



"We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:19–21)

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The Minor Prophets

Introduction

- I. “When, in an apprehensive or deploring mood, we seniors are tempted to dispense to our successors cautionary admonishment and dire prediction, we should first reflect on the moral history of mankind, which can be summarized: They *hang* prophets. Or ignore them, which hurts worse.” (Karl Menninger, M.D., *Whatever Became of Sin?*, pg. 1).
- II. Prophetic books cover over one-quarter of the Bible, yet no section of the Bible is more neglected. There are several possible reasons:
 - A. Since we are no longer under the Law of Moses, some assume we no longer need to study the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4).
 - B. Some claim that since we do not have to know about the prophets to get to heaven, we can neglect them (minimal Christians).
 - C. It takes too long to get through the Prophets.
 - D. Lack of respect for the inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).
- III. The prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit to teach the word of God.
 - A. They claimed to be spokesmen for God (Hag. 1:13; Amos 3:7; Micah 3:8).
 - B. Their message was (and is) alive and up to date.
 - C. Their message dealt with the sins of the people and pointed out God’s hand moving behind the scenes in the affairs of nations (Dan. 2:21; 4:25).
 - D. “From the prophets I have derived an insight into God’s work among the nations which has helped me to determine something of the principles on which He works among them. This has enabled me to look to Him, rather than to men, for the solution of modern problems; for He continues to rule in the kingdoms of men. This study has been of help in preaching to people of today, for the prophets preached to people in similar circumstances and under like conditions. Also, the study has strengthened my faith in Jesus as the Christ, as I have seen fulfilled in Him the glorious promises of the Lord spoken through these great men of God. In the light of what the prophets have meant to me, I have wished to share this rich blessing with others.” (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, pg. 11).
 - E. Notice God’s use of nations (Jer. 18:7–10).
- IV. Look at how New Testament writers used the Old Testament:
 - A. Matthew quoted from the Old Testament 67 times.
 1. It is obvious to even the casual reader that Matthew wrote to prove that in Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecy.
 2. There are more than forty Old Testament passages in Matthew quoted in connection with even the minor details in the life of Christ (Matt. 1:23; 2:6, 8,23; 3:3; 4:14–16; 8:17; 13:35).

- B. The sermons in the book of Acts are filled with the words of the prophets:
 1. Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:17f, 25, 34).
 2. Peter on Solomon's Porch (Acts 3:22–25).
 3. Stephen's history of the Jews (Acts 7 contains 11 OT quotations).
 - C. The book of Romans contains 60 OT quotations. The major premise of the book (Rom. 1:16,17) is from Hab. 2:4.
 - D. The book of Hebrews contains 59 quotations from the OT. The book assumes you have a good knowledge of the OT (Heb. 9:5; 5:10–11).
 - E. The book of Revelation does not contain a direct quote from the OT, but it has over 400 allusions to the OT in 404 verses.
- V. The Prophets contain the most poetic language in the Bible.
- A. "Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down..." (Oba. 1:4).
 - B. "But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream." (Amos 5:24).
 - C. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).
 - D. "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isa. 40:31).

Body

I. The Institution Of The Prophets

- A. Deuteronomy 18:9–22 is a remarkable passage on the origin of the prophetic institution.
 1. It stands as a warning to the Israelites who were about to enter Canaan.
 2. God was going to raise up men and put His word in their mouth.
- B. The Levites were the appointed guardians of the law; they were to promote fellowship with God by the means of sacrifices at the altar.
 1. In the promised land there would be new circumstances requiring further revelation from God.
 2. Canaan was filled with superstition: they claimed detailed knowledge of the future, but their *sources* were declared abominations by God.
 3. God would raise up prophets and reveal His word to them.

II. Superstitions Employed By The Canaanites

- A. Febration ("*makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire,*" Deut. 18:10).
 1. Purpose: obtain an oracle, avert national disaster (cf. Deut. 12:29–31).
 2. A worshiper of Moloch, national deity of Ammonites (Lev. 18:21).
 3. Abomination caused God to root out the Canaanites (Lev. 18:24–30).

- B. The next three terms describe various methods of divination:
1. “*One who practices witchcraft,*” “*Soothsayer,*” “*interprets omens.*”
 2. Significance of Numbers 23:23 – No soothsayer has any power against Israel, for Israel receives her information from the Lord.
- C. The next two: “*Sorcerer,*” “*One who conjures up spells.*”
- D. The next two with those who seek after the dead:
1. “*Medium*” and “*spiritist*” are often used side by side in the Scriptures.
 2. Manasseh reinstated many of these in Judah (2 Kings 21:1–6).
 3. “Although these two words, ‘ghost’ and ‘familiar spirit’ are used side by side, there was nevertheless a distinction between them. The person who was possessed of an *ob* (ghost) was evidently a ventriloquist. Like the witch at Endor he might call up the *ob* and describe what he saw. Those about him would probably hear only a muttering or twittering which seemed to come from the ground. The ‘familiar spirit’ however, was evidently a spirit that was at the beck and call of a particular person.” (Edward J. Young, *My Servants The Prophets*, pg. 23).
 4. Saul and the witch at Endor (1 Sam. 28:3–19).
- E. “*One who calls up the dead.*” Covers all forms of spiritualism.
- F. “The context refers to sorcery, divination, spiritism, and other similar practices. Excavations at different sites have uncovered a great number of figurines, charms, amulets, and other objects connected with sorcery, fertility cults, demon exorcism, and pagan superstitions that at times propagated themselves in Israel to such an extent that legislators, prophets, and some rulers had frequently to warn the people against them.” (G. Baez-Camargo, *Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, pg. 55).
- G. “The list is indeed impressive. These superstitious practices which were so much in vogue among the Canaanites of ancient time are the reason why the Lord will dispossess these people of their land. Moses then advances a step. Not only are these practices in themselves abominations, he says, but also every one that doeth them is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. It is for this reason that God will drive out the Canaanites from their land. It is well that we should grasp this fact, for it has sometimes been maintained that the God of the Old Testament was an arbitrary despot, who drove out the Canaanites and brought Israel into Palestine, and this, it has been said, was a cruel, arbitrary act. Such a judgment, however, is unjust, and out of accord with the facts. God, in dispossessing the Canaanites, was doing a gracious and merciful thing to the remainder of the world. The Canaanites, through their abominations, had themselves become abominations. If there was to be any salvation for the world, Canaan must go. The cup of their iniquity had filled, and they could no longer be permitted to exist as heretofore. Let no one, then, charge God with lack of justice in His treatment of Canaan.” (Young, *My Servants The Prophets*, pg. 24).

- H. Israel would not have to resort to such means (Deut. 18:15).
1. The words, “from your midst, from your brethren,” imply that there would be no necessity for Israel to turn to heathen soothsayers.
 2. God was going to do two things (a double reference):
 3. Raise up a body of prophets, an institution, to declare God’s words.
 4. Raise up one great prophet, who alone could compare to Moses.

III. Moses And The Prophets (Num. 12:1–8)

- A. Distinction between Moses and the rest of the Old Testament prophets.
1. “We may conclude then, that Moses in marrying a foreign woman had offended Miriam, whose narrow nationalism stands in marked contrast to Moses’ own act. The real reason for the complaint however, was something quite different. The real complaint which Miriam and Aaron discussed between themselves had to do with the relationship of their position in Israel with respect to that of Moses. They did not wish to be the recipients of revelation which was subordinate to that received by Moses but rather of that which was equal to that given to him. There is truth, of course, in their statement. God had indeed spoken to them. Aaron had the exalted privilege, which was not even vouchsafed to Moses, of using the Urim and Thumin in bringing the people’s rights before God (Exodus 28:30). Miriam was called a prophetess (Ex. 15:20), and occupied an honored position among the women of Israel.” (Young, *My Servants The Prophets*, pg. 41,42).
 2. “For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” (Micah 6:4)
 3. Num. 12:7 “Not so with my servant Moses.”
- B. Four phrases found in Numbers 12:8.
1. “Face to face” – God will speak directly and immediately.
 - a) “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” (Ex. 33:11a). A personal exchange, without any mediation.
 - b) “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...” (Deut. 34:10).
 2. “Plainly” — This strengthens all that follows
 3. “Not in dark sayings” — Not in riddles (cf. Ezek. 17:2ff).
 4. “He sees the form of the Lord” — Not just a vision!
- C. Moses was not just one of the prophets, nor equal with them.
- D. Rather, all of the prophets are under Moses (Deut. 34:9–12).

