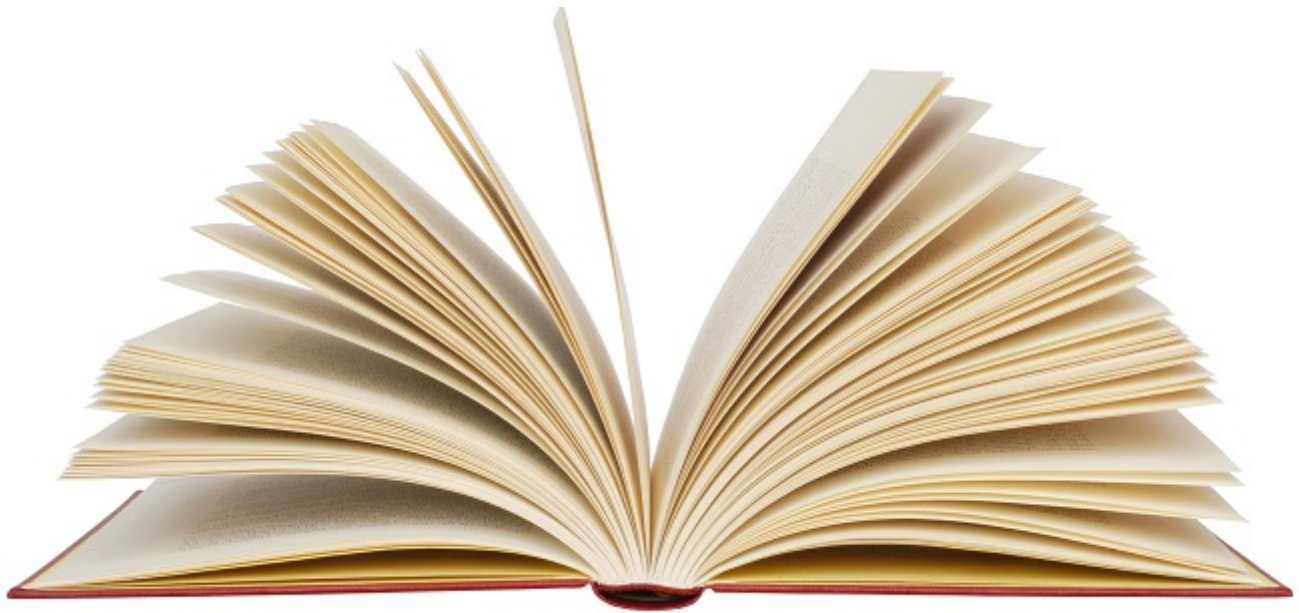

THE OLD TESTAMENT COVER TO COVER



Book Three: Joel Through Malachi

Gene Taylor

Table of Contents

Joel	3
Amos	9
Obadiah	16
Jonah	19
Micah	26
Nahum	33
Habakkuk	39
Zephaniah	44
Haggai	50
Zechariah	55
Malachi	60

© Gene Taylor 2020. All Rights Reserved.

Joel

I. The Man

- A. His name means "Jehovah is God."
 - 1. "The Hebrew name Yo'el means 'Yahweh is God,' a name appropriate to a book which emphasizes God's sovereign work in history" (*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, 245).
 - 2. "The name Joel means 'Jehovah is God' and suggests the prophet's constant attention in the book to the fact that Jehovah is the God whom Judah should worship" (William S. Deal, *Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 211).
- B. Although there are 12 "Joels" in the Bible, the prophet is unknown other than the fact that he was "the son of Pethuel" and a prophet of Judah.
 - 1. References to the temple and the official priesthood suggest an origin for his prophecy in Judah or perhaps Jerusalem itself, which he often mentions (2:15,23, 32; 3:1,6).
 - 2. "Although there are several other Joels in the Bible, the prophet Joel is known only from this book. Joel identifies himself as the son of Pethuel (1:1), and his frequent references to Zion and the house of the Lord suggest that he probably lived not far from Jerusalem. Because of his statements about the priesthood in 1:13,14; and 2:17, some think Joel was a priest as well as a prophet. In any case, Joel was a clear, concise, and uncompromising preacher of repentance" (*Nelson's*, 245).
 - 3. "As one among the oldest Hebrew prophets, Joel enjoyed a great reputation among the prophets who followed him" (Deal, 212).

II. The Date

- A. The book has been dated from the earliest to the latest of the writing prophets.
- B. The most likely date is around 830 B.C.
 - 1. "The reign of Joash (835-796 B.C.) is most appropriate for the prophecy... Joel's diction seems reminiscent of Amos, who seems to have made use of Joel (cf. Joel 3:16 with Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18 with Amos 9:13). Perhaps significant is the lack of mention of a king in the book. Joash was a minor and for a long time under the guardianship of Jehoiada the high priest. Then too, Israel's enemies are the Phoenicians and Philistines (3:4) and the Egyptians and Edomites (3:19), not the Assyrians and the Babylonians who harrassed Israel from Amos' period to the Exile" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 595).
 - 2. "Since the book includes no explicit time references, it cannot be dated with certainty. It has traditionally been dated c. 835 B.C., when Joash was placed upon the throne at the age of seven and Jehoiada the priest functioned as the real ruler (2 Kin. 11:12). This period seems to fit the text of Joel since the influence of the priesthood appears to be strong and there is no mention of a king. Because of this priestly prominence, others argue that Joel is to be dated much later in the post-exilic period" (*Nelson's*, 245).

- C. "Tradition assigns Joel to the period of Hosea, a possible contemporary. Nothing is known of how long he prophesied or when he may have written his book. It was likely produced near the close of his ministry as a summation of his preaching. Some place him as early as 830 B.C.; others as late as 750 B.C. His ministry certainly fell within this period, and he may have been among the earliest of the prophets of Judah" (Deal, 212).
- D. An estimated 27 phrases, clauses and expressions which Joel uses have parallels in other Old Testament writings thus causing some to speculate that his prophecy was an early one and that other prophets were very familiar with its message.
- He was quoted by Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Malachi and some of the Psalmists.

III. The Setting

- A. The reign of Joash is recorded in 2 Kings 11-12 and 2 Chronicles 23-24.
1. When Ahaziah died, his wicked mother, Athaliah, assumed the throne and killed all the heirs except Joash who was hidden in the temple by Jehoiada the priest.
 2. When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada presented him to Judah as their rightful king and put Athaliah to death.
 3. Joash began as a faithful king and determined to repair the temple desecrated by Athaliah but following Jehoiada's death, he turned to idols and God's wrath came upon Judah being ushered in by the warnings of the prophets (2 Chron. 24:17-22).
 4. It was perhaps at this time that Joel prophesied.
 5. God delivered Judah into the hands of the Syrians because of their apostasy (2 Chron. 24:23-26).
- B. "The prophecy was occasioned by a calamity that befell the land from locusts and drought and from fires that followed in their wake" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 40).
1. Israel was infested with a devastating swarm of locusts which consumed fields, crops, vines and even the bark off trees and which, evidently, lasted a long time (2:25).
 2. It may have been a fulfillment of Moses' promise of a curse if Israel disobeyed (cf. Deut. 28:15,38-42).
 3. Though some think the locusts were figurative of an invading army, most likely they were literal.

IV. The Message

- A. "Disaster struck the southern kingdom of Judah in the form of a cloud of locusts. In a matter of hours, the fields were stripped bare, and the prophet Joel seized this opportunity to proclaim God's message. The plague of locusts is seen as a foreshadowing of the coming day of the Lord. In light of this, the book warns of approaching judgment, calls the people to repentance, and gives God's people hope of the coming day of salvation that will follow judgment" (Nelson's, 245).
- B. "Unless there is repentance and righteousness of life on the part of the nation, the locusts will be followed by a stronger and more severe judgment, an invasion by the nations" (Hailey, 41).

- C. "The purpose was to turn Judah back to God. He wished them to repent and turn from sin, and thus escape judgment. A further purpose was to point out God's future plans for Israel and their final restoration" (Deal, 211).
- D. A summary.
1. Joel describes the desolation of the land, consumed by an invading army of locusts, and calls on the people to weep, mourn, and appeal to God for deliverance (1:2-20).
 2. The plague foreshadowed the "day of the Lord" for that nation, when God would send conquering armies in retribution for Israel's sins (2:1-11).
 3. Joel pleads with the people to "rend your heart and not your garments" and return to God before it too late to avoid God's destruction (2:12-17).
 4. He then relates the blessings of prosperity that would follow a genuine repentance as proof that God is in their midst (2:18-27).
 5. The book closes with God's promise to bless mankind through the outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-32) which came on the Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 when the Lord's church was established (Acts 2:16-21). Deliverance for the remnant was found in "Mount Zion and in Jerusalem" (2:32; cf. Heb. 12:22).
 6. Joel then promises that God will judge all the nations for their unjust treatment of His people (3:1-17) and also bless His children (3:18-21).

V. The Theme

- A. "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?" (2:11).
1. This theme runs through the prophetic books (cf. Isa. 2:12f; Ezek. 13:5; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:7,14; Zech. 14:1; Rev. 6:17; 16:14), occurring over 30 times in the Old Testament.
 2. The day of the Lord was not only for Israel and Judah but also for Babylon (Isa. 13:1), Egypt (Jer. 46:10), and other nations (Joel 3:14).
 3. This phrase does not always refer to the Second Coming of Christ.
 - a. It does refer to the coming of the Lord in judgment to punish the guilty and reward the faithful.
 - b. The ultimate "day of the Lord," foreshadowed by all the other times of judgment in history, is the final judgment day (2 Pet. 3:10-13).
- B. "This phrase occurs in the book (Joel) five times (1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14), and signifies as Davidson has well put it, 'the moment when Jehovah grasps the reins, which he seems to have held slackly before, when the currents of his moral rule, which had been running sluggishly, receive a mysterious quickening, and the Lord's work upon the earth is at last fully performed.' Or, as Gaebelien expresses it, it means 'the day on which Jehovah will manifest himself as God;' the ultimate day of Jehovah; a day of both terror and blessing; a day of vengeance and year of the redeemed; the day on which the eternal principles of Divine righteousness and human duty will be demonstrated; the final day of reckoning," (George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 44).
- C. "This brief book develops the crucial theme of the coming day of the Lord (1:15; 2:1,2, 11,31; 3:14,18)—a time of awesome judgment upon people and nations that have rebelled against God. But it is also a time of future blessing upon those who have trusted in Him. The theme of disaster runs throughout the book (locust

plagues, famine, raging fires, invading armies, celestial phenomena), but promises of hope are interspersed with the pronouncements of coming judgment” (Nelson’s, 247).

VI. The Lessons

- A. The plague of locusts was used by Joel to illustrate God’s chastisement of Israel for their sins (ch. 1-2).
 - 1. This illustrates that the judgment of God brings sure destruction to the wicked.
 - 2. It also demonstrates how God often uses troubles, sicknesses and sorrows which He permits as means of chastisement to draw His people nearer to Him and to awaken and save sinners (Heb. 12:5-11).
- B. The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:28-32) brings a message of hope.
 - 1. Though the book opens in gloom with a dark and terrifying picture, it closes with the anticipation of a bright and glorious day to come.
 - 2. Joel proclaimed that God would visit His people again with a spiritual revival which would bring a turning to God.
- C. There is a strong Messianic message running throughout the book.
 - 1. The judgment of the nations (3:1-12).
 - 2. The battle of God against the forces of wickedness in the valley of Jehoshaphat (3:9-12).

VII. Joel in the New Testament

- A. References.
 - 1. An explanation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32).
 - 2. For “whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32).
- B. Echoes.
 - 1. The moon turned to blood (Rev. 6:12; Joel 2:31).
 - 2. The description of the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25; Joel 2:10).
 - 3. Judgment as a harvest (Matt. 13:39; Rev. 14:17ff., Joel 3:13).
 - 4. Treading the winepress as a symbol of judgment (Rev. 14:20; 19:15; Joel 3:13).
 - 5. Locusts (Rev. 9:3-11; Joel 2:1-11).

Questions on Joel

1. What is the meaning of the name “Joel?”
2. What significance, if any, does the name “Joel” have in relation to his work and message?
3. Who was Joel’s father?
4. What dates are ascribed to the book of Joel? Which do you think is more likely? Why?
5. Who, more than likely, was king during Joel’s ministry? Briefly describe his reign.
6. What prophet was a possible contemporary of Joel?
7. What other Old Testament prophets quote Joel? What does that fact cause some scholars to conclude?
8. Who was Athaliah? What did she do after the death of King Ahaziah?
9. Who was Jehoiada? What did he do in relation to Joash?
10. What did Joash do after Jehoiada died?
11. What plague afflicted Judah during the time of Joel?
12. What application did Joel make of that plague?
13. What is meant by the phrase “day of the Lord?” To what does Joel apply it?
14. What is the theme of the book of Joel? (2:11)
15. What is the ultimate “day of the Lord?”
 - a. How does it differ from that which Joel describes?
 - b. How is it like that which Joel describes?
16. What other nations besides Israel and Judah would have to deal with the day of the Lord? (Isa. 13:1; Jer. 46:10; Joel 3:14)

17. How does the book of Joel demonstrate the principle that God often uses troubles, sicknesses and sorrows which He permits to chastise His people and awaken sinners?
18. What application is made in the New Testament of Joel 2:28-32?
19. What hope did Joel 2:28-32 give to the people of Joel's day?
20. What does it mean to "call upon the name of the Lord?" (2:32; cf. Rom. 10:13)

Amos

I. The Man

- A. His name means “burden” or “burden-bearer.”
1. He is the only “Amos” mentioned in the Old Testament.
 2. “The name ‘Amos’ is derived from the Hebrew terms meaning ‘lift a burden.’ Thus, the name means ‘Burden’ or ‘Burden-bearer.’ Amos lived up to the meaning of his name by bearing up under his divinely given burden of declaring judgment to rebellious Israel” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 248).
 3. “Amos means ‘carrier,’ or perhaps better, ‘heavy’ or ‘burden.’ He bore the ‘burden of the Lord’ against several countries of his day. The word ‘burden’ really means ‘denunciation.’ As a prophet, his ministry was a denunciation against the sinfulness of those countries, and he pronounced God’s judgments upon them” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 214).
- B. A citizen of Tekoa, Amos was a herdsman of sheep and a dresser of sycamore trees, an ordinary man, who was called by God to do a great work for Him.
1. Tekoa was located 18 miles west of the Dead Sea, 12 miles south of Jerusalem and 6 miles south of Bethlehem in a dry, desolate region some 2700 feet above sea level.
 2. The sheep he tended were NAKADS or NOKEDS and had a wool of superior quality.
 3. Sycamore trees.
 - a. George Adam Smith, in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, said the sycamore was a tree whose fruit was fig-like, slightly sweet and watery, and somewhat woody. It was eaten by the poorer people. Its fruit had to be pinched or bruised before it would ripen (76-77).
 - b. Some have suggested that Amos had to migrate to either the coastal plain or the Jordan Valley in order to tend such trees.
 4. His call may have been the five visions he records in his book.
 - a. The locusts (7:1-3).
 - b. The great fire devouring the land (7:4-6).
 - c. The plumb line (7:7-9).
 - d. The basket of summer fruit (8:1-2).
 - e. The Lord standing by the altar and giving the command to smite the capitals and let none escape (9:1).
- C. “Amos was a native of Tekoa, a small village some six miles south of Bethlehem, overlooking the Dead Sea. The town was just a few miles from the busy caravan route linking Jerusalem with Hebron and Beer-sheba. In this barren hill country, Amos was a herdsman of sheep and goats, and a grower of sycamore figs (1:1; 7:14). [Note: Pastoral scenes abound in the book at these and other places: 1:2; 2:13; 3:4-5; 4:7; 6:12; 7:1; 8:1; 9:6]. As a wool merchant he probably made many trips into the northern cities of Israel and saw firsthand the religious and social corruption of its people” (Irving Jensen, *Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament*, 404-405).

