before the reign of said king, or about 820 B.C.

IV. THE MOTIVE

The motive of the prophecy was to rebuke the exclusive spirit of Israel, and its rejoicing over the calamities of alien nations. The Jews claimed that God cared only for them. Their doctrine was upset when God offered forgiveness to Nineveh, capital city of Assyria, and most dangerous foe of Israel, when the Ninevites repented.

V. CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL

It was a time of political revival in Israel. If it was during the reign of Jeroboam II, outward prosperity was in evidence, and conquered territory was being restored to Israel. But destruction was imminent. Before long God used the Assyrians as a scourge upon Israel.

VI. PECULIARITIES OF THE BOOK.

In form, the book is not a prophecy in the ordinary sense. It differs from other Old Testament prophecies in that it is narrative in form. It is more "the history of a prophecy than a prophecy itself". Whereas other prophecies are filled with prophetic utterances, the book of Jonah narrates his experiences, but gives us few of his utterances. It has been called "the most 'Christian' of all the Old Testament books", since it gives the universality of God's plan of redemption, and shows "the capacity of the Gentiles for salvation, and the design of God to make them partakers of it."

VII. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

God sent Jonah to prophesy against Nineveh, a wicked, alien city. The prophet shrank from the commission because he felt it would result in the sparing of a hostile city. He attempted to escape by ship to Tarshish. A storm arose, Jonah was cast into the sea, and a large fish prepared by Jehovah swallowed him. The prophet then executed his commission. The king of Nineveh commanded the Ninevites to repent and thereby averted threatened destruction. Moved by national prejudice, Jonah begrudged the mercy which was extended to Nineveh, a heathen city. By the lesson of the gourd, Jonah was shown that God cares for other nations besides Israel.

VIII. RESEARCH MATERIAL

- A. Elements of character noticeable in Jonah.
- B. Missionary lessons taught in this book.
- C. Jonah's influence on the sailors and the Ninevites.
- D. Map study of all places named or implied in the book.

IX. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. God would have us love all men as He loves them and give ourselves to the task of winning them.
2. It is utterly impossible to escape from God.
3. No divinely given task may be lightly regarded.
4. One tends to limit God by disobedience.
5. It is tragic to have to meet the storms of life without God's presence.
6. One usually runs into a storm when he seeks to run away from God.
7. The path of self-will is always downward.
8. In the hour of distress one turns to the God he has grieved.

A M O S

I. TITLE

The title comes from the chief character, Amos, which means "Burden".

II. THE PROPHET

Amos, sometimes called the "prophet of righteousness", was a native of Tekoa, a small town of Judea about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. Originally, he was a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees, (7:14-15). He was very humble. Amos was not of the prophetic line, and was not trained in the schools of the prophets, (7:14-15). Yet God called him to leave his native home in Judah and become a prophet in Israel. He delivered his bold prophecy at Bethel, where the sanctuary was. His bold preaching against Israel caused Amaziah, idolatrous priest, to complain against Amos to the king. Apparently, Amaziah accused Amos of preaching as a trade, (7:10-14). The result was that Amos was expelled from the northern kingdom. He probably returned to Tekoa, but nothing is known of the time or manner of his death.

III. DATE

The exact date is uncertain. Probably between 750-800 B.C., because he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (1:1).

IV. CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL

Times were prosperous in Northern Israel. Social evils accompanied their luxury, and religion was at a low ebb. These ten tribes had rejected God, but they were confident in their belief that no harm could come upon them. They were selfish, greedy, immoral and oppressive. The people gave mere lip service to Jehovah and mingled their worship of Him with many idols.

V. ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

A. The Announcement of Judgment Against the Nations (1:1--2:16)

1. Introduction (1:1).
2. Theme (1:2).
3. Prophecies against the nations:
 - a. Damascus (1:3-5); Philistia (1:6-8); Phoenicia-Tyre (1:9-10); Edom (1:11-12); Ammon (1:13-15); Moab (2:1-3)
 - b. Those spoken against God's chosen people: Judah (2:4-5); Israel (2:6-16).