IV. What Is A Prophet?

- A. The Hebrew word for “prophet” is *nabhi*, and “Signifies an inspired person, an announcer of the words of another, not from his own influence and will; to foretell the future and secret events and who revealed the will of God. The OT prophets were special agents of Jehovah, raised up and sent, as occasion required, to incite to duty, to convict of sin, to call to repentance and reformation, to instruct kings and denounce against nations the judgments of God. The prophets received their messages from God in visions, trances and dreams. The OT contains the inspired writings of sixteen of the Hebrew prophets, four of whom, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, are called the greater, and the other twelve the minor prophets.” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*).
1. Another word for prophet is *ro’eh*, which is often translated as “seer,” one who sees into the future.
 2. Samuel was called both a “seer” and a “prophet.”
 3. “The word *nabhi* stresses the active word of the prophet, in speaking forth the message from God. The word *ro’eh*, on the other hand, brings to the fore the experience by means of which the prophet was made to ‘see’ that message. One word lays emphasis upon the prophet’s relation to the people; the other upon his relation to God. Both however, may refer to the same individual, and the function of that individual, whether he be designated by one word or by the other, was to declare the message which God had given to him” (Edward J. Young, *My Servants The Prophets*, pg. 65).
- B. Prophecy is more “forthtelling” than “foretelling.”
1. Aaron was Moses’ *prophet* and *spokesman* (Exo. 7:1,2; 4:16).
 2. God said Jeremiah would be “as My mouth” (Jer. 15:19).
 3. Prophets did have the ability to foretell the future (Isa. 46:8–11).
- C. The prophets were men of faith.
1. Jeremiah was set over the nations (Jer. 1:4–10, 17–19; 5:11).
 2. Ezekiel had a forehead like “adamant stone” (Ezek. 3:7–9).

V. The Twelve Minor Prophets

- A. These books are not “minor” because they are of any lesser value, but because they are shorter than the “major” prophets.
- B. A “minor” prophet is equal in importance to the “major” prophets.
- C. In the earliest listing of OT books, these books are put together.
1. Grouped together in Ecclesiasticus 49:12.
 2. The “Church Fathers” referred to them as “The Twelve.”
 3. Josephus refers to the prophets as a single unit (*Against Apion*, I.8).

VI. Chronology As Suggested By Homer Hailey:

A. Ninth Century (Early Assyrian Period).

1. Obadiah (c. 845 B.C.).
2. Joel (c. 830 B.C.).
3. Jonah (c. 790–750 B.C.).

B. Eighth Century (Assyrian Period).

1. Amos (755 B.C.).
2. Hosea (750–725 B.C.).
3. Isaiah (740–700 B.C.).
4. Micah (735–700 B.C.).

C. Seventh Century (Chaldean Period).

1. Jeremiah (626–586 B.C.).
2. Zephaniah (630–625 B.C.).
3. Nahum (625–612 B.C.).
4. Habakkuk (c. 605 B.C.).

D. Sixth Century (The Exile).

1. Ezekiel (593–570 B.C.).
2. Daniel (605–536 B.C.).

E. Post-Exile.

1. Haggai (520 B.C.).
2. Zechariah (520–518 B.C.).
3. Malachi (c. 440 B.C.).

VII. Political Background From Elisha To Amos

Hailey's revision of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

A. Israel

1. **Jehu** [843–816] (II Kings 9:1–10:28. Athaliah and Joash in Judah). Anointed by a son of the prophets, 9:1–10; house of Ahab smitten and Jezebel slain by Jehu, 9:11–36; Ahab's seventy sons slain, 10:1–17; priests and worshippers of Baal slain, 10:18–28. Sin of Jehu: worship of the calves of Jeroboam.
2. **Jehoahaz** [816–804] (II Kings 13:1–9. 23rd year of Joash, king of Judah). Jehovah began to deliver Israel into the hand of Syria; Jehoahaz called on Jehovah who hearkened to him because of pity for Israel.
3. **Jehoash** [804–790] (II Kings 13:10–25. Joash, king of Judah). Came to Elisha, told to shoot arrows; death of Elisha; Joash smote Syria three times according to the number of arrows shot, and the prophecy of Elisha.
4. **Jeroboam II** [790–749 or 750] (II Kings 14:23–29. Amaziah, king of Judah). Restored the borders of Israel; Jonah was his prophet; prosperity during his reign. Soon after, Amos began to prophesy.

B. Judah

1. **Jehoram** [855–844]. Co-regent with Jehoshaphat to 850; sole king from 850–844, II Kings 8:16–24; II Chron. 21. Son of Jehoshaphat, husband of Athaliah (daughter of Ahab). In his days Edom revolted. He made high places; was rebuked by a letter from Elijah, II Chron. 21:11–15. Philistines, Arabians, Ethiopians stirred up against him. Died of a terrible bowel disease, according to the word of the prophet. The people were glad when he died.
2. **Ahaziah** [844–843] (II Kings 8:25–29; II Chron. 22:1–9). Son of Jehoram and Athaliah; walked in the way of Ahab. Death within a year.
3. **Athaliah** [843–837] (II Kings 11; II Chron. 22:10–23:21). A woman, usurper. Slew all the seed royal except Joash; only he escaped. Reigned six years, slain by the people in an insurrection led by Jehoiada, the priest. Under Jehoiada, Jehovah-worship was restored. These were stirring times!
4. **Joash** [837–803] (II Kings 12; II Chron. 24). Seven years old when he began to reign. Did right while Jehoiada the priest lived; then became evil: forsook Jehovah, slew Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. Syrians came. Slain by his own servants.
5. **Amaziah** [803–787] (II Kings 14; II Chron. 25). Did right, but not with a perfect heart. Put down Edom, then took their gods to Jerusalem to worship. Warred against Joash, king of Israel, but was defeated. Joash broke down the walls of Jerusalem, took the gold, silver, etc. Amaziah reigned fifteen years after that.
6. **Uzziah** [787–735] (II Kings 15:1–7; II Chron. 26). Also called Asariah. Sixteen years when he began to reign; reigned 52 years. Did right; put down enemies; promoted husbandry. But became proud, and offered incense to Jehovah. Smitten with leprosy; a leper till death.

Obadiah

The Destruction Of Edom

Background Information

- I. Obadiah's name means "Servant of the Lord."
- II. The exact date of this book is uncertain, Sampey gives the date as 845 B.C.
- III. Addressed to Edom although Judah was intended as the primary readers of the book.
- IV. Message of the book: Condemnation of Edom's pride and a declaration of the ultimate victory of Jehovah.
- V. Edom: "The country settled by Esau's descendants. The ruddy hue of the mountains may have given the name Edom which is red in the original. The ancient name was Mt. Seir. Seir means rugged. On the E side of W Arabah, from Elath on the S to Moab on the N, at the brook Zered, about 100 miles long by 20 miles wide. The whole country is wild, rugged and full of deep glens but is also very fertile on the terraces; while the desert on each side is barren. The people dwelt amid the rocky heights in caves and houses perched on dizzy crags, like eagles in their nests, living by their swords; yet, as Isaac promised, this land possessed 'the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven.' The ancient capital was Bozrah. Sela (Petra) was the stronghold and Ezion-geber its seaport, where Solomon built a fleet. The crusaders built a fortress 12 miles N of Petra on Mons. Regalis, now a ruin, called Shobek. The people were always idolaters. The rock temples and dwellings of Edom were cut in a soft rock; were large, airy, well lighted and dry, and a safe protection against robbers." (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*).
- VI. Two lessons we can learn:
 - A. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Gal. 6:7).
 - B. "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." (Proverbs 11:4).

Discussing The Book

I. **The Ruin Of Edom (1:1-9)**

- A. What did God promise to do to Edom? How would He do this (1:1,2)?

- B. What was Edom's source of pride (1:3,4)?