- D. "Amos was not a 'professional' prophet (7:14) like the more numerous institutional or cultic prophets of his day. From his rustic background at Tekoa, six miles south of Bethlehem in the southern kingdom of Judah, Amos was called by God to go to the northern kingdom to be His spokesman (7:15)" (*Nelson's*, 248).
- E. "He is one of the most forceful preachers of repentance and judgment of all the prophets of the Old Testament...Though he was untutored having lived as a shepherd in the isolated and desert regions of Tekoa, yet being by birth a morally noble, healthy, and vigorous yeoman, like John the Baptist who spent most of his years in the same wilderness, he developed into a religious reformer, and eventually became supremely concerned for the rights of God, and for justice" (George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 47-48)

II. The Date

- A. The events in the book took place sometime between 760 and 750 B.C.
 - 1. Uzziah was king of Judah (1:1; 2 Kings 14:21). He reigned from 767 to 740 B.C.
 - 2. Jeroboam II was king of Israel (1:1). He reigned from 793-753 B.C.
- B. Two years before the earthquake (1:1).
 - 1. It must have been one of considerable magnitude.
 - 2. It is mentioned some 400 years later (Zechariah 14:5).
 - 3. Josephus said it took place in connection with Uzziah's trespass reported in 2 Chronicles 26:18-21 when he attempted to usurp the priestly functions (*Antiquities of the Jews IX*, 10, 4).
- C. Some 25 to 30 years before the captivity by Assyria started (722 B.C.).
- D. "The message of Amos seems to have been delivered at Bethel some thirty years before the fall of Israel. Josephus says the 'earthquake' (1:1) occurred when Uzziah, king of Judah, was struck with leprosy (II Chron. 26:16-21), which took place in 751 B.C." (Deal, 214).
- E. "According to 1:1, Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah (767-739 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 of 760-753 B.C." (*Nelson's*, 248).

III. The Setting

- A. Israel was prospering under the reign of Jeroboam II but God was going to bring judgment upon them because of their sins.
 - 1. "Israel was corrupt from the top of its social and political stratum to the bottom" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 81).
 - 2. The sins of Israel included the following. They:
 - a. Sold the righteous into slavery (2:6).
 - b. Oppressed the poor (2:6-7; 5:7-11).
 - c. Accepted bribes (5:12).
 - d. Were dishonest in trade (8:5-6).
 - e. Were materialistic (4:1; 6:4).
 - f. Had a false confidence in their own righteousness (4:4; 5:14; 9:10).
 - g. Had failed to heed past warnings from God (2:11-12; 4:7-12).

3. Israel also had a false sense of self-confidence in their own righteousness.
 - a. We are God's people (3:2).
 - b. God brought us out of Egypt (9:7).
 - c. We worship regularly (5:21).
- B. "During the ninth century B.C., Assyria had been increasing in power and in the exertion of that power in the east, gradually extending it into the west. However for sixty years following 805 B.C., 'the west was given a breathing space because the rulers of Assyria were not strong men' (*Westminster Atlas*, p. 73). It was during this period that Jonah had visited Nineveh. This sixty years respite from the east gave Judah and Israel the opportunity needed to strengthen the power of each nation. Under the strong leadership of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, the borders of each nation were enlarged; and through trade, agriculture, and conquest, each king was able to bring prosperity to the people. This prosperity brought equally great perils on both nations" (Hailey, 84).
 1. With this prosperity came:
 - a. Excessive luxury (3:12,15; 5:11; 6:1,4-7).
 - b. Social corruption. The oppression of the poor by the rich (2:6-8; 5:11-12; 8:4).
 - c. Religious corruption. Idolatry (4:4-5; 5:25-27) and heartless, mindless worship (5:21-24; 8:4-6) dominated the religious scene.
 2. All these ultimately led to doom and destruction in 722 B.C. when Assyria executed the judgment of God upon Israel.
 3. Amos, along with Hosea, prophesied to a generation who would likely see this destruction happen in their lifetime.
- C. "The 50 years preceding Amos were a time of relative calm and prosperity for both Israel and Judah. Trade routes had been reestablished through the land, commerce flourished, wealth was piling up, and peace prevailed. In the midst of that apparent prosperity, however, an inner sickness was developing. The poor were being oppressed, the weak were intimidated, justice was ignored. Religion was a pretense, corruption a way of life" (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 227).
- D. "Israel had adopted the worship of the golden calf at Bethel after the division of the kingdom. To this had been added the most abominable Baal-worship, or worship of the sun-god. For some two hundred years this wickedness had gone on and had now become so deeply rooted as to be almost impossible to destroy... Israel had sunk to an all-time low in the days of Amos. The land was filled with brazen idolatry and moral rottenness; it reeked with adultery, swearing, stealing, injustice, robbery, and murder" (Deal, 214-215).

IV. The Message

- A. A summary of the book.
 1. Amos, in response to God's commission, went to Bethel, where the sanctuary in Israel was, to deliver this bold prophecy.
 2. He announces judgment on the nations (1:1 - 2:16).
 - a. He denounces in succession the surrounding nations, beginning with the more distant and alien peoples (Damascus, Gaza, Tyre), then addresses the nearer and more kindred people (Edom, Ammon, Moab), then turns his attention to the brother nation of

- Judah (2:4-5), and then finally directs his attention to the northern kingdom as the subject of this prophecy (2:6-16).
- b. God's judgement is coming upon Israel because of her cruelty to her own people (2:6-8).
3. Punishment is coming to Israel (3:1 - 4:13).
 - a. Only a remnant will be spared (3:12).
 - b. The rest of the nation, especially the rich, will be plundered (3:13 - 4:13).
 - 1) God had punished (chastened) them before but they had not yet returned to Him (4:6-11).
 - 2) The entire message of Amos can be found in one statement: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (4:12).
 4. God calls on Israel to repent (5:4-15), to "Seek good and not evil, That you may live" (v. 14).
 5. If Israel would not repent, then the Day of the Lord will be a day of darkness for them (5:16-27).
 6. "Woe to you who are at ease in Zion" (6:1-14).
 7. The prophecy of Amos winds down with 5 visions God has given him which emphasize and depict the coming judgment (7:1 - 9:10). Amaziah, prophet of Bethel, interrupts Amos' message and was condemned by God because he rejected God's message through Amos (8:10-17).
 8. Though the first of the prophets to declare the inevitable doom of Israel (5:2), Amos closes with a ray of hope.
 - a. There will be a spiritual remnant who will be saved, being sifted out (9:8-10; cf. Rom. 11:5).
 - b. Israel will be restored, not as a physical nation, but a spiritual kingdom (9:11-15) under the Messiah of the house of David (9:11; see Acts 15:15-18; Luke 1:67-79).
- B. The three-fold message could be stated as:
1. Judgments against the neighboring nations of Israel.
 - a. Damascus (1:3-5).
 - b. Gaza (1:7-8).
 - c. Tyre (1:9-10).
 - d. Edom (1:11-12).
 - e. Ammon (1:13-15).
 - f. Moab (2:1-3).
 - g. Judah (2:4-5).
 2. Punishment and doom for Israel (2:6ff).
 - a. The lion has roared (3:8).
 - b. They must prepare to meet their God (4:12-13).
 - c. They must prepare themselves for "the day of the Lord (5:18).
 - d. Assyria would take them captive, a captivity from which they would never return (5:27; 7:8-9; 8:2).
 3. An oracle of hope (9:11-15) for a "remnant" of the people through the raising up of the "fallen" tabernacle of David.
- C. "The book of Amos is basically a message of judgment: prophecies of judgment on the nations, oracles and visions of divine judgment against Israel. Amos

begins with a series of indictments against seven neighbors of Israel, including Judah, and upon Israel herself (chs. 1; 2). Each foreign nation is to be punished for specific offenses either against Israel or some other nation. This judgment on the nations teaches that God is a universal monarch and all nations must answer to Him for their mistreatment of other nations and peoples" (*Nelson's*, 250).

V. The Lessons

- A. "Although Amos preached some 2,700 years ago, he addressed a society to which we are no strangers. He confronted people who had a love affair with 'things,' who oppressed the poor, who scorned strong preaching, whose worship was ritualistic and whose religion was on the road to apostasy. One would not need to search very far to find these same characteristics in evidence today. Amos' prophecy, therefore, has a particular pertinency for our time" (Wilson Adams, *Bible Survey* [an unpublished work], 150).
1. The problem of luxury and ease (6:1).
 2. The problem of rejecting sound preaching (7:12-13; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-4).
 3. The problem of vain worship (5:21-24; 4:4-5).
 4. The problem of indifference (4:4-6).
 5. The problem of apostasy (4:6-11).
- B. We must seek God (5:4,6,8).
- C. We need a solid standard by which to live (7:7).
- D. We must prepare to meet God (4:12).
- E. We must never be "at ease in Zion" (6:1).

VI. Amos in the New Testament

- A. Stephen quotes 5:25-27 (Acts 7:42-43).
- B. James quotes 9:11-12 (Acts 15:16-17).

Questions on Amos

1. What does the name “Amos” mean?
2. How is his name related to his work as a prophet?
3. Where was Amos from? Where is it located?
4. What were Amos’ occupations other than prophet?
5. What do the five visions he records in his book seem to point out?
6. When did the events recorded in Amos take place?
7. During the time Amos prophesied, who was king in:
 - a. Israel?
 - b. Judah?
8. How many years “before the earthquake” did Amos’ ministry take place? (1:1)
9. What was the political conditions in Israel during the time of Amos?
10. What was the social conditions in Israel during the time of Amos?
11. What was the moral conditions in Israel during the time of Amos?
12. What was the religious conditions in Israel during the time of Amos?
13. What is the three-fold message of Amos?
14. To whom was the message of Amos delivered?
15. Summarize the basic theme of Amos.
16. Why do you think God chose Amos to deliver this message seeing he was from Judah?
17. How did the following problems affect the people of Amos’ day?
 - a. Luxury and ease. (6:1)
 - b. Rejection of sound preaching. (7:12-13)
 - c. Vain worship. (5:21-29; 4:4-5)
 - d. Indifference. (4:4-6)
 - e. Apostasy. (4:6-11)

18. How do the above problems affect God's people today?
19. What does the phrase "prepare to meet your God" mean? (4:12)
20. What did it mean to be "at ease in Zion?" (6:1)

Obadiah

I. The Man

- A. His name means “servant of Jehovah” (v. 1).
- B. He is unknown other than his book.

II. The Date

- A. The book is ascribed to periods ranging from 845 to 400 B.C.
- B. Since the prophet refers to an attack on Jerusalem (vv. 11-14), the date can be narrowed down to two probable dates: 845 or 586 B.C. with 845 being the most likely.
 - 1. 845 B.C. - the days of Jehoram (848-841 B.C.) when the Philistines and Arabians attacked the city of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 21:8-10, 16-17; cf. 2 Kings 8:20-22; Joel 3:3-6; Amos 1:6).
 - 2. 586 B.C. - the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.
- C. “Amos (c. 760 B.C.) shows acquaintance with Obadiah (cf. 4 with Amos 9:12; vv. 9,10, 18 with Amos 1:11-12; v. 14 with Amos 1:6, 9; v. 19 with Amos 9:12; v. 20 with Amos 9:14). Jeremiah apparently used this prophecy also (cf. Jer. 49:7-22 with Obad.1-6). This gives additional support for an early date for the prophecy” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 413).

III. The Setting

- A. Edom was the nation which descended from Esau (Genesis 36:8-9). The nation of Israel descended from his brother Jacob.
- B. As enmity existed between Jacob and Esau, even before they were born (Gen. 25:22-26), it was also present between the two nations that came from them.
 - 1. Their descendants became bitter rivals and bloody enemies (cf. Amos 1:11).
 - 2. God forbade Israel to “abhor an Edomite” nor take Edom’s land because they were brothers (Deuteronomy 23:7; 2:5-8).
 - 3. Though war between the two was forbidden, it was still very common.
 - a. Conflict began when Edom refused to allow passage to Israel on their journey from Egypt (Numbers 20:14-21).
 - b. There was conflict between them during the reign of King Saul (1 Samuel 14:47).
 - c. David slew 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt (2 Samuel 8:11-14; cf. 1 Chron. 18:12-13). Joab, the captain of David’s army, remained there for six months until he had cut down every male in Edom (1 Kings 11:15-16).
 - d. Edom revolted against King Jehoram of Judah who defeated them at Zair but was unable to stop the rebellion (2 Kings 8:20-22).
 - e. Amaziah, king of Judah (796-767 B.C.), invaded Edom, killed 10,000 in the Valley of Salt and took Selah (2 Kings 14:7).
 - f. The Edomites helped Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (604-562 B.C.), and then rejoiced when the Jews were destroyed and punished (Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35:3-6).

- C. Throughout the writings of the prophets, Edom stands as a symbol of the earthly, non-spiritual people of the world.