B. Israel is Judged (3:1 - 6:15).

1. God and his people (3:1-15).
2. Past punishments have not brought them back (4:1-13).
3. The Lord's lament over Israel (5:27 - 6:15).

C. Five Visions of the Coming Judgment (7:1 - 9:15).

1. Plague of locusts (7:1-3).
2. Fire devours the deep (7:4-6).
3. The plumbline, together with Amaziah's command to Amos to leave the land. (7:7-17).
4. The basket of summer fruit (8:1-14).
5. The destruction of the sanctuary (9:1-10).

D. Promise of Messianic blessing (9:11-15).

VI. FURTHER STUDY

- A. Memorize Amos 4:12.
- B. List all passages where rustic or agricultural illustrations are used.
- C. Know the connection between James' remarks of Acts 15:16-18 and Amos 9:11-12)

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. Men displease God by hollow, insincere worship.
2. Nations and individuals that have been favored are laden with corresponding responsibilities.
3. God is gracious and patient in warning us.
4. Sin must be punished. Men must suffer.
5. Ease, luxury and idleness lead to open sin.
6. Social injustice is intolerable to God.
7. Possessing power over others creates grave dangers.
8. God amply warns before He brings judgment, but He does not speak and warn endlessly.

I. TITLE

The title comes from the leading character, Hosea (Hebrew, Hoshe'a, Greek and Latin Osee), which means "Salvation" or "Deliverance".

II. WRITER

Evidence indicates that the prophecies were collected and compiled by Hosea himself toward the end of his career. There is no sufficient reason for denying to Hosea any of this book.

III. THE PROPHET

Hosea has been called the "Prophet of Divine Love". Nothing is known of his life except what may be gained from this book. He was the son of Beerai (1:1), and probably a native of the Kingdom of Israel. He followed Amos, and was contemporary with Isaiah. While Isaiah was prophesying at Jerusalem, Hosea was preaching to corrupt Israel. His ministry extended approximately fifty years. Some estimate 786 to 726 B.C.; others, 760 to 720 B.C. He evidently lived until the destruction of Israel and her exile at the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. Hosea 1:1 places his work during the reign of Jeroboam II.

IV. STYLE

Hosea is called the "weeping prophet of Israel", as Jeremiah was of Judah. His writing is abrupt, poetical and figurative. "Images are woven upon images, metaphor strung upon metaphor." From his symbolic speech we learn the modes of life of that day.

V. CONDITIONS OF ISRAEL

"Outward prosperity and inward decay" describes conditions in Israel at that time. Through foreign conquests and increased commerce the country was financially prosperous. Religious conditions were bad. The people had forgotten the law, the worship was polluted, and the rankest kinds of immorality were practised. They worshipped Baal instead of Jehovah, and looked to Egypt and Assyria for help.

VI. PURPOSE

The prophecy of Hosea to the ten rebellious tribes reflects the grace of God. His great purpose is to show the love of God for his people, although sinful and corrupt. The symbolism of a faithless wife is used to show Israel as a nation that has committed spiritual adultery. His plea is for repentance and return to God.

VII. SUMMARY

The book falls into two sections.

Part I, Chapters 1-3 - discusses Israel's sin and broken covenant, illustrated by tragedy of Hosea's marriage.

Part II, Chapters 4-14 - contains prophetic speeches concerning Israel's fall, punishment, repentance and restoration. Hosea predicts with no uncertainty the approaching captivity of Israel. Three great lessons are forcefully taught: on national decay; on the nature and effect of sin; on love.

VIII. EXERCISES

- A. What is the significance of Hosea's marriages? (Chs. 1-3)
- B. Study the various invitations found in Hosea.
- C. Why were the people in a state of destruction? (4:6).
- D. Discuss the controversy between Jehovah and Israel; its cause, manifestations and results. (4:1-19).
- E. Explain the statement: "Like people...like priest." (4:9).
- F. Memorize Hosea 4:11.
- G. Note the many expressions of tender love which God has for wayward, backsliding people.

IX. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. God suffers intense pain when men desert Him.
2. The sacredness and sanctity of the marriage relation.
3. The tragic consequence of heeding unworthy teachers.
4. In God's plan there can be no double standard of morality.
5. Sin destroys the nerve that enables men to make moral distinctions.
6. Worship cannot please God until the worshiper comes in the right spirit.
7. Genuine repentance will bring forgiveness and full restoration to God.
8. The root sin from which all others spring is unfaithfulness to God.