C. Who are the “men in your confederacy” (1:7)?

D. Where is Teman (1:9)?

II. The Reasons For The Destruction Of Edom (1:10–14)

A. What day is described in Obadiah 1:11?

B. What should the Edomites have done in this “day” (1:12–14)?

III. The Retribution To Edom And The Restoration To Israel (1:15–21)

A. What lesson can we learn from Obadiah 1:15?

B. *Pentecost Pointer*: How was Obadiah 1:17 to be fulfilled?

C. Identify the following locations:

1. The “inhabitants of the South” (1:19)

2. The Philistine lowland (1:19)

3. The fields of Samaria (1:19)

4. Gilead (1:19)

5. Zarephath (1:20)

6. Sepharad (1:20)

D. *Pentecost Pointer*: What are the “saviors” and how will they judge (1:21)?

Reflections

- I. “God can easily lay those low who magnify and exalt themselves; and will do it. Carnal security ripens men for ruin, and makes the ruin worse when it comes. Treasures on earth cannot be so safely laid up but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Those that make flesh their trust, arm it against themselves. The God of our covenant will never deceive us: but if we trust men with whom we join ourselves, it may prove to us a wound and dishonor.” (*Matthew Henry*)

- C. “No one who has ever seen the locust at work accuses the Bible account of hyperbole. In 1926 and 1927, small swarms of the African migratory locusts were spotted in an area 50 by 120 miles on the plains of the river Niger near Timbuktu. The next year swarms invaded Senegal and Sierra Leone. By 1930 the whole of west Africa was flailing away at the pests with everything moveable. But the locusts didn’t seem to notice; swarms reached Khartum, more than 2,000 miles to the east of Timbuktu, then turned south, spreading across Ethiopia, Kenya, the Belgian Congo, and in 1932, striking into the lush farm land of Angola and Rhodesia. Before the plague finally sputtered out fourteen years after it began, it affected five-million square miles of Africa, an area nearly double the size of the United States.” (John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, pgs. 128, 129).
- D. How should the inhabitants of the land reacted to the locusts (1:8–12)?
- E. How were the priests to express their mourning (1:13,14)?
- F. What is the “day of the Lord” (1:15)?

II. The Day of the Lord in Prospect (2:1–3:21)

- A. How is the day of the Lord described in Joel 2:1–5?
- B. What army is discussed in Joel 2:4–9?
- C. The language of Joel 2:10 is similar to two other Bible passages. Please identify these passages and tell who they were talking about.
- D. Joel 2:13 is among the most poetic and beautiful passages in the Bible. Please compare these words with David’s expression of repentance (Psalms 51).

- E. Identify the following items in Joel 2:20...
1. The “northern army”
 2. The “eastern sea”
 3. The “western sea”
- F. What is the “former rain” and the “latter rain” (2:23)?
- G. *Pentecost Pointer*: In Acts two, Peter quoted from Joel 2:28–32. What application did he make of these verses?
- H. In what other passages did God promise to show signs in the heavens as a symbol of Divine judgment (2:30,31)?
- I. Where is the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” (3:2)?
- J. Why are Tyre and Sidon mentioned in Joel 3:4?
- K. How will the swords be beaten into plowshares (3:10)? What other Old Testament passage uses this figure of speech?
- L. *Pentecost Pointer*: When will the Lord “dwell in Zion” (3:17)?

M. How are the blessings of God described in Joel 3:18?

Reflections

- I. “It is in face of this calamity that Joel urges the calling of a national assembly for repentance. Uniquely, he does not mention and condemn specific sins either private or national, but calls for rending of hearts as a contrast to external show of torn garments (Joel 2:12,13). It was no washing of the outside of the cup affair. Since the Lord is merciful, who knows but that he may relent (Joel 2:14). The priests are called upon to appeal to the Lord’s ‘tender nerve’: ‘Spare thy people, O Lord, and make not thy heritage a reproach and a by-word among the nations.’ (Jack P. Lewis, *Minor Prophets*, pgs. 82,83)

Jonah

God's Concern For The Gentiles

Background Information

- I. Jonah's name means "Dove."
- II. "Jonah was a contemporary of Jeroboam II of Israel (782–753 B.C.) who ministered after the time of Elisha and just before the time of Amos and Hosea. ... Assyria, a nation which had achieved a near-legendary reputation for cruelty, was in a mild decline during these years, but it remained a threat. The repentance of Nineveh probably occurred in the reign of Ashurdan III (773–755 B.C.). Two plagues (765 and 759 B.C.) and a solar eclipse (763 B.C.) may have prepared the people for Jonah's message of judgment." (*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, pg. 255).
- III. Message of the book: God's concern for the heathen nations and that Jehovah is the universal God over all the earth.
- IV. What we can learn from Jonah:
 - A. "The Scriptures reveal to us no way in which God brings men to repentance, except in connection with preaching." (J.W. McGarvey, *Jesus and Jonah*, pg. 44).
 - B. "Jonah learned, and through his valuable experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it than to run away from it." (McGarvey, pg. 54).
 - C. Jonah is the only Old Testament prophet that Jesus directly compared Himself to (Matt. 12:38–41).

Discussing the Book

I. The First Commission Of Jonah (1:1–2:10)

- A. Where is the city of Nineveh located (1:2)?
- B. Where is Tarshish? How far away from Nineveh was it (1:3)?
- C. Where is Joppa? How far away from Nineveh was it (1:3)?
- D. How would you describe the mariners (1:5–16)? What did they do?

E. *Messianic Marker*: Compare Jonah 1:17 with Matthew 12:38–41.

F. What points did Jonah make in his prayer (2:2–9)?

II. The Second Commission Of Jonah (3:1–4:11)

A. “The book of Jonah assigns to Nineveh a seemingly much exaggerated size. For that reason some commentators have regarded the book as belonging to a relatively late period when Nineveh had become legendary. Excavations have shown that the widest diameter of the city, from the gate of Ashur to the gate of Nergal, was only some 3 miles, at most a walk of an hour and a half. Parrot, however, considers that the dimensions in the book of Jonah refer rather to what may be called ‘the greater Nineveh,’ that is, metropolitan Nineveh plus the neighboring cities of Khorsabad to the north and Nimrud to the south, joined by a suburban ring of inhabited places with almost no space between. it is the urban aggregate usually called today ‘the Assyrian triangle’ which adds up to a length of some 24 miles, almost three one-day marches at a moderate pace, and even more if loaded beasts and families were taken along, as was usual in ancient travel.” (Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, *Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, pg. 184).

B. Describe the repentance of Nineveh (3:5–9). Compare with Jer. 18:7–10.

C. Why was Jonah so angry in Jonah 4:1?

D. What three items did God “prepare” (4:6–8)?

E. What did Nahum prophesy about Nineveh (Nah. 1:1, 3:7,19).

Reflections

- I. “See here the nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty. Also, the benefit of affliction; it brings those back to their place who had deserted it. See the power of Divine grace, for affliction of itself would rather drive men from God, than draw them to him. God’s servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; we must do whatever the word of the Lord commands. Jonah faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. ... Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to delay judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that we cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days, as Nineveh then was that it should stand forty days? We should be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, yet we are careless though we are not sure to live a day.” (*Matthew Henry*)

Background Information

- I. “Amos” means “To Bear,” or “Burden Bearer.”
- II. “According to 1:1, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah (767–739 B.C.), and Jeroboam, king of Israel (782–753 B.C.), thus leaving a possible time frame from 767 to 753 B.C. The prophecy of 7:9–11 seems to indicate a time late in the reign of Jeroboam and a probable date of writing is 760–753 B.C.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, pgs. 248, 250).
 - A. Concerning the sun being darkened at noon (Amos 8:9): “What is described here is an eclipse of the sun. In Nineveh some tablets were found containing a list of personal names associated with particular events. It amounts to a year-by-year chronicle of Assyria’s history. For each person in the list the main event of the respective year is recorded. One of the entries says, ‘In the year of the eponym Buru-Sagale, the governor of Gozan: an uprising in the city of Ashur. In the month of Sivan there was an eclipse of the sun.’ By astronomical calculations it has been possible to fix the exact date of this eclipse, namely, June 15, 763 B.C. This is precisely the time of Amos. The eclipse was accompanied by an earthquake...” (*Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, pg. 184).
- III. Message of the book:
 - A. Judgment: prophecies on the nations and visions of divine judgment on the house of Israel.
 - B. God is the universal sovereign over all the nations.
 - C. The righteousness and justice of God.
- IV. What we can learn from the book of Amos:
 - A. The most elaborate worship, if insincere, is an insult to God (5:21,23).
 - B. There must be social justice between man and man (5:24).
 - C. Privilege involves responsibility (3:2).
 - D. The meaning and purpose of calamity (4:5ff; cf. Luke 13:1–5).
- V. Notable passages:
 - A. “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (3:3).
 - B. “Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” (4:12).
 - C. “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion” (6:1).
 - D. “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” (8:1).

Discussing The Book

I. Introduction To Amos (1:1,2)

- A. What was the occupation of Amos? Where did he live (1:1)?

- B. How does Amos describe the voice of God (1:2)?

II. The Eight Judgments (1:3–2:16)

- A. List the transgressions of Damascus (1:3–5).

- B. List the transgressions of Gaza (1:6–8).