IV. The Message

- A. Edom will fall because of her pride and cruelty against Israel.
1. Much of Edom's pride came from her fortifications within the rocks and cliffs of what was later known as Petra (vv. 1-4).
 2. Edom was to be completely laid waste and forsaken by her allies (vv. 5-9).
 3. She would have to reap the cruelty and inhumanity she had shown toward her brothers, the Israelites (vv. 10-16).
 4. Edom had to share in God's judgment on the nations (vv. 15-16).
- B. Israel and Zion will be exalted when Seir, the Edomite counterpart of Zion, would be cast down and all the enemies of Israel defeated (vv. 17-21).
1. Mount Zion represents God's stronghold, His house.
 2. Ultimately the Messiah will rule over the "house of Jacob" and the nation of Edom and the kingdom would be His (vv. 17, 20-21; cf. Numbers 24:15-19; Luke 1:33).
- C. The result of this prophecy: "Edom's destruction began with the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar...Between the sixth and end of the fourth centuries, Edom was invaded by Arabs known as Nabateans...who drove the Edomites out of their land into a region south of Judea. The Maccabees brought them under subjection in the second century when Judas Maccabeus slew some twenty thousand of them. John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) subjugated the remnant of the nation... Under the Romans sometime during the first century after Christ the remaining Edomites were absorbed by the Arabs and their identity was lost completely" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 37-38).

V. The Lessons

- A. Pride is deceitful and "goes before a fall" (vv. 3-4; Proverbs 16:18).
- B. The injustice of cruelty, bitterness and passion of one people against another must be avenged by God (vv. 10, 15).
- C. Rejoicing at another's misfortune is sin (Prov. 17:15; Job 31:29).
- D. When one shares in the spoils of wrong-doing, though he may not be an instigator of the crime, he becomes "even...as one of them" (v. 11).
- E. God provides a place of escape in time of judgment for those who turn to Him (vv. 17, 21; cf. Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Questions on Obadiah

1. What does the name “Obadiah” mean?
2. What two dates are given for the book of Obadiah? Which is preferable? Why?
3. From whom was the nation of Edom descended?
4. Who was the above person’s brother? What nation descended from him?
5. Describe the relationship between the two brothers.
6. What was Israel forbidden to do in relation to Edom? Why?
7. What are some instances which illustrate the animosity between Edom and Israel?
8. What does Edom symbolize in the writings of the prophets?
9. What is the basic message of the book of Obadiah?
10. What were some of the sources of Edom’s pride which led to her downfall?
11. In what way(s) does pride go “before a fall?” (vv. 3-4)
12. What would be exalted when Seir, the Edomite stronghold, would be cast down?
13. When did Edom’s destruction begin?
14. Why is it sinful to rejoice at another’s misfortune?
15. What does it mean to become “even...as one of them?”

Jonah

I. Jonah the Man

- A. His name means “dove.”
- B. His personal life.
 - 1. He was the son of Amittai (1:1).
 - 2. He was from Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25).
 - a. It was a city of the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13).
 - b. It was located four miles northeast of the city of Nazareth.
- C. His prophetic ministry.
 - 1. He was a prophet in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) (2 Kings 14:23-25).
 - 2. His work which is chronicled in his book is exclusively to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (1:1-2).
 - 3. He was not, to say the least, God’s most faithful prophet.
 - a. He was a narrow-minded, fiercely zealous patriot.
 - b. He was exceedingly jealous of Israel’s relationship to God wanting no other people to have a similar relationship.
 - c. He became upset when the people of Nineveh repented at his preaching.
 - 4. As a prophet, he and his book are unique in a number of ways.
 - a. His is the only book of the minor prophets that is a book about the prophet instead of being a collection of the oracles of the prophet.
 - b. He is the only minor prophet:
 - 1) Whose major activity is on foreign soil.
 - 2) In whose career the miraculous plays a prominent role.
 - 3) Who preaches exclusively to a foreign people.
 - 4) Who is mentioned by Jesus.
 - c. He is the only Old Testament character who:
 - 1) Is represented as taking a trip on the Mediterranean Sea.
 - 2) Is likened by the Lord to Himself.

II. The Date

- A. The book was written some time around the general period of 780 B.C.
- B. Since Jonah was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II which was from 793 B.C. to 753 B.C., it is likely the events recorded in his book took place during that time.

III. The Setting

- A. Geographically.
 - 1. Tarshish was a city in Spain which the people of Jonah’s day believed to be “the end of the world.”

2. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria.
 - a. At that time it had a population somewhere between six hundred thousand and one million.
 - b. Located on the Tigris River, it was some 80 miles in circumference with a wall around it that was 100 feet high with some 1500 towers each of which was 200 feet in height. It is said that four chariots could be driven abreast upon the walls.
- B. Politically.
1. Israel during the time of Jeroboam II:
 - a. Had her borders extended farther than at any time after Solomon (See 2 Kings 14:25).
 - b. Enjoyed a time of ease and prosperity. "Times were prosperous, money plentiful, and the spirit of nationalism or patriotism was running high. The kingdom of Israel had been expanded and the people were proud and confident" (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, 280).
 - c. Was already feeling the influence of Assyria to whom it would ultimately fall in 721 B.C.
 2. Assyria.
 - a. She was Israel's enemy during this period. She would eventually destroy Israel in 721 B.C.
 - b. The Assyrians were hideously and brutally cruel to the people they conquered.
 - 1) They had a seemingly unquenchable thirst for blood and vengeance.
 - 2) Their atrocities would have been well-known in Israel.
 - c. "...from shortly before 800 until 745 B.C., the time of Tiglath-pileser's accession to the throne, Assyria was torn with internal strife and by wars with revolting provinces...not only were there revolts from within the empire but also the nation was at war with a powerful country (Urartu) near the Caspian Sea. No doubt this depressed state of Assyria contributed much to the readiness of the people to hear Jonah as he began to preach to them" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 63).

IV. The Message

- A. A summary of the book.
 1. God commissioned Jonah to go and preach repentance to Nineveh (1:1-2).
 - a. Jonah, knowing God's mercy and lovingkindness, knew if they repented God would not destroy them.
 - b. Jonah wanted no part in saving them (4:1-2).
 2. Jonah began to flee to Tarshish (1:3).
 - a. God caused a severe storm at sea (1:4).
 - b. The sailors on board the ship on which he traveled were persuaded by Jonah, against their will, to throw him overboard in order to appease God's wrath (1:4-16).

3. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish prepared by God (1:17).
 - a. He spent three days and nights in it during which time he penitently prayed (1:17 - 2:9).
 - b. The fish vomited him on dry land at the command of the Lord (2:10).
 4. Jonah journeyed to Nineveh to preach his message: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:1-4).
 - a. All the people, from the king on down, repented (3:5-9).
 - b. God spared Nineveh (3:10).
 5. Jonah was enraged at God's decision to spare Nineveh (4:1-2).
 - a. He wanted to die (4:3).
 - b. God taught him a lesson about love and compassion by causing a plant to grow over Jonah (4:4-6).
 - 1) Jonah was grateful for the plant.
 - 2) God prepared a worm to damage the plant and cause it to wither (4:7).
 - 3) Jonah, having lost the cover of the plant and feeling the heat of the sun, again wanted to die (4:8).
 - 4) God used the plant for which Jonah had pity to tell him how he should have pity on the Ninevites (4:9-11).
- B. The book of Jonah has been variously interpreted. Some suggested interpretations include:
1. Mythical. The story is a myth that grew around some incident in the history of Israel.
 2. Allegorical. The story is an allegory of Israel's captivity, repentance and restoration to its land.
 3. Historical. This interpretation literally views the accounts in the book as happening in the historical context.
 - a. Is the fish historical? If God created all fish found in the seas, could He not create one specifically for the purpose of swallowing and preserving Jonah?
 - b. "James Bartley & the Whale," (Bob Dickey, *The Pointer*, Vol. 14, No. 20, November 1982).

"The book of Jonah tells the story of the prophet Jonah's disobedience as he attempted to escape from the preaching task that the Lord had enjoined upon him. Having taken his flight in a ship sailing to Tarshish, Jonah was cast overboard and swallowed by a whale prepared by God. Tormented alive in the whale's belly, the prophet repented and promised to do the Lord's bidding; whereupon, he was deposited safely on dry ground.

"Modernists (those who reject the verbal inspiration of the scriptures and especially the miracles of the Bible) scoff at the story of Jonah and the whale. Many of them have said that it is scientifically impossible for a man to be swallowed whole by a whale, let alone live to escape and tell about it. Some of them propose the idea that Jonah is a symbolic, figurative book and we are not to take its meaning literally. Others say it is a product of

an overactive imagination, or perhaps it is an ancient children's bedtime story like our modern-day "Three Little Pigs" or "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Many of the modernists just laugh and say, 'It's a whale of a fish story' or 'It's a fish story that's hard to swallow.' Jesus believed the story of Jonah and the whale. He likened it to His own burial in the earth and the promised resurrection from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21).

"Those who think the story of Jonah and the whale impossible should be enlightened and made to reflect further by the account of James Bartley. His story was reported by H.P. Lee and printed in *The Literary Digest* of April 4, 1896:

'In February, 1891, an English vessel, *Star of the East*, was sailing in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. The lookout sighted two large sperm whales three miles away. Two boats were launched. One whale escaped. The other was bombed and harpooned.

'The boat attached to the captured whale reduced to splinters when hit by the powerful lash of the monster's tail during its dying struggle. The men were thrown out of the boat and one of them, James Bartley, was mourned as drowned. It took the crew a day and a half with axes and spades to remove the blubber.

'At the end of that time they attached some tackle to the stomach and hoisted it to the deck. The sailors were startled to see something jumping in the stomach at irregular intervals. Upon cutting the stomach open James Bartley came rolling out, screaming like a lunatic. He remained in that mental condition for weeks. Within three weeks he recovered from the shock and resumed his duties.

'Writing of the experience later, Mr. Bartley said, 'I remembered from the moment that I jumped and felt my feet striking some soft substance. I looked up and saw a canopy of pink and white descending, and the next moment felt myself drawn downward, feet first and realized I was being swallowed by a whale. I was drawn lower and lower; a wall of flesh hemmed me in, yet the pressure was not painful and the flesh gave way before the slightest movement. Suddenly I found myself in a sack much larger than my body, completely dark. Soon I felt a great pain in my head and my breathing became difficult. At the same time I felt a terrible heat; it seemed to consume me, and I believed I was going to be broiled alive. The thought that I was to perish in the belly of the whale tormented me beyond endurance, while the awful silence weighed me down. I tried to rise to cry out. All action was now impossible, but my brain seemed abnormally clear, and, with a full comprehension of my fate, I lost consciousness.'

“This dreadful account of a man swallowed by a whale is all the more remarkable because he lived to tell about it. But whether or not it can be demonstrated that a whale can truly swallow a man, we must remember that God ‘prepared’ Jonah’s fish for the task—and with God all things are possible. Those who believe the Bible should have no trouble with the story of Jonah or with any of the other Bible miracles. Your belief in miracles depends upon whether or not you spell your god with a capital ‘G’...”

- c. Jesus Christ confirms the historicity of the account of Jonah in Matthew 12:38-42 and Luke 11:29-32.
- C. Jonah’s message to Nineveh: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown” (3:4).
- D. God’s message to Jonah.
 - 1. The love of God is for all mankind (4:10-11).
 - 2. The will of God is to be done (3:2-3).

V. The Lessons

- A. National sin demands national repentance (See Proverbs 14:34).
- B. The book of Jonah displays the universality of:
 - 1. God’s presence. A person can neither run nor hide from God (Psalm 139:7-12; Amos 9:2-4).
 - 2. God’s concern for man (Acts 10:34-35).
 - 3. God’s love for all mankind no matter how wicked (4:10-11; cf. John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Peter 3:9).
 - 4. God’s providence. He is able to use all incidents in the life of His servants for their good and His glory.
 - 5. A preacher’s responsibility (3:2; cf. 2 Timothy 4:2).
- C. The conditional nature of prophecy. God’s wrath is conditioned on man’s repentance or lack of it (3:9-10; Jeremiah 18:7-10; Acts 17:30-31).
- D. Opportunity begets challenge.
- E. God, in contrast to man, is more concerned with spiritual matters rather than with material things.

VI. Jonah in the New Testament

- A. Jesus compares His experiences in the grave to Jonah’s in the fish (Matthew 12:39-40).
- B. Jesus contrasts His preaching and the lack of response to it Nineveh’s response to Jonah’s preaching (Matt. 12:41-42; Luke 11:29-32).

Questions on Jonah

1. What does the name “Jonah” mean?
2. Who was Jonah’s father?
3. Where was Jonah from?
4. Who was king of Israel during Jonah’s ministry?
5. Describe Jonah as a prophet.
6. What is unique about Jonah and the book of Jonah?
7. When was the book of Jonah written?
8. What was Tarshish? What did the people in Jonah’s day believe about it?
9. What was Nineveh?
10. Describe the conditions of Israel during the time of Jonah.
11. Describe the nation of Assyria and the nature of its people.
12. Where did God want to send Jonah to preach?
13. What was Jonah’s response to the command of God? Why?
14. What happened to Jonah when he tried to flee?
15. Why do you think God spared Jonah’s life instead of sending another prophet?
16. What is the basic message of the book of Jonah in relation to:
 - a. Nineveh?
 - b. Jonah?
17. What was the response of the Ninevites when Jonah delivered his message to them?

18. What was the reaction of Jonah to the Ninevites' response?
19. Considering Matthew 12:38-42 and Luke 11:29-32, who confirmed the historicity of the account of Jonah?
20. How does the book of Jonah display the universality of God's:
- a. Presence?
 - b. Concern for man?
 - c. Love for all mankind—even the wicked?
 - d. Providence?

Micah

I. The Man

- A. His name means “Who is like Jehovah?” (cf. 7:18). “As his name suggests, Micah was certainly a God-exalting prophet” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 222).
- B. He was from the city of Moresheth-Gath.
 - 1. Located in Judah, it was about 20 to 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem not far from the border of the Philistines.
 - 2. Possessing good, fertile soil, it lied within good farming country in the Shephelah.
 - 3. It was near the great coastal road which ran “north and south from Egypt to Mesopotamia, along which the armies of antiquity passed” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 234).
 - 4. “Like Amos, Micah was a man of the country who had time for thought and clear vision” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 261).
- C. Nothing is known of his occupation other than prophet.
- D. A glimpse of his character is seen in 3:8. “But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression And to Israel his sin.”
 - 1. “Blessed with Amos’ passion for justice and Hosea’s heart of love, Micah’s spirit burned with indignation over how the city dwellers oppressed the peasants. Yet his teaching is not entirely unique; he echoes great truths proclaimed by his predecessors and contemporaries, especially Isaiah of Jerusalem” (*Nelson’s*, 261).
 - 2. “The style of writing is rough, like a peasant writer of his times. It portrays quick temperament and brisk change from one subject to another and from one person to another. Sometimes he is bold, stern, severe; at other times he drops into sorrowful, loving tones” (Deal, 223).
- E. He was a contemporary of Isaiah.
 - 1. Isaiah’s and Micah’s messages are so similar that some have called the book of Micah “Isaiah in miniature.” Though contemporaries with a similar message, they were quite different.
 - a. Isaiah was of the city, one who was closely in contact with world affairs, an associate of kings and princes. He was the leader of the “Jehovah Party” (loyalists of his day) which stood in opposition to pro-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian parties.
 - b. Micah was a simple country man of unknown parentage who had no interest in political affairs but had deep compassion for the oppressed and great concern for the spiritual and moral problems of his people.