MICAH

I. THE TITLE

The book is named after the prophet, Micah, which means, "Who is like God?"

II. THE PROPHET

Micah, called the Morashtite, lived in Moresheth, a small town of Gath, in the southwest of Judah, near the Philistine border. Jer. 26:18-19; Micah 1:1; 1:14. Little is known of his personal history. He seems to have been a simple countryman who sympathized deeply with the common people. He was born of obscure parents, and was recognized as one of the peasant class. Moved by social evils, (Chs. 2-3) he became the people's defender as well as their accuser.

III. THE DATE

Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Micah 1:1, "thus giving a maximum limit of 59 years (B.C. 756-697) and a minimum limit of 16 years (B.C. 742-726) from the death of Jotham to the accession of Hezekiah." He was a contemporary of Isaiah in Judah, and of Hosea and Amos in Israel.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Micah denounced the wickedness of both Israel and Judah, told of the impending punishment, the restoration of the Jews, and the coming of Christ. Analysis: 1. Impending destruction, Ch. 1; 2. Sins which provoked the calamity, Chs. 2-3; 3. Promise of restoration and glory, Chs. 4-5; 4. Jehovah's controversy with Israel, Chs. 6-7.

V. MICAH'S GREATEST PROPHECIES

1. On the establishment of the church, 4:1-8. See also Isa. 2:3-4.
2. On the time and place of Christ's birth, 5:2. See Matt. 2:3-6).
3. On God's mercy and faithfulness to promise, 7:16-20. See Luke 1:72,73.

VI. EXERCISES FOR STUDENT ACTIVITY. (Completion:)

1. The word Micah means "Who is like _____?"
2. Micah was a native of the town of _____.
3. Micah is called the _____.
4. (Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos) mentions Micah in his prophecy.
5. The maximum limit of Micah's ministry was (16, 40, 59) years.

True-False:

1. T F Micah prophesied to both Israel and Judah.
2. T F Micah gives much of his personal history.
3. T F Micah was contemporary with Hosea and Amos.
4. T F Micah sympathized with upper classes.
5. T F In his "Benedictus", Zacharias Quoted from Micah.
6. T F Micah said "the word of Jehovah would go forth from Bethlehem.
7. T F The priests and scribes quoted Micah on the birth of Christ.
8. T F Micah predicted the destruction of Jerusalem.
9. T F Micah signs his name at the close of his prophecy.
10. T F Micah reproduces Isaiah's prophecy on establishing the church.

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. Elaborate pretensions of piety and liberal gifts in public cannot atone for a lack of true righteousness in the heart.
2. The Unscrupulous use of power, even though within the bounds of law, hurts the heart of God.
3. We cannot expect God to continue rich blessings upon us when we are not in harmony with Him and His purpose for us.
4. Courage comes to a minister who senses the presence of God in his life.
5. The tragic state of people whose leaders are unworthy.
6. The certainty of the triumph of God's purpose and His undertakings.
7. Universal peace will be assured when the people of earth sit at the Messiah's feet and let Him arbitrate their disputes and guide their behavior.
8. How reasonable are God's basic requirements! How unchangeable are His demands! How deep and tender and changeless His great love!

ZEPHANIAH

I. THE TITLE

This book is named for its writer, Zephaniah, which means "Jehovah hides", or "hidden by Jehovah".

II. THE PROPHET

Zephaniah was the son of Cushi (Zeph. 1:1). The ancestry of Zephaniah is traced back to four generations removed. This is the only prophet with such a background. It is probably the case with Zephaniah to show his royal ancestry as a descendant of Hizkiah, generally believed to be king Hezekiah. There is no definite information concerning his home. Since it is stated that he prophesied during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, it is thought that he lived in the southern kingdom of Judah.

