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# A Study of Prophecy and the Prophets



Gene Taylor

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# Introduction: Studying the Prophets

## I. Some Reasons for a Study of the Prophets

- A. To enrich the life of anyone who learns their teaching.
  - 1. They are a mine of spiritual wealth.
  - 2. A word of caution: They will only add to the confusion of those who would use their writings as a basis on which to speculate about the future.
- B. To strengthen the faith of the one who sees the fulfillment of the prophecies and predictions in history and the New Testament.
- C. To give courage to the Lord's faithful today—seeing how the prophets dealt with religious, social, and moral corruptions.
- D. To help one to better read the signs of the times—seeing the principles on which God dealt with disobedience.
- E. To make hearing and reading the news of today more meaningful—concluding God, in His providence, will act in a like manner today.
- F. To learn as much of the word of God as possible.

## II. What to Look for As You Study

- A. The role of the prophet as being more than a “fore-teller.”
  - 1. More accurately, he was a “forth-teller” speaking forth the message of God.
  - 2. He was the “mouth” of God, the one in whose mouth God put His word. (Ex. 4:16; 7:1; Deut. 18:18-19)
- B. In times of spiritual and moral repression and decay, God raised up prophets in an effort to turn people back to Him. The main purpose the prophet served was to get people to repent.
- C. In their work the prophets:
  - 1. Emphasized the deity of God—His majesty, holiness, righteousness, and justice.
  - 2. Made known the principles on which God would act toward people.
  - 3. Declared God to be infinite in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding so He can, therefore, declare the end from the very beginning, and never err in His actions.
  - 4. Declared God to be infinite in power so He can, therefore, carry out His divine purpose.
  - 5. Declared God to be immutable—His principles never change—so man can, therefore, depend on Him to act and react at all times according to a definite pattern. (Isa. 43:1 ff; 44:6, 24-26; 46:10)
- D. In the writings of the prophets are found some of the most beautiful, majestic, and artistic expressions of all literature.
  - 1. They were inspired. (2 Peter 1:20-21)
  - 2. Even though the prophets were inspired, God allowed the personality and back-ground of each man to shine through his message.
  - 3. Their writings virtually throb with both the life of man and of God.
    - a. As individuals, they rejoice, sorrow, praise, weep, lament, and hope.
    - b. Their language vibrates with the thunder of judgment—as a lion roars or earth quakes—but also it possesses the tenderness of a mother calming her trembling babe.
- E. The messages of prophets originated in several ways: dreams, visions or by direct word from God.
- F. The prophet is always and by all means striving to make known the will of God to His people.

### III. Some Essentials to the Study

- A. Some essential attitudes. To properly study the prophets, one must possess:
1. An intense desire to know God in His entirety.
    - a. Such should come from the relation one sustains to Him.
    - b. His child ought to seek to know all about God and His ways so he might draw closer to Him.
  2. A purpose which motivates. That purpose is twofold:
    - a. To better understand the words of Jesus, His apostles, and the inspired writers of the New Testament.
    - b. To meet the errors of prophetic speculators.
  3. A willingness to do some hard work.
    - a. Arriving at an understanding of the prophets and their messages is not an easy task. It takes diligent effort.
    - b. An understanding of the prophets may have to come at the price of sacrificing something else one wants to do.
- B. Some essential facts. To properly study the prophets, one must understand:
1. The prevailing conditions of the day in which the prophet spoke. Such would include:
    - a. The spiritual, moral, social and political conditions.
    - b. How the prophet strove to meet those conditions.
  2. God's relationship to the nations.
    - a. God's rule is among all peoples including the heathen.
    - b. One must recognize the impending judgments against pagan world powers as seen in the writings of the prophets.
  3. The Messianic hope—the coming of one who would rule in righteousness over a kingdom of righteousness.

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. How can a study of the prophets:
  - a. Enrich one's life?
  - b. Strengthen one's faith?
  - c. Encourage the faithful?
  - d. Help one read the signs of the times?
  - e. Give more meaning to the news of the today?
2. What was the main role of prophets?

3. What was the main purpose of prophets?
4. Why do you suppose the prophets emphasized the majesty, holiness, righteousness, and justice of God?
5. How is God immutable? Why is His immutability important?
6. What are some of the various ways prophets received their messages from God? Briefly define each term.
7. How can a study of the prophets give one a better understanding of the words of Jesus, His apostles and the writers of the New Testament?
8. Why is it important to know the spiritual, moral, social and political conditions of the time in which the prophets spoke their messages?
9. What are some conclusions which can be drawn from the fact that God's rule has always been over and among all nations?
10. How important was the Messianic hope in the messages of the prophets?

# Lesson Two: Instructors Under the Old Testament

## I. The Scriptural Basis For Classes of Instructors

- A. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of some classes of speakers, teachers, in Israel who were important to the instruction of the people.
  - 1. Jeremiah 18:18. “Then said they, ‘Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the **priest**, nor counsel from the **wise**, nor the word from the **prophet**.’” (All emphasis mine—GT)
  - 2. Ezekiel 7:26. “Disaster will come upon disaster, And rumor will be upon rumor. Then they will seek a vision from a **prophet**; But the law will perish from the **priest**, And counsel from the **elders**.”
- B. Under the law, there were at least five classes of instructors to which the people looked for guidance.

## II. Classes of Instructors Under the Old Covenant

- A. Lawgiver.
  - 1. Since the law was given but once there would be, of necessity, only one lawgiver—Moses.
  - 2. “...Book of the Law of Moses...” (Nehemiah 8:1)
  - 3. “...which the Lord had commanded by Moses...” (Neh. 8:14)
  - 4. God gave Israel “just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments...And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant.” (Neh. 9:13-14)
  - 5. “For the law was given through Moses...” (John 1:17)
  - 6. ““Did not Moses give you the law...”” (John 7:19)
- B. Wise men.
  - 1. The function of these was to give counsel, sound advice on matters of life.
  - 2. Examples of wise men (actually wise women).
    - a. The first mention of a “wise” person is the “wise woman” in 2 Samuel 14:1-24 (v. 2).
    - b. The second mention is also of a “wise woman.” (2 Samuel 20:16-22)
  - 3. The most outstanding wise man in the Old Testament was Solomon.
    - a. His request for wisdom is in I Kings 3:7-9. God’s response is in verses 10-13.
    - b. Solomon’s wisdom excelled that of all others of his day. (1 Kings 4:29-34; 10:1-10)
  - 4. The canonical books of wisdom are Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
  - 5. “The wise men did not appeal directly to the conscience as did the prophets, but rather to the mind through counsel and argument, though their ultimate aim was to reach the conscience and through it influence life and conduct.” (Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 14)
- C. Priests.
  - 1. The special function of the priests was related to the law.
  - 2. Since the law was both civil and ecclesiastical, their function was two-fold:
    - a. To declare, interpret, and teach the law. (Leviticus 10:8-11; Malachi 2:7)
    - b. To perform the sacrificial duties. (Lev. 1:5-9; et. al.)

3. When apostasy came, the priests were in a large measure responsible for it. (Hosea 4:6; Ezek. 22:26)

#### D. Prophets.

1. The mission of the prophet was to communicate the divine word to Israel.
2. Though they did predict, it may be said of them that “so far as their work as a whole was concerned they were proclaimers rather than predictors.” (*The Prophetic Movement in Israel*, p. 16)
3. Their purpose: For present Israel to repent and correct their view of what was to come. (See Acts 7:51-53)

#### E. Psalmists.

1. These were poets or “sweet singers.” (2 Sam. 23:1)
2. From these came the *Psalms*.
  - a. In the Psalms are found expressions of the deepest emotions and feelings of the human spirit.
  - b. “Some reflect, others express, many foretell; but all seek to glorify God.” (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 15)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who gave the law of God to Israel? Why was there only one lawgiver?
2. Describe the function of “wise men.”
3. Who was the first “wise” person mentioned in the Old Testament?
4. Who was the most outstanding wise man mentioned in the Old Testament? How did he get his wisdom?
5. What books of the Old Testament are considered the “wisdom literature?” What qualifies them to have such a designation?
6. As given by the Old Law, what were the two main functions of the Levitical priests? Briefly summarize what would be involved in each function.
7. Why were the priests largely responsible for Israel’s apostasies?
8. What was the prophet’s mission? What was his main purpose?
9. What were psalmists?
10. What purpose did the psalms serve?

# Lesson Three: Prophet Defined

## I. Prophet and Prophecy in Scripture: Its Terms

- A. The word translated “prophet” in our English Bible is the Hebrew term “*nabi*.”
  - 1. It occurs about four hundred (400) times as a noun in the Old Testament.
  - 2. A verb from the same root occurs one hundred ten (110) times in the Old Testament.
- B. “It is generally agreed that the etymology of the word presents difficulties; however, the use of the word in Scripture makes clear the meaning, since Scripture is its own best interpreter.”  
(Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 15)

## II. “Prophet” Defined

- A. Some definitions from scholars.
  - 1. “To boil up like a fountain (Heb.). In both the Old and the New Testaments, (a prophet) is one who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit speaks the words and the thoughts of God, whether they relate to the past, to the present, or to the future.” (Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, p. 298)
  - 2. “To bring forward or announce.” (Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Prophecy and the Prophets*, p. 23)
  - 3. “According to the uniform teaching of the Bible the prophet is a speaker of or for God. His words are not the production of his own spirit but come from a higher source.” (*I.S.B.E.*, Vol. IV, p. 2459)
  - 4. “One who spoke in God’s stead.” (Albert C. Knudson, *Beacon Lights of Prophecy*, p. 30)
- B. Biblical definitions. According to Scripture, a prophet is:
  - 1. Primarily a spokesman for another person.
    - a. Aaron was to be Moses’ prophet. (Exodus 7:1)
    - b. Of Aaron it was said, “So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you...” (Ex. 4:16)
  - 2. A spokesman for God.
    - a. God would raise up a prophet and put His words into his mouth. The prophet would then speak them in the name of God. (Deuteronomy 18:9-22)
    - b. God revealed His will through the prophet in the Old Testament period. (Hebrews 1:1)
  - 3. An ambassador sent to make known the will and purpose of God:
    - a. To His chosen people under the Old Law, Israel. (Amos 3:7-8)
    - b. To other nations. (Jonah 1:1-2)
  - 4. More a “forth-teller” than a “fore-teller.” While predictions of events to come were a part of many prophetic messages, the main task of the prophet of God was to speak forth the message of God.

## III. Other Terms Used in Scripture to Describe the Prophet

- A. Seer. (1 Samuel 9:9)
  - 1. It appears to have been the earliest term by which he was designated.
  - 2. A seer is one who sees. God gives a vision which the prophet sees and then speaks.



- B. Man of God. (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 17:18)
- C. Man of the spirit. (Hosea 9:7)
- D. Servant of God (or of Jehovah). (1 Chronicles 6:49; 1 Kings 18:36; Isaiah 20:3)
- E. Messenger of Jehovah. (Isa. 42:19)
- F. Watchman. (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7)
- G. A summary: “All these terms expressed the same fundamental idea—that of a mediator by speech between man and God.” (Preferably, “between God and man”—GT) (Albert C. Knudson, *The Prophetic Movement in Israel*, p. 30)

#### IV. Some Basic Principles in Understanding the Role of the Prophet

- A. The prophet is a man who is moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- B. The prophet cannot introduce strange religions. (Deut. 13:1-5)
  - 1. Prophets did not introduce a new law.
  - 2. It was the prophet’s function to call people back to the law given by Moses.
- C. The true prophet is the man whose oracles come to pass. (Deut. 18:20-22)
  - 1. The ability to know the future belongs to God alone.
  - 2. The prophet knows things to come only to the extent that God speaks through him.
- D. Prophecy is conditional. (Jeremiah 18:5-11)
  - 1. One must ask, “Have the conditions of this threat or promise been met?”
  - 2. A threat or judgment may be delayed by repentance. (1 Kings 21:29)

#### Conclusion

“Someone has said that there are two classes of preachers—the good preachers who have something to say, and the poor preachers who **have** to say something. But there is yet another and higher class. It consists of those who both have something to say and who **have** to say it. Such are the prophets.” (Knudson, 65-66; cf. Jer. 20:9)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. How was Aaron a “prophet” for Moses?
2. What was the role of the prophet in relation to God?
3. What is an ambassador? How does a prophet qualify as one?
4. What is a seer? Why is that a proper designation for most prophets found in the Bible?
5. What is meant by the term “man of God?” Why is it proper to apply it to the prophets found in Scripture?
6. What is a watchman (cf. Ezek. 3:17; 33:7)? In what way(s) is a prophet of God a “watchman?”
7. Why could a prophet of God not introduce “strange religions” to Israel?
8. Why could a prophet of God not introduce a new law to Israel?
9. What is the Biblical test of a true prophet?
10. How is prophecy conditional?

# Lesson Four: Pre-literary (Oral) Prophets

## I. The Patriarchal Period: Founders of the Hebrew Nation

### A. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1. Abraham. He is recognized in Scripture as a prophet of God (Genesis 20:7,17).
2. Isaac and Jacob are probably those “prophets” referred to by the Psalmist in Psalm 105:15.

### B. Moses.

1. It is only natural that God’s instrument, the deliverer and lawgiver of the children of Israel, should have been a prophet.
2. He would not necessarily be included with the pre-literary prophets who follow for he stands in a class by himself. (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-23; Deut. 34:10; Numbers 12:1-8; Hosea 12:13)

### C. Miriam.

1. She is spoken of as a “prophetess.” (Exodus 15:20)
2. In some way she was used of God to assist Moses in his work, probably as a teacher.