- C. List the transgressions of Tyre (1:9,10).

- D. List the transgressions of Edom (1:11,12).

- E. List the transgressions of Ammon (1:13–15).

- F. List the transgressions of Moab (2:1–3).

- G. List the transgressions of Judah (2:4,5).

- H. List the transgressions of Israel (2:6–16).

III. Three Sermons Of Judgment (3:1–6:14)

- A. Summarize the first sermon *{Israel's Present}* (3:1–15).
- B. Summarize the second sermon *{Israel's Past}* (4:1–13).
- C. Summarize the third sermon *{Israel's Future}* (5:1–6:14).

IV. Five Visions Of Judgment (7:1–9:10)

- A. Explain the vision of the Locusts (7:1–3).
- B. Explain the vision of the Fire (7:4–6).
- C. Explain the vision of the Plumb Line (7:7–9).
- D. The visions of Amos are interrupted by Amaziah. Who was Amaziah and what was his complaint? Who did he complain to (7:10–17)?
- E. Explain the vision of the Summer Fruit (8:1–14).
- F. Explain the vision of the Stricken Doorposts (9:1–10).

V. The Promises Of The Restoration Of Israel (9:11–15)

A. What promises did God make to Israel (9:11–15)?

B. *Pentecost Pointer*: What is the “tabernacle of David” (9:11)?

C. *Pentecost Pointer*: Why did James quote from Amos 9:11 in his sermon in Acts 15:14–18?

Reflections

I. “God employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to reprove and warn the people. Those to whom God gives abilities for his services, ought not to be despised for their origin, or their employment. Judgments are denounced against the neighboring nations, the oppressors of God’s people. The number of transgressions does not here mean that exact number, but many: they had filled the measure of their sins, and were ripe for vengeance. The method in dealing with these nations is, in part, the same, yet in each there is something peculiar. In all ages this bitterness has been shown against the Lord’s people. When the Lord reckons with his enemies, how tremendous are his judgments!” (*Matthew Henry*)

Hosea

The Prophet Of A Broken Heart

Background Information

- I. Hosea's name means "Salvation" or "Deliverance."
- II. Hosea probably wrote this book during the early years of Hezekiah, which means his ministry stretched from about 755 B.C. to about 710 B.C.
 - A. When Hosea began his work, Jeroboam II (782–753 B.C.) was still reigning in Israel. His work spanned the reigns of the last six kings of Israel from Zechariah (753–752 B.C.) to Hoshea (732–722 B.C.).
 - B. "The Assyrian aggression got under way anew with the accession of Tiglath Pileser III in 745 B.C. and the handwriting was on the wall for Israel. While Amos did not name the enemy who threatened, Hosea is specific that it is Assyria (7:11; 11:5,11; 12:1; 14:3). The Indian Summer period of the reign of Jeroboam II gave way to the instability of the final days as kings were cut off 'like a chip (foam: KJV) on water' (Hos. 10:7). Kings were given in anger and taken away in wrath (Hos. 13:11), blood touched blood (Hos. 4:2). 2 Kings 15:8–17:41 summarizes this tragic period of 25 years in which six kings reigned: Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea. Four of these were murdered in office by their successors and one was captured in battle. Only one (Menahem) was succeeded on the throne by his son. Terms of office were as brief as one month. In one short year Zechariah, Shallum, and Menahem succeeded each other. The dismemberment of the northern kingdom got under way in 735 when Tiglath Pileser III of Assyria took Gilead and carried off the people of Naphtali. Shortly afterward Hoshea conspired with So, king of Egypt, against Assyria. Hoshea was arrested by Shalmaneser V and the city of Samaria was besieged three years until its capitulation. Sargon claims to have carried off 27,290 people in 721 B.C. and foreigners were settled in Samaria in their place (2 Kings 17:24). The exile had set in; Israel was no more." (Jack Lewis, *Minor Prophets*, pgs. 16,17).
- III. Message of the book: The story of the one-sided love and faithfulness represented the relationship between Israel and Jehovah. The phrase "loving kindness" is found throughout the book.
- IV. What can we learn from the book of Hosea? Israel had been unfaithful to her covenant commitments, as illustrated by the marriage vow. God's "loving kindness" would not permit Him to easily divorce His people.

Discussing The Book

I. The Adulterous Wife And Faithful Husband (1:1–3:5)

- A. What command did God give to Hosea (1:2)? Why would God make such a request to one of His prophets?

- B. What does “Jezreel” mean (1:4)? What does this represent?

- C. Who is Jehu (1:4)? What is he remembered for?

- D. Where is the valley of Jezreel (1:5)?

- E. What does “Lo-Ruhamah” mean (1:6)? What does this represent?

- F. What does “Lo-Ammi” mean (1:8)? What does this represent?

- G. What charge is brought against the “wife” in Hosea 2:2?

- H. What did God promise Israel in Hosea 2:11?

- I. Describe God’s mercy as shown in Hosea 2:14–23.

- J. What period of time is spoken of in Hosea 3:4?

II. The Adulterous Israel And The Faithful Lord (4:1–14:9)

- A. What charge did God bring against Israel (4:2)?

- B. Why was Israel “destroyed” (4:6)?

- C. Explain the phrase, “Ephraim is joined to idols” (4:17).

- D. Why are the princes “like those who remove a landmark” (5:10)?

- E. Which is more important, mercy or sacrifice? Which is more important, the knowledge of God or burnt offerings (6:6)?

- F. Why did the people “call to Egypt” and “go to Assyria” (7:11)?

- G. What does it mean to “sow the wind” and “reap the whirlwind” (8:7)?

- H. How will God treat His disobedient children (9:17)?

- I. Notice the beautiful poetry of Hosea 10:12. What is the “fallow ground”?

- J. How is Hosea 11:1 used in the New Testament? In context, who is this passage talking about?
- K. What does God promise in Hosea 12:9?
- L. Explain Hosea 13:11, "I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath."
- M. How will God treat Israel when they repent (14:1-7)?

Reflections

- I. "Who profits by the truths the prophet delivered? Such as set themselves to understand and know these things. The ways of God's providence towards us are right; all is well done. Christ is a Foundation Stone to some, to others a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offense. That which was ordained to life, becomes, through their abuse of it, death to them. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But those transgressors certainly have the most dangerous, fatal falls, who fall in the ways of God, who split on the Rock of Ages, and suck poison out of the Balm of Gilead. Let sinners in Zion fear this. May we learn to walk in the right ways of God, as his righteous servants, and may none of us be disobedient and unbelieving, and stumble at the word." (*Matthew Henry*)

Micah

Judgment, Restoration And Repentance

Background Information

- I. Micah's name means "Who is like the Lord?"
- II. Micah 1:1 puts the prophets ministry during "days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."
 - A. This gives him a span of 20 to 55 years.
 - B. For Biblical background, read: 2 Kings 15:32–20:21 and 2 Chron. 27:1–32:33.
 - C. He was working about the same time that Isaiah was in Jerusalem.
- III. "These years of the 8th century were earthshaking in their significance. 735 B.C. saw the Syro-Ephraimitic war as Pekah and Rezin threatened to depose Ahaz for his refusal to join them in a revolt against Assyria. They saw the Assyrian machine of aggression dismember Damascus and Israel in stages that led to the downfall of Samaria and to the exile of the northern tribes in 721 B.C. Ahaz maintained his state at the price of paying heavy tribute to Assyria, but in 711 B.C. the Philistine states were in a state of revolt which Sargon ruthlessly put down (Isa. 20). Sargon erected a victory stele at Ashdod, fragments of which have recently been recovered, as well as leaving behind in his palace at Khorsabad records of his victories in Palestine. All of the dangers came to a climax in 701 B.C. when Hezekiah raised a revolt that brought Sennacherib west to demand his tribute and the surrender of Jerusalem. Siege was laid to Lachish which is near Moresheth-Gath. The city fell. Sennacherib left to posterity a large picture, today to be seen in the British Museum, which depicts his siege of Lachish. He boasts that he took 46 of Hezekiah's walled cities and shut the king up like a bird in a cage in his city, Jerusalem. The fact that Jerusalem was spared at the last moment does not affect the case that Micah's territory was devastated." (Jack P. Lewis, *Minor Prophets*, pgs. 23,24).
- IV. Message of the book: the holiness of God and the righteousness of His rule.
- V. What we can learn from Micah: His summary of what the Lord requires of us, i.e., "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8).

Discussing The Book

- I. **The Prediction Of Judgment (1:1–3:12)**
 - A. How was "the earth" going to react when the Lord "came down" (1:2–4)?