2. He was the last of the prophets sent to announce the doom of Israel. Where Amos and Hosea were sent directly to Israel to prophesy, Isaiah and Micah, prophets of Judah, announced Israel's imminent destruction and the threat of ungodliness which had also spread to Judah (1:3-9).
3. Micah condemned in Judah the same things Amos and Hosea had in Israel.

II. The Date

- A. The date of the book is somewhere between 735-700 B.C.
- B. The prophetic work of Micah is dated by the reigns of Jotham (740-732 B.C.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.), and Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.), kings of Judah (1:1).
 1. Though contemporary with Isaiah, Micah evidently began prophesying a few years later (Isa. 1:1; Mic. 1:1).
 2. He began prophesying before the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C. (1:5-7; 6:9-16) and continued into the reign of Hezekiah (3:12; cf. Jer. 26:17-19).
 3. His description of the prevailing corruption and immorality would fit the conditions which prevailed during the reign of Ahaz (732-716 B.C.).
- C. "Although Micah deals primarily with Judah, he also addresses the northern kingdom of Israel and predicts the fall of Samaria (1:6). Much of his ministry, therefore, took place before the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 722 B.C. His strong denunciations of idolatry and immorality also suggest that his ministry largely preceded the sweeping religious reforms of Hezekiah. Thus, Micah's prophecies ranged from about 735 to 710 B.C." (*Nelson's*, 261).
- D. "His spoken ministry was doubtless far larger than his written prophecies, which are the summation of his total ministry. He possibly prophesied as long as fifty years. His book was probably composed near the end of his ministry. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and possibly knew Hosea in that prophet's old age" (Deal, 222).

III. The Setting

- A. Politically.
 1. Judah continued to prosper following the reign of Uzziah (767-740 B.C.).
 2. In the time of Ahaz (732 B.C.), Judah was threatened by a coalition of Israel and Syria because it would not join them in an alliance against Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (744-727 B.C.). Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser for help resulting in Judah paying heavy tribute to Assyria and losing her independence.
 3. Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), a successor to Tiglath-pileser, invaded Judah in 712/711 B.C. in order to quell a state of revolt (Isa. 20).
 4. Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.), successor to Sargon II, invaded Judah in 702/701 B.C. to aid in securing his western provinces.
 - a. It is said he shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a "bird in a cage."
 - b. He claimed to capture 46 Judean cities including Lachish.
 5. In summary.
 - a. "These were trying days, constantly overshadowed by the threat of invasion and foreign rule" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 188).

- b. "Micah's ministry was during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, roughly parallel to Isaiah. He lived to see the arrival of the Assyrian army, the fall of Damascus in Syria, the war between Israel and Judah, the conquering of Galilee, the destruction of Samaria and the northern kingdom of Israel, and Sargon's defeat of Egypt. It was a violent, unsettled period of time" (*Shaw's*, 234-235).

B. Socially.

1. Both Israel and Judah present a dark picture both socially and morally during the time of Micah.
2. Micah laments the disappearance of the righteous man (7:2). In his place, he sees four classes of evil-doers.
 - a. Land grabbers (2:1-2,9; 7:5-7).
 - 1) The person displaced would have nowhere to go for necessities.
 - 2) This practice shows a disregard for the Law of Moses (Lev. 25: 10, 23).
 - b. Rulers who hated good and loved evil (3:1-4; 7:3). They were as cannibals, butchers and/or wild beasts.
 - c. False prophets who divined for money (3:11).
 - d. Priests who taught for hire (3:11).
3. In spite of the fact they were involved in idolatry (5:12-15), the people had a false sense of security (3:11). They thought God's favor could be bought with sacrifice (6:5-7).
4. "Socially and morally Judah presented a dark picture during the latter part of the eighth century. Rulers sold the rights of men and vested interests gained control of the lands, taking away the privileges of the people. The wealthy coveted the lands (2:1-2) and robbed the poor (2:8), casting women out of their possessions (2:9). Corrupt business ethics were practiced (6:11). The people were under the powerful control of false prophets (2:11) who prophesied for reward (3:6,11) and priests who taught for hire (3:11). Rulers in their greed were as cannibals (3:1-3,9), and judges judged for a bribe (7:3). The corrupt concept of Jehovah held by the people was little different from the heathen concept of their gods (3:11b); they kept the statutes of Omri and Ahab (6:16). These conditions fanned the indignation of the prophet Micah into white heat, and he held not back from declaring to the nation their sins and to the people their transgressions (3:8)" (Hailey, 189).

C. Religiously.

1. Hezekiah brought sweeping religious reforms (See 2 Chron. 29-31).
 - a. The priests cleansed themselves and the inner part of the house of God.
 - b. Idolatrous altars were destroyed and the true worship of God restored.
 - c. The brazen serpent which had been fashioned by Moses in the wilderness was destroyed because it had become an object of worship.

2. The people did not take these reforms to hearts.
 - a. It was a superficial religious fervor and did not bring permanent results.
 - b. Religion was just a matter of form and ceremonial observance.
- D. Overall. Israel was on the verge of being destroyed but, by God's grace and the influence of Isaiah, Micah and Hezekiah, Judah would survive another century before being taken captive by Babylon.

IV. The Message

- A. The book is divided into three collections of speeches.
 1. The first is to be heard by all people as a general cry against God's people (1:2).
 2. The second specifically singles out the heads of Israel (3:1).
 3. The third is for all God's people (6:1).
- B. "Burdened by the abusive treatment of the poor, the book of Micah rebukes anyone who would use social status or political power for personal gain. One third of Micah exposes the sins of his countrymen, another third pictures the punishment God is about to send, and the final third holds out the hope of restoration once that discipline has ended. Through it all, God's righteous demands upon His people are clear: 'To do justly; to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God' (6:8)" (*Nelson's*, 261).
- C. "Micah's apparent purpose was to bring both nations (Israel and Judah - gt) to repentance and so avert disaster, if possible. He served notice that if they did not repent, their calamity would be certain. Finally, he encouraged the faithful among them to look to the future for ultimate deliverance from oppression. He rebuked the rich for oppressing the poor and encouraged the poor to look to God for justice. To encourage social justice was one of his great aims. His references to the coming, glorious Messianic kingdom are all worked into the other prophecies" (*Deal*, 222).
- D. "The book of Micah is a collection of sermons and prophecies, largely arranged by topic rather than by when they were preached. The style varies, depending on the time and circumstance. Sometimes Micah is harsh and vigorous, at other times tender and compassionate. His language is always straightforward and forceful...The basis for Micah's message was the righteousness of God, much like the emphasis of the prophet Amos, who was preaching to the northern kingdom of Israel. Micah stressed that God demands righteous actions from us, not outward show...Micah presented a message of judgment. God will bring judgment on the land to destroy it if it does not mend its ways (3:12). A century later, Jeremiah remembered those words and referred to them in his prophecy (26:18)" (*Shaw's*, 235).
- E. To summarize Micah's message.
 1. Judgment will come from God (1:3ff).
 2. Samaria is to be overthrown (1:6-7).
 3. Judah will fall to Babylon (3:12; 4:10).
 - a. Micah is the first prophet to specifically threaten Judah with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

- b. The threat of Micah caused Hezekiah to repent (Jer. 26:18).
 - c. "During the ministry of Micah, the kingdom of Israel continued to crumble inwardly and outwardly until its collapse in 722 B.C. The Assyrian empire reached the zenith of its power and became a constant threat to Judah. Babylon was still under Assyrian domination, and Micah's prediction of a future Babylonian captivity for Judah (4:10) must have seemed unlikely" (*Nelson's*, 261-263).
4. The advance of the Assyrian army through Micah's section of the country is described (1:10-16). (cf. Isa. 20:28-34).

V. The Lessons

- A. Three great texts in Micah.
 - 1. 3:12. This verse is the keystone and climax of Micah's message of judgment. It was so noteworthy that it was remembered for more than a century and was instrumental in saving Jeremiah's life (Jer. 26:17-19).
 - 2. 5:2. Micah focused the people's attention on a humble birthplace for their king, not a palace in the capital. He would share the common man's burden and be his deliverer (See Matt. 2:1-11).
 - 3. 6:8. Micah summarized the cardinal teachings of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah in this simple yet profound statement.
 - a. Amos was the prophet of justice (Amos 5:24).
 - b. Hosea declared God's unfailing mercy (Hosea 11:8; 14:4-7).
 - c. Isaiah pleaded with Israel to walk in communion with God (Isa. 1:16-20).
- B. "Micah alone proclaims the actual place of the Savior's birth (5:2). 'Bethlehem' is named as the place from which the 'ruler' whose goings forth are to be 'everlasting' shall come. Only the birth of Christ could be meant here. Even the Jewish people before Christ's coming recognized this as the birthplace of the coming Messiah (Matt. 2:1-6)" (Deal, 223).
- C. "What does the Lord require of you?" (6:8). God's requirements for all men are set forth in clear, simple terms.
- D. The church will be established (4:1-2; cf. Isa. 2:1-4).

VI. Micah in the New Testament

- A. The Messiah from Bethlehem (5:2; Matt. 2:6; John 7:42).
- B. A man's enemies are those of his own household (7:6; Matt. 10:36; Luke 12:53).
- C. The universalism of Micah's vision of peace (4:1-3) shows a kindred thought to Mark 11:17.

Questions on Micah

1. What does the name “Micah” mean?
2. How did his name relate to his prophetic work?
3. Where was Micah from? Where is it located?
4. What do you know about Micah’s character? (3:8)
5. With what prophet was Micah contemporary?
6. Compare and contrast Micah with the prophet who was contemporary with him.
7. When did the events in the book of Micah take place?
8. Who were kings of Judah during Micah’s prophetic ministry?
9. What city’s fall was predicted by Micah? (1:6)
10. Describe the political setting during Micah’s ministry.
11. Describe the social setting during Micah’s ministry.
12. Describe the religious setting during Micah’s ministry.
13. What are the main messages of the book of Micah?
14. To whom, mostly, were these messages given?
15. Who was the intended audience for Micah’s:
 - a. First speech? (1:2)
 - b. Second speech? (3:1)
 - c. Third speech? (6:1)
16. What was Micah the first prophet to predict about Jerusalem and its temple? (3:12; 4:10)

17. Why is 3:12 such an important passage in the book of Micah?
18. Why is 5:2 such a significant Messianic prophecy?
19. What principle is stated in 6:8? What application, if any, can be made of it today?
20. What prophecy does Micah make of the coming kingdom? (4:1-2; cf. Isa. 2:1-4)s

Nahum

I. The Man

- A. His name means “consolation” (1:1).
 - 1. It could also be translated “comfort” or “compassion.”
 - 2. “In the Hebrew original, Nahum means ‘comforter.’ Certainly Nahum comforted God’s people with promises of blessing, but he flayed the wicked without mercy” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 224).
- B. He was from Elkosh (1:1).
 - 1. “According to 1:1, the prophet was called the ‘Elkoshite.’ Although the precise location of Elkosh is unknown, many scholars believe that Elkosh was a town in southern Judah (later called Elcese) between Jerusalem and Gaza. This would make Nahum a prophet of the southern kingdom and may explain his interest in the triumph of Judah (1:5; 2:2)” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 264).
 - 2. “Nahum was born in Judah, possibly at Elkosh, near Capernaum. The word Capernaum actually means ‘village of Nahum.’ He could have been a resident, or even the founder, of Capernaum” (Deal, 224).
- C. Nothing is known of his occupation other than prophet.

II. The Date

- A. The date of the writing of this book has been greatly disputed but estimates range from 663 to 612 B.C.
 - 1. Since Nineveh was destroyed by the combined armies of Cyaxares the Mede and Nabopolassar the Babylonian in 612 B.C., it had to be written previous to that time.
 - 2. The earliest date identifiable in the book is the fall of No-amon, the Egyptian Thebes (3:8), which occurred about 663 B.C.
- B. “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*, 264).
- C. “Jonah had been sent by God about 100 years earlier to preach repentance to the Ninevites and a large portion of them had responded favorably. The intervening years, however, brought a change of heart as well as a change of government, and Nineveh went back to its old ways. God therefore gave Nahum the task of preaching judgment to the Assyrian capital sometime between 664 B.C. and the city’s fall in 612 B.C.” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 239).

III. The Setting

A. Assyria.

1. In general.

- a, "Assyria was a loosely-knit empire of different peoples, held together by trade and strong, cruel rulers. It was a military state throughout its later history. Its idolatrous religion was a part of the general condition. Cruelty and savagery dominated its control of its people. Its far-flung wars and oppression gradually exhausted its resources (human and financial)" (E. Glen Barnhart, *An Overview of the Old Testament*, 42).
- b. The Assyrian people, in general, and their rulers, specifically, could be characterized as being excessively cruel (3:1).

2. Her rulers.

- "The Assyrian records leave no doubt but that through all the nation's history they were always cruel and violent and barbaric; ever boasting of their victories, gloating that 'space failed for corpses', that they 'made pyramids of human heads', and 'covered pillars with the flayed skins of their rivals' ...Assurbanipal (669-625 B.C.) was exceptionally cruel. He even boasts of his violence and shameful atrocities: how he ruthlessly tore off the lips and limbs of kings, forced three captured rulers of Elam to drag his chariot through the streets, compelled a prince to wear around his neck the decapitated head of his king, and how he and his queen feasted in a garden with the head of a Chaldean monarch whom he had forced to commit suicide hanging from a tree above them. No other king even of Assyria ever boasts of such inhuman and atrocious barbarities" (George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 108-110).