## II. The Period of the Judges

### A. Deborah.

1. She was a female judge as well as a prophetess. (Judges 4:4)
2. During the same period there was also an unnamed prophet whom God sent to the people. (Jud. 6:8)

### B. The prophetic bands or “sons of the prophets.”

1. The earliest reference there is to these prophets is during the time of Samuel, the 11th century B.C. (1 Samuel 10:5-13)
2. A similar company is mentioned in 1 Samuel 19:18-24.
3. After the time of Samuel it was two centuries before the prophetic bands came again into prominence, this time in connection with Elijah and Elisha. (1 Kings 18:13; 22:6)
4. These prophetic bands were probably religious individuals who gathered around an outstanding prophet to study under him or to imbibe his spirit.

### C. Samuel.

1. He was the “prophet-judge.” (1 Sam. 1:1 - 25:1)
2. The apostle Peter indicates that Samuel’s work marks the beginning of the prophetic era. (Acts 3:24)

## III. The Period of the Kings

### A. From David to the division of the kingdom. (1000-931 B.C.)

1. Nathan. He rebuked David (2 Samuel 12:1ff), prophesied of the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:1-17) and anointed Solomon (1 Kings 1:11-48).
2. Gad. He rebuked David for numbering Israel. (2 Sam. 24:11ff)
3. Ahijah. He was prophet to Jereboam in reference to the division of Judah and Israel. (1 Kings 11:29ff)
4. Shemaiah. He was prophet to Rehoboam, king of Judah, with instruction not to go up and fight against the northern kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 12:21-24)

5. An unnamed prophet.
  - a. He is referred to as “a man of God out of Judah.” (1 Kings 13:1)
  - b. He sent to Jereboam to warn him of the results of his apostasy. (1 Kings 13:1-10)
  - c. He was slain after heeding false instructions from an “old prophet.” (1 Kings 13:11-32)
- B. From the division of the kingdom to the time of Amos. (931-760 B.C.)
  1. Jehu. He declared the doom of Baasha (I Kings 16:1-4). He also rebuked Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab. (2 Chronicles 19:1-3)
  2. Eliezer. He prophesied against Jehoshaphat. (2 Chron. 20:37)
  3. Micaiah. He stood against the false prophet Zedekiah. (1 Kings 22:1-36).
  4. Jonah. He wrote the book which bears his name. He was an advisor to Jereboam II. (2 Kings 14:25)
  5. Elijah. (His life and prophetic work will be covered in lesson five of this study.)
  6. Elisha. (His life and prophetic work will be covered in lesson six of this study.)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Why was Abraham referred to as a prophet?
2. Why does Moses, in relation to the other pre-literary prophets, stand in a class by himself?
3. Who was Miriam? Why was she called a prophetess?
4. Other than prophetess, what other office did Deborah hold? Describe that office. How did it relate to her role as prophetess?
5. Who were the “sons of the prophets?”
6. Who was Samuel? Why would it be fair to say, as the apostle Peter did in Acts 3:24, that Samuel marked the beginning of the prophetic era?
7. Who was Nathan? Cite some “highlights” of his prophetic career.
8. Why do you think a prophet was chosen by God to anoint Solomon as king? (I Kings 1:11-48)
9. What was the prophet Gad’s warning to King David? Why did he give him such a warning? How does this episode illustrate the role of the prophet?
10. Should Jonah be included in a list of pre-literary prophets? Explain your answer.

# Lesson Five: Elijah

**Text: I Kings 17:1 - 2 Kings 2:12**

## **I. Background Information**

- A. Name: “Jah is God,” or “my God is Jehovah.”
- B. He was a native of Tishbeh in the territory of Naphtali. (1 Kings 17:1)
- C. His physical appearance was that of a hairy man dressed in a leather girdle. (2 Kings 1:8)
- D. He prophesied mostly during the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. (876-854 B.C.)
- E. His ruling passion was jealousy for Jehovah. (1 Kings 19:10, 14)
- F. He was the type of John the Baptist. (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:11-13; Mark 9:11-13)
- G. He appeared with Jesus and Moses at the transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-5)

## **II. A Summary of Elijah’s Life**

- A. He prophesied a drought. (1 Kings 17:1) It lasted three and a half years. (1 Kings 18:1,41-46; Luke 4:25; James 5:17)
- B. He was fed by ravens at the brook Cherith. (1 Kings 17:2-7) The brook Cherith was east of the Jordan River.
- C. He was sustained by the widow of Zarephath. (1 Kings 17:8-16)
  - 1. Zarephath was on the seacoast of Phoenicia between Tyre and Sidon.
  - 2. Providentially, her meal and oil did not run out while Elijah was there.
- D. He restored the life of the widow of Zarephath’s son. (1 Kings 17:17-24) She thought his death was by a judgment on her sins because of the presence of the prophet.
- E. He challenged and defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. (1 Kings 18:1-40) There were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah.
- F. The drought he had prophesied ended in the third year. (1 Kings 18:1,41-46)
- G. He fled from the wrath of Jezebel, wife of Ahab, queen of Israel. (1 Kings 19:1-14)
- H. He was instructed by God to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel (841-814 B.C.), and Elisha to be prophet. (1 Kings 19:15-18)
- J. He cast his mantle on Elisha. (1 Kings 19:19-21)
- K. He prophesied against the house of Ahab for the death of Naboth. (1 Kings 21:17-19)
- L. He prophesied the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel (853-852 B.C.), son of Ahab. (2 Kings 1:2-16)
- M. He warned Jehoram, king of Judah (848-841 B.C.), of an impending plague upon his family and possessions and foretold of his death. (2 Chronicles 21:12-15, 18-19)
- N. He ascended to heaven in a whirlwind, passing his mantle to Elisha. (2 Kings 2:1-18)

## **III. Two Outstanding Events in the Life of Elijah**

- A. The contest with Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18:16-46)
  - 1. It was occasioned by King Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel.
    - a. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians.
    - b. She instituted the persecution of Jehovah-worship and introduced the worship of Baal. (1 Kings 18:4,13)

2. Elijah was raised up by God.
    - a. “Coming forth suddenly from the wilds of Gilead, he announced himself to Ahab. Austere and ascetic, he brought with him the strong monotheistic spirit of the desert...He came to save his country from a mixture of Baal and Jehovah-worship.” (George L. Robinson, *Leaders of Israel*, p. 161)
    - b. He delivered God’s message to Ahab: Jehovah is a jealous God who demands the worship of His people.
    - c. He prophesied three years of drought and famine.
  3. He demanded a contest between Jehovah and Baal.
    - a. The contest at Mt. Carmel was the result. (1 Kings 18:1-40)
    - b. It was an apparent victory for the people shouted, “Jehovah, he is God.” (1 Kings 18:39)
- B. The victim of despondency—the lesson at Horeb. (1 Kings 19:1-18)
1. When his life was threatened by Jezebel, not a person responded to his cause.
  2. This narrative is “Spiritually one of the profoundest in the Old Testament. It is a magnificent parable, intended to teach Elijah that a prophet of Jehovah must cultivate grace and mercy. Elijah had used the weapon of force, and had failed. Jehovah makes an experiment upon Elijah with his own weapon. He visits the mountain with a hurricane, with an earthquake, and with a fire. The prophet’s wounded spirit is not moved by any of them. But in the calm which follows the tumult he hears a still, small voice, ‘a sound of stillness,’ which thrills his inmost being; he feels that God is there; wraps his face in his mantle and waits to receive the divine communication. He is thus taught the meaning of his failure. In the heart of Sinai he learns the gentleness of God.” (Strachen as quoted by Robinson, 163)
  3. The lessons learned by Elijah in this incident.
    - a. A lesson of humility. “I am no better than my fathers.” (1 Kings 19:4)
    - b. A lesson of courage. Do not run until God commands it.
    - c. A lesson of gentleness. Do not trust too much in violent means for promoting spiritual and moral truth.
    - d. A lesson in patience and perseverance. God knows better than we when our work is finished.
    - e. A lesson of hopefulness. “Yet I will leave me seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal. God has more servants than we sometimes imagine.” (John R. Sampey, *The Heart of the Old Testament*, pp. 142-143)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Elijah” mean? Given his role as prophet, why is it a fitting name for him?
2. Describe Elijah’s physical appearance. What other Biblical character was similar in appearance?

3. Who was king of Israel during most of the prophetic ministry of Elijah? Briefly summarize the condition of Israel during the reign of this king.
4. In what way(s) was Elijah a type of John the Baptist?
5. Why do you think Elijah, along with Moses, appeared at the transfiguration of Jesus?
6. Who was Baal? How did Baal-worship get introduced into Israel?
7. Briefly summarize the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.
8. Why did Elijah flee after his victory on Mt. Carmel? Where did he go?
9. How, after his flight, did Elijah regain his courage and faith?
10. Briefly describe the end of Elijah's life.

# Lesson Six: Elisha

## I. Background Information

- A. Name: “God is salvation,” “God his salvation.”
- B. He was the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah. (1 Kings 19:16). Abel-meholah was located at the northern end of the Jordan Valley and a little south of the Sea of Galilee.
- C. His call and preparation.
  - 1. Elijah was commanded by God to anoint Elisha as his successor. (1 Kings 19:16-17)
  - 2. His call. (1 Kings 19:19-21)
    - a. He was plowing in a field.
    - b. Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha, a token of succession and possibly adoption as a son.
    - c. Elisha only delayed long enough to bid farewell to his parents and provide a departing feast.
  - 3. His preparation.
    - a. He spent several years, seven or eight, with Elijah.
    - b. The only mention of his work during this period of time is that he “poured water on the hands of Elijah.” (2 Kings 3:11)
  - 4. He asked Elijah to give him “a double portion” of his spirit. (2 King 2:9-10)
    - a. This was the portion of a first-born son.
    - b. He was not asking to be equal to Elijah but that he might be as his son, his successor as prophet.

## II. A Summary of Elisha’s Life

- A. Elijah was instructed by God to anoint Elisha to be prophet. (1 Kings 19:15-18)
- B. Elijah cast his mantle on Elisha. (1 Kings 19:19-21) Elisha followed him after bidding farewell to his parents.
- C. He took up the mantle of Elijah at Elijah’s ascent to heaven. (2 Kings 2:1-18)
- D. He went to Jericho where he healed the waters. (2 Kings 2:19-22)
- E. He cursed the children of Bethel who mocked him. (2 Kings 2:23-25)
- F. He prophesied victory to Jehoram, king of Israel (852-841 B.C.), and his allies, Judah and Edom, over Moab. (2 Kings 3:4-27)
- G. He supplied oil to a widow for the redemption of her sons. (2 Kings 4:1-7)
- H. He raised the son of the Shunammite woman. (2 Kings 4:8-37)
- J. He healed some noxious pottage, taking the “death” out of it. (2 Kings 4:38-41)
- K. He fed one hundred people with only twenty loaves. (2 Kings 4:42-44)
- L. He healed Naaman, captain of the Syrian host, of leprosy. (2 Kings 5:1-19)
- M. He smote Gehazi, his servant, with leprosy. (2 Kings 5:20-27)
- N. He caused an ax head to swim. (2 Kings 6:1-7)
- O. He miraculously informed the king of Israel of the locations and the activities of the Syrian army. (2 Kings 6:8-12)
- P. The Syrians sent to capture him are stricken with blindness in answer to his prayer to God. (2 Kings 6:13-23)

- Q. He prophesied the end of a famine in Samaria caused by Ben-hadad and the Syrian host's besieging of the city. (2 Kings 6:24 - 7:20)
- R. He foretold of seven years of famine. (2 Kings 8:1-2)
- S. Jehu was anointed king of Israel (841-814 B.C.) at his direction. (2 Kings 9:1-13)
- T. He prophesied to Joash, king of Israel (835-796 B.C.), Israel's deliverance from Syria. (2 Kings 13:14-19)
- U. He died of some unnamed disease. (2 Kings 13:14,20)
- V. A dead man, cast into the sepulchre of Elisha, revived when his body touched the bones of Elisha. (2 Kings 13:21)
- W. Benhadad, king of Syria and son of Hazael, was defeated three times by Jehoash, king of Israel (798-782 B.C.), in fulfillment of the prophecy of Elisha. (2 Kings 13:23-25)

### III. Elisha and Elijah Contrasted

- A. "Elijah and Elisha were quite unlike in their personal history and in the character of their work. Elijah's home was in the mountains of Gilead; Elisha's in the hot Jordan valley. Elijah seems to have owned nothing but a mantle and girdle; Elisha was the son of a man who could send twelve plows to his field. Elijah was much alone, not being magnetic and companionable; Elisha was the trusted friend and counselor of kings, and the favorite guest of both rich and poor. Elijah was the avenger and destroyer; Elisha was the quiet statesman and religious teacher, his miracles being chiefly works of mercy. The words and deeds of Elijah remind us of John the Baptist; the miracles of Elisha point to the work of Jesus.  
 "Still it remains true that Elijah is the greater character. He ranks with Enoch and Moses. He was not, like John, a forerunner; for Elisha was merely his greatest disciple." (John R. Sampey, *The Heart of the Old Testament*, p. 146)
- B. "Elijah was a typical prophet; Elisha was more of a wonderworker. Elijah wore a rough mantle; Elisha, the ordinary garments of a civilian. Elijah was distinguished for his flowing locks; Elisha, for a head which was bald. Elijah was a son of the desert; Elisha is usually found in the city...Elijah's career was comparatively brief; Elisha's extended over a period of some sixty years. Elijah came into conflict with kings; Elisha was their counselor and friend." (George L. Robinson, *Leaders of Israel*, p. 166)

#### A Contrast and Comparison of Elijah and Elisha

##### Elijah

Home: Mountains of Gilead  
 Owned nothing, it seems, but mantle and girdle  
 Mostly alone (not magnetic nor companionable)

Avenger and destroyer

Like John the Baptist  
 Typical prophet  
 Wore rough mantle  
 Hairy  
 Found in desert  
 Brief career (as prophet)  
 Conflicted with kings

##### Elisha

Home: Jordan Valley  
 Son of man who could send 12 plows to his field  
 Trusted friend and counselor of kings (and of rich and poor)  
 Quiet statesman - religious teacher (Miracles chiefly merciful)

Like Jesus  
 Wonder worker  
 Wore garments of a civilian  
 Bald (2 Kings 2:23)  
 Found in city  
 Career extended over 60 years  
 Counselor and friend to kings



# Questions for Review and Discussion

1. How did Elisha become a prophet?
2. What is meant when, in 2 Kings 2:9, Elisha asks Elijah for a “double portion of your spirit” to be upon him? Why would he make such a request?
3. Why did Elisha curse the children of Bethel? What happened to them?
4. Why did Elisha help the widow who had two sons? (1 Kings 4:1-7) How did he help her?
5. Who was Naaman? Why did he come to Elijah? Briefly summarize their encounter.
6. Who was Gehazi? What happened to him after Naaman had departed from Elisha? Why?
7. Why, in 2 Kings 6, did the Syrians want to capture Elisha? What happened to them?
8. What of an unusual nature occurred when the body of a dead man was placed in the tomb that contained the physical remains of Elisha?
9. Contrast Elisha to Elijah.
10. In what way(s) could Elisha be considered a type of Jesus?