III. THE DATE

The date of the book is suggested by the inscription, "in the days of Josiah" Zeph. 1:1. Josiah reigned for 31 years, from about 642 to 611 B.C. Zephaniah prophesied sometime during this period, hence his prophecy came before the Babylonian captivity. While it cannot be determined definitely, it is likely that Zephaniah prophesied some time before Josiah's reforms. Such passages as Zeph. 1:4-6; 8-9, 12; 3:1-3,7 indicate the religious and moral condition of the people was very low.

IV. THE PROPHECY

The prophecy foretells the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, describes their sins, calls them to repentance, threatens the neighboring countries with destruction, promises the restoration of Judah under the Messiah.

V. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS:

- A. The Prophet's Warning (Chapter 1)
 - 1. The nations, and Jerusalem in particular, to be punished for sin.
 - 2. Various classes specified -- royalty, nobility, tradesmen, the indifferent, the obstinate. Their punishment is described.
- B. The Object Lesson. The Injunction (Chapter 2).
 - 1. The doom that is to overtake the Philistines, Moab, Ethiopia (Egypt), Assyria.
 - 2. Israel warned to repent and thus escape the judgment that is to fall upon these nations.
- C. Perversity Ending in Captivity (Chapter 3:1-7).
 - 1. God's call to repentance.
 - 2. Jerusalem rebellious and obstinate.
 - 3. Unmoved by the fall of other nations.
 - 4. To be punished for her perversity.
- D. Judgment and Blessing (Chapter 3:8-20).
 - 1. The faithful remnant. They should wait and trust. They shall escape the ruin of the nations, and shall come to a state of security and rest.
 - 2. Jehovah in the midst of his people. For his goodness they shall be thankful. Their reproach is removed. The prophet's picture of the Restoration.

VI. EXERCISE FOR THOUGHT
COMPLETION

1. The word Zephaniah means " _____ by Jehovah".
2. The prophecy of Zephaniah contains _____ chapters.
3. Zephaniah foretells the destruction of _____ and _____.
4. Zephaniah was the son of _____.
5. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of _____.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Zephaniah traces his pedigree to the (second, third, fourth) ancestor.
2. Zephaniah prophesied (during, before, after) the Babylonian captivity.
3. Zephaniah probably lived in (Egypt, Moab, Judah).
4. Zephaniah foretold the destruction of (Israel, Judah, Edom).
5. Zephaniah prophesied about (600, 400, 200) years before Christ.

TRUE OR FALSE

1. T F Zephaniah was a descendant of King Hezekiah.
2. T F Zephaniah's prophecy contains no Messianic hope.
3. T F Zephaniah predicted the restoration of Judah from Babylon.
4. T F Zephaniah tells where he lived.
5. T F Zephaniah pronounced judgment on Judah's neighbor countries.

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. A man's belief about God largely determines his conduct.
2. It is universally true that one tends to become like the God he worships.
3. Living a life is a serious business and should be the best and most serious endeavor.
4. The wrath of God is a terrible thing when turned upon human sin.
5. Earnest warning sorely needed to draw us back to the presence of God.
6. The Day of Jehovah is inevitable for all men of every race.
7. God gives assurance that the humble ones who seek Him will be safe in His presence in the day of destruction.
8. God's purpose is not to wreak vengeance but to cleanse and refine and save those who will allow Him to save them.

NAHUM

I. THE TITLE

The book is named for its writer, Nahum, which means "Consolation".

II. THE PROPHET

Little is known of the Author. He was a native of the village of Elkosh, and was known as the "Elkoshite". Nahum 1:1. Opinions differ concerning the location of Elkosh. It is placed by some in Galilee, by others in Judah, and again Assyria. Some think it was the same as Capernaum, which means "the village of Nahum". Internal evidence indicates that Nahum was a natural inhabitant of Palestine, 1:4, 15:2:2. It is thought that Nahum escaped into Judah when the ten tribes were captured, and that he was at Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion. Whether he uttered the prophecy in Nineveh, Philistia or Jerusalem is uncertain, but many authorities favor the last named. Nahum is a ranking poet in Hebrew literature, occupying a high place.

III. THE DATE.

The date of the prophecy is difficult to determine. Some place it between 720 and 698 B.C., during the reign of Hezekiah in Judah. Weighty evidence however, places it at a later date--sometime between the destruction of Thebes, 664 B.C., and the fall of Nineveh, 606 B.C. Nahum mentions the destruction of Thebes (Naomon) Nahum 3:8-10, and predicts the fall of Nineveh, Ch. 1.