3. The city of Nineveh.

- a. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and during Nahum's ministry was at the peak of wealth, power, and fame (See 3:16-17).
- b. "The main part of the city was then about thirty miles long and ten miles wide, protected by huge walls and supplied with water by the Tigris. From the fact that Jonah recognized 120,000 babies (not knowing the right hand from the left—Jonah 4:11), it is thought to have had a population of about one million" (Deal, 225).
- c. "Up to the time it (Nineveh) had been impregnable. The city, with its walls one hundred feet high and wide enough for three chariots to drive side by side on its top, had remained unconquered for more than a century. It is said that outside this massive wall was a moat one hundred and forty feet wide and sixty feet deep, dominated by some twelve hundred defense towers" (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, 289).
- d. Its overthrow.
 - 1) "Esarhaddon II was Nineveh's last king. The Medes, with the Babylonians and Scythians, first razed all the surrounding fortresses (3:12), and then beleaguered the city. The Ninevites proclaimed a fast of one hundred days to propitiate their gods (cf. Jonah 3:5); nevertheless the city fell. Ktesias describes how the last night of the besieged city was

spent in drunken orgies (1:10; 2:5), in which the effeminate king set the example. To precipitate the catastrophe, the Tigris overflowed, breaking breaches in the walls, whereupon the king, seeing the fate impending, burnt himself alive in his palace (3:15-19), and the city was, of course, subsequently plundered of its rich spoil (2:10-14). It fell c. 611 b.c. All that remains today of the ancient city are two great mounds..." (Robinson, 110-111).

- 2) "In 614 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon headed a coalition of all the enemies of Assyria. For two years they laid siege to the city of Nineveh. It appeared that the Assyrians might hold out. However, heavy rains came and flooded the Tigris river which in turn swept away a huge section of the city wall. Through this gap the enemy forced their way and captured the city. See 3:13; 2:6" (Wilson Adams, *A Survey of the Bible*, an unpublished work, 170).
- B. Judah. "The poor people of Judah and Jerusalem were spectators of all these horrors. Indeed they had beheld for generations an almost endless succession of Assyrian invasions of Palestine; Shalmanezar II in 842 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III in 734, Shalmanezar IV and Sargon II in 724-22, Sennacherib in 701, Esarhaddon in 672, and now Assurbanipal" (Robinson, 109).

IV. The Message

- A. The book of Nahum, in the Hebrew, is a very lyrical, poetic book.
1. It might be compared to the song of Deborah in Judges 5.
 2. As poetry, it has elegiac meter: three stresses in the first half of a line, two in the second.
 3. "In the original the book is actually a poem. Chapter 1 is a psalm in alphabetical form, setting forth the majesty and power of God and His mercy and justice in dealing with mankind" (Deal, 224-225).
- B. The message of Nahum is the downfall of Nineveh.
1. While in the book of Jonah God forgave Nineveh, in Nahum He announces and executes its doom (2:11-13).
 - a. He prophesied the exact means of its downfall (1:8).
 - b. They would make a frenzied defense (2:4,8; 3:8,13-14) but they would suffer a wound beyond healing (3:19,7).
 2. The inspiration of his message is seen in that he prophesied in a time when Assyria and Nineveh showed no signs of decay (1:12; 3:16).
 3. While saying nothing of the sins of Judah, he wrote for their benefit assuring them that as alarming as their circumstances might be, the nation threatening them would fall.
- C. "Nahum's message is one of coming judgment for the Ninevites. Their sins will be punished, specifically their idolatry (1:14), arrogance (1:11), murder, lies, treachery, superstition, and social sins (3:1-19). For all of this the city will be destroyed. Nineveh was, he said, a city filled with blood (3:1), a graphic description of the awful depths to which the nation of Assyria had sunk" (Shaw's, 239).

- D. "Nahum single-mindedly proclaims the doom of the Assyrian capital...The brief book of Nahum can be divided into three parts: the destruction of Nineveh decreed (ch. 1), the destruction of Nineveh described (ch. 2), and the destruction of Nineveh deserved (ch. 3)" (*Nelson's*, 266).
- E. "The purpose is clear—to predict the ultimate destruction of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian empire..“Its second purpose was to comfort the Jewish people and assure them of final triumph and deliverance; the captor of the ten tribes was at last being punished" (Deal, 224).
- F. A summary.
1. Nahum begins with a grand ode to the goodness and severity of God (ch. 1; Rom. 11:22).
 - a. God is depicted as being jealous for His good cause.
 - b. He cannot condone the wickedness of Assyria, and consoles His own people, Judah.
 2. Nahum then graphically describes the siege of Nineveh (ch. 2).
 - a. Their defenses will be useless.
 - b. The city will be flooded, her people taken captive and her treasure plundered.
 - c. Fear will fill the hearts of the Ninevites and they will be destroyed.
 3. Nahum concludes by stating that the doom of Nineveh is sure and cannot be changed (ch. 3, esp. v. 19).
 - a. Because of their cruelty and idolatry, they will reap what they have sown (3:1-13).
 - b. He challenges them to make preparations for war, then watch their strength desert them (3:14-19) and listen to the cheers of the nations as Nineveh disappears forever (See Zephaniah 2:13-15; Psa. 9:17).

V. The Lessons

- A. God rules in the kingdoms of men.
1. "The foundation of Nahum's message is that God rules over all the earth, even over those who do not acknowledge him as God" (*Shaw's*, 239).
 2. No nation is too powerful for God to destroy.
 3. God's patience with wicked nations eventually runs out.
 - a. Compare Nahum 1:2-3 with 2 Peter 3:9-12.
 - b. For a nation to survive, it must be established upon and directed by the principles of righteousness and truth.
- B. "The fact that Nahum comes with a message of doom 150 years after God sent Jonah with a message of mercy reveals God's way of dealing with mankind. He offers plenteous mercy. If this is rejected—after all means fail—justice must come" (Deal, 225).
- C. The book serves as a reminder of the need for righteous indignation.
1. Compassion can never be exercised at the expense of righteousness. Love and longsuffering never equal weakness or tolerance of sin.

2. "Surely there is a place for a book like Nahum even in the revelation of Grace... We need it. It reminds us that love degenerates into a vague diffusion of kindly feeling unless it is balanced by the capacity of a righteous indignation. A man who is deeply and truly religious is always a man of wrath. Because he loves God and his fellow men, he hates and despises inhumanity, cruelty and wickedness. Every good man sometimes prophesies like Nahum" (Raymond Calkins, *The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets*, 86).

Questions on Nahum

1. What does the name “Nahum” mean?
2. How did his name relate to Nahum’s prophetic ministry?
3. Where was Nahum from? How did that relate to his work as a prophet?
4. When did the events in the book of Nahum take place?
5. Describe the setting of the book in relation to Judah.
6. Describe the nation of Assyria in relation to its:
 - a. People.
 - b. Rulers.
 - c. Impact on Judah.
7. What is the basic message of Nahum?
8. To whom was the message directed?
9. Compare and contrast the basic message of the book of Nahum to that of the book of Jonah.
10. What might be a secondary purpose of the book of Nahum?
11. How does the book of Nahum illustrate the principle that God rules in the kingdoms of men?
12. What is righteous indignation? How does the book of Nahum show that it is consistent with such Biblical principles as love, mercy, forbearance and longsuffering?

Habakkuk

I. The Man

- A. His name means “embrace” or “ardent embrace” (1:1).
 - 1. “Habaquq is an unusual Hebrew name derived from the verb habaq, ‘embrace.’ Thus his name probably means ‘One Who Embraces’ or ‘Clings.’ At the end of his book this name becomes appropriate because Habakkuk chooses to cling firmly to God regardless of what happens to his nation (3:16-19)” (*Nelson’s New King James Bible, Slimline Reference Edition, Introductory Notes to Habakkuk*, 823).
 - 2. “Habakkuk means ‘one who embraces,’ which Jerome thought may be taken to represent one who wrestles with God in prayer, as did Jacob” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 226).
- B. Nothing is known of his home or of any other occupation.
 - 1. “The fact that he is called a ‘prophet’ (1:1; 3:1) may suggest that he was a member of a professional prophetic guild. In addition, the musical reference at the conclusion of the book indicates Habakkuk may have been a priest connected with the temple worship in Jerusalem” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 267).
 - 2. “Little is known about Habakkuk himself; he states only that he was a prophet (1:1). Some think he may have been of the tribe of Simeon. Tradition says he fled to Egypt when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, but that he later returned to Judah, where he died. His tomb is said to have been shown in ancient times in the hill country of Judah, but this is not historically certain” (Deal, 226).
 - 3. Rabbinic tradition says he was the son of the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:16f).
 - 4. The apocryphal book, *Bel and the Dragon*, states that he was connected with the tribe of Levi and that he was carried by the hair of his head by the angel of the Lord to Babylon to supply Daniel with pottage when Daniel was in the lion’s den (33-39).

II. The Date

- A. The date of the writing is somewhere between 612 and 606 B.C.
 - 1. It is after the fall of Assyria to Babylon which took place in 612 B.C.
 - 2. Habakkuk 3:16 places it before the Chaldean invasion, their oppression of Judah and the carrying away of the first group of Judeans to Babylon (605 B.C.).
- B. “The date of the prophecy is fixed in relation to a statement in Habakkuk 1:6. Assyria had fallen and Chaldea (i.e. Babylon) was then the primary world power.

Yet the Babylonians had not yet invaded Judah (Hab. 3:16). Since Assyria fell to Babylon in 612 B.C. and Babylon invaded Judah in 606 B.C., the book must be dated within this period" (Rubel Shelly, *A Book-By-Book Study of the Old Testament*, 112).

- C. "Although the book of Habakkuk includes no reference to the reign of a king, internal evidence indicates a date between the death of King Josiah (609 B.C.) and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity (605 B.C.). The only explicit time references in Habakkuk are to the Babylonian invasion as an imminent event (1:6; 2:1; 3:16). The deplorable conditions of the people (1:2-4) imply a date after the untimely death of Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.) and early in the wicked reign of King Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C.)" (*Nelson's*, 267).

III. The Setting

- A. "Habakkuk prayed and prophesied in times of crisis. Shortly before he began his ministry, the international scene was shocked by events of far-reaching import: the Assyrian Empire was crushed, never to regain its power; the Egyptians, after slaying Josiah, king of Judah (609 B.C.), were themselves utterly defeated (605 B.C.). The new world power, concentrated in Babylon and executed by the vigorous Nebuchadnezzar, was stretching itself across the breadth of the earth...Within a period of approximately twenty years the Chaldeans swept over Judah in successive waves, and ultimately destroyed the country and took its inhabitants away into captivity (597, 587 B.C.)" (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. III, 3).
- B. "In the year 605, at the great battle of Carchemish, the Babylonians defeated what was left of the old Assyrian army and the Egyptians. That opened the way for Babylon as the new world power to exert its influence along the major trade route that ran from the Fertile Crescent down to Egypt, running right through Judah. It was only a matter of time before Judah would feel the heavy hand of Babylon, and Habakkuk, with prophetic insight, knew that" (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 240).
- C. The situation in Judah.
1. Jehoahaz succeeded his father, Josiah, upon Josiah's death at the battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.).
 - a. Jehoahaz was 23 years old at the time.
 - b. His reign is summarized in 2 Kings 23:32: "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done."
 - c. He reigned three months being deposed by Pharaoh-necho of Egypt who put Jehoahaz's brother, Eliakim, on the throne.
 2. Jehoiakim.
 - a. Eliakim's name was changed by Pharaoh-necho to Jehoiakim.
 - b. He reigned 11 years (609-598 B.C.).
 - c. He was as wicked as his brother.

IV. The Message

- A. The book of Habakkuk differs from other prophetic books in one aspect: instead of taking God's message directly to the people, Habakkuk takes the complaint of the people to God, representing them in the complaint.
1. "He does not teach as other prophets do, but addresses God and questions the justice if not the reality of divine providence" (J.B. Tidwell, *The Bible Book By Book*, 146).
 2. "Habakkuk did not cry out against the sins of Judah as such, but came at the problem in a different way. Because he was convinced that God is good and all-powerful, he wondered out loud why God allowed these things to happen. Granted Judah was sinful, but God was strong enough to do something about it, so why didn't he? That kind of approach to the problem is almost unheard of in the Old Testament. The book of Job looks at evil in somewhat this fashion, but Habakkuk is alone among the prophets in doing so" (Shaw's, 241-242).
- B. "Habakkuk apparently attempted to awaken Judah to her spiritual needs and warn her of impending doom by the Babylonians. Thinking they had little to fear, Judah seems to have grown more wicked after the fall of Assyria. He warns them to the contrary. Babylon stood ready to carry them away as Assyria did Israel" (Deal, 226).
- C. Written in the style of a complaint and an answer, the book contains a cry to God because of the wickedness, injustice and disregard for the law of God in Judah.
- D. The book has three major divisions.
1. Habakkuk's problem (1:2-11).
 - a. Complaint: How can God allow lawlessness to go unchecked?
 - b. Answer: God is raising up the Chaldeans to take care of the evil-doers.
 2. A new problem (1:12 - 2:20).
 - a. Complaint: How can God use such a cruel power to punish a people less wicked than the Chaldeans?
 - b. Answer: The wicked man will not last because evil is self-destructive.
 - 1) The righteous will live by faith (2:4).
 - 2) A series of woes are pronounced upon the aggressor: for increasing that which is not one's own (2:6), against the one who covets (2:9), against the one who builds a town with blood (2:12), against the one who gives his neighbor drink (2:15), and against all idolaters (2:19).
 3. A poem with musical notations (ch. 3).
 - a. It is a beautiful expression of faith—the faith of the prophet at its peak.
 - b. It has two divisions.
 - 1) A vision of God's appearance for judgment (3:1-16).
 - 2) A hymn of faith (3:17-19).

V. The Lessons

- A. The universal supremacy of God's judgment upon the wicked. God may tolerate wickedness for a time but ultimately it will be judged.
- B. Faithfulness is the guarantee of permanence because evil is self-destructive.
- C. The reality of divine discipline. The book of Job presents the suffering of an individual while Habakkuk reveals the suffering of a nation.
- D. "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4).
 1. "In what seems to be merely an incidental contrast between the arrogance of the Babylonians and the humble submission of the righteous to God, Habakkuk states a fundamental principle of the gospel: 'The just shall live by his faith.' When Paul (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) and the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 10:38) quote this verse, they merely apply the principle laid down by the prophet regarding the importance of faith in man's relationship to God" (*Nelson's*, 269).
 2. "Those who have asked, 'Why, in a world governed by a good God, does wickedness so often triumph?' will find Habakkuk wrestling with the same question...Yet...Habakkuk has not given us an intellectual answer to the problem of evil. His answers are existential: they teach us how we can go on living and believing in God in spite of certain missing answers. That...is the real force of the book's most famous text: 'The just shall live by his faith'...This book does not make everything clear, does not pretend to explain exactly what God is about...So maybe we can feel a sort of kinship with Habakkuk...for he is one of the faithful (like some of us) who believes that God is working in history, all right, but who must acknowledge that at the present what God is doing seems incomprehensible or may even seem to be counterproductive...it is what the faithful do when the vision is lacking or downright negative in its implications that is the ultimate concern of this prophet...God has not answered Habakkuk's questions in rational terms. But He has come. As the coming of God in the book of Job answered none of Job's questions but provided a whole new perspective on it all, so the coming of God to Habakkuk confirms his belief that the God of the Exodus is the Living God and gives him strength to remain faithful, in spite of anything that may come (3:17-18)" (Donald E. Gowan, *The Triumph of Faith in Habakkuk*, 9-11, 36-37, 83).