# Lesson Seven:

## The Historical and Political Background of the Literary Prophets

### I. The United Kingdom (1 & 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11; 1 & 2 Chronicles 1-9)

- A. During the lifetime of Samuel, the Israelites rejected God's system of rule by judges and demanded a king. (1 Samuel 8:1-8). Saul was anointed as king, reigning forty years.
- B. David, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), was anointed as second king of Israel.
  - 1. He subdued all the nations which afflicted Israel and the borders of the kingdom were spread.
  - 2. God promised him that his kingdom would endure forever. (2 Samuel 7:11-16)
- C. David was succeeded by Solomon, his son.
  - 1. He built the empire of Israel to its peak of earthly glory. (1 Kings 4:20-25)
  - 2. He built the temple in Jerusalem which his father, David, had been forbidden to build.

### II. The Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 10-36; Amos; Hosea, Isaiah; Micah; Nahum; Jeremiah; Zephaniah; Habakkuk; Lamentations, Daniel, Ezekiel)

- A. Following Solomon's death, the nation was divided into two kingdoms.
  - 1. Israel. The northern kingdom consisting of ten tribes with Samaria as its capital.
  - 2. Judah. The southern kingdom consisting of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah with its capital in Jerusalem.
- B. Israel.
  - 1. Of the twenty kings who ruled her, there was not a good one.
  - 2. From its beginning, Israel was the victim of idolatrous worship, king Jeroboam (931-910 B.C.) erecting idols in Samaria and Dan. Even though she sank into terrible depths of idolatry and sin, God did not give up on her without a fight.
  - 3. God sent prophets to turn the hearts of the people back to Him and His law.
    - a. Elijah. (1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 2)
    - b. Elisha. (2 Kings 2-13)
    - c. Amos (755 B.C.). Amos condemned the unjust social practices, extravagant but empty formal worship, and the political corruptions of Israel. His preaching was stern and he demanded that the people repent or "Prepare to meet your God." (Amos 4:12)
    - d. Hosea. (750-725 B.C.) Hosea was instructed to take a wife of harlotry.
      - 1) His wife, Gomer, who later left him and played the harlot, was taken back by Hosea because of his love for her.
      - 2) This incident typified God's marriage to the spiritually idolatrous harlot, Israel. It showed God's love for His rebellious people.
  - 4. The Assyrian captivity. Israel did not heed God's warning so she fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17)

### C. Judah.

1. Judah had some good kings among those who ruled her. They made great efforts to destroy idolatry and restore the worship God had commanded.
2. When Assyria tried to take Judah, King Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.), a good king, appealed to the prophet Isaiah who prayed to God to spare His people.
  - a. God slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night and Judah was spared. (2 Kings 19:35-37)
  - b. God spared Judah a few more years because of the good influence of Hezekiah and King Josiah. (641-609 B.C.)
3. During this time, Judah was becoming more corrupt thus storing up judgment for herself.
  - a. Unlike Israel, the kings of Judah turned the people back to God periodically thus putting off their destruction for a time.
  - b. Josiah cast down all the idolatrous images but could not take the idols from the hearts of the people.
4. As He had to Israel, God sent His prophets to Judah.
  - a. Isaiah. (740-690 B.C.)
    - 1) Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah (767-740 B.C.), Jotham (740-732 B.C.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.), and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Isaiah 1:1).
    - 2) He prophesied against the vices of Judah and warned her of God's wrath.
    - 3) He also painted a bright picture of the future glory awaiting Judah after her redemption.
  - b. Micah. (735-700 B.C.)
    - 1) A contemporary of Isaiah, he began his ministry a few years after Isaiah had begun. (Micah 1:1)
    - 2) Judah had become prosperous and the attendant social evils of greed and oppression of the poor surfaced. Micah cried out against these injustices.
  - c. Zephaniah (630-625 B.C.). Zephaniah saw the Chaldeans, Babylonians, as a growing threat to world judgment, including Judah.
  - d. Jeremiah (625-586 B.C.)
    - 1) He prophesied for 40 years trying to avert the Babylonian captivity.
    - 2) He warned the people they would be taken as slaves to Babylon for 70 years. (Jeremiah 25:11) No one heeded his warning.
  - e. Habakkuk. (612-606 B.C.)
    - 1) Habakkuk cried to God because of the wickedness of Judah and doom on the horizon in the form of the Babylonians.
    - 2) God's judgment was coming on Judah to purge her of her evil. (Habakkuk 1:5-6)

### III. The Babylonian Captivity

- A. Judah fell to the Babylonians in 606 B.C..
  1. Jerusalem was captured in 597 B.C.
  2. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 586 B.C.
- B. God sent prophets to comfort and reassure His people that they would return to their homeland.
  1. Lamentations (586 B.C.). Jeremiah wrote a poem, weeping and lamenting the fall of Jerusalem and the affliction of the people because of God's wrath against them.

2. Daniel (606-536 B.C.). Daniel prophesied of God's protection during the captivity, the restoration of His people to their land, and the promise of the Messianic kingdom.
3. Ezekiel (593-573 B.C.). Ezekiel prophesied to the fragments of a shattered nation. They saw no light at the end of the tunnel and Ezekiel gave them hope (see Ezek. 37).

#### **IV. Restoration of a Remnant (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)**

- A. True to God's promises (Isa. 44:24 - 45:7; Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10), after 70 years in captivity, Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king who had defeated the Babylonians, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland.
- B. The first group returned from captivity under Joshua and Zerubbabel. (Ezra 1-4)
  1. The altar was restored and the foundations of the temple laid but then the work was stopped as the people went about their own business.
  2. About 16 years after the work was stopped, God sent two prophets to encourage the people to build the temple.
    - a. Haggai (520 B.C.). He moved the people to action with the simple message, "Build the temple." (Haggai 1:1-11)
    - b. Zechariah (520-518 B.C.).
      - 1) He looked beyond the immediate temple to the Messiah and the spiritual temple of God.
      - 2) He had many prophetic visions of the coming King.
  3. Work on the temple was completed in 516 B.C., 70 years after the destruction of the previous temple. (Ezra 5-6)
- C. The life of Esther falls between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah somewhere around 483-465 B.C.
  1. She was a Jewess who married the king of the empire.
  2. Through her influence, God providentially delivered His people from destruction to bring them back to their homeland. (cf. Esther 4:13-14)
- D. The second group of captives, under the leadership of Ezra, returned to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. (Ezra 7-10)
- E. In 444 B.C., Nehemiah, a Jew who was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, came to Jerusalem and led the remnant to rebuild the walls of the city. They rose up, repaired the wall, defended the city against their enemies, and rededicated themselves to God. (Nehemiah 8-13)
- F. A century after the return of the first exiles, the people became indifferent to the moral and ceremonial aspects of the Law.
  1. Worship and morality were in a state of decay. God sent His final prophet of the era to His people with what would be His final message for a long time.
  2. Malachi. (432 B.C.)
    - a. Malachi cried out against the corruptions of the nation and announced the coming of Elijah the prophet who would precede the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord saying that this prophet would turn the hearts of the people back to God.
    - b. More than 400 years passed before God sent that prophet, John the Baptist. (Matt. 11:13-14; 17:11-13; Luke 1:17)

# A Chronology of the Prophetic Era

Date	Event	Israel	Judah	Empire	Prophet
931		Jeroboam 931-910	Rehoboam 931-913		
913			Abijam 913-911		
911			Asa 911-870		
910		Nadab 910-909			
909		Baasha 909-886			
886		Elah 886-885			
885		Zimri 885			
883		Tibni 885-880		(Assyria) Ashur-Nasir- Pal II 883-859	
876					Elijah 876-854
874		Ahab 874-853			
870			Jehoshaphat 870-848		
858				Shalmaneser III 858-824	
854					Elisha 854-794(?)
853		Ahaziah 853-852			
852		Joram (Jehoram) 852-841			
848			Jehoram (Joram) 848-841		
845					Obadiah 845
841		Jehu 841-814	Ahaziah 841 Athaliah 841-835		
835			Joash (Jehoash) 835-796		
830					Joel 830
823				Shamshi- Adad V 823-811	
814		Jehoahaz 814-798		Adad-Nirari III 810-783	
810					
798		Jehoash (Joash) 798-782			

Date	Event	Israel	Judah	Empire	Prophet
796			Amaziah 796-767		
793		Jeroboam II 793-753			
782				Shalmaneser IV 782-773	
780 772				Ashur-Dan III 772-755	Jonah 780
767			Uzziah (Azariah) 767-740		
760					Amos 760-750
754				Ashur-Nirari V 754-745	
753		Zachariah 753-752			
752		Shallum 752 Menahem 752-742			
750 744				Tiglath- Pileser III 744-727	Hosea 750-727
742		Pekahiah 742-740			
740		Pekah 740-732	Jotham 740-732		Isaiah 740-690 Micah 735-700
735					
732		Hoshea 732-723	Ahaz 732-716		
726		(END)		Shalmaneser V 726-722 Sargon II 721-705	
721	Fall of Samaria to Assyria				
716			Hezekiah 716-687		
704				Sennacherib 704-681	
687			Manasseh 687-643		
680				Esarhaddon 680-669 Ashurbanipal 668-633	
668					
663					Nahum 663-612
643			Amon 643-641		
643					

Date	Event	Israel	Judah	Empire	Prophet
641			Josiah 641-609		
630					Zephaniah 630-625
626					Jeremiah 626-586
625				(Babylonia) Nabopolassar	
612	Fall of Nineveh to Babylonians			625-605	Habakkuk 612-605
609			Jehoahaz 609 Jehoiakim 609-598		
605					Daniel 605-536
604				Nebuchad- nezzar 604-562	
598			Jehoiachin 598-597		
597	Fall of Jerusalem to Babylonians		Zedekiah (Mattaniah) 597-586		
593					Ezekiel 593-570
586	Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar				
561				Evil-Merodoch 561-560	
559				Neriglissar 559-556	
556				Cyrus II (The Great) 559-530	
555				Laborosoardoch 556	
539	Beginning of Persian Empire			Nabonidus 555-539 Belshazzar 553-539 (Persia)	
536	Decree of Cyrus permitting the return from exile				
529				Cambyses II 529-522	
521	Work of Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to build the Temple			Darius I 521-486	
520					Haggai 520 Zechariah 520-518
516	Completion and dedication of Temple				
485				Xerxes 485-465	
464				Artaxerxes I 464-424	
457	Return of exiles led by Ezra				

Date	Event	Israel	Judah	Empire	Prophet
445	Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem				Malachi 445-432
423				Darius II 423-405	
404				Artaxerxes II 404-359	
358				Artaxerxes III 358-338	
337				Arses 337-336	
335				Darius III 335-331	

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who was the first king of Israel? Briefly summarize the circumstances by which he became king?
2. Who was the second king of Israel? What kind of man was he? What legacy did he leave?
3. Who was the third and last king of Israel? Briefly relate the nation's condition during his reign.
4. What caused the nation to divide after the reign of the previous king? Name the nations after the division. How many tribes were in each?
5. Describe the kings of the northern kingdom. Why do you think they were that way?
6. Why did God send prophets to the nations?
7. Which prophets were sent to the northern kingdom? Was their overall message effective? Explain.
8. Which prophets were sent to the southern kingdom? How did their overall message differ from that of their counterparts to the northern kingdom?
9. What role(s) did the other nations have in relationship to the prophets and the people of God?
10. Why did Judah go into Babylonian captivity? What prophets warned them of it? Comforted them during it? Encouraged and corrected them after it?