IV. THE PROPHECY.

The subject of the prophecy is the approaching fall of Nineveh, 1:1, capital of Assyria, then at the height of its greatness. In keeping with the name of the author, the purpose of the prophecy was to comfort Israel, "so long harassed by Assyria, which was soon to fall and trouble them no more." The style is bold, clear and eloquent. It differs from other prophecies thus far studied in that it does not mention the sins of Judah. Since "Jonah" sets forth the mercy of God toward the Ninevites when they repented, and "Nahum" declares the execution of judgment against Nineveh, the two books should be read together. Both form connected parts of the same moral history.

V. EXERCISES FOR STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Completion:

1. The word "Nahum" means _____.
2. Nahum was a native of the town of _____.
3. Nahum is called the "_____".
4. The subject of "Nahum" is the approaching fall of _____.
5. The purpose of the prophecy was to _____ Israel.
6. Some think Nahum prophesied during the reign of _____ in Judah.
7. Nahum does not mention the sins of _____.
8. Naomon was another name for _____.

True - False:

1. T F Little is known of Nahum's personal history.
2. T F It is definite that Elkosh was located in Assyria.
3. T F Elkosh means the "village of Nahum".
4. T F Many think that Nahum prophesied in Jerusalem.
5. T F Nahum ranks low as a poet in Hebrew literature.
6. T F Both Jonah and Nahum prophesied concerning Nineveh.
7. T F Nahum was probably carried into Assyrian captivity.
8. T F Elkosh may have been the same as Capernaum.

NAHUM

VI. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

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

HABAKKUK

I. TITLE

The title is taken from the prophet, Habakkuk, which means "to caress, embrace". In the LXX this appears as Ambakouk, in the Vulgate as Habacuc.

II. THE PROPHET

We have no certain information concerning the prophet's life. One interpretation of Hab. 3:19 assumes that he was a Levite. "Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And he maketh my feet like hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places." The apocryphal work, Bel and the Dragon (vv. 33-39), claims he carried pottage to Daniel in the lions' den. According to another such work, Lives of the Prophets, he was a man of the tribe of Simeon who fled upon Nebuchadnezzar's advance to take Jerusalem (587) but returned after the fall, dying two years before the return from captivity. Actually, nothing is known of this prophet.

III. THE DATE

Habakkuk probably prophesied sometime during the period of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Some place him between 628 and 608 B.C. He was very likely a contemporary of Jeremiah.

IV. THE PROPHECY

Habakkuk witnessed the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar when the first Jews were carried to Babylon. The overthrow of Babylon (the Chaldeans) is the subject of the prophecy. As Nahum prophesied the fall of Assyria for its oppression of Israel, and Obadiah the doom of Edom, so Habakkuk predicted the doom of Babylon. Tidwell says: "Its purpose grew out of the fact that they were no better off under the rule of Babylon (Chaldeans) which had overthrown Assyria than they were formerly while Assyria ruled over them." The book discusses the suffering of the righteous, and shows how God may use a wicked instrument (as Babylon) to execute His purposes. The question of Job on human suffering is here applied to a nation. In style, Habakkuk is poetical. The book is rich in sublime imagery.

V. ANALYSIS

The prophecy consists of three chapters. Chapter one predicts the invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans, and discusses the apparent triumph of sin. In chapter two Habakkuk foretells the doom of the Chaldeans. Chapter three contains the prophet's prayer, a majestic psalm showing confidence in God as the deliverer.

VI. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A. Prophecy as a dialogue between Habakkuk and Jehovah (Chapters 1-2).
 - 1. The prophet's complaint (1:2-4).
 - 2. Divine oracle (1:5-11).
 - 3. Renewed appeal of the prophet (1:12-17).
 - 4. The divine answer (2:1-5).
 - 5. A taunting proverb; five woes (2:6-20).
- B. Prayer of Habakkuk (Chapter 3).