VI. Habakkuk in the New Testament

- A. 1:5 describes the perplexity caused by the opportunity afforded by the gospel (Acts 13:41).
- B. 2:14 speaks of an earth full of knowledge of the Lord as waters cover the sea. This idea beautifully expresses the ideal of the gospel.
- C. "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:37-38).

Questions on Habakkuk

1. What does the name “Habakkuk” mean?
2. How does Habakkuk’s name relate to his prophetic message?
3. What is known of a personal nature about Habakkuk?
4. When was the book of Habakkuk written?
5. Briefly describe the setting of the book of Habakkuk.
6. Who were kings of Judah during the ministry of Habakkuk?
7. How does the book of Habakkuk differ from other prophetic books of the Old Testament?
8. What is the basic message of the book of Habakkuk?
9. What are the three main divisions of the book of Habakkuk?
10. How is evil self-destructive? How is that illustrated by the book of Habakkuk?
11. How does the book of Habakkuk demonstrate the reality of divine discipline?
12. What is meant by the statement “the just shall live by his faith?” (2:4) What application is made of this principle in the New Testament? (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)

Zephaniah

I. The Man

- A. His name means “Jehovah hides,” “He whom Jehovah has hidden” or “Jehovah hides or protects” (1:1).
 - “The name Zephaniah means ‘the Lord hath hid,’ or perhaps ‘whom Jehovah hides or shelters.’ From the nature of his judgment message, he would need God’s sheltering” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 227).
- B. There are two other “Zephaniahs” mentioned in the Old Testament but there is no reason to connect either with the prophet (1 Chron. 6:36; Jer. 21:1).
- C. He was a great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, king of Judah (716-687 B.C.), thus of the royal bloodline of Judah (1:1).
 1. He is the only prophet to trace his ancestry back four generations.
 2. “Normally the genealogy of a prophet is traced no further than his father. Zephaniah, however, traces his ancestry back four generations in order to demonstrate his royal lineage as the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah (1:1). Thus, he was a distant relative of King Josiah and those to whom he addresses his prophecy” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 271).
- D. He is thought to have lived in Jerusalem.
 1. He refers to it as “this place” (1:4).
 2. He is intimately familiar with its topography.

II. The Date

- A. The date of the writing is somewhere between 650 and 625 B.C. with 630 to 625 being most likely.
 1. He prophesied in the days of Josiah, the last good king of Judah who reigned from 641 to 609 B.C. (See 2 Kings 22-23).
 2. He wrote about 100 years after the Assyrian captivity of Israel began. Samaria fell in 721 B.C.
- B. “Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah (640-609 b.c.). More precisely it can be inferred from his allusions to the state of morality and religion (1:4ff, 8, 9, 12; 3:1-3,7) that his activities took place before the great reformation of 621 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 23:4ff)” (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. V, 1051-1052).
- C. “Zephaniah was the first of a series of prophets sent by God to the southern kingdom of Judah before its fall in 587 B.C. and after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722. Isaiah and Micah had lived to see the fall of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, but had died before Zephaniah’s time. Zephaniah was followed by Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel, all of whom had a special message to Judah in the south. Regrettably, that nation, too, paid no attention to the warnings sent from God” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 244).
- D. “Zephaniah fixes the time of his prophecy ‘in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah’ (1:1). Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 B.C., and 2:13 indicates that the destruction of Nineveh (612 B.C.) was still in the future. Thus, the book of

Zephaniah can be dated between 640 and 612 B.C. Because Josiah's religious reforms began c. 628 B.C., and because Zephaniah catalogs lists of sins prevalent prior to the reforms (1:3-13; 3:1-7), the time of Zephaniah may be dated more precisely as occurring c. 635 to 625 B.C. Zephaniah's forceful prophecy may even have been a factor in the reforms that took place" (*Nelson's*, 271).

III. The Setting

A. Judah.

1. "Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh...It is doubtful that at any period of its history Judah had a more wicked ruler than Manasseh...He rebuilt the high places, reared altars to Baal and Ashtoreth, and built altars to the host of heaven... (see 2 Kings 21; 2 Chron. 33:1-9...Later Manasseh tried to correct the wickedness of his earlier years, but apparently without success (2 Chron. 33:10-20). Ammon who succeeded Manasseh, followed in the steps of his father; his reign was like-wise one of great wickedness (2 Chron. 33:21-25). Josiah...was the last good king to reign over 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...The cleansing of the temple was followed by a passover such as had not been observed with like enthusiasm in many years (see 2 Kings 22-23; 2 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*, 223-224).
2. Religious and moral conditions.
 - a. The reforms of Josiah reached their peak in the 18th year of his reign.
 - b. In spite of the reforms, Judah had the same ungodly attitude that characterized Israel.
 - 1) The people appeared to be cruel and corrupt.
 - 2) Social injustice and moral corruption were widespread.
 - 3) Luxury and extravagance abounded.
 - 4) Idols were still worshiped.
 - 5) The people refused to receive correction (3:2,7).

B. Other nations.

1. Assyria.
 - a. In the period from Micah to Zephaniah (700-630 B.C.), Assyria had been able to maintain supremacy over the world but things were changing.
 - b. Though revolts were common in the Assyrian empire, Josiah remained loyal but with the death of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria (668-633 B.C.), c. 633 B.C., the Assyrian empire began to disintegrate.
2. Babylon.
 - a. In 625 B.C., Nabopolassar, king of Babylon (625-605 B.C.), declared the independence of Chaldea causing war between Babylon and Nineveh.

- b. With the help of the Medes, who had captured Ashur, a chief city of Assyria, in 614 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. and then the final remnant of the Assyrian army at Haran in 609 B.C. leaving Babylon the supreme power to the east.
 - 3. Egypt.
 - a. Pharaoh-necho of Egypt had determined to help Assyria at Haran (609 B.C.).
 - 1) Josiah attempted to stop him at Megiddo but was defeated and killed.
 - 2) Egypt then dominated Judah for four years.
 - b. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar pursued Egypt as far south as Judah.
 - 1) Judah then became dominated by Babylon.
 - 2) After his father's death, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to assume the throne taking Daniel and others with him.
- C. "He (Zephaniah - gt) lived in a crucial time in international affairs. Assyria, who for more than a century had dominated southwest Asia, was now declining in power. Babylonia, under Nabopolassar, was soon to gain the supremacy in this area of the world. Although Nineveh did not fall until 612 B.C., Babylonia was the dominant influence as early as 625 B.C., the date of Zephaniah" (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, 287).
- D. "In short time, Nineveh would fall (612 B.C.), and the armies of the Babylonians (and Egypt) would be on Judean soil. God was bringing about His judgment on impenitent Judah and surrounding nations" (E. Glen Barnhart, *An Overview of the Old Testament*, 43).

IV. The Message

- A. A summary.
 - 1. Zephaniah begins his prophecy with an awful picture of doom and devastation when God comes in judgment against Judah and announces that the "day of the Lord is near" (1:2-18).
 - 2. He calls on the meek to repent and seek God so that they can be part of the remnant who will be delivered and restored (2:1-3).
 - 3. He then turns his attention to the heathen nations who will like-wise share in the utter desolation of the "day of the Lord," showing that all people are accountable to Him (2:4-15).
 - 4. He shows Judah her sins and says that if the heathen were to be punished, Judah could also expect to be punished (3:1-7).
 - 5. The book closes on a positive note. A remnant of God's people, after having the wickedness purged from their nation, would be gathered from the nations and returned to their homeland, ultimately pointing to the Messianic age (3:8-20).
- B. The book of Zephaniah could be outlined as follows.
 - 1. Look Within. Judgment coming on Judah (1:1 - 2:3).
 - 2. Look Around. Judgment coming on the nations (2:4 - 3:8).
 - 3. Look Beyond. Judgment gives way to glory (3:9-20).

- C. "...his purpose is two-fold. Israel must be warned and awakened, but so must all nations. The Gentile world is told that God will 'assemble all nations to judgment'" (Deal, 227).
- D. "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*, 271).
- E. "The great and only theme of Zephaniah is the coming 'day of Jehovah', when the Lord would reveal Himself in His fulness to the whole world, judging evil doers, and fulfilling his great purposes of redemption among men" (George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 133).
1. Where Isaiah (39:6), Habakkuk (1:6) and Jeremiah (20:4) specified Babylon as the rod God would use to smite Judah, Zephaniah brought God Himself before the Judeans as the one behind the judgment.
 2. Zephaniah presents the "day of the Lord" as:
 - a. "At hand" (1:7) and "near" (1:14).
 - b. A day of darkness and terror (1:15-16).
 - c. A judgment against sin (1:17).
 - d. Accompanied by great convulsions of nature (1:15).
 - e. To fall upon all creation (1:2-3; 2:1-15; 3:8). Included in the judgments are Philistia, Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon, Chereth, Ammon, Moab, Ethiopia and Assyria, especially Nineveh.
 - f. A day of doom from which only a remnant will escape—redemption would come.
- F. "No hotter book lies in all the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, saltpits, and owls and ravens looking from the windows of desolate places" (George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*, Vol. II, 48).

V. The Lessons

- A. The "day of the Lord" (1:13-14).
1. "As with Amos some one hundred years earlier, the theme of the coming day of the Lord is central for Zephaniah. This day of the Lord is seen as having two components: judgment that results in the destruction of Judah by foreign armies, but also restoration and hope for the people of God. Zephaniah sees this second aspect of the day of the Lord as a terminal event, bringing history to a close. Thus the message shares some characteristics with apocalyptic literature that portrays the end times" (*Nelson's*, 273).
 2. "Zephaniah...brought further insight to the concept of the 'day of the Lord.' Popular opinion assumed that the day of the Lord meant vindication for them in the face of their enemies. Zephaniah told them it meant judgment first for them and then for their foes. The prophet ended with a promise of restoration (3:9-20), looking beyond a mere return to the land to a time of universal blessing for the whole earth" (*Shaw's*, 244-245).

- B. God is the ruler of the universe (1:2) and all nations are accountable to Him (2:4ff).
- C. Acknowledging the rule of God and seeing His judgment in the “day of the Lord,” one should seek the Lord (2:3).

VI. Zephaniah in the New Testament

- A. The book draws a picture of the Messianic age (3:14-20) though not specifically mentioning or describing the Messiah Himself.
- B. Zephaniah states that all nations will worship God (3:9-10).

Questions on Zephaniah

1. What does the name “Zephaniah” mean?
2. How does his name relate to his work as a prophet?
3. Who was Zephaniah’s great-great-grandfather? Why do you think this is mentioned?
4. Where did Zephaniah live?
5. When was the book of Zephaniah written?
6. Describe the political situation in Judah during the time of Zephaniah.
7. Describe the religious situation in Judah during the time of Zephaniah.
8. Describe the moral conditions in Judah during the time of Zephaniah.
9. Briefly describe the status of the following nations and their impact on Judah during the time of Zephaniah.
 - a. Assyria.
 - b. Babylon.
 - c. Egypt.
10. What is the basic message of the book of Zephaniah?
11. To whom was the message of Zephaniah primarily directed?
12. How does the message of judgment on Judah delivered by Zephaniah differ from that of:
 - a. Isaiah? (Isa. 39:6)
 - b. Habakkuk? (Hab. 1:6)
 - c. Jeremiah? (Jer. 20:4)
13. What is the three point outline which could represent the book of Zephaniah?
14. What is meant by the phrase the “day of the Lord?” (1:13-14)
15. How was the “day of the Lord” both a curse and blessing to Judah?

Haggai

I. The Man

- A. His name means “festival” or “festive.”
- “The name of this prophet means ‘festive’ and doubtless refers to rejoicing of some kind. As a prophet of the early restoration period, he represents the joy and gladness with which Judah returned to the native land” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 229).
- B. Knowledge of Haggai is limited to his book and to Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14-16.
1. “We know nothing of his parentage nor from what part of Judah he came” (Deal, 229).
 2. “The prophet Haggai is known only from this book and from two references to him in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. There he is seen working alongside the younger prophet Zechariah in the ministry of encouraging the rebuilding of the temple” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, 274).
- C. Haggai returned to Judea from Babylon with Zerubbabel in 536 B.C.
1. “Haggai returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and evidently lived in Jerusalem. Some interpret 2:3 to mean that he was born in Judah before the 586 B.C. destruction of the first temple and was one of the small company who could remember the splendor of the former temple. This would mean that Haggai was about seventy-five years old when he prophesied in 520 B.C. It is equally likely, however, that he was born in Babylon during the captivity” (*Nelson’s*, 274).
 2. “From the fact that he seems to have seen the ‘glory of the former house’ of the Lord, (or Temple), some think he may have been carried away to Babylon as a child and that he later returned as an old man. This is not conclusive proof, for he could have known of the former Temple, even though he was born in Babylon, which some believe more likely” (Deal, 229).

II. The Date

- A. The date of the writing of the book of Haggai is a four month period, August to December, of the year 520 B.C.
- B. The book was written during the second year of Darius who reigned from 521 to 486 B.C. (1:1).
- C. “Haggai’s work was accomplished about 520 B.C. or shortly afterward. His ministry was evidently short but very important and at that time, quite powerful. He may have prophesied over considerable time, but his main message, that is contained in the book, was likely of brief duration” (Deal, 229).
- D. “All four sermons of Haggai are precisely dated in the year 520 B.C., the second year of the reign of Darius I (521-486 B.C.), king of Persia. The first was delivered on the first day of the Hebrew month of Elul (August-September), the second on the first day of Tishri (September-October), and the last two on the twenty-fourth day of Kislev (November-December)” (*Nelson’s*, 274, 276).