# Lesson Eight: Isaiah

## I. The Man

- A. His name: “Isaiah.”
  - 1. It means “salvation is of the Lord” or “the Lord is salvation.”
  - 2. It “indicates that his mission was to point the people to the Lord, the only source of salvation.” (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 26)
- B. Little is known of his personal life except for his family.
  - 1. He was married to a woman who was a prophetess. (8:3)
  - 2. He had at least two sons who had prophetic names, the first a promise of mercy, the latter of judgment.
    - a. Shear-jashub: “a remnant shall return.” (7:3)
    - b. Maher-shalal-hash-baz: “the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth.” (8:3)
- C. He was a prophet of God who was:
  - 1. A prophet of the future, even though he addressed himself to the Jews of his day.
    - a. He constantly pointed to events to come.
    - b. He prophesied of the future of Judah and the destruction of the heathen nations.
    - c. He spoke of the coming of a King, the Messiah, who would rule in righteousness. (cf. John 12:41)
  - 2. A great statesman who had great insight into the affairs of his day.
  - 3. An advisor to kings meeting them as their equal.
  - 4. A great reformer.
    - a. He condemned the errors of the people.
    - b. He pointed to God as the source of all right conduct.
  - 5. Without peer in relation to his insight into the true nature and character of God.
    - a. He recognized the Lord’s absolute holiness and righteousness.
    - b. He emphasized God’s control over the nations and their destiny.
- D. There is no account of his death.
  - 1. Tradition, based on an apocryphal book, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, says he was sawed asunder on the order of Manasseh.
  - 2. Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, reproaches the Jews with the accusation “whom (Isaiah) you sawed asunder with a wooden saw.” (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho 120*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p. 259)

## II. The Date

- A. The probable length of Isaiah’s ministry was fifty years, 740-690 B.C.
  - 1. He was a prophet during the reigns of Uzziah (767-740 B.C.), Jotham (740-732 B.C.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.), and Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.) in Judah.
  - 2. He was a contemporary of the prophets Amos (760-750 B.C.), Hosea (750-725 B.C.), and Micah (735-700 B.C.).
- B. “The book of Isaiah is basically a series of discourses by the prophet delivered at different times and on different occasions. The arrangement of these discourses is generally chronological whenever history is involved.” (Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 329)

C. The book of Isaiah in relation to certain historical dates and events.

1. 1:1 (740-690 B.C.). The scope of Isaiah's ministry.
2. 6:1 (740 B.C.). Isaiah's call and commission as a prophet in the year king Uzziah died.
3. 7:1 (734 B.C.). The Syro-Ephraimitic War. Syria and Israel formed an alliance against Assyria and when king Ahaz of Judah refused to join them, they conspired to kill him.
4. 14:28 (727 B.C.). In the year king Ahaz died, Isaiah prophesied against the surrounding nations.
5. 20:1 (711 B.C.). Sargon invaded the region of Palestine and conquered Ashdod, a Philistine city which had revolted against Assyria.
6. 36:1 (701 B.C.). Sennacherib invaded Palestine and besieged Jerusalem. After an angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their camp, the Assyrians fled.

### III. The Setting

A. Politically.

1. "During the time Judah had become the battleground of the two great powers of the ancient world, Assyria and Egypt...Like the iron upon the anvil, therefore, Judah lay between two hostile forces, one of which (Assyria) was burning with the youthful fires of enterprise and lust of conquest, while the other (Egypt) still remembered its former glories and the empire it had wielded in Asia." (A.H. Sayce, *The Life and Times of Isaiah*, p. 21)
2. Egypt's influence.
  - a. Because Egypt feared the growing power of Assyria, she began to meddle in the politics of Palestine.
  - b. Under the rule of Tirhakah, Egypt sought to form a league with Jerusalem against Assyria. (See Isaiah 30)
3. Assyria's influence.
  - a. When Judah was threatened by a coalition of Israel and Syria because she would not join them in an alliance against Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria, king Ahaz of Judah appealed to Tiglath-Pileser for help resulting in Judah paying heavy tribute and losing her independence to Assyria.
  - b. Sargon II, successor to Tiglath-pileser, invaded Judah in 712/711 B.C. to quell a state of revolt. (see Isaiah 20)
  - c. Sennacherib, successor to Sargon II, invaded Judah in 702/701 B.C. to aid in securing his western provinces.
4. There were three political parties in Judah in the time of Isaiah.
  - a. The Egyptian party. It advocated an alliance with Egypt against Assyria.
  - b. The Assyrian party. It advocated submission to Assyria.
  - c. The Nationalistic or "Jehovah" party.
    - 1) Led by Isaiah, it urged loyalty to the Lord as the only way to salvation.
    - 2) It opposed any alliance with either Egypt or Assyria.

B. Religiously.

1. "The moral and spiritual conditions in Judah were little better than they were in Israel." (Hailey, 20)
2. During the reign of Uzziah, Judah enjoyed prosperity and strength not known since the days of Solomon but it brought with it the sins of greed, oppression, religious formality, and corruption.

3. The reforms of Hezekiah brought sweeping changes. (2 Chronicles 29-31)
  - a. They were not taken to heart by the people.
  - b. They accounted for only a superficial religious fervor among the people but no permanent results.

#### IV. The Message

- A. According to Melvin Curry in “The Forward” to *A Commentary on Isaiah* by Homer Hailey (pp. 11-12), the book of Isaiah:
  1. “...portrays the tense conditions in Judah during the Assyrian invasions in a gripping way.”
  2. “...contrasts the faith of the few who trusted in the Lord with the unbelief of the many who feared the king of Assyria.”
  3. “...contrasts the gloom of Judah’s present sinful condition with the glory of its future restoration from captivity and the eventual establishment of the messianic kingdom.”
- B. “Amos emphasized the righteousness of Jehovah; Hosea his lovingkindness; Isaiah saw the source of these qualities in the divine holiness...In all his teaching he gives special emphasis to the two phases of the divine character that were burned into his innermost soul during his inaugural vision, namely, the divine holiness and the divine majesty.” (Frederick Carl Eiselen, *Prophetic Books of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, pp. 200, 202)
- C. “The central message is—‘JEHOVAH IS SALVATION.’ In part one the key chapter is the sixth, where Isaiah sees the vision of Jehovah as King. In part two the key chapter is the fifty-third, where he sees the Lamb suffering and then triumphing.” (Wilson Adams, *A Survey of the Old Testament* [an unpublished work], p. 115)
- D. “He saw the Lord as King, high and exalted above all creation and absolute in holiness and righteousness...The words righteousness and justice, the principles on which God always acts occur repeatedly in the predominant thought and emphasis in this book.” (Hailey, 27)
- E. The two main divisions of the book are:
  1. Sermons of present judgment and future glory. (chs. 1-39)
  2. Sermons of God’s greatness. (chs. 40-66)

#### V. The Lessons

- A. Salvation is by faith.
  1. It was on the basis of faith in God that the people would be saved from their guilt and its consequences.
  2. The people are encouraged to wait earnestly, expectantly, and hopefully in faith for the Lord to deliver them.
- B. The oneness of Jew and Gentile under the Messiah’s rule.
  1. The coming Messiah would bring salvation to people of all nations.
  2. The Messiah’s spiritual kingdom would be universal in its scope.
- C. “The Bible in Miniature. As there are 66 books in the Bible, so there are 66 chapters in the book of Isaiah. As the 66 books are divided into 39 (Old Testament) and 27 (New Testament), so the 66 chapters of Isaiah are divided into 39 and 27. Furthermore, as the 39 Old Testament books are mainly concerned with the Law and the judgment that befalls those who disobey it, so the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are concerned with the thought of judgment on the covenant people because of their disobedience to the Law; and as the 27 books of the New Testament are mainly occupied with the message of Divine grace and salvation, so the last 27 chapters of Isaiah speak of the coming day when that grace and salvation will be made available to all men through Christ. Thus, Isaiah is a kind of Bible all in itself.” (Adams, 114-115)

## VI. Isaiah in the New Testament

- A. “Isaiah presented the most vivid picture of the Messiah and His kingdom of any of the prophets.” (Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments*, Vol. 1, p. 143)
- B. References to the Messiah and His kingdom: 2:1-4; 4:2; 7:14; 9:1-2, 6-7; 11:1-11; 16:5; 28:16-17; 32:1-4, 16-19; 33:17-24; 35:5-10; 40:3-5; 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 53:1-12; 55:1-5; 60:18-22; 61:1-3.
- C. Some fulfilled prophecies.
  1. The virgin birth. (7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-28)
  2. The Lord on His throne. (6:1ff; John 12:41)
  3. Every knee bowing to Jesus. (45:23; Philippians 2:10)
  4. Jesus to sit and rule on David’s throne. (9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33)
  5. Jesus of the lineage of David. (11:1-2; Romans 15:2)
  6. Jesus, the cornerstone laid in Zion. (28:16; 1 Peter 2:6)
  7. John the Baptist’s preparatory work. (40:3-5; Matt. 3:3)
  8. Christ’s death on the cross. (53:1ff; Acts 8:32-35)
  9. The Messiah’s kingdom established. (2:2-4; Acts 2:16; 1 Timothy 3:15; Eph. 2:13)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of the name “Isaiah?” What, if anything, does it say about his mission as a prophet?
2. What are the names of Isaiah’s two sons? What prophetic messages were contained in their names?
3. Who were kings in Israel and Judah during the prophetic ministry of Isaiah? What prophets were contemporary with him?
4. What two nations were the preeminent world powers during Isaiah’s ministry? Describe their influence on Israel and Judah during that time.
5. What three political parties existed in Judah in the time of Isaiah? Briefly describe and then state the purpose of each.
6. Briefly summarize the religious condition of both Israel and Judah during the ministry of Isaiah.
7. Briefly state what you believe to be the basic message of the book of Isaiah.
8. Why is it fair to refer to Isaiah as “the Messianic prophet?”
9. What is taught in 2:1-4 that makes it such a key Messianic prophecy?
10. Since it is obvious that 7:14 is a Messianic prophecy, what meaning did it have to the people of Isaiah’s day?

# Lesson Nine: Jeremiah

## I. The Man

A. His name means “Jehovah will lift up.”

B. His personal life.

1. He was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, and may have been a priest himself. (1:1)
2. He lived in Anathoth, his hometown, until he had to escape because of persecution by his own townspeople (11:18-23) and his own family (12:6).
3. He was forbidden by God to marry a wife or have children to symbolize God’s removal of the joy of mirth, gladness and marriage from Judah. (16:1-4,9)
4. He was a “loner.” (16:5, 8)
5. “He was of a sensitive nature, mild, timid, and inclined to melancholy...He was uncommonly bold and courageous, although it was unpopular and subjected him to hatred and even to suffering wrong...He is also called the weeping prophet.” (J.B. Tidwell, *The Bible Book by Book*, p. 118)
  - a. He describes himself as “the man who has seen affliction.” (Lamentations 3:1)
  - b. “It is noteworthy that when people were trying to account for Jesus, Jeremiah was one of the names put forward (Matthew 16:13-14).” (Eugene H. Peterson, *Run with the Horses: A Quest for Life at Its Best*, p. 16)

C. His prophetic ministry.

1. God chose him before birth to be a prophet. (1:5)
2. He was ordained to be a prophet while still young. (1:6)
3. He seemed constantly torn between his love for God and faithfulness to Him and his love for and patriotic duty to his country. (4:19; 8:20-22; 9:1)
4. He was so totally devoted to his duty as a prophet and so dedicated to his God-given mission that he could not stop speaking the message of God even though at times he felt like giving up. (20:7-9)
  - a. In his forty years of ministry he never once saw any positive response to his message, yet he patiently and bravely persisted in his mission despite the fact that he was unheeded, humiliated and even persecuted. (6:16-19; 25:4-11; 26:12-13)
  - b. Even though at times it broke his heart to do so, he continually declared the whole counsel of God to an unrepentant people.

## II. The Date

A. Jeremiah began his work as a prophet during the reign of Josiah (1:2) in 627 B.C. and prophesied for the next forty years to 586 B.C.

1. His work spanned the reign of the last five kings of Judah. (1:1-3)
2. He prophesied during the forty years which led up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its inhabitants to Babylonian captivity.

B. He was a contemporary of Ezekiel (597-575 B.C.) and Daniel (605-536 B.C.).

### III. The Setting

#### A. Politically.

1. "The tense three-sided contest for world dominion between Assyria, Egypt and Babylon form the background of (Jeremiah's) prophetic career." (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 571)
  - a. Assyria.
    - 1) Her power and dominion were waning because of revolts throughout her empire, especially that of Babylon.
    - 2) After Ashurbanipal's death (633 B.C.), she declined rapidly until Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C.
  - b. Egypt.
    - 1) She was growing in power. Pharaoh Necho came to Assyria's aid against the Medes and Babylonians in 609 B.C., killing king Josiah of Judah in Megiddo when he tried to stop him (2 Chronicles 35:20-35).
    - 2) He took Jehoahaz, Josiah's successor, captive (Jeremiah 22:11-17) and replaced him with Jehoiakim. (2 Kings 23:31-34; 2 Chron. 36:1-5)
    - 3) Babylon defeated the Egyptian armies at Carchemish in 605 B.C. and became the dominant world power. (Jer. 46:1-26)
  - c. Babylon.
    - 1) She subdued Assyria and then Egypt.
    - 2) She collected tribute and took hostages from Judah under king Jehoiakim in 605 B.C.
    - 3) She also deported Jews from Jerusalem on two other occasions (Jer. 52:28-30) and then in 586 B.C. destroyed Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25; Jer. 52)
2. Judah.
  - a. Judah had turned away from God and had made alliances, at various times, with Assyria, Egypt and Babylon.
  - b. Following the death of Josiah, who was the last good king of Judah, all her kings were wicked and led her away from God.
    - 1) Jehoahaz (609 B.C.) reigned three months until Pharaoh Necho carried him away to Egypt. (2 Kings 22:1 - 23:30; 2 Chron. 34-35)
    - 2) Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C.), brother of Jehoahaz, was set up as king by Necho and paid him heavy tribute until Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, overran Judah and he became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 23:35 - 24:7; 2 Chron. 36:5,8) He was taken to Babylon in chains in 597 B.C.
    - 3) Jehoiachin (597 B.C.) reigned three months after which Jerusalem was captured and another group of captives were taken to Babylon. (2 Kings 24:8-16; 2 Chron. 36:9-10)
    - 4) Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.), Jehoiachin's uncle, was made king by Nebuchadnezzar. When he rebelled against him, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and destroyed it and then carried Zedekiah and all the people of the city captive to Babylon in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 24:17 - 25:21; 2 Chron. 36:11-21; Jer. 52:1-30)

#### B. Religiously.

1. Judah had forsaken God and turned to idols. (Jer. 2:13)
2. The extent of the wickedness of the people is seen in the fact that three times in the book it is said that the people are past praying for. (7:16; 11:14; 14:11)
3. The wickedness and impenitence of the people are drawing them closer to the inevitable judgment of God, Babylon being the instrument of His providence.