VII. PRACTICAL LESSON OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. God never stifles a sincere questioner.
2. Some problems cannot have a definite direct answer.
3. In every crisis God can be trusted.
4. When faith is swept off its feet, it finds that it has wings.
5. Evil has within itself the germs of truth.
6. We may see and understand God only when we rise above the fog of human doubt.
7. It helps to understand something of the vast sympathy of God.
8. Remember these verses:
 - "The righteous shall live by faith." 2:4.
 - "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood" 2:12.
 - "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." 2:14.

OBADIAH

I. TITLE

This prophecy is named from its author 'Obhadhyah' (Obadiah), which appears in the LXX as Obdiou, and the Vulgate as Abdias.

II. THE PROPHET

Of the prophet himself nothing is known. His name means "Servant of Jehovah", and he was surely a man of deep convictions, stern, pious, and patriotic, certain that God was in command of the affairs of man. He must not be confused with the Obadiah of Elijah's day (I Kings 18). The name "Obadiah" was common in Israel from the days of David to the close of the Old Testament. There are no direct references to Obadiah in the New Testament.

III. THE DATE

The question of the date depends upon the interpretation of verse II where the prophet speaks of the conquest of Jerusalem and the captivity of Jacob (Israel) as having occurred. It was probably written after the conquest of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C., and before the fall of Edom. This possible date would make Obadiah a contemporary of Jeremiah.

IV. THE OCCASION

The prophecy was occasioned by the cruelty of the Edomites in their rejoicing over, and even perhaps participating in, the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. (Cf. Psalms 137, especially v.7). Edom was glad that Jerusalem had fallen and Judah was taken captive.

V. THE EDOMITES

The Edomites were the descendants of Edom (red), a name given to Esau, the first-born son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob, after he had sold his birthright to the latter for a mess of red pottage. The country which God later gave to Esau was called "the country of Edom", (Gen. 32:3): also Mount Seir and Idumea. Because of Jacob's deception in obtaining the blessing, Esau and his posterity bitterly hated the Israelites, and never lost an opportunity of persecuting them. One notable instance is seen in their refusal to allow the Israelites to pass through their land in going from Egypt to Canaan (Num. 20:18-21).

VI. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A. Description of Edom's punishment (vv. 1-9).
- B. Edom's sin (vv. 10-14).
- C. The guilt of other nations (vv. 15-16).
- D. Prediction of Judah's restoration (vv. 17-21).

VII. IMPORTANT LESSONS

- A. On sin: Its chief element is pride. Its principle manifestation is violence; its final outcome, recompense.
- B. On home. Edom, a proud, jealous nation, shall be destroyed, but Israel shall be restored.

VIII. SUMMARY OF THE PROPHECY

The book contains a vehement denunciation of the Edomites, and envisions "the future glories of Zion when the arm of the Lord should have wrought her deliverance and have repaid double upon her enemies." Because of its denunciation of Edom, the prophecy is a favorite book of the Jews.

IX. TOPICS FOR SPECIAL STUDY

1. Name the books of the Bible which have only one chapter.
2. Is it ever right to rejoice in another's misfortune?
3. What is the Bible's attitude on avenging oneself? Matt. 5:38-41; Romans 12:19.
4. Give other examples which show that we reap what we sow.
5. Recall other instances in which jealousy in the family has provoked unending trouble.
6. Learn all you can about the Edomites. See Gen. 32:3; Num. 20:18-21; I Sam. 14:47; II Sam 8:13-14; I Kings 9:26; II Kings 14:7; II Chron. 20:22; Isa. 34:5-8; 63:1-4; Jer. 49:17; II Chron. 25:14-15, 20).

X. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. Human defenses are utterly useless when the power of God comes against them.
2. Ridicule is always bad for it reveals a low human pride that means an utter lack of brotherly love.
3. God can be depended upon to reveal His righteous purpose in His own good time.
4. Eternal justice will prevail.
5. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.
6. The profane person cannot expect to find favor at the hand of the God whom he has never loved.
7. It is criminal to rejoice in the calamity of another and to gloat over his misfortune.
8. It teaches us that hate silences the voice of compassion, blinds the soul's vision, corrupts the social fabric, inflicts needless grief and dismay on innocent multitudes.