- B. What was going to happen to Samaria (1:6)? What was her crime?

- C. Why were the men told to “cut off your hair” (1:16)?

- D. Who is described in Micah 2:1,2?

- E. Where in the New Testament is the “remnant” of Micah 2:12 described?

- F. How are the priests and prophets described in Micah 3:11?

- G. Note on Micah 3:12 (“*Jerusalem shall be plowed as a field*”): “After his last visit to Jerusalem (A.D. 130), the emperor Hadrian decided to build a temple to Jupiter Capitalinus in the area where the Second Temple had stood. His obvious purpose was to prevent once and for all any attempt to reconstruct it, He wanted to change the Holy City into a Roman colony. With this end in view, one of the first tasks of the legate Tinius Rufus was literally to plow up the areas near the walls. This deed precipitated the general Jewish uprising of A.D. 132.” (*Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, pg. 186).

II. Prediction Of Restoration (4:1–5:15)

- A. *Pentecost Pointer*: Find the Old Testament passage that is nearly identical with Micah 4:1–3 and the New Testament passage where it is fulfilled.

- B. Who will the Lord “reign over in mount Zion” (4:7)? When?

- C. *Messianic Marker*: Where is Bethlehem Ephrathah (5:2)? What was going to happen there? When did it happen?

- D. What was the Lord going to remove (5:12–15)?

III. The Plea For Repentance (6:1–7:20)

- A. What does the Lord remind His people of in Micah 6:4,5?

- B. Explain the phrase, “The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul” (6:7).

- C. What does the Lord require of man (6:8)? Explain each part of this answer.

- D. What are the “statues of Omri” (6:16)?

- E. Why does the Lord say, “Do not trust in a friend” (7:5)?

- F. What “day” is spoken of in Micah 7:11–13?

- G. What promise is given in Micah 7:18–20? Where will God cast our sins?

Reflections

- I. “Righteousness was in the Old Testament, and will ever remain, one of the three cardinal virtues of permanent religion. As human nature is always a constant quantity, so the essential requirements of religion are always fundamentally the same. Once and forever Micah brushed aside sacrificial ritual, even the holocaust of a first born, as of trifling importance compared with ethical righteousness. Like Hosea he taught that religion and ethics are inseparable (Hos. 6:6). He also conceived of Israel, that is of the nation, as one gigantic personality which sinned as one and ought to repent as one. He sympathized entirely with the poorer classes. He regarded Jehovah as the spiritual Vindicator of Judah’s voiceless sufferers. He looked into the pinched faces of the helpless proletariat, and poured forth the strongest invectives against the landed aristocracy who kept on joining house to house (2:2). He refused to recognize the claims of a would-be nobility. He knew that the land of Israel belonged to Jehovah, and that a Year of Jubilee was needed as a sort of shaking up, to give a new start to all. In thus preaching ethical righteousness Micah anticipated the modern sociologist, and furnished the only possible solution of social discontent. The patricians of his day were self-centered and the plebeians became victimized. Let us take heed lest ‘the slants’ of our lives are too often inwards!” (George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, pg. 103)

Zephaniah

Judgment And Salvation In The Day Of The Lord

Background Information

- I. Zephaniah's name means "Jehovah Hides."
- II. Zephaniah prophesied "in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah" (1:1). Josiah ruled from 640 to 609 B.C.
 - A. Zeph. 2:13 indicates that Nineveh had not yet been overthrown (612 B.C.).
 - B. Zephaniah can be dated between 640 and 612 B.C.
- III. "Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a lad of twelve years. It is doubtful that at any period of its history Judah had a more wicked ruler than Manasseh. He sought to undo all the good his father had done. He rebuilt the high places, reared altars to Baal and Ashtoreth, and built altars to the host of heaven. He committed the abomination of making his son pass through the fire, practicing augury and enchantment, and dealing with familiar spirits. To all this he added the sin of bloodshed, filling Jerusalem with innocent blood (see II Kings 21; II Chron. 33:1-9). Under his reign the heathen party gained control of the government. Later Manasseh tried to correct the wickedness of his earlier years, but apparently without success (II Chron. 33:10-20). Ammon, who succeeded Manasseh, followed in the steps of his father; his reign was likewise one of great wickedness (II Chron. 33:21-25).
"Josiah, who came to the throne at the age of eight, was the last good king to reign over Judah. At the age of sixteen he began to seek after Jehovah, the God of his fathers; and at the age of twenty he began to purge Judah. His reforms were among the most sweeping of any that were attempted by the kings who reigned over the southern kingdom. Altars and images were alike destroyed, and the bones of priests who had offered sacrifices on the altars of the false gods were gathered and burned. In the process of cleansing the temple a copy of the law was found and read before the young king. Alarmed at what he heard, he sent to a prophetess, Huldah, for a word from God concerning what he had learned. The young king caused the newly found Word of God to be read in the hearing of the people, great and small. Why he sent to Huldah and not to Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, or Habakkuk, all prophets of the period, is unknown. The cleansing of the temple was followed by a Passover such as had not been observed with like enthusiasm in many years (see II Kings 22-23; II Chron. 34-35). It was in the time of the reign of this king that Zephaniah prophesied." (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary On The Minor Prophets*, pgs. 223,234).

- IV. Message of the book: “The book of Zephaniah repeatedly hammers home the message that the day of the Lord, judgment day, is coming when the malignancy of sin will be dealt with. Israel and her gentile neighbors will soon experience the crushing hand of God’s wrath. But after the chastening process is complete, blessing will come in the person of the Messiah.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, pg. 271).
- V. What we can learn: Jehovah is the God of the universe and the day of the Lord is coming!

Discussing The Book

I. Judgment In The Day Of The Lord (1:1–3:8)

- A. Zephaniah 1:1–3 pictures a judgment on the whole earth. Zephaniah 1:4 through 2:3 describes the judgment on the nation of Judah. What crimes had they committed?

- B. How is the “day of the Lord” described in Zephaniah 1:14?

- C. Zephaniah 2:4–15 describes a judgment in the nations surrounding Judah. What nations are mentioned and what sins had they committed?

- D. Zephaniah 3:1–7 describes a judgment on the city of Jerusalem. What sins had the inhabitants of the city been guilty of?

II. The Salvation In The Day Of the Lord (3:9–20)

- A. Why was the Lord going to “restore” His people (3:9)?

- B. What is the “remnant of Israel” (3:13)?

C. How will the Lord treat His people “in that day” (3:16–20)?

Reflections

- I. “After the promises of taking away sin, follow promises of taking away trouble. When the cause is removed, the effect will cease. What makes a people holy, will make them happy. The precious promises made to the purified people, were to have full accomplishment in the gospel.” (Matthew Henry)
- II. “Zephaniah’s message must have helped forward the reformation of King Josiah; for, he directed his blows against religious syncretism—a mixture of Baal, Milcom, and star worship—and exhorted his people to seek meekness and righteousness, promising that, if they did, all would be well. It is unfair to say that his message is ‘wholly negative and destructive.’ That statement is true only when the promissory portions are detached by an illogical and unscientific criticism.” (Robinson, pg. 134)

Nahum

The Destruction Of Nineveh

Background Information

- I. Nahum's name means "Consolation" or "Consoler."
- II. "Since the message of the book is a prediction of the destruction of Nineveh, it must have been delivered sometime before 612 B.C., when the city was destroyed by the Babylonians. It was clearly written after 663 B.C., the year that the capital of Egypt, Thebes (called 'No Amon' in 3:8), was captured by Assyria. Since Thebes regained its independence in 654 B.C., and Nahum does not allude to that event, it may be that the book was written between 663 and 654 B.C." (*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, pg. 264).
- III. Message of the book: Nahum single-mindedly proclaims the destruction and doom of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital.
- IV. Nineveh: "The ancient capital of Assyria. First mentioned in Genesis. The country was also called the land of Nimrod by Micah. Balaam prophesied the captivity of Israel by Assyria, and Asaph sings of their alliance with Moab. Jonah was sent to the city about 800 B.C. and Nahum devotes the whole of his book to "the burden of Nineveh," ... Isaiah says that Sennacherib resided in the city; and it was probably the scene of his death, while worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his god. The last notice of it is by Zephaniah, B.C. 630. Assyria is alluded to as having been destroyed, according to prophesy by Ezekiel, and Jeremiah omits it from the catalogue of all nations. The city is not mentioned in the inscriptions of the Persian dynasty. Herodotus passed very near, if not over, the site of the city, about 200 years after its destruction, but does not mention it, except as having once been there. Xenophon, with his 10,000 Greeks, encamped near the site (B.C. 401) but does not mention its name, although he describes the mounds as they appear now. Alexander marched over the very place and won a great victory at Arbela, in sight of it, but his historians make no note of it. The Emperor Claudius planted a colony there and restored the name Nineve. Tacitus calls it Ninus when taken by Meherdates. On the coins of Trajan it is Ninus and on those of Maximinus it is Niniva; Claudeopolis being added on both coins. Many relics of the Romans have been found; vases, sculptures, figures in bronze and marble, terra-cottas, and coins. The site was again deserted when Heraclius gained a victory over the Persians, A.D. 627. The Arabs named their fort, on the east bank of the Tigris, Ninawi (A.D. 637). The accounts of its immense extent are various and not very reliable. Diodorus Siculus says the dimensions were (according as we estimate his figures, from 32 to 60, or even) 74 miles in circuit. The walls were 100 feet high and wide enough for 3 chariots to drive abreast, flanked by 1500 towers, each 200 feet high (accounts which have not yet been verified). Layard says: 'If we take the 4 great mounds of Nimrud, Koyunjik, Khorsabad, and Karamles as the