III. The Setting

A. Some pertinent dates.

1. 586 B.C. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
2. 539 B.C. The fall of Babylon. The Medo-Persian empire became the dominant world power.
3. 538 B.C. The decree of Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian empire (538-530 B.C.), which allowed the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.
4. 536 B.C. The first Jews return to Judah. 50,000 are led by Zerubbabel to Judah (Ezra 1:5 - 2:70).
5. 536-535 B.C. The altar of the Temple is rebuilt, the feasts are reinstated and the foundation of the temple is laid (Ezra 3).
6. 535-534 B.C. Opposition to the rebuilding of the temple is encountered (Ezra 4).
7. 534 B.C. The work on the Temple stops (Ezra 4:24).
8. 520 B.C. Haggai and Zechariah prophesy and construction on the Temple is resumed (Ezra 5:1-2; Hag. 1:14-15).
9. 516 B.C. The Temple is completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:14-15).

B. "An international upheaval, resulting in a change of world leadership, then put Cyrus the Persian in charge of what was left of Babylon (539). One of the first things Cyrus did was to allow former captives to return home if they wanted to go. A sizable number of Jews returned, although by no means all of them, and work was begun in the restored community. It was a difficult time. There were walls to be built, houses to construct, a Temple to dedicate, farms and fields to plant, forests to clear, roads to build, and an army to raise for protection. What to do first? After a zealous start on the Temple in Jerusalem, interest waned and work ceased in 536. After sixteen years of inactivity and divided interests, the prophet Haggai preached his message, demanding that work be resumed on the Temple so that God would have a fit dwelling place" (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 245-246).

C. "Haggai, along with Zechariah and Malachi, faced a different situation than had the pre-exilic prophets. Those earlier prophets confronted a people who tended to depend upon physical ceremonies and buildings rather than upon a true relationship with God marked by obedience. In contrast, the post-exilic prophets ministered to a discouraged and apathetic people who were tempted to believe that nothing they did made any difference from a religious standpoint. The destruction of Jerusalem had humbled a once-proud people and they were influenced by the Persian view of all religions as equal in value. As a result, the returning Jews saw little reason to pay careful attention to their distinctive laws and practices, and they felt no need to be overly concerned about rebuilding the temple. Of course, the dangers of this situation were profound. In short order, the Jews would be assimilated into the pagan culture around them; the revelatory heritage would be lost, and the messianic line of promise extinguished. The post-exilic prophets were faced with the task of encouraging the people to distinguish themselves from the other peoples by the character of their obedience, and this obedience had to begin with the rebuilding of the temple and the reestablishment of the Mosaic laws" (*Nelson's*, 276).

IV. The Message

- A. A singular theme: Rebuild the Temple. This theme is stated in four oracles.
1. Oracle one (1:2-11).
 - a. It is dated about August 29, 520 B.C.
 - b. It stated that the time for rebuilding the Temple is long overdue.
 - c. It accused the people of being more interested in their own houses than in God's house and then condemned them for that.
 2. Oracle two (2:1-9).
 - a. It was uttered at the feast of the tabernacles, October 520 B.C. (the 21st day of the 7th month), some two months after the first oracle.
 - b. Its purpose was to encourage those who tended to compare the second temple with the first. The latter glory would exceed the former (2:9).
 3. Oracle three (2:10-19).
 - a. It was spoken on the 24th day of the ninth month (December 520 B.C.) some two months after the second oracle.
 - b. It was perhaps a reply to those who felt that God's blessings were slow in coming.
 - c. It confirmed that blessings would come from the Lord when the Temple was rebuilt (2:16-17).
 4. Oracle four (2:20-23).
 - a. It was given the same day as oracle three.
 - b. It promised divine protection by Zerubbabel (2:20-23).
- B. "Haggai's basic theme is clear: the remnant must reorder its priorities and complete the temple before it can expect the blessings of God" (*Nelson's*, 276).
- C. "Haggai was a man of a single idea: build the temple! He confined his work to this single theme; anything else said was built around this essential necessity. Without rebuilding the temple, that for which they had returned, Jehovah's favor could not be expected. This central place of devotion and worship was essential if the nation was to be held together..." (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 298).
- D. "His book consists of four messages all preached in 520 B.C. The first was directed to Joshua, the religious leader, and Zerubbabel, the civil leader. It denounced the people for spending time on their own amusement while the Temple lay in ruins. The second encouraged those who wanted to build, but were afraid the results would be insignificant. The third and fourth messages denounced the present state of corruption and promised God's protection, if the people responded to God" (*Shaw's*, 246).
- E. The Messianic hope.
1. The house of God would be filled with a glory that would surpass anything previously seen (2:9).
 2. Zerubbabel was to be God's "signet," i.e., in him the hope would be realized.
 - a. The Messianic line is traced through Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27).
 - b. "The Messiah is also portrayed in the person of Zerubbabel (2:23), who becomes the center of the messianic line, sealing both branches together" (*Nelson's*, 276).

3. "Haggai had but one message as to the future to convey, and he enforced it by the repeated use of the same word (2:6,7,22), that temporal things should be shaken, the eternal should remain...(Hebrews 12:26)" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the Old Testament, Minor Prophets*, Vol. II, 294).
4. "In his message he revived the Messianic hope, pointing out that the house would be filled with glory, a glory that would surpass anything previously seen. He likewise pointed to Zerubbabel as Jehovah's signet, an assurance that in Zerubbabel would the hope be realized" (Hailey, 301).

V. The Purpose

- A. "The entire purpose of this message seems to have been to stir up the people, inspire new zeal, and restore confidence. Haggai intended to make the leaders conscious of their responsibility to rebuild God's house—the Temple" (Deal, 229).
- B. "Haggai is second only to Obadiah in brevity among the Old Testament books, but this strong and frank series of four brief sermons accomplishes its intended effect. The work on the temple had ceased and the people had become more concerned with the beautification of their own houses than with the building of the central sanctuary of God. Because of their misplaced priorities, their future labors cannot be blessed by God. Only when the people put the Lord first by completing the task He set before them will His hand of blessing once again be upon them" (*Nelson's*, 274).
- C. "The purpose of the prophecy, therefore, was to combat apathy and depression by giving inspired leadership for the actual reconstruction, along with a promise from God that the glory of the new Temple would exceed that of the former" (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. III, 13).

VI. The Lessons

- A. We must speak "the word of the Lord." This phrase is used some 26 times by Haggai in a book of only 38 verses.
- B. We must rightly order our priorities (1:2-4).
 1. Haggai taught the same lesson as Jesus—"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).
 2. The people were condemned because they were more interested in their own houses than they were in the house of God.
- C. Everyone must work, not just leaders (1:12-15). All too often, the Lord's work is neglected by those who should promote it.
- D. We should get to work now (2 Cor. 6:2; John 4:35).
 1. Haggai demonstrates the fruits of procrastination.
 2. "When a good job is awaiting its accomplishment, the time to do it is now" (Anon.).
- E. The glory of the church is revealed (2:6-9).
- F. "Is the seed still in the barn?" (2:19). We are to be sowing the seed of the kingdom.
- G. Discouragement is not an adequate reason for neglecting duty.

VII. Haggai in the New Testament

- A clear echo from Haggai is found in the book of Hebrews (2:6; Heb. 12:26-28).

Questions on Haggai

1. What does the name "Haggai" mean?
2. How does the name "Haggai" relate to his work as a prophet?
3. What Scriptures, other than the book that bears his name, refer to Haggai?
4. What is known about the personal life of Haggai?
5. When was the book of Haggai written?
6. What happened to Babylon in 539 B.C.?
7. Who was Cyrus?
8. What decree did Cyrus give concerning the Jews in 538 B.C.?
9. Who was Zerubbabel? What did he do in 536 B.C.?
10. When did the Jews begin to rebuild the Temple?
11. When did the work on building the Temple stop? Why did it stop?
12. What is the basic message of the book of Haggai?
13. What is the basic theme of the book of Haggai?
14. In how many oracles is the theme of Haggai stated?
15. When were each of the oracles given?
16. To whom were each of the oracles directed?
17. How does Zerubbabel relate to the Messianic hope found in the book of Haggai?
(2:23; Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27)
18. Why did Haggai emphasize "the word of the Lord" in his message?
19. What does Haggai reveal about the glory of the church? (2:6-9)
20. What application can be made today of the principle contained in the question, "Is the seed still in the barn?" (2:19)

Zechariah

I. The Man

A. His name means “Jehovah remembers.”

1. “The name of this book means ‘Jehovah has remembered.’ It is a better way of spelling Zachariah, a rather prominent name in Israelitish history. This name suggests that God’s mercy has been returned to Israel in their restoration to Palestine from Babylonian captivity” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 230-231).
2. “Zechariah, whose name means ‘Yahweh Remembers,’ was one of the post-exilic prophets, and a contemporary of Haggai. The name ‘Zechariah’ was a popular one in the Old Testament, being shared by no fewer than twenty-nine Old Testament characters” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 279).

B. He was a priest as well as a prophet (Neh. 12:1,16).

1. He was the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo, a priest (1:1; Neh. 12:1-4).
2. He is not to be confused with Zechariah the priest who was the son of Jehoiada slain in the house of God (2 Chron. 24:20-22).
3. “He was likely born in Babylon, probably of the priestly line; this was of considerable advantage to his ministry to the Jewish leaders and priests” (Deal, 231).

C. He was a contemporary of Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

1. They prophesied together at the same time to achieve the same goal—the rebuilding and completion of the temple.
2. “Zechariah began his ministry some two months after Haggai began preaching. While Haggai’s ministry lasted around four months, Zechariah’s ministry in connection with the Temple lasted about two full years...” (Deal, 231).
3. “Haggai rebuked and admonished; Zechariah encouraged and looked to brighter days. Their work was fully complementary and compatible” (Rubel Shelly, *A Book-by-Book Study of the Old Testament*, 115).
4. “For Haggai and Zechariah the situation resolved itself into a question of priorities, and in their thought a reconstructed and functioning temple was by far the most important material consideration” (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. V, 1047).

II. The Date

A. Zechariah prophesied from 520 to 518 B.C.

1. A contemporary of Haggai, he began his work two months after Haggai about one month after work on the Temple had been resumed (Hag. 1:14-15; Zech. 1:1).
2. He continued to be active as a prophet for two years to the ninth month, fourth year of the reign of Darius I (521-486 B.C.).

- B. Three specific dates in the book.
 1. The call to repentance, November 520 B.C. (1:1-6).
 2. The night visions, February 519 B.C. (1:7 - 6:8).
 3. The response to the questions about fasting, December 518 B.C. (chs. 7-8).
- C. "The historical setting for chapters 1-8 is the same as that of Haggai (520-518 B.C.). Work was resumed on the temple in 520 b.c. and the project was completed in 516 B.C. Chapters 9-14 are undated, but stylistic differences and references to Greece (9:13) indicate a date of between 480 and 470 B.C. This would mean that Darius I (521-486 B.C.) had passed from the scene and had been succeeded by Xerxes (486-464 B.C.), the king who made Esther queen of Persia" (*Nelson's*, 279).
- D. "There seems to have been two periods of Zechariah's ministry. The earlier part of the book notes conditions which were contemporaneous with Haggai's ministry. The latter part apparently occurred sometime later" (Deal, 231).

III. The Setting

- A. The rebuilding of the temple had been stopped until Haggai encouraged the people to get back to work. In three weeks they were working but two months later discouragement had already set in so Zechariah came along to further encourage the same thing.
- B. "Zechariah preached to the restored community at exactly the same time that Haggai did. The people had returned home from exile only to find an enormous task confronting them. There were homes to build, walls to erect, fields to plow, forests to clear, roads to build, and a Temple to construct, all in the face of strong opposition from the people who had moved into the land after the Jews had been carried away into captivity. Haggai concentrated on encouraging the people to rebuild the Temple, while Zechariah preached on more general issues" (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 247).

IV. The Message

- A. The character of the book.
 1. Zechariah is not only the longest but also the most obscure book of the minor prophets. I believe it to be the most difficult of any Old Testament book.
 2. No other book of prophecy is as difficult to interpret as far as a few specific prophecies are concerned.
 3. The book is written in apocalyptic language and symbolism.
 4. The book emphasizes visions as a means of divine communication.
 5. Angelic mediation occupies an important place in the message of the book.
- B. The overall message of the book is to the returning Jews to rebuild the temple of God.
 1. Zechariah looks beyond the immediate results of the temple's completion to the consummation of God's purpose in the Messiah.
 2. The Messiah could not come until the temple is rebuilt.
- C. "For a dozen years or more, the task of rebuilding the temple had been half completed. The prophet Zechariah was commissioned by God to encourage the people to complete this important task. Rather than exhorting them with strong words of rebuke, Zechariah offered a very positive goal: the temple must be built, for someday the glory of the Messiah would inhabit it" (*Nelson's*, 279).

- D. "The basic message of Zechariah concerns the accomplishment of God's will. God, the Lord of hosts, is in absolute control of life and history. By symbol, vision, image, and statement, Zechariah hammered home the point that we need never fear if we are doing God's will. God knows what he is doing and is in complete control. The Messiah (Jesus Christ) will come to represent God and will do God's will. First he comes in weakness, but later as sovereign Judge" (*Shaw's*, 249).
- E. "The last section (9-14) is one of the most remarkable Messianic passages of the Old Testament. It is very descriptive of many things about Christ and His work. It is also more like Isaiah than any other Old Testament section of Scripture" (Deal, 231-232).
- F. The make-up of the book.
 - 1. Section one.
 - a. The call to repentance (1:1-6).
 - b. The night visions (1:7 - 6:8).
 - c. A coronation (6:9-15).
 - d. Questions about fasting (7:1-7).
 - e. Ten short oracles of encouragement introduced by "Thus saith the Lord" (8:1-23).
 - 2. Section two.
 - a. A preliminary denunciation of neighboring nations whose land lies within the boundaries of the promised land followed by an announcement of the triumph of Judah through her Messiah (9:1 - 10:12).
 - b. The good and foolish shepherds (11:1-17).
 - c. Two distinct sections which deal with final events in an apocalyptic way (chs. 12-14).

V. The Purpose

- A. "Zechariah uses a series of eight visions, four messages, and two burdens to portray God's future plans for His covenant people. The first eight chapters were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple; the last six chapters were written after the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel's coming Messiah" (*Nelson's*, 279,281).
- B. "The book of Zechariah may be thought of as a sequel to Haggai. The temple was begun and constructed in the midst of conflict, but it would be completed. Zechariah looks beyond the immediate temple to the Messiah and the spiritual temple of God, and to the final consummation of God's purpose in the glory of the Messiah and His rule. This would be accomplished amid great opposition, but Jehovah would fight for His people and give them victory" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 317).
- C. "Zechariah serves to encourage the nation in its divinely appointed task. The indignation of the Lord has come, he teaches, because of the people's sin. If then the nation will hum-ble itself before God, it will have a glorious future. The heathen nations will one day be cast down, and Jerusalem will prosper. This future spiritual blessing will be brought about through the Messiah" (Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 283).