#### IV. The Message

- A. The basic message of Jeremiah's prophetic work can be seen in 25:11 and 30:11.
  - 1. 25:11. "And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."
  - 2. 30:11. "...though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished."
- B. Jeremiah's message can be summarized as "Repent or perish" (3:25 - 4:2) but sadly it went unheeded (6:16-19; 25:4-11; 26:12-13).
- C. "His was principally a message of stern warning against the inevitable doom of the Babylonian Captivity (25:1-14), if the people did not repent of idolatry and sin. The menacing doom of an (unorthodox) message (1:10) was highlighted, however, by bright Messianic flashes (23:5-8; 30:4-11; 31:31-34; 33:15-18). Final restoration of Israel was to be accomplished after a period of unparalleled suffering (30:3-10), through the manifestation of David's righteous Branch, the Lord (23:6; 33:15)." (*Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 344)
- D. While his message is basically one of gloom and judgment, there are brief glimpses of the future hope in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (23:1-6; 31:31-34)

#### V. The Lessons

- A. "Every concerned Christian in America would do well to ponder long over Jeremiah's book for there are striking similarities between his day and ours on nearly every page—a corrupt leadership (23:1-2), a general condoning of immorality among the populous ('neither could they blush...' 8:12), and even a spiritual breakdown among religious leaders—all find their comparisons in our own day. (See 5:30-31)." (Wilson Adams, *A Survey of the Bible*, [an unpublished work], p. 118)
- B. Devotion to duty to the Lord as depicted by Jeremiah's persistent perseverance. (20:7-9)
- C. National sin brings national judgment. (2:8,19,25)
- D. The impossibility of Christ reigning on the earthly throne of David as the premillennial theory demands Him to do. (22:28-30)
  - 1. Coniah (Jeconiah) would have no descendants on the throne of David who would rule in Judah.
  - 2. Jesus Christ was a descendant of Jeconiah (Matthew 1:1-11), therefore, He could not sit on an earthly throne in Jerusalem.
- E. Jeremiah speaks of the sorrow, patience, grace and self-sacrificing love of Jesus for His people. Compare 9:11 with Matthew 23:37.

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Describe the call of Jeremiah to be a prophet.
  
2. Why did God forbid Jeremiah to marry and have children?

3. During what time did Jeremiah prophesy?
4. What three nations were world powers during the ministry of Jeremiah? Describe the situation of each and their influence on Judah.
5. What five kings reigned in Judah during Jeremiah's ministry? Briefly describe each.
6. Briefly summarize the spiritual condition of Judah during the time of Jeremiah.
7. Why is it correct to characterize Jeremiah as "the weeping prophet?"
8. What is the basic message that Jeremiah preached? How was it received by the people? What lessons, if any, can be learned from these facts?
9. In what ways can Jeremiah be compared to Jesus?
10. Do you believe the times in which Jeremiah lived could be compared to our times today? If not, why not? If so, what consequences might that have on us or our nation?



# Lesson Ten: Lamentations

## I. The Author

- A. Jeremiah. (cf. 3:1, 8, 14-17, 48-51, 52-57, 60-63)
  - 1. Though he is not named in the text, his authorship has never been questioned.
  - 2. The very nature of this book shows a kinship to the book of Jeremiah.
- B. Evidence which suggests Jeremiah as author.
  - 1. The Septuagint names Jeremiah as author and introduces the book by saying, “Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented with his lamentation over Jerusalem, and said...”
  - 2. Early church fathers such as Origen and Jerome identify him as author.
  - 3. Jeremiah, like the writer of Lamentations, had a sensitive nature. (cf. Jeremiah 8:21 - 9:1; 14:17-22)
  - 4. The scenes depicted of the destruction of Jerusalem are so lifelike and stirring that they suggest an eyewitness.

## II. The Date - 586 B.C.

- A. “The time of the composition of these poems is certainly the period immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, and probably during the month which intervened between the capture of Jerusalem and its destruction (see passages which show that famine and hunger were still raging in the city, 1:11,19; 2:19,20; 4:4; etc.)” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the OT*, p. 281)
- B. “It is quite probable that this book was written during the three months between the time the first group of captives were taken to Babylon and the time when the second group left Jerusalem, fleeing into Egypt in 586 B.C., taking Jeremiah with them.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 188)
- C. “The vivid and passionate tone of the author gives a strong impression of one who had just experienced the horrors of the destruction of the Holy City and the temple.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, p. 219)

## III. The Setting

- A. See “The Setting” in previous lesson, “Jeremiah.”
- B. Read 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21 and Jeremiah 34,37-39, 52 concerning the fall of Jerusalem. (Lamentations 1:1-3) The siege against Jerusalem lasted a year and a half.
- C. “The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., is the historical event common to the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Jeremiah prophesies and anticipates the fall and Lamentations looks back at the holocaust in utter distress.  
“Knowing from his prophecies how Jeremiah wept over his people before judgment fell, it is not difficult for us to imagine the depths to which his soul sank in utter grief as he watched the holy city burning and his people being ravished. Lamentations reveals something of the pathos of that experience.” (Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen’s Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 351)

## IV. Composition and Style

- A. “The five chapters of Lamentations consist of five mournful poems which can be entitled: (1) the destruction of Jerusalem, (2) the anger of Yahweh, (3) the prayer for mercy, (4) the siege of Jerusalem, (5) the prayer for restoration.” (*Nelson’s*, 219)

- B. “‘Lamentations’ is a set of five short poems of mourning. They are funeral songs. The first four follow an acrostic pattern. Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 each have 22 verses, with each successive verse beginning with each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Lamentation 3 has three verses allotted to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and every group of three begins with the same letter. Lamentation 5 balances out the other poems with 22 verses, but is not an alphabetical acrostic.

“The songs are composed using a special arrangement suitable for mourning. It is called a ‘limping meter’ with three beats in the first line, trailing away to a distressed two-beat line. When publicly read in the Hebrew language, it gave the effect of a faint dying away. It would be a very depressing song to hear.

“Various views are held as to why the author used this acrostic device. Among them are: (1) as an aid to memorization; (2) as a symbol of the **fullness** of the people’s grief (i.e. from A to Z); (3) to confine the expression of boundless grief by the limiting device of acrostic.” (Jensen, 353)

## V. The Message

- A. “Behind the writing was the intention to produce in the sinful Jewish people that element of true repentance necessary before God could work out their restoration to their homeland. Jeremiah had prophesied that there would be a return. He must now set about helping to prepare them for this fulfillment.

“One sees in the book, also, the personal heartbreak and deep sorrow of the prophet *personally*, for his love for his city never ceased to well up from within him.” (Deal, 188)

- B. “Lamentations portrays the reaction of a devout Israelite toward the destruction of the theocracy. The tragic scene presents God’s people so corrupt that Jehovah has forsaken His sanctuary and abandoned it to their enemies...The whole note is one of deep tragedy.” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 641)
- C. “What Jerusalem’s fall meant to the Jews of the Old Testament is hard for us to imagine... To them it was the loss of everything—their Temple, priesthood, sacrificial system, capital city, nation, and, in most cases, large numbers of their loved ones. For the survivors of the destruction, it meant a forced march of about 2,000 miles to Babylon, where they then had to live in exile, servitude, and misery. Lamentations was written to bewail those awful facts.” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, p. 214)
- D. “The name of this book reflects the fact that the book is a sort of funeral dirge, a song of heartbreak, over the destruction of Jerusalem. In the most ancient Hebrew groupings of Scripture, this book is listed with Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Ruth, and Esther, which were known as ‘The Writings.’” (Deal, 186)
1. It was listed there because, like these books, it was used for special readings in the synagogues.
  2. Starting in the Middle Ages, the Jews read “Lamentations” every Sabbath eve at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) in Jerusalem to commemorate the city’s fall.

## V. A Summary

- A. Lamentation 1. (ch. 1) Jerusalem’s terrible condition after her destruction is portrayed.
1. The author is despondent over her emptiness. (vv. 1-11)
  2. The city is personified so that she cries her own song of mourning for her dreadful condition. (vv. 12-22)

- B. Lamentation 2. (ch. 2) God’s anger and punishment upon Jerusalem for her sins is depicted.
  - 1. It explains this destruction is a judgment from God. (vv. 1-10)
  - 2. The prophet’s heart is broken so he is powerless to console the people. (vv. 11-17)
  - 3. The people cry out to the Lord because of their horrible plight. (vv. 18-22)
- C. Lamentation 3. (ch. 3)
  - 1. The prophet cries out in anguish for his own affliction during his life and ministry but he also sings of the hope he has because of God’s faithfulness and mercy. (vv.1-39)
  - 2. God’s chastisement for their sins was just. (vv. 39-47)
  - 3. The prophet prays for vengeance upon his adversaries. (vv. 48-66)
- D. Lamentation 4. (ch. 4) The reason for their punishment is told—their degradation and affliction is because of their sins.
- E. Lamentation 5. (ch. 5) This is the prophet’s prayer for mercy and restoration.
  - 1. He reminds God of the affliction of the survivors. (vv. 1-18)
  - 2. He pleads for God to ultimately deliver and restore them. (vv. 19-22) He would in 70 years. (Jeremiah 25:8-11)

## VI. An Outline

- A. The Affliction and Misery of Jerusalem. (ch. 1)
- B. Jehovah’s Anger and Punishment. (ch. 2)
- C. The Prophet’s Anguish and Hope. (ch. 3)
- D. The Horrors and Degradation of the Siege. (ch. 4)
- E. A Prayer for Restoration. (ch. 5)

## VII. Some Lessons from Lamentations

- A. “The spirit of the book of Lamentations goes beyond merely weeping over the past. Here we have an implicit warning that to transgress is to invite disaster. The prophets had predicted that God would judge the sins of his people if they did not repent. Now, the ashes of the city were testimony to the fact that God had spoken and was true to his word. History was thus a vindication of God and his righteousness. It was also a declaration of the wrath of God, never a popular concept. Most people choose to emphasize the softer side of God, and properly so, but that understanding must never obscure the fact that God is not to be trifled with...  
 “Lamentations has another side, however. Although the nation of Judah is cast down, it is not without hope. The people may yet trust God and find pardon. God is one whose mercies are renewed every morning, whose faithfulness is great (3:19-39). We see the value of patience, prayer, and confession of sin. God does not hold grudges and is willing to start over anytime we are willing to acknowledge our errors and resubmit ourselves to him.” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, pp. 214-215)
- B. “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7) is forcefully illustrated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people. God will deal with sin with dreadful justice when it is not repented of and forsaken.
- C. Bearing the “yoke” in youth is a great blessing. (3:27)
- D. Amid the most darkening gloom he could imagine, the prophet retained his faith in God.

# Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who is the author of Lamentations? Cite evidence to support your answer.
2. How does the nature of Lamentations show kinship to the other book this prophet authored?
3. What does the name “Lamentations” mean? Why is it an appropriate title for this book?
4. When was Lamentations written? What important event in Judah’s history had just taken place? What had caused that event?
5. In relation to the event mentioned in the previous question, what were some of the consequences the Jews of that day experienced because of it?
6. Why is it proper to refer to the five poems of Lamentations as “funeral songs?” Over what, or whom, were they mourning?
7. What are some of the basic messages of Lamentations?
8. Is there any message of hope in Lamentations? If so, what is it?
9. With what other Old Testament books was Lamentations grouped in the Hebrew Bible? What title did the Jews give to this grouping of books? Why? Why was Lamentations included in it?
10. What are some lessons to be learned from Lamentations?

# Lesson Eleven: Ezekiel

## I. The Man

- A. His name: “Ezekiel.”
  - 1. It means “God strengthens” or “God will strengthen.”
  - 2. He would need the Lord’s strength in order to preach the message God had him to speak. (3:8-11,14) Also, his task seemed to be to strengthen the exiles and turn them back to God.
- B. His personal life.
  - 1. He was born in 622 B.C., the son of Buzi, a priest, possibly of the lineage of the righteous Zadok. (1:3; cf. 40:46; 44:15)
  - 2. He was undoubtedly a priest himself.
  - 3. He was married to a woman who died suddenly on the day Nebuchadnezzar began to put Jerusalem under siege. (24:2,15-18)
  - 4. In 597 B.C. at age 25, he was one of the Judeans taken captive to Babylon.
- C. His prophetic ministry.
  - 1. At age 30, five years after his exile, he was called to be a prophet. (1:1-3)
    - a. He, it seems, had been preparing for the priesthood. (4:14)
    - b. He should have entered into service as a priest at age 30. (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30) Instead, he became a spokesman for God to an exiled people.
  - 2. He saw the vision of God’s glory and God commissioned him to be a “watchman” for the house of Israel. (2:1 - 3:21)
  - 3. His prophetic ministry spanned at least 22 years. (1:1-3; 29:17)

## II. The Date

- A. The likely date for the prophetic ministry of Ezekiel was 592-570 B.C. (1:1-2; 29:17)
- B. “Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry falls into two major periods. The first included the years 592-586 B.C., during which the prophet’s message—directed toward Jerusalem—consisted of reiterated warnings and symbolic actions designed to bring Judah to repentance and back to her historic faith in God. The second period, which began with the year of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, included the years 586-570 B.C. In the course of these years, Ezekiel was a pastor to the exiles and a messenger of comfort and hope (Ezek. 33-48).”  
(*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 455)
- C. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah (627-586 B.C.) and Daniel (606-536 B.C.).
  - 1. Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Judah before Jerusalem’s fall.
  - 2. Daniel spoke God’s messages to the royal courts of the kings of Babylon.
  - 3. Ezekiel was prophet to the exiles in Babylon before and after the fall of Jerusalem.

## III. The Setting

- A. Politically.
  - 1. Previous to the exile.
    - a. God refused to defend Judah against Babylon because of her sins.
    - b. Other nations refused to come to Judah’s aid militarily.

2. During the exile.
  - a. The Jews were captives living in Babylon.
  - b. The Babylonians did not treat the Jews as slaves.
    - 1) They were allowed to buy land, enter into business and accumulate wealth.
    - 2) Some, such as Daniel, attained high political offices with the Babylonian government.

B. Religiously.

1. Previous to the exile.
  - a. Even after witnessing two previous deportations to Babylon (606 and 597 B.C.), the people remained impenitent.
  - b. They continued to go even deeper into wickedness and idolatry.
  - c. Two common false notions existed during this period.
    - 1) Those left behind in Jerusalem thought their kinsmen who had been deported were probably being justly punished for their sins while they themselves, since they remained in the city, were still in God's favor.
    - 2) Those already exiled thought their captivity would end quickly and that God would never allow His chosen city, Jerusalem, to burn.
    - 3) Both of these ideas were proven false when Nebuchadnezzar, in 587-586 B.C., destroyed Jerusalem, burning it to the ground and massacring its citizens.
2. During the exile.
  - a. The people enjoyed religious freedom.
  - b. During this period they forever gave up idolatry.
  - c. They sought out the law of God.
  - d. It was most likely during this time that synagogue worship was inaugurated.

#### IV. The Message

- A. Ezekiel's message was different to different Jews.
  1. To those in exile who thought they would shortly be returning to Jerusalem, he proclaimed that they would not be going home.
  2. To those who blamed God for their exile, he announced that the judgments of God were just and deserved.
  3. To those who had given up and were filled with despair, he spoke of hope for the future.
- B. A summary of the book identifies Ezekiel and his message.
  1. Section one. (chs. 1-3) It introduces Ezekiel and describes his call and commission to be a prophet.
  2. Section two. (chs. 4-24) It details prophecies made against Jerusalem before her fall.
  3. Section three. (chs. 25-32) It contains prophecies against foreign nations.
    - a. There were nations happy to see Judah fall.
    - b. The premise: If God was punishing His own nation for her disobedience, how much more would He punish the heathen nations?
    - c. The nations included are Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt.
  4. Section four. (chs. 33-48)
    - a. Written after the fall of Jerusalem, it is a message of hope for the future.

- b. It concludes with Ezekiel’s vision of a new city and temple which were to be glorious and splendid. (chs. 40-48)
  - 1) This was not the temple which was to be rebuilt in Jerusalem following the release from captivity.
  - 2) This vision was of the spiritual temple to be built by the Messiah where God would again dwell among men (48:35).
- C. The overall theme of Ezekiel’s message seems to be “They shall know that I am the Lord.”
  - 1. This phrase is repeated over 70 times in the book.
  - 2. See, for example: 6:7, 10, 13-14.
- D. “The mission of Ezekiel was to save from complete apostasy the group in Babylon that had been carried away in 597 B.C. Also he labored to prepare them against the corruptions of those left in Jerusalem when they should be brought to Babylon. At this point one should read carefully Jeremiah 24. The good figs were the captives taken to Babylon in 597; the bad figs those taken in 586. Out of the first group God would find the remnant that should return to Jerusalem. It was Ezekiel’s work to preserve this remnant.” (Homer Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments*, Vol. I, p. 188)

## V. The Lessons

- A. The importance of preaching. (2:3-7; 3:4-11)
  - 1. Sent by God into a true “mission field,” Ezekiel’s work would be disappointing, discouraging and received apathetically.
  - 2. In spite of adversity, Ezekiel stayed with his God-given task of preaching God’s message.
- B. Personal accountability. (ch. 18)
  - 1. “Ezekiel emphasized the doctrine of personal responsibility for sin in the most vigorous terms. ‘The soul that sins shall die’ (18:4). The message of Ezekiel in this respect constituted an important turning point in the prophetic message. With the destruction of the nation, the emphasis on national responsibility gave way to an emphasis on individual responsibility.” (*Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 456)
- C. No nation is indestructible. (chs. 25-32)
  - 1. The principle found in James 4:6, while true of individuals, is also true of nations.
  - 2. God’s judgment upon a nation will destroy it no matter how strong it is or seems to be.
- D. Salvation is of the Messiah.
  - 1. Chapter 34 speaks of a new and glorious day for Israel when God would set a new “David,” the Messiah, over them, give them a new covenant, and cause there to be a blessing in the land again.
  - 2. The vision of the dry bones in chapter 37 speaks of a day when God would cause spiritual life to enter into His people.
  - 3. The spiritual temple, described in chapters 40 through 47, would be built by God for man providing “living water” (47:9) to man.

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? In what way, if any, does it apply to the work of the prophet?
2. What do you know of Ezekiel’s personal life?

3. With what other prophets was Ezekiel contemporary? How does his mission and message compare or contrast with theirs?
4. Contrast the situation of the Jews before the exile to Babylon and during that exile in relation to the following areas.
  - a. Political situation.
  - b. Spiritual situation.
5. What is the basic message of Ezekiel to his people?
6. How did God describe Ezekiel's position on behalf of Israel? (3:17-21; 33:1-11) What were some ramifications of that position?
7. Since God could no longer reach Israel as a nation, how, in Ezekiel, does He reach them? What principle underlies this attempt?
8. What makes Ezekiel's writing so injurious to Calvinism?
9. What is the significance of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones? (ch. 37)
10. What did Ezekiel's vision of the new temple and new city signify? Explain.



# Lesson Twelve: Daniel

## I. The Man

- A. His name “Daniel” means “God is my judge.”
- B. His personal life.
  1. He may have descended from a noble family, perhaps he was even a prince, since normally the prominent people of a nation were taken captive. (1:3, 6) This would have fulfilled Isaiah’s earlier prophecy. (Isaiah 39:7; 2 Kings 20:18)
  2. He was carried away while a youth, about 15 years old, to Babylon during the third year of Jehoiakim (609-558 B.C.), along with the other elite young men of Judah.
  3. Given the name “Belteshazzar,” he was instructed in the wisdom and science of the Chaldeans.
    - a. His study was probably in preparation for royal service.
    - b. During that time, he was allowed by his advisor to live on vegetables and water rather than eating rich food and wine.
    - c. Daniel’s dedication made him a better student than his Babylonian counterparts.
  4. He remained steadfast in his devotion to God and distinguished himself by his ability and understanding.
  5. God gave him gifts in the understanding of mysteries and the interpretation of dreams. He used them to interpret two dreams for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. (chs. 2 and 4)
  6. He was made ruler over the province of Babylon and chief of the governors over its wise men.
  7. He interpreted writing for Belshazzar, probably the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and was further honored. (ch. 5)
  8. Under Darius the Mede, who succeeded Belshazzar, he was one of three presidents of the satraps. (ch. 6)
  9. His enemies made an attempt to do away with him and he was cast into a den of lions from which he was miraculously delivered. (ch. 6)
    - a. His opponents, knowing Daniel prayed three times daily to Jehovah, had tricked Darius into issuing an edict which prohibited anyone from praying to any god or man for 30 days.
    - b. Though Darius rued his command, he could not legally change it and, therefore, had to cast Daniel into the lions’ den.
    - c. Darius believed Jehovah would deliver Daniel. After a sleepless night, he arose early in the morning and saw that Daniel had been preserved by God.
    - d. The enemies of Daniel, along with their wives and children, were cast into the den of lions and were immediately consumed.
  10. He continued in high office until the first year of Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian empire which conquered Babylon. (538 B.C.)
  11. Apparently he did not return to Palestine with the Jews. Most likely he spent his last days in Babylon.

12. “Daniel is one of the few well-known biblical characters about whom nothing negative is written. His life was characterized by faith, prayer, courage, consistency, and lack of compromise. This ‘greatly beloved’ man (9:23; 10:11,19) was mentioned three times by his sixth-century B.C. contemporary Ezekiel as an example of righteousness.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, p. 233)

C. His prophetic ministry.

1. As a prophet, he served from 605-536 B.C.
2. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah (628-586 B.C.) and Ezekiel (593-570 B.C.), a fellow exile (cf. Ezekiel 14:20).
3. Unlike the other prophets, such as Ezekiel who ministered directly to the people, he was primarily God’s representative in the king’s court of the ruling nation.
4. “Daniel ministered for the full duration of the Babylonian captivity as a prophet and government official, and he continued on after Babylon was overcome by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. His prophetic ministry was directed to the gentile courts of Babylon and Persia, as well as to his Jewish countrymen.” (*Nelson’s*, 235)

D. Author of the book which bears his name.

1. “That Daniel is the author of this book has been received both by the Jews and the Christian church throughout the centuries.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 200)
2. “The authorship and date of Daniel are two of the more contested issues in the field of biblical studies...Daniel claimed to write this book (12:4), and he used the autobiographical first person from 7:2 onward. The Jewish Talmud agrees with this testimony, and Christ attributed a quote from 9:27 to ‘Daniel the prophet’ (Matt. 24:15).” (*Nelson’s*, 233)

## II. The Date

- A. 606-536 B.C. or later. (1:1; 10:1)
- B. The events and prophecies of this book cover at least the full length of the 70 year exile in Babylon, from the first deportation of Hebrew captives (2 Chron. 36:5-8; Dan. 1:1-2) to the first return of the captives to their homeland. (Ezra 1-2)
- C. “The events of the book occurred during the Babylonian captivity, 605-536 B.C. Much of the book sets its own historical timetable by such references as those to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius the Mede.  
“Daniel had been in Babylon sometime before the burning of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the bringing of the last captives to Babylon. The book itself contains no date as to when it was written. It is clear, however, that the events making up the book occurred over a period of some time. It will be noted, though, that there is no *progressive chronology* in Daniel. For example, Belshazzar’s tragic end is described in chapter 5, while in chapter 8 Daniel is talking about a vision which he had during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign... The reference to the instruction to Daniel to go and stand in his lot (12:13) may indicate that he was a very old man when he finished his prophetic work. It is thought that his book was written in its final form just before the close of the captivity, possibly not long before his death.” (Deal, 199-200)

## III. The Setting

- A. Review the background of the book of Jeremiah as presented in a previous lesson.

## B. The Judean exiles.

1. Nebuchadnezzar, returning from Jerusalem to Babylon to assume the throne following the death of his father, Nabopolassar, took with him a number of captives, including Daniel and his three friends, in 606 B.C.
2. A second group was exiled with King Jehoiachin, including Ezekiel, in 597 B.C.
3. A third group was carried away with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. Jeremiah 52:28-30)
4. Jeremiah had cautioned the captives to live in Babylon peaceably and prosper because after 70 years they would return to their homeland. (Jer. 29:1-20)
  - a. From the captivity of the first group (606 B.C.) to the return of the first group of captives (536 B.C.) was 70 years.
  - b. From the destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the temple (586 B.C.) to the return of the final group of captives and completion of the temple (516 B.C.) was 70 years.

## C. Babylon.

1. Some important historical dates.
  - a. 625 B.C. Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.) rebelled against Assyria.
  - b. 612 B.C. Babylon destroyed Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, during war.
  - c. 609 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar's son, destroyed the Assyrian army leaving Babylon the power in the east.
  - d. 606-605 B.C. Pharaoh-necho attacked Babylon and was defeated. He returned to Egypt.
  - e. 605 B.C. Nabopolassar died. Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 B.C.) returned to Babylon to assume the throne. He brought the elite of Judah, including Daniel, with him.
  - f. 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Judah and carried away Ezekiel and Jehoiachin and 10,000 artisans of Judah.
  - g. 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem a third time. Jerusalem fell, the temple was destroyed, and Judah was taken captive.
  - h. 539 B.C. Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians under the reign of Cyrus the Great (538-530 B.C.).
  - j. 536 B.C. A group of exiled Jews returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.
  - k. 516 B.C. The temple was rebuilt.
2. "What kind of a world was this new home of theirs? Compared to the poor little country of Palestine it was a big, rich, and prosperous country. Here the Jews found an advanced culture, big business and material splendor. Babylon, the chief city, was one of great wealth and magnificence. It was the center of a vast empire including all of Mesopotamia and the highlands beyond, as well as Syria and Palestine. The city of Babylon was on the monotonous plains of the banks of the Euphrates River. Ancient writers describe it as a city surrounded by four walls, each fifteen miles in length. Twenty four streets ran north and south and the same number east and west. In this way each street terminated at a gate in the wall (100 of these) and the city was thus made up of more than six hundred square blocks. It is said that in the center of each square was a garden. The city contained many elaborate and expensive buildings such as palaces and temples. To relieve the homesickness of his wife for her native hills Nebuchadnezzar constructed, at great expense, the famous hanging gardens. In reality these were immense terraces placed on top of each other until they reached the height of the city walls. On these were planted beautiful shrubs and flowers." (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, pp. 251-252)

D. The visions of future world empires.

1. God gave Daniel insight into the kingdoms of the future to show the weakness of the kingdoms of men and the permanence and glory of the kingdom of God. (2:24-25; 7:1-28; 8:1-27; 9:20 - 11:45)
  - a. Babylon (625-536 B.C.). With the great Nebuchadnezzar as its main leader, it was the head of gold.
  - b. Medo-Persian (536-330 B.C.). Established by Cyrus, king of Persia, and Darius, the king of Media, it was represented by the breast and arms of silver.
  - c. Macedonia [Grecian] (330-168 B.C.). Established by Alexander the Great and then divided among his four generals in 323 B.C., it was conquered by the Romans in 168 B.C.. It was represented by the belly and thighs of bronze.
  - d. Rome (30 B.C. - 330 A.D.). Established as the world power by Octavius Caesar, Rome was the legs of iron and feet and toes of iron and clay.
  - e. The kingdom of God. It would be established during that fourth world empire and it would never be destroyed. (2:44-45; 7:9-27)
2. “The four kingdoms of the image were Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. These pagan empires were human in their origin, temporary in their nature, and would be overcome in their weakness. Over against these God would set up a kingdom, which should be divine in its origin, eternal in its nature, and unconquerable in its strength. This kingdom is the kingdom of Christ and God today, established on Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, which has endured the attacks of Satan, the vicissitudes of time, and is destined to be presented unto God the Father (I Cor. 15:24-28). The book of Revelation is God’s moving picture in symbols of the testing of that kingdom’s claim to divine origin and permanence and the proof of its divine character as it withstood each onslaught from every quarter that the Devil could bring against it.” (Homer Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments*, Vol. I, pp. 236-237).

#### IV. A Synopsis of the Book

- A. Chapter 1. Introduction. The development of Daniel and three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to serve in the court of the king of Babylon.
- B. Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s vision. Divine judgment brought four kingdoms to an end.
- C. Chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar sets up a gold image.
  1. Three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, are cast into a furnace for refusing to bow down to it.
  2. They, by the providence of God, come out unscathed.
- D. Chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great tree. Its lesson: God is able to debase the proud.
- E. Chapter 5. Belshazzar, probably grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, sees the handwriting on the wall. Darius received the kingdom.
- F. Chapter 6. Daniel is made one of three presidents over the satraps. After the plotting of his enemies, he is cast into a den of lions. He, like his three friends, is preserved by God.
- G. Chapter 7. Daniel’s dream of the four great world empires. (The key to understanding the book of Revelation)
  1. Beasts come up out of the sea.
  2. Judgment of the beasts.
  3. One like the Son of man.

- H. Chapter 8. A vision of Daniel. Alexander the Great (destruction of the Medo-Persian empire by the Macedonian empire). Broken up into four divisions (Syria and Egypt most notable).
- J. Chapter 9. The prayer of Daniel answered in the latter part in the definition of the Messianic kingdom.
- K. Chapter 10. Conflict between Egypt and Syria. (Judah under the Syrians)
- L. Chapter 11. The coming of the Romans.
- M. Chapter 12. The time of the end. (Brought down to Christ)

## V. The Message

- A. "...the theme of this book is the sovereignty of the God of Israel. Nations are under His power. The destinies of individuals are under His control. The message served to comfort the exiles and to encourage them to look beyond their present dark hour in confident faith." (Rubel Shelly, *A Book-By-Book Study of the Old Testament*, pp. 99-100)
- B. "Daniel, the 'Apocalypse of the Old Testament,' presents a surprisingly comprehensive sweep of prophetic history. After an introductory chapter in Hebrew, Daniel switches to the Aramaic language in chapters 2-7 to describe the future course of the gentile world powers. Then in chapters 8-12, Daniel reverts to Hebrew to survey the future of the Jewish nation under gentile domination.
 

"The theme of God's sovereign control in the affairs of world history clearly emerges and provides comfort to the future church, as well as to the Jews whose nation was destroyed by the Babylonians. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans will come and go, but God will establish His kingdom through His redeemed people forever.

"Another theme of this book is the emphasis on separation to God, with Daniel as the ultimate example. From his decision not to eat the king's food (1:8-16), to his refusal to pray to the king (6:4-24), Daniel displayed such an uncompromising spirit that spectacular opportunities were opened for God to display His power on Daniel's behalf." (*Nelson's*, 236)
- C. "We can see four elements in the message of Daniel. First, God is all-knowing. He can predict future events, and he revealed some of those secrets to the prophets. Second, God rules over human affairs. This does not mean that we are not free to act, but it does mean that God works in and through our choices. This gives us confidence to live because ultimately no one can defy God and get away with it. God is still on the throne. Third, evil will ultimately be overcome. Although God's enemies may get the upper hand at times in history, the final chapter has not yet been written. When it is, God will come out the victor, along with those who have chosen to live for him. Finally, God's Messiah, Jesus, is vital in his plan for the world; Daniel had an intimation of that redemptive mystery." (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, p. 221)

## V. The Lessons of Daniel

- A. God rules in the kingdoms of men.
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar did not "take" Jerusalem. God gave it to him. (1:2)
  - 2. Amidst the thrones of the world, wherever they may be, there is one throne that reigns supreme over all upon whom sits the King of Kings and Ancient of Days. (2:21; 7:9-10)
    - a. It is by the will of God that kings are raised or deposed. (2:21; 4:17, 25)
    - b. The destiny of the nations is within his hands. (5:18ff; cf. Acts 17:26)
    - c. No battle or siege is successful unless God wills it. (1:2a; 5:25-30)
  - 3. God shows that all heathen nations and individuals were still accountable to His moral law. (4:27; 5:22-23, 27)

- B. God cares for His own.
  - 1. The Jews of the captivity were tempted to think that God had forgotten them.
  - 2. God's deliverance of the three men from the furnace and Daniel from the lions' den would serve as proof that God still loved and cared for His people—whom the Lord loves He chastens and disciplines. (Hebrews 12:6)
- C. The superiority of the kingdom of God to the kingdoms of men.
  - 1. All the world kingdoms would be earthly and devilish while the kingdom of God would be heavenly.
  - 2. The kingdoms of men were destined for destruction while the kingdom of God under the rule of the Messiah was destined for glory. (2:44-45; 7:1-28)
- D. Faithfulness under trying circumstances.
  - 1. In contrast to the worldly who tend to go with the crowd and follow the path of least resistance, Daniel and his three friends illustrate that we can live righteously in spite of our surroundings. (1:8; 3:13-18; 6:10-17)
  - 2. As God rewarded them for such faithfulness, He will also reward us.
- E. Divine protection.
  - 1. God does not leave the faithful to the mercy of their enemies.
  - 2. When Daniel and his friends were faithful, God protected them. (1:18-20; 2:12-13; 3:19-27; 6:10-23)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Briefly summarize the personal life of Daniel.
2. Why was Daniel placed into a den of lions? What happened to him there? Why? What lessons can be drawn from this incident?
3. When did Daniel serve as a prophet? What period of time do the events and prophecies of this book cover?
4. Which prophet, who was also a fellow exile of his, was contemporary with Daniel? Of what did he use Daniel as an example?
5. Describe the political setting of the book of Daniel.
6. What kind of people were the Babylonians? How did the Jews fare while in exile in Babylon?
7. Briefly summarize the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar in chapter two and its interpretation. What significance, if any, does it have for us today?
8. In your own words, what is the basic message of the book of Daniel?
9. How does the book of Daniel illustrate that God rules in the kingdoms of men?
10. Who were Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego? What lessons do they teach? How does Daniel teach a similar lesson?

# Lesson Thirteen: 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 Chron. 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*, p. 413)

## III. The Setting

- A. Edom was the nation which descended from Esau (Gen. 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. (Deut. 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. (Num. 20:14-21)
    - b. There was conflict between them during the reign of King Saul. (1 Sam. 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. (Ezek. 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. Num. 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*, pp. 37-38)

#### V. The Lessons

- A. Pride is deceitful and "goes before a fall." (vv. 3-4; Prov. 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. Rom. 5:9; 1 Thes. 1:10)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What two dates are given for the book of Obadiah? Which is preferable? Why?
2. From whom was the nation of Edom descended? Who was his brother?
3. Describe the relationship between the two brothers.



4. What was Israel forbidden to do in relation to Edom? Why?
5. Describe the continuing relationship between the nations of Israel and Edom. Cite specific events which support your view.
6. What does Edom symbolize in the writings of the prophets?
7. What is the basic message of the book of Obadiah?
8. What were some of the sources of Edom's pride which led to her downfall?
9. In what way(s) does pride go "before a fall?"
10. Why is it sinful to rejoice at another's misfortune?

# Lesson Fourteen: 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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 is 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 Gaebelein 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 ven-geance 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*, p. 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 pro-nouncements 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of the name “Joel?” What significance, if any, does it have in relation to his work and message?
2. What dates are ascribed to the book of Joel by scholars? Which date do you think is more likely? Why?
3. Who, more than likely, was king of Judah during Joel’s ministry? Relate the circumstances which led to his assuming the throne. Describe what kind of king he was.
4. What plague afflicted Judah during the time of Joel? What application did Joel make of it?
5. What is meant by the phrase “day of the Lord?” To what does Joel apply it?
6. What is the ultimate “day of the Lord?” How does it differ from that which Joel describes? How is it like that which Joel describes?
7. 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?
8. What application is made in the New Testament of Joel 2:28-32?
9. What hope did the passage cited in the above question give to the people of Joel’s day?
10. What does it mean to “call upon the name of the Lord?” (2:32; cf. Rom. 10:13)

# Lesson Fifteen: 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 600,000 and 1,000,000.
    - 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. Her borders extended farther than at any time after Solomon (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*, p. 280)
  - c. Was already feeling the influence of Assyria to whom it would ultimately fall in 721 B.C.
2. Assyria.
  - a. Israel’s enemy during this time, she would eventually destroy them 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*, p. 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 loving kindness, 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 for Review and Discussion**

1. What do you know of the personal life of Jonah?
2. To whom was Jonah a prophet?
3. How does the book of Jonah and Jonah himself differ from the other minor prophets?
4. Describe the conditions of Israel during the time of Jonah.
5. Describe the Assyrians.
6. What did God want Jonah to preach to Nineveh? What was his response to the command of God? Why?
7. List the different suggested interpretations of the book. Tell why each is either acceptable or unacceptable.
8. What is the basic message(s) to be found in the book of Jonah?
9. What lessons did Jonah learn while in flight from God?
10. Luke 11:30 says that "Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites." In what way(s) was he a sign to them?

# Lesson Sixteen: 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*, p. 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*, p. 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. (pp. 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*, pp. 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*, pp. 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. Jereboam 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. (Zech. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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 rotteness; 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. (7:10-17)
  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], p.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 for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Amos” mean? How is it related to the work he did as a prophet?
2. Where was Amos from? Where is it located?
3. What occupation, other than prophet, did Amos have?
4. When did the events recorded in Amos take place? Who was king of Israel at that time?
5. Describe the political, social and moral conditions in Israel during the time of Amos.
6. What is the main message of the book of Amos? To whom was this message delivered?
7. Why do you think God chose Amos to deliver this message seeing that he was from Judah?
8. How did the following problems affect the people of Amos’ day? How do they affect us today?
  - a. Luxury and ease.
  - b. Rejection of sound preaching.
  - c. Vain worship.
  - d. Indifference.
  - e. Apostasy.
9. What does the phrase “prepare to meet your God” (4:12) mean?
10. What did it mean to be “at ease in Zion?”

# Lesson Seventeen: Hosea

## I. The Man

- A. His name means “salvation,” “deliverance,” “help,” or “God is salvation.”
  - 1. In the Hebrew, though translated differently into English, his name is the same as that of the last king of Israel, Hoshea.
  - 2. “The name Hosea means salvation. His prophetic ministry was an attempt to see Israel delivered from sin and brought back to proper relationship with God.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 209)
- B. He was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom.
  - 1. His addresses were occupied with the northern tribes and seems to have an intimate knowledge of the northern kingdom. (5:1; 6:8-9; 12:12; 14:6)
  - 2. He also makes reference to “our land” and “our king” in his prophecy to the north. (1:2; 7:5)
  - 3. He characteristically refers to Israel by the name of its largest tribe, Ephraim (cf. 4:17; 5:3,5; etc.), therefore, he may have been an Ephraimite.
  - 4. As a prophet, he was a contemporary of Amos.
    - a. “Whereas Amos had denounced the social inequalities of his day and the exploitation of the lower classes, Hosea was primarily concerned with the political, religious, and moral evils of the nation.” (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 211)
  - 5. Nothing is known of any other occupation.
- C. He was the son of Beerai (1:1) and husband of Gomer, daughter of Deblaim (1:3).
  - 1. Gomer was a wife of harlotry (1:2), who bore him two sons and a daughter whose God-given names represented different aspects of God’s relationship to Israel.
  - 2. Being unfaithful to him, Gomer left Hosea and played the harlot with many different lovers.
  - 3. Hosea was then instructed to buy her back and love her again as he did at the beginning. (3:1) This he did. (3:2-3)
  - 4. “This bitter tragedy did something for Hosea that nothing but suffering and sorrow can do...This experience enabled him to understand something of God’s immeasurable love for his people. It enabled him also to plead with his people effectively to return to their God who loved them.” (H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*, p. 283)
  - 5. “Hosea had a real compassion for his people, and his personal suffering because of the behavior of his wife gave him insight into God’s grief over Israel’s sin. Thus, his words of coming judgment are passionate but tempered with a heart of tenderness.” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, p. 241)

## II. The Date

- A. The date is somewhere between 750 and 727 B.C. shortly after the prophecy of Amos and shortly before the fall of Israel to Assyria. (722 B.C.)
- B. “The work of Hosea occurred in the last generation of the history of the northern kingdom...The reference in Hosea 1:4 indicates a date prior to the death of Jeroboam II for the start of the ministry...and if the allusion to Assyria (8:9) is to the tribute paid to Tiglath-Pileser III by Menahem about 739 B.C. (cf. 2 Kgs. 15:19-20), this would indicate that the ministry of Hosea



was well established by 743 B.C...Furthermore, the mention of relations with Egypt (7:11; 9:6; 12:1) would point to the political activity of Hoshea, the last king of Israel (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:3-4), who ruled for a decade prior to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.” (*Zondervan’s*, Vol. III, p. 210)

- C. “Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel for about 50 years. His ministry began during the reign of Jeroboam II, making him a contemporary of Amos who also preached to the North, and of Isaiah and Micah, who preached to the southern kingdom of Judah. Hosea lived to see the fall of his nation to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.” (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, p. 222)
- D. “Hosea evidently compiled this book during the early years of Hezekiah, and his ministry stretched from about 755 B.C. to about 710 B.C. When Hosea began his ministry, Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.) was still reigning in Israel. Hosea’s ministry spanned the reigns of the last six kings of Israel from Zechariah (753-752 B.C.) to Hoshea (732-722 B.C.)” (*Nelson’s*, 241)
- E. “Hosea ministered during the last forty years of the Northern Kingdom—around 760 B.C. He began his ministry when Jeroboam II was at his height as king.

“Hosea was a younger contemporary of Amos and somewhat older than Isaiah and Micah. As a boy, he may have known the prophet Jonah, who had flourished somewhat earlier.” (Deal, 210)

### III. The Setting

#### A. Religiously.

- 1. Jeroboam I (931-910 B.C.) had introduced calf worship and Ahab (874-853 B.C.) and Jezebel led the people into Baal worship.
- 2. Hosea summarized the indictments against Israel in one word, “harlotry.” Israel had joined herself to false gods as a prostitute would join herself to many men. (2:5,12-13)  
Her spiritual whoredom included:
  - a. A lack of knowledge. (4:1,6)
  - b. Idolatry. (8:4; 13:2)
  - c. Revolts. (5:2; 9:15)
  - d. Pride. (5:5)
  - e. Transgressing the covenant. (6:7; 7:13; 8:1, 12)
  - f. Speaking lies against God. (7:13)
  - g. Continually turning back from God. (11:7)
- 3. Israel had committed spiritual adultery so long, she forgot who her God really was and knew nothing about Him. (4:6; 5:4; 8:12)

#### B. Morally.

- 1. Morally, Israel was in ruin and decay. They had:
  - a. Mixed with the world. (7:8)
  - b. Corrupted themselves. (9:9)
  - c. Practiced fraud and deceit. (12:7-8)
  - d. Trafficked with women at shrines. (4:14)
- 2. They attempted to be religious even though they were vile, immoral and ungodly. (4:1-2; 6:8-9)

#### C. Politically.

- 1. Israel was in turmoil and upheaval.
- 2. “Conspiracy is the keyword of the history of the period.” (George Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*)

3. These were years of conniving, treachery, treason and murder. Assassination was the main political tool.
  - a. Zechariah (753-752 B.C.) reigned only 6 months (2 Kings 15:8-12) then was murdered by Shallum.
  - b. Shallum (752 B.C.) only reigned 1 month (2 Kings 15:13-15) then was murdered by Menahem.
  - c. Menahem (752-742 B.C.) reigned 10 years (2 Kings 15:16-22) and paid tribute to Pul, King of Assyria.
  - d. Pekahiah (742-740 B.C.), son of Menahem, reigned 2 years (2 Kings 15:23-26) and was killed by a conspiring captain, Pekah.
  - e. Pekah (740-732 B.C.) reigned 8 years (2 Kings 15:27-31). During his reign Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria, began his conquest of Israel. Hoshea then conspired and killed Pekah.
  - f. Hoshea (732-723 B.C.) reigned 9 years (2 Kings 17:1-6) and became subject to Assyria. He conspired with Egypt against Assyria and Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, laid siege against Samaria in 722 B.C.. The city fell to Sargon II, King of Assyria in 721 B.C. and Israel was taken captive as a result of her sins. (2 Kings 17:5-23)

D. In summary.

1. “The picture painted in the Book of Hosea is truly that of a nation in decay.” (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 129)
2. “When Hosea began his ministry, Israel was enjoying a temporary period of political and economic prosperity under Jeroboam II. However, the nation began to crumble after Tiglath-Pileser II (745-727 B.C.) strengthened Assyria.” (*Nelson’s*, 241)

#### IV. The Message

A. A summary of the book.

1. The first three chapters of Hosea relate Hosea’s personal experience with Gomer to impress in his mind God’s feeling for His people who had committed spiritual adultery.
  - a. He had three children by Gomer each with symbolic names.
    - 1) A son named “Jezreel” implying that God would punish the dynasty of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel. (cf. 2 Kings 10:1-31)
    - 2) A daughter named “Lo-ruhamah” which literally means “no mercy.” It was a prophecy of the Assyrian captivity. (1:6-7)
    - 3) A son named “Lo-Ammi” which literally means “not my people.” It indicated the temporary rejection of Israel (1:8-9). Israel would be restored and the children’s names would be changed. (See 1:11; 2:22-23; 2:1, 23)
2. Israel would be cast off for a time because of her whoredoms against her husband, God (2:2-13), but after a time, God would love her again and take her back to be His wife (2:14-23). Hosea is instructed to take Gomer back (3:1-3) as a symbol of God’s mercy to Israel. (3:4-5)
3. The messages of chapters 4-14 were apparently not compiled with an outline in mind. One writer observes, “The sentences fall from him like the sobs of a broken heart.” (James Robertson, *ISBE*, Vol. 3, p. 1426)

- B. “The book of Hosea is a story of a one-sided love and faithfulness that represents the relationship between Israel and God. As Gomer is married to Hosea, so Israel is betrothed to God. Both relationships gradually disintegrate—Gomer runs after other men, and Israel runs after other gods. Israel’s spiritual idolatry is illustrated by Gomer’s physical adultery. The development of the book can be traced in two parts: the adulterous wife and faithful husband (chs. 1-3), and the adulterous Israel and faithful Lord (chs. 4-14).” (*Nelson’s*, 243)
- C. “Hosea’s main purpose seems to have been to awaken Israel from her sinful condition and bring her back to God...  
 “Hosea makes clear his purpose is to warn and bring Israel back to God, if possible, but if not, to announce to them God’s intention to punish them, to dispossess them finally, and to replace them with another people who love and obey Him.” (Deal, 209-210)
- D. “The message of Hosea stresses the steadfast love of God, who continues to care for his people despite every provocation imaginable. There was simply no reason why God should continue to love his people, but because his love was steadfast he did. A touching illustration of this can be found in 11:1-4. A second theme is that God takes the lead in his dealings with his people. Grace is mercy extended to those who do not deserve it. Like Gomer, Israel qualified on that count. Third, Hosea emphasized the reality and enormity of Israel’s sin. He was not blind to the fact that what Gomer and Israel were doing was wrong and he could not ignore this in the name of sentimentality mistaken for love. True love sees what is really at stake and calls things by their right name. What Israel and Gomer were doing was sin and would ultimately be their undoing. Fourth, Israel’s basic problem lay in their having ‘rejected knowledge’ (4:6). Knowledge in this instance means understanding, not so much recollection of facts. Israel did not understand God at all. Neither did Gomer understand Hosea. Fifth, repentance must precede renewal. God asked Israel to acknowledge its sin and return to him.” (*Shaw’s*, 223-224)

## V. The Lessons

- A. The downfall of a nation. Hosea’s message to us is that inward corruption in a nation is more dangerous to its existence than its external enemies (cf. Prov. 14:34; Jer. 18:1-10; Rom. 1:18). The steps of Israel’s downfall were:
1. Lack of knowledge. (4:6)
  2. Immorality. (4:1-2, 13-14)
  3. Pride. (5:5; 7:10)
  4. Insincerity. (6:4,6)
  5. Worldliness. (7:8)
  6. Corruption. (9:9)
  7. Backsliding. (11:7)
  8. Idolatry. (13:2-3)
- B. “Hosea provides one of the Old Testament’s most eloquent expressions of God’s mercy. It is embodied in the Hebrew word *hesed*, variously rendered ‘mercy,’ ‘loving kindness,’ or ‘steadfast love.’ It involves loving loyalty to covenant commitments, well illustrated by the marriage vow. But from Hosea’s perspective, God’s faithful love would not permit Him to easily divorce His people.” (*Nelson’s*, 243)
- C. Even God’s people can be destroyed for lack of knowledge. (4:6)
- D. Adversity turns people to God (5:15) while prosperity turns them from God. (13:6)
- E. God looks on the inner man. (6:6)
- F. Those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind. (8:7)

## VI. Hosea in the New Testament

- A. "Hosea is highly regarded by New Testament writers and quoted many times (Matt. 9:13; 12:7; Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16)." (Deal, 210)
- B. "Not my people." (Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10; cf. 2:23; 1:10)
- C. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (6:6; Matt. 9:13; 12:7; cf. Mark 12:33)
- D. "Out of Egypt have I called my son." (11:1; cf. Ex. 4:22f; Matt. 2:15)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name "Hosea" mean? How does it relate to his work as a prophet?
2. To what nation was Hosea a prophet? Of what nation was he a citizen? Cite evidence to support your answer.
3. When did the ministry of Hosea take place?
4. With what prophet was Hosea contemporary? How do they compare? How do they differ?
5. Describe the religious, moral and political conditions during Hosea's ministry.
6. Describe Hosea's family. What lesson did God teach him by using his family situation?
7. What is the basic message of the book of Hosea?
8. List the contributing factors to the downfall of Israel as seen in Hosea. Define each one and explain why each was a factor, i.e., how it contributed to Israel's fall.
9. How does the book of Hosea illustrate the love and mercy of God?
10. What lessons found in Hosea have application today?

# Lesson Eighteen: Micah

## I. The Man

- A. His name.
  1. His name means “Who is like Jehovah?” (cf. 7:18)
  2. “As his name suggests, Micah was certainly a God-exalting prophet.” (William S. Deal, *Baker’s Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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 (732-716 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), 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*, p. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Micah” mean?
2. Where was Micah from? Where is it located?
3. What do you know about Micah’s character?
4. With what prophet was Micah contemporary? Compare and contrast Micah with him.
5. When did the events in the book of Micah take place?
6. Describe the setting of the book of Micah:
  - a. Politically.
  - b. Socially.
  - c. Religiously.
7. What are the main messages of the book of Micah? To whom, mainly, were these messages given?
8. Why is 3:12 such an important passage in the book of Micah?
9. Why is 5:2 such a significant Messianic prophecy?
10. What principle is stated in 6:8? What application, if any, can be made of that principle today?

# Lesson Nineteen: 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*, p. 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 Elcesei) 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, pp. 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*, p. 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, p. 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*, p. 86)

## Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Where was Nahum from? How did that relate to his work as a prophet?
2. When did the events in the book of Nahum take place?
3. What is the basic message of the book of Nahum? To whom was it directed?

4. Compare and contrast the basic message of the book of Nahum to that of the book of Jonah.
5. Describe the nation of Assyria in relation to its:
  - a. People.
  - b. Rulers.
  - c. Impact on Judah.
6. In the original Hebrew, what is the literary style of the book of Nahum?
7. What might be a secondary purpose of the book of Nahum?
8. How does the book of Nahum illustrate the principle that God rules in the kingdoms of men?
9. How is the mercy of God illustrated by the books of Nahum and Jonah? How do they demonstrate His justice?
10. 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?

# Lesson Twenty: 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*, p. 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*, p. 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, pp. 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*, p. 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*, pp. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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, p. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Zephaniah” mean? How does it relate to his work as a prophet?
2. Who was Zephaniah’s great-great-grandfather? Why do you think this is mentioned?
3. When was the book of Habakkuk written? Cite evidence to support your answer.
4. Describe Judah during the time of Zephaniah in relation to the following areas.
  - a. Political.
  - b. Religious.
  - c. Moral conditions.

5. Briefly describe the status of the following nations and their impact on Judah during the time of Zephaniah.
  - a. Assyria.
  - b. Babylon.
  - c. Egypt.
6. What is the basic message of the book of Zephaniah? To whom was that message primarily directed? Why?
7. How does the message of judgment on Judah delivered by Zephaniah differ from that of Isaiah (39:6); Habakkuk (1:6); and Jeremiah (20:4)?
8. What is meant by the phrase the “day of the Lord?” (1:13-14)
9. How was the “day of the Lord” both a curse and a blessing to Judah?
10. Though it does not specifically mention the Messiah, how can the book of Zephaniah be considered Messianic?

# Lesson Twenty-One: 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, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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, p. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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 evildoers.
  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*, pp. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Habakkuk” mean? How does it relate to his prophetic message?
2. What is known of a personal nature about Habakkuk?
3. When was the book of Habakkuk written?
4. Briefly describe the setting of the book of Habakkuk.
5. Who were kings of Judah during the prophetic ministry of Habakkuk? Briefly describe each.
6. How does the book of Habakkuk differ from the other prophetic books of the Old Testament?
7. What is the basic message of the book of Habakkuk?
8. How is evil self-destructive? How is that illustrated by the book of Habakkuk?
9. How does the book of Habakkuk demonstrate the reality of divine discipline?
10. 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?

# Lesson Twenty-Two: 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, pp. 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*, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What does the name “Haggai” mean? How does it relate to his work as a prophet?
2. What is known about the personal life of Haggai?
3. When was the book of Haggai written? Cite evidence to support your answer.

4. What had happened to Babylon in 539 B.C.?
5. Who was Cyrus? What decree did he give concerning the Jews in 538 B.C.?
6. Who was Zerubbabel? What did he do in 536 B.C.?
7. When did the Jews begin to rebuild the Temple? When did the work on it stop? Why did the work stop?
8. What is the basic message of