corners of a square, it will be found to agree pretty accurately with the 60 miles of Jerodotus, which make the three days' journey of Jonah.' Within this space there are many mounds and remains of pottery, bricks, etc. The name of Nineveh is found on the Egyptian monuments of the date of Thothmes III, about 1400 B.C." (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*).

- V. The fall of Nineveh: "Sardanapalus then shut himself up in Nineveh, and determined to defend himself to the last. The siege continued two years, for the walls of the city were too strong for the battering machines of the enemy, who were compelled to trust to reducing it by famine. Sardanapalus was under no apprehension, confiding in an oracle declaring that Nineveh should never be taken until the river became its enemy. But, in the third year, rain fell in such abundance that the waters of the Tigris inundated part of the city and overturned one of its walls for a distance of twenty stades. Then the King, convinced that the oracle was accomplished and despairing of any means of escape, to avoid falling alive into the enemy's hands constructed in his palace an immense funeral pyre, placed on it his gold and silver and his royal robes, and then, shutting himself up with his wives and eunuchs in a chamber formed in the midst of the pile, disappeared in the flames. Nineveh opened its gates to the besiegers, but this tardy submission did not save the proud city. It was pillaged and burned, and then razed to the ground so completely as to evidence the implacable hatred enkindled in the minds of subject nations by the fierce and cruel Assyrian government. The Medes and Babylonians did not leave one stone upon another in the ramparts, palaces, temples, or houses of the city that for two centuries had been dominant over all Western Asia. So complete was the destruction that the excavations of modern explorers on the site of Nineveh have not yet found one single wall slab earlier than the capture of the city of Arbaces and Balazu. All we possess of the first Nineveh is one broken statue. History has no other example of so complete a destruction." (F. Lenormant and E. Chevallier, *The Rise and Fall of Assyria*).
- VI. What can we learn from the book? Nahum sums it up well in 1:3, "the Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."

Discussing The Book

I. The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Decreed (1:1-15)

A. How is Jehovah described in Nahum 1:2-8?

B. What does God promise in Nahum 1:14?

C. Where is Nahum 1:15 quoted in the New Testament?

II. The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Described (2:1–13)

A. What does God admonish Nineveh to do in Nahum 2:1–4?

B. What rivers are referred to in Nahum 2:6?

C. Why is Nineveh described as “the dwelling of the lions” (2:11,12)?

III. The Destruction Of Nineveh Is Deserved (3:1–19)

A. What crimes made Nineveh fit for judgment (3:1–4)?

B. How does Nahum describe the coming shame of Nineveh (3:5)?

C. What city is Nineveh compared to in Nahum 3:8? Where is it?

D. How will the other nations greet the news of Nineveh’s downfall (3:19)?

Reflections

- I. “About a hundred years before, at Jonah’s preaching, the Ninevites repented, and were spared, yet, soon after, they became worse than ever. Nineveh knows not that God who contends with her, but is told what a God he is. It is good for all to mix faith with what is here said concerning Him, which speaks great terror to the wicked, and comfort to believers. Let each take his portion from it: let sinners read it and tremble; and let saints read it and triumph. The anger of the Lord is contrasted with his goodness to his people. Perhaps they are obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them. The Scripture character of Jehovah agrees not with the views of proud reasoners. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is slow to wrath and ready to forgive, but he will by no means acquit the wicked; and there is tribulation and anguish for every soul that doeth evil: but who duly regards the power of his wrath?” (*Matthew Henry*)

Habakkuk

A Holy God Chastising His Children

Background Information

- I. Habakkuk's name means "Embrace."
- II. This book was written between the death of good King Josiah (609 B.C.) and the beginning of Babylonian captivity (605 B.C.). The miserable condition of the people (1:2-4) implies a date after the death of Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo and early in the wicked reign of Johoiakim (609-597 B.C.). Habakkuk would have been a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah.
- III. "The Chaldeans are a tribe of Semites from Southern Babylonia who freed themselves from Assyrian over lordship in 625 B.C. and who under the leadership of Nabopolassar became rulers of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Joining with the Medes and Scythians, they destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. Josiah in 609 B.C. had lost his life at Megiddo vainly attempting to block Necho's advance to aid the dying Assyrian empire (2 Kings 23:29,30). At Carchemish in 606 B.C. (cf. Jer. 46:2) the remnant of Assyria and Pharaoh Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon's domination over Judah was assured. The new Babylonian Chronicle makes it likely that Nebuchadnezzar returned to Syria following his coronation and took tribute. These events furnish the background of Habakkuk's expectation from the Chaldeans. The Neo-Babylonian empire with Nebuchadnezzar at its head dismembered Judah. In 597 B.C. Jehoiachin and a number of artisans were exiled. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed. The time span of the empire is actually coextensive with the exile. By 539 B.C. Cyrus had conquered Babylon and the Persian period of Biblical history sets in." (Jack Lewis, pg. 49).
- IV. This book was written while the nation of Judah was committing spiritual suicide. Although Habakkuk repeatedly calls for repentance, the nation refuses. Habakkuk is informed by God that the Babylonians would be His chastening rod on the nation. Though perplexed, Habakkuk realizes that the just shall live by faith (2:4) and like Job, he praises God's wisdom even though he does not fully understand His ways.
- V. What can we learn from the book of Habakkuk?
 - A. 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." (Robinson)
 - B. The fact that sin is self-destructive.
 - C. Faith is a condition of life (2:4).

Discussing The Book

I. The Problems Of Habakkuk (1:1–2:20)

- A. What problem did Habakkuk bring before the Lord (1:2–4)?

- B. What did God reply to Habakkuk (1:4–11)?

- C. What is the second problem Habakkuk brings before God (1:12–2:1)?

- D. How does God respond to Habakkuk's second inquiry (2:2–20)?

- E. Habakkuk 2:4 is the theme of what New Testament book?

- F. Habakkuk 2:18–20 chides what group of people?

II. The Praise Of Habakkuk (3:1–19)

- A. What does Habakkuk pray to God for in 3:1,2?

- B. What does Habakkuk remember in 3:3–15?

- C. In the hymn found in Habakkuk 3:17–19, how does Habakkuk depict God?

Reflections

- I. “When we see a day of trouble approach, it concerns us to prepare. A good hope through grace is founded in holy fear. The prophet looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and observed what great things God had done for them, and so was not only recovered, but filled with holy joy. He resolved to delight and triumph in the Lord; for when all is gone, his God is not gone. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease. But those who, when full, enjoyed God in all, when emptied and poor, can enjoy all in God. They can sit down upon the heap of the ruins of their creature-comforts, and even then praise the Lord, as the God of their salvation, the salvation of the soul, and rejoice in him as such, in their greatest distresses. Joy in the Lord is especially seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world. Even when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may be supplied by the graces and comforts of God’s Spirit. Then we shall be strong for spiritual warfare and work, and with enlargement of heart may run the way of his commandments, and outrun our troubles. And we shall be successful in spiritual undertakings. Thus the prophet, who began his prayer with fear and trembling, ends it with joy and triumph. And thus faith in Christ prepares for every event. The name of Jesus, when we can speak of Him as ours, is balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. It is as ointment poured forth, shedding fragrance through the whole soul. In the hope of a heavenly crown, let us sit loose to earthly possessions and comforts, and cheerfully bear up under crosses. Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and where he is, we shall be also.” (Matthew Henry)

Haggai

Build The Temple!