HAGGAI

I. THE TITLE

This prophecy is named for its writer, Haggai, which means "festive". Haggai appears in the LXX as Aggaios and in the Vulgate, Aggaeus.

II. THE PROPHET

History and tradition are silent regarding the tribe and parentage of Haggai. Born in Babylon, he returned from captivity under Zerubbabel. Ezra tells us that Haggai prophesied during the time of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, (Ezra 5:1 and 6:14). He was the first one called to prophesy after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon.

III. THE DATE

Haggai began his teaching during the reign of Darius, about sixteen years after the return of the first Jewish expedition to Jerusalem. Darius ascended to the Persian throne in 521 B.C. In Haggai 1:1 we learn that the word of Jehovah came by Haggai first "in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month." If it came in the second year of Darius, then Haggai must have prophesied in 520 B.C.

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By permission of Cyrus, King of Persia, Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, had taken an expedition of Jews back to Jerusalem. They set up the altar and began work on the temple, but Samaritans and other hostile hordes had hindered the work and for fourteen years very little had been done. Inactivity caused a loss of zeal, and the Jews were rapidly becoming reconciled to the situation. Because of their lack of interest in the Lord's work, many despaired of seeing the temple and the people restored to that glory predicted by former prophets.

V. THE PROPHECY

In style the prophecy is generally plain and unadorned, "though at times it rises to the dignity of severe invective when the prophet rebukes his countrymen for their selfish indolence and neglect of God's house." (Smith). Its purpose was to encourage the Jews and arouse their zeal for Jehovah's work. The prophet reproves them for their negligence, and urges them to revive their work of restoring the temple, even in the face of bitter opposition.

VI. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A. First Discourse of Haggai (Ch. 1).
The people are indifferent to the Temple; the prophet interprets the drought; the people are aroused to action.
- B. Second Discourse of Haggai (Ch. 2:1-9).
He encourages; the second temple compared with the first.
- C. Third Discourse of Haggai (Ch. 2:1-19).
Reminds them of consequences of neglect.
- D. Fourth Discourse of Haggai (Ch. 2:20-23).
Addresses Zerubbabel; gives assurance to him.

HAGGAI

VII. LESSONS TAUGHT

1. False content and discontent are dangerous.
2. False fears and expectations must be guarded.
3. It is not always possible to judge the comparative strength of a proposition by the number of friends or enemies it has.
4. A life that leaves God out is built on the wrong foundation.

VIII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. Difficult duties should be faced courageously and without delay.
2. A stern call to duty is a good tonic.
3. How serious and lasting are the effects of evil (2:10-19)!
4. How futile is human effort and endeavor when separated from spiritual emphasis.
5. The best test of oratory is found in whether or not words stimulate action.
6. Full obedience to God is a necessary condition of approach to Him.
7. Outward splendor does not necessarily constitute true glory.
8. The book is a challenge to preachers to throw themselves enthusiastically into a great program for God.

ZECHARIAH

I. THE TITLE

This prophecy is named for its writer, Zechariah, which means "Remembered of the Lord", or "Jehovah hath remembered".

II. THE PROPHET

Zechariah says that he was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, whereas in the book of Ezra, Ch. 5:1; 6:14, he is spoken of as the son of Iddo. It has been supposed that Berechiah, the father, died early, and that there was no intervening link between Zechariah and his grandfather, Iddo. Indications are that Zechariah was born in Babylon, whence he returned to Jerusalem with the first expedition of captives under Zerrubbabel. From Nehemiah 12:1-16 we learn that Zechariah was priest as well as prophet. Jewish history names him as a member of the Great Synagogue.

III. THE DATE

Zechariah was a colleague of Haggai. He was called to the prophetic office in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), two months after the call of Haggai, (Zech. 1:1; Haggai 1:1). However, Zechariah continued his work at least two years longer (Zech. 7:1), perhaps four years longer, (Ezra 6:14,15). The time of the first eight chapters is that of the rebuilding of the temple. It is thought by some that the last six chapters were written thirty years later.

IV. NATIONAL CONDITIONS

Conditions at the time of the prophecy were the same as those described in Haggai. After their return from Babylonian captivity, the Jews had undertaken the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Opposition interrupted the work, and many fell into a state of indifference and lost interest.