- D. "There seems to be a twofold purpose in this book: The early part of the book appeals to Israel in particular, especially the Jerusalem Jews and their leaders. Zechariah's immediate purpose was to encourage the Jews and inspire them to finish rebuilding the Temple and to resume regular worship. The last part of the book contains a note of universal appeal and encouragement to the people of God. This section of the book is highly Messianic in its presentation and concepts. There one can clearly see the prophecies concerning Christ" (Deal, 231).

VI. The Lessons

- A. We should learn from the lessons of history (1:2-6).
- B. Demons do not exist today (13:2).
- C. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ. His blood is the fountain for sin and uncleanness (13:1).
- D. Many specific prophecies about Christ (See below).
 - The book of Zechariah is more Messianic than any other minor prophet.

VII. Zechariah in the New Testament

- A. The "Branch" (3:8; 6:12).
- B. The king who rides upon the ass (9:9; Matt. 21:4f; John 12:15).
- C. The betrayal, noting thirty pieces of silver and the potter's field (11:2f; Matt. 26:15; 27:9f).
- D. Looking on whom they have pierced (12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7).
- E. Smite the shepherd (13:7; Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).
- F. The king who reigns from sea to sea (9:10).
- G. The fountain for cleansing (13:1).
- H. His demand that everyone speak truth to his neighbor is echoed by Paul (8:16; Eph. 4:25).
- I. The antecedent of certain pictures employed by the apostle John, the writer of the book of Revelation.
 - 1. The four horsemen (6:1-8; Rev. 6:1-8).
 - 2. The two olive trees (4:3ff; Rev. 11:4).
 - 3. The candlestick and seven eyes (4:2-10; Rev. 1:12f).

Questions on Zechariah

1. What is the meaning of the name Zechariah?
2. How does the name Zechariah apply to the message of this book?
3. What occupation did Zechariah have besides being a prophet?
4. Who was Zechariah's father? Who was his grandfather?
5. Where, more than likely, was Zechariah born?
6. With what other prophet was Zechariah contemporary?
7. How do the lengths of the ministries of Zechariah and the other prophet compare?
8. What span of time is encompassed by the book of Zechariah?
9. What three specific dates are mentioned in the book of Zechariah?
10. Describe the setting of the book of Zechariah.
11. What is the overall message of the book of Zechariah?
12. In what two ways does the book of Zechariah unique in relation to the other minor prophets?
13. Why can the book of Zechariah be thought of as a sequel to the book of Haggai?
14. Why seems to be the primary motivation Zechariah uses to get the Judeans to complete the Temple reconstruction?
15. Why do you think there are so many specific Messianic prophecies included in the book of Zechariah?

Malachi

I. The Man

- A. His name means “messenger of Jehovah or “my messenger.”
1. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, treats his name as a common noun.
 2. “The name ‘Malachi’ means ‘My Messenger.’ Although some have considered it a title rather than a name, this is unlikely since such a usage would be unique among the prophets” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 284).
 3. “This name means ‘The Messenger of Jehovah.’ It carries the thought that this prophet brought a message from Jehovah to His people. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets and is thus the connecting link between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment in historical reality” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, 233).
- B. Nothing more is known of him other than that which is revealed in the book.
- “As to his origin, we know little of Malachi. He is assumed to have come from somewhere in Judah, since he prophesied around Jerusalem, where he later wrote his famous book. Of his last days and burial, tradition has left no certain word” (Deal, 233).

II. The Date

- A. The book was written sometime during the period of 445 to 432 B.C.
- B. The time frame for this book is probably about the same as that of the book of Nehemiah.
- C. “Malachi probably wrote his book around the time of Nehemiah’s visit to Babylon in 433 B.C. (Neh. 13:6)...In support of this view are these facts: a) The Temple project had already been completed, and Mosaic sacrifices were being offered (Mal. 1:7-10; 3:1, 8). b) A Persian governor, not Nehemiah, was ruling the Jews at the time. Read 1:8. c) The sins denounced by Malachi were the same sins that Nehemiah dealt with during his second term. For example: laxity and corruption of priests (Mal. 1:6-2:9; Neh. 13:1-9), mixed marriages (Mal. 2:10-16; Neh. 13:23-28), neglect of tithes (Mal. 3:7-12; Neh. 13:10-13)” (Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament*, 467-468).

III. The Setting

- A. Some pertinent dates.
1. 536 B.C. Zerubbabel had led a group of about 50,000 Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem after the decree of Cyrus, Medo-Persian king, which had freed them (Ezra 2).
 2. 520-516 B.C.
 - a. The prophetic work of Haggai, who prophesied from August through December, and Zechariah, whose prophetic ministry in relation to the building of the Temple lasted two years, began in 520 B.C. encouraging the people to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

- b. The Temple was completed and dedicated in 516 B.C.
 - 3. 458 B.C. Ezra, 79 years after the first group of exiled Jews had returned, led back a second group composed of about 2,058 persons (Ezra 8:1-34).
 - 4. 445 B.C. Thirteen years after Ezra's return, Nehemiah returned with a third group (Neh. 2).
 - a. Nehemiah had been cup-bearer to Artaxerxes, king of the Medo-Persian empire (464-424 B.C.).
 - b. Artaxerxes had permitted Nehemiah to return so that he could rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem.
- B. Religiously.
 - 1. In the nearly 100 years since the people had returned from the Babylonian captivity, their religious condition had worsened. Indifference to both the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Law characterized the people.
 - a. They had grown weary of observing its demanding sacrifices.
 - b. They were sacrificing, thus the priests were accepting as offerings, animals which were sick, lame and defiled instead of the best.
 - c. They were marrying non-Jews (2:11-12), divorcing their wives to do it.
 - 2. "All was not well in the nation of Israel. Pagan and other questionable practices were common in the land. There was religious unconcern, greed, corruption in governmental circles, and marriages to foreign women (which meant introducing foreign gods back into the land). The priesthood especially was a problem. Religious matters had become routine, lacking any real significance, either for the priests or for the people of the land. The lack of concern here was called nothing less than robbery of God" (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 250).
 - 3. "The people of Israel had become disillusioned and doubtful. Internally they wondered if God's messianic promises would ever be fulfilled and whether it was worth serving God after all. Externally, these attitudes were manifested in empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings, and indifference to the moral and ceremonial law" (*Nelson's*, 286).
- C. "Many changes had occurred since the times of Haggai and Zechariah. The people had grown indifferent to their spiritual obligations, had neglected the temple and were worldly, restless and in danger from their enemies about them. Crops were poor, the priests were corrupt and the people refused to pay their tithes and offerings. Worship had degenerated, social abuses were widespread and home and family life were decaying. Nehemiah had come back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and to help his brethren in their plight but he needed the support of a prophet. Malachi was called to serve in this crisis" (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, 294).

IV. The Message

- A. The character of the book.
 - 1. The book is an appeals to God as the source of its message (1:2). The phrase, "says the Lord," is used 25 times.

2. The book makes extensive use of the didactic-dialectic, question and answer, method. This method became the universal style of teaching in the Jewish schools and synagogues.
 - a. The method defined.
 - 1) An assertion or charge is made.
 - 2) A fancied objection is raised by the hearers.
 - 3) A refutation of the objection is presented by the speaker.
 - b. Examples of the use of this method in the book.
 - 1) I have loved you (1:2,3).
 - 2) You have despised my name (1:6-7).
 - 3) Judah has been faithless (2:10-16).
 - 4) You have wearied the Lord with your words (2:17).
 - 5) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes (3:7).
 - 6) You have robbed me (3:8).
 - 7) Your words have been stout against me (3:13).
- B. "The book consists of two sections. The first deals with the sins of Israel and the second with promised blessings and judgments. It is set up as a series of questions and answers, much like a courtroom scene, with Israel asking rhetorical (and often self-justifying) questions and God answering" (*Shaw's*, 250).
- C. A summary.
 1. The book opens with an affirmation of God's love for Israel and His specific choice of them to be His people (1:1-5).
 2. God utters oracles to two different groups.
 - a. He first addresses the priesthood (1:6 - 2:9).
 - 1) They had profaned the temple worship by offering polluted sacrifices (1:6-8).
 - 2) They had become weary of the ritual of worship (1:13-14).
 - 3) They had caused many people to stumble (2:7-8).
 - 4) Therefore, He would curse them (2:1-2).
 - b. He then rebukes the people because of their indifference toward Him and their breaking of His covenant with them (2:10 - 4:3).
 - 1) They had been unfaithful to God's marriage laws by divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying heathen wives (2:10-16).
 - 2) They had come to doubt whether or not there was a God of justice, therefore, God announces His coming judgment in the Messiah (2: 17 - 3:7).
 - 3) They had robbed God by hoarding their tithes which were supposed to be offered to care for God's house (3:8-12).
 - 4) They complained of the vanity of serving God because the wicked were prospering and they were not. In reply, God showed them that He kept an account of what the righteous and unrighteous did and that there would be a day of reckoning (3:13 - 4:3).

3. The book concludes with an exhortation to keep the Law and to look for the prophet Elijah who would be Israel's final messenger before God's great day of reckoning (4:4-6). Of course, Jesus said John the Baptist was the one prophesied by Malachi (cf. Matt. 11:7-15; 17:11-12).
- D. "What more could God do for Israel than what He did do? Does this not give some idea as to why the Bible is silent for the four hundred years between Malachi and Christ? There was nothing more to be said. The only thing God had left to offer them was the Messiah. Every other promise had been fulfilled" (Homer Hailey, *Hailey's Comments*, Vol. I, 65).

V. The Purpose

- A. The book is designed to encourage zeal and enthusiasm for God in the hearts of the Jews.
1. It relates that God still loves Israel but that her sins have delayed her salvation.
 2. It seeks to restore an understanding of the value of serving the Lord faithfully.
- B. "The apparent purpose was to set before Israel a picture of her ingratitude in the manner in which she was living as a nation. One can see that Malachi desired to produce repentance in the heart-life of Israel and a return to true righteousness" (Deal, 233).
- C. "The prophet insists that God's acceptance of men's offerings and service is conditioned upon the sincerity and purity of the life of those who make them. The people had robbed God not only in tithes and offerings, but they had withheld from Him their loyalty and their love. If the people gave to God what rightfully belonged to Him, abundant blessings should follow..." (Hester, 294-295).
- D. "The book of Malachi contains the Lord's last recorded words of Old Testament times. In many respects it is a sad book, because it reveals what little progress—if any—Israel had made since the nation was born fifteen hundred years earlier... Malachi is both a conclusion and a connecting link. It concludes the story of Israel for the span of 2000-400 B.C., and it is the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament. The book connects the Old Testament with the New Testament in its prophecies of John the Baptist and Christ's first advent" (Jensen, 467, 469).

VI. The Lessons

- A. God hates indifference to Him and His law (1:13; cf. Rev. 3:14-16).
- B. God hates divorce (2:16; cf. Matt. 19:3-8).
- C. Man will rob God (3:8).

VII. Malachi in the New Testament

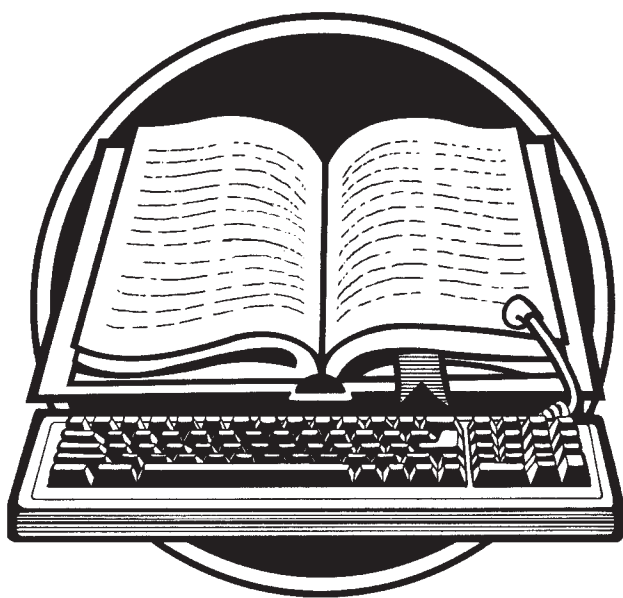
- A. "The last two chapters of the last book of the Old Testament contain dramatic prophecies of the coming of the Lord and of John the Baptist. Israel flocked to

the Jordan River four hundred years later when 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord'' (Matt. 3:3; cf. Mal. 3:1) appeared, thus breaking the long period of prophetic silence" (*Nelson's*, 286).

- B. "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated" (1:2-3; Rom. 9:13).
- C. The messenger to come (3:1; Matt. 11:10).
- D. Elijah the prophet (4:5; Matt. 11:14).

Questions on Malachi

1. What is the meaning of the name “Malachi?”
2. How does his name relate to the content and purpose of the book?
3. When was the book of Malachi written?
4. What other Old Testament book dates to the same period of the book of Malachi?
5. Describe the religious condition of the Judeans during the ministry of Malachi especially noting the changes which had occurred since the time of Haggai and Zechariah.
6. What is the message of the book of Malachi to:
 - a. The priesthood?
 - b. The Jews in general?
7. What is the “didactic-dialectic” method?
8. What role did the above method have in Jewish education?
9. Cite some examples of the didactic-dialectic method in the book of Malachi.
(At least three)
10. Of the two sections that comprise the book of Malachi, what is addressed in:
 - a. Section one?
 - b. Section two?
11. What do you think is the purpose of the book of Malachi?
12. Of God’s two oracles found in the book of Malachi, whom is addressed in:
 - a. Oracle one?
 - b. Oracle two?
13. Why do you think a 400 year silence from God followed the book of Malachi?
14. According to Malachi, what is God’s attitude toward divorce?
15. According to Malachi, how can one “rob God?” What application, if any, can be made of this principle today?



www.padfield.com

Sermon Outlines
Bible Class Books
Bible Class Curriculum
PowerPoint Backgrounds
Bible Land Photographs
Church Bulletin Articles

This booklet is protected by Federal Copyright Laws. Individuals and local congregations are allowed to reprint this book. No one is allowed change the contents. This book may not be placed on any other Web site, nor is it allowed to be sold.