Background Information

- I. Haggai's name means "Festival."
- II. The book was written "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month" (Hag. 1:1), which would be 520 B.C.
- III. "The *Nabonaid Chronicle* and the *Cyrus Cylinder* are our most significant extra-Biblical sources of information for the events of this period. The *Nabonaid Chronicle* is a clay tablet now in the British Museum which relates the activities of the last king of Babylon and the capture of Babylon by Cyrus. The *Cyrus Cylinder* is a baked clay cylinder about nine inches long found in Babylon by Rassam, also now to be seen in the British Museum. It contains an account of Cyrus's conquest of Babylon and of his policy of allowing captive peoples to return to their native lands and rebuild their ancestral temples. The Persians were humane conquerors. Babylon was not destroyed. The policy of exiling peoples followed by the Assyrians and Babylonians was reversed. Isa. 45:1 points to Cyrus as the agent of the Lord to accomplish the return from captivity. The statement of Josephus (*Ant.* 11.1.2) that Cyrus had read Isaiah seems to be merely a conjecture on the part of Josephus. The records of Cyrus preserved outside the Bible do not specifically mention decrees in favor of the Jews. Nevertheless, the *Cyrus Cylinder* makes clear that it was a part of Cyrus' policy to allow subject peoples to return home and to rebuild their temples. The permission to the Jews alluded to in Ezra 1 would be in harmony with this policy. Rather than being a believer in the Lord, the cylinder makes quite clear that Cyrus, like most ancient people, was broad-minded on religious questions. He hoped that prayer to all the gods would be offered for him. Under these conditions the first return took place." (Lewis, *Minor Prophets*, pg. 54)
- IV. Cyrus of Persia issued a decree in 538 B.C. which allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple. The work on the temple began in 536 B.C. When the Jews met opposition from the Samaritans, the work stopped in 534 B.C. and remained untouched for 16 years. It was during this time that God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to compel the people to work.
- V. Suggested reading: Ezra 5:1,2; 6:14-16.
- VI. From this book we can learn of the contagious nature of the sin of procrastination. One author penned, "The faint aroma of sanctity coming from their altar sacrifices, was too feeble to pervade the secular atmosphere of their life."

Discussing The Book

I. The Completion Of The Second Temple (1:1–15)

- A. What did the people say about building the temple (1:2)?

- B. What had the people been doing while the temple was in ruins (1:4)?

- C. What were the consequences of their inactivity (1:6)?

- D. Who was Zerubbabel (1:12)? Who was his father?

II. The Glory Of The Second Temple (2:1–9)

- A. How did the second temple compare with the first one (2:3)?

- B. What is the “Desire of all Nations” (2:7)?

III. The Blessings Of Obedience (2:10–19)

- A. What is meant by the phrase, “so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean” (2:14)?

- B. Why did God send hail, mildew and blight to the people (2:17)?

IV. The Future Blessings (2:20–23)

- A. *Messianic Marker*: How was Zerubbabel a “signet ring” (2:23)? (Please read Jer. 22:30 and 2 Sam. 7:11–14).

Reflections

- I. “Observe the sin of the Jews, after their return from captivity in Babylon. Those employed for God may be driven from their work by a storm, yet they must go back to it. They did not say that they would not build a temple, but, Not yet. Thus men do not say they will never repent and reform, and be religious, but, Not yet. And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is not done. There is a proneness in us to think wrongly of discouragements in our duty, as if they were a discharge from our duty, when they are only for the trial of our courage and faith. They neglected the building of God’s house, that they might have more time and money for worldly affairs. That the punishment might answer to the sin, the poverty they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it.” (*Matthew Henry*)

Zechariah

The Glory Of The Messiah

Background Information

- I. Zechariah's name means "Yahweh Remembers."
- II. This book is a sequel to the book of Haggai. The historical setting for chapters 1 through 8 is the same as that of Haggai (520–518 B.C.). Work on the temple resumed in 520 B.C. and work was completed in 516 B.C. The date for chapters 9 through 14 is uncertain but indications are that it was penned between 480 and 470 B.C. (due to the references to Greece in 9:13).
- III. Message of the book: An apocalyptic look to the final consummation of God's eternal purpose in the glory of the Messiah's rule.
- IV. "Few books of the Old Testament are as difficult of interpretation as that of Zechariah. Jewish expositors like Abarbanel and Jarchi, and Christian interpreters such as Jerome, have been forced to concede that they failed 'to find their hands' in the exposition of the prophet's visions (using a Hebrew idiom found in Ps. 76:5), and that they passed from one labyrinth to another, and from one cloud into another until they were lost. And, indeed, the scope of the prophet's vision and the spiritual profundity of his thought challenge the most earnest reflection. In fact, it is no exaggeration to affirm that of all the prophetic compositions of the Old Testament, Zechariah's visions and oracles are the most messianic, and, accordingly, the most difficult, because mingled and intermingled with so much that is apocalyptic and eschatological." (Robinson, pg. 149)
- V. Messianic prophecy in the book of Zechariah:
 - A. Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12,13).
 - B. They will look one the one pierced (Zech. 12:10).
 - C. Fountain for sin and uncleanness opened (Zech 13:1).
 - D. Wounded in the house of His friends (Zech 13:6).
 - E. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter (Zech. 13:7).
- VI. What we can learn from the book:
 - A. The value of the "former prophets" (1:4; 7:12; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16,17).
 - B. The rule of the Messiah would be world-wide (2:11; 6:15; 8:23; 14:16).
 - C. Fasting and even feasting are nothing in themselves, for neither of these caused or averted Israel's exile; God requires justice, mercy, truth and righteousness from His people (8:16,17).
 - D. We can appreciate the eternal purpose of God in His plan to redeem man. Zechariah foretold "the day of the Lord" in exacting detail centuries before it happened (11:12,13; 12:10; 13:1).

Discussing The Book

I. The Call To Repentance (1:1–6)

- A. Why was the Lord angry with “your fathers” (1:2)?

- B. Who are the “former prophets” (1:4)?

II. Eight Visions Of Zechariah (1:7–6:8)

- A. Explain the meaning of the vision of the horses among the myrtle trees (1:7–17).

- B. Explain the meaning of the vision of the four horns and the four craftsmen (1:18–21).

- C. Explain the meaning of the vision of the man with the measuring line (2:1–13).

- D. Explain the meaning of the vision of the cleansing of Joshua, the High Priest (3:1–10).

- E. Explain the meaning of the vision of the golden lampstand and the olive trees (4:1–14).

- F. Explain the meaning of the vision of the flying scroll (5:1–4).

G. Explain the meaning of the vision of the woman in the basket (5:5–11).

H. Explain the meaning of the vision of the four chariots (6:1–8).

III. The Crowning Of Joshua (6:9–15)

A. What is the significance of the crowning of Joshua (6:9–11)?

B. Who is the “Branch” (6:12)? What will He do?

C. What two works will the “Branch” perform (6:13)?

IV. The Matter Of Fasting (7:1–3)

A. What question did the people ask in Zechariah 7:3?

V. The Four Messages Of Zechariah (7:4–8:23)

A. What was the first message that came to Zechariah (7:4–7)?

B. What was the second message that came to Zechariah (7:8–14)?

C. What was the third message that came to Zechariah (8:1–7)?

D. What was the fourth message that came to Zechariah (8:18–23)?

VI. The First Burden Of Zechariah: The Rejection Of The Messiah (9:1–11:17)

A. Identify the following places, and what was said about them:

1. Hadrach (9:1)
2. Hamath (9:2)
3. Tyre & Sidon (9:2–4)
4. Ashkelon (9:5)
5. Gaza (9:5)
6. Ekron (9:5)
7. Ashdod (9:6)

B. *Messianic Marker*: Zechariah 9:9 is fulfilled in what New Testament passages?

C. The anger of the Lord was kindled against what group of people (10:3)? What had these people done?

D. Where will the Lord bring His people back from (10:9–11)?

E. What happened to the “three shepherds” (11:8)?

F. *Messianic Marker*: Where is the fulfillment of Zechariah 11:12,13?

VII. The Second Burden Of Zechariah: The Reign Of the Messiah (12:1–14:21)

A. Find the six times the phrase “in that day” is found in chapter twelve.

B. *Messianic Marker*: How was Zechariah 12:10 fulfilled?

C. *Messianic Marker*: Where was the fountain opened for sin (13:1)?

D. How was Zechariah 13:6 fulfilled?

E. *Messianic Marker*: Where is Zechariah 13:7 fulfilled?

F. Who will stand on the Mount of Olives (14:4)?

G. What period of time is described in Zechariah 14:16–21?

Reflections

- I. “The book of Zechariah includes a series of visions with vivid but mysterious symbols, together with the appearance of an angel who interprets the visions but leaves some of the symbols unexplained. These visions mix the work of the Messiah in both advents, and like the other prophets, Zechariah sees only the peaks of God’s program without the intervening valleys.” (Nelsons, pg. 282)

Malachi

Will A Man Rob God?

Background Information

- I. Malachi's name means "My Messenger."
- II. "Although an exact date cannot be established for Malachi, internal evidence can be used to deduce an approximate date. The use of the Persian term for governor, *pechah* (1:8) indicates that the book was written during the Persian domination of Israel. The temple had been rebuilt, since sacrifices were being offered in the temple (1:7–10). In addition, Malachi's oracle addressed the same problems that Nehemiah faced: corrupt priests (1:6–2:9; cf. Neh. 13:1–9), neglect of tithes and offerings (3:7–12; cf. Neh. 13:10–13), and intermarriage with pagan wives (2:10–16; cf. Neh. 13:23–28). Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. to rebuild the city walls, but returned to Persia in 432 B.C. On his return to Palestine (c. 425 B.C.), Nehemiah dealt with the sins described in Malachi. Thus it is likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah was absent between 432 and 425 B.C." (Nelsons, pg. 284)
- III. "Malachi's literary method was that of the scribes, putting and answering questions. 'The form of his book shows us that his period was no longer patient of prophetic preachers; he has to have recourse to argument' (Sellin). He was the Hebrew Socrates. 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)..." (Robinson, pg. 161)
- IV. From the book of Malachi we can learn:
 - A. The value of sincere worship (1:6–14).
 - B. The crime of divorce (2:10–15).
 - C. Of the work of John the Baptist (3:1; 4:5).
 - D. That some men will try to "rob God" (3:8).

Discussing The Book

- I. **The Privilege Of The Nation (1:1–5)**
 - A. Why did God love Jacob (1:2)?

B. Why did God hate Esau (1:3)?

II. The Pollution Of The Nation (1:6–3:15)

A. What did the people think of “the table of the Lord” (1:7)?

B. What type of sacrifice did the people try to offer (1:8)?

C. How did the people view the worship of God (1:13)?

D. What sins had the priests committed (2:1–9)?

E. What sins had the people committed (2:10–15)?

III. The Promises To The Nation (3:16–4:6)

A. Who is the messenger of Malachi 3:1? Where can we read of his work?

B. How did the people attempt to rob God (3:8)?

C. What is the “book of remembrance” (3:16)?

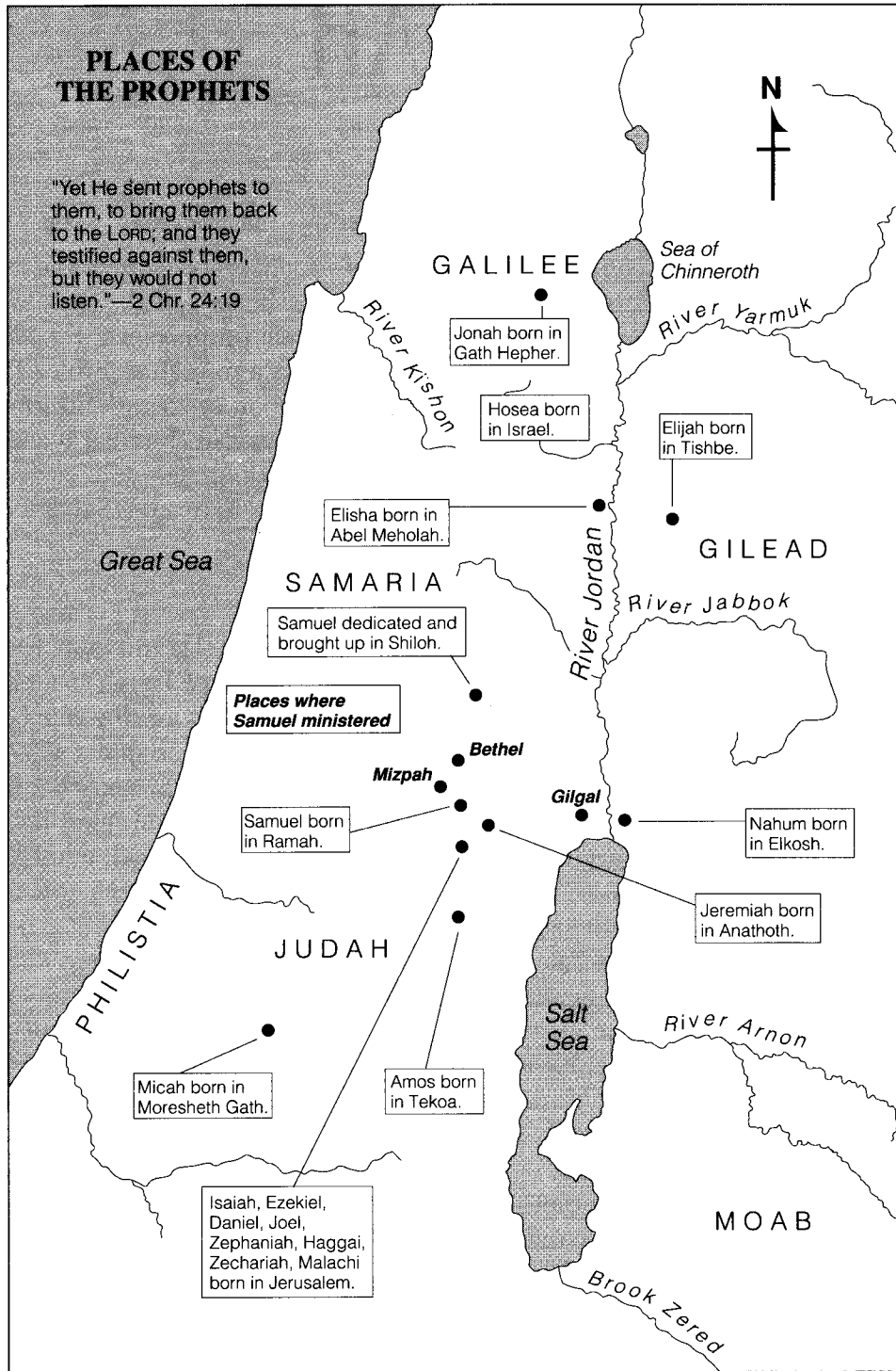
D. What is the “Sun of Righteousness” (4:2)?

E. *Messianic Marker*: When did or will Elijah return (4:5)?

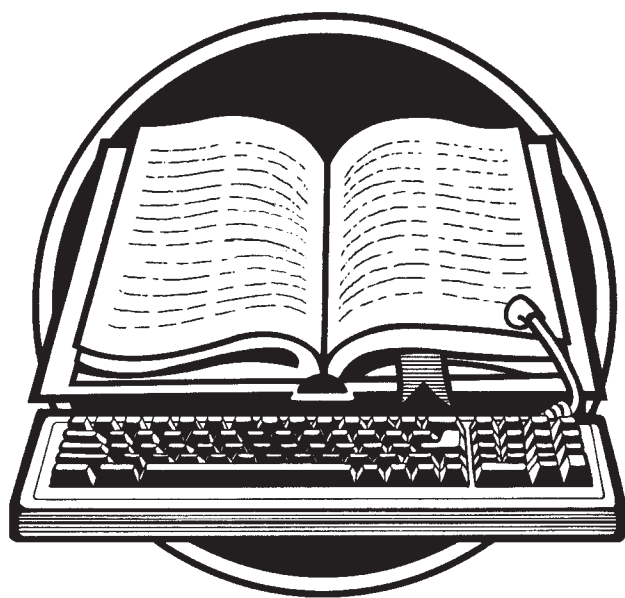
Reflections

- I. “The Book of Malachi serves as a fitting close to God’s ancient revelation to His people. A final appeal is made to the people to purge out the wickedness found among them and to render to Jehovah an acceptable service. A final warning is given of inevitable judgment upon the wicked. And a final promise is made of Jehovah’s righteousness to be provided in Him who would be the personal bond of unity between Jehovah and His people. There was no more that Jehovah could say or do; therefore no word was heard from Him until the silence was broken by the messenger who would introduce the Messiah. This messenger’s call to repent was followed by the words of grace spoken by Him in whom God was doing His work and revealing Himself and His will.” (Hailey, pg. 426)

Places of the Prophets



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