V. THE PROPHECY

The purpose of the prophecy, as well as that of Haggai, was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. It contains reproof for sin, threatens God's judgments against the impenitent, encourages the faint-hearted, exhorts to obedience, fasting and prayer, promises the prosperity of God's people, and contains various predictions concerning the coming Messiah and His kingdom. Both Zechariah and Haggai should be read in connection with the first six chapters of Ezra.

VI. LESSONS TAUGHT

- A. God is the great guardian of His people - "The Watcher".
- B. God is the secret source of blessings for His people.
- C. God's people will succeed in the conflict with their enemies if they trust in Jehovah's strength.
- D. God's people should suffer no permanent discouragement.
- E. Disobedience is a source of much misery among God's people.

ZECHARIAH

VII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. For the godly soul there is joy in knowing that at evening time there shall be light.
2. Fasting and mourning are utterly useless unless the heart is pouring itself out to God.
3. A house of worship is necessary for the proper development of spiritual religion.
4. In God's plan true religion is destined to become universal.
5. It is important for God's followers to maintain a hopeful, optimistic outlook - knowing that He cannot fail.
6. Zechariah had a remarkable ideal for his city: Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth".
7. The true glory of a city is to be found in its devotion to the living God.
8. Dynamic preaching has peculiar power to restore drooping faith.

MALACHI

I. THE TITLE

The book is named for its author, Malachi, which means "My Messenger", or "Messenger of the Lord". Early Jewish writings reflect their thinking that Malachi might not have been a proper name. In the Targum of Jonathan ben-Uzziel there is added, "whose name is called Ezra the scribe." However, the LXX regards Malachi as a proper name, and such has been the general conclusion since the second century, A.D.

II. THE PROPHET

Malachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets. Nothing is known of him except what we learn from his book. He was connected with the reform work of Ezra and Nehemiah and condemned the same sins which they condemned.

III. THE DATE

Malachi was contemporary with Nehemiah. His prophecy belongs near the time of Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem. He must have lived about 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah, or around 430-420 B.C.

IV. CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL

The Jews had been restored to Jerusalem, and the temple had been rebuilt. Because of sensuality and selfishness, they had grown careless and negligent. False interpretations of Messianic prophecies made them think that the Lord's kingdom would be set up immediately after their return to Palestine. When the Lord failed to come, they became discouraged and skeptical. Doubting God's promises, they began to neglect vital religion, and "true piety had given place to mere formality." Worldliness had crept into the congregation, and the people were guilty of many vices found among professed Christians today.

V. THE PROPHECY

The purpose of the prophecy was to aid in the great reforms then needed. The people are rebuked for departing from the true worship, and are urged to return to Jehovah and revive their national spirit. It contains denunciations of social evils, severe rebukes for indifference and hypocrisy among the priests, prophecies of the coming Messiah, and predictions concerning the forerunner of Jesus.

VI. OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- A. Jehovah's love for his chosen people (1:1-5).
- B. The degeneracy of the priests condemned (1:6 - 2:9).
- C. The sins of the people (2:10 - 3:18).
- D. The day of Jehovah (Chapter 4).
- E. Conclusion: Keep the law of Moses, and wait for the forerunner, who will promote love and unity (4:4-6).

MALACHI

VII. LESSONS TAUGHT

1. God is the moral Governor of the World.
2. It pays big dividends to serve God and worship Him.
3. God's love is unfailing, constant, conscious and courageous.
4. Human love is essential in order to purity, peace, prosperity, happiness.
5. Love is the highest motive which prompts one to action.
6. Without love, man is powerless and a failure.

VIII. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE

1. God loves a pure, clean, happy home.
2. Divorce is an abomination in His sight.
3. Insincerity in worship is an insult to God.
4. Impatience often leads to a false accusation of God.
5. One who lives in willful sin cannot hope to please God by costly sacrifices.
6. Carelessness and indifference in worship may be the first step in spiritual decline.
7. Laxity in the externals of worship is an indication of spiritual apathy.
8. Each man may determine for himself whether the Day of Jehovah is to be a day of terror or a day of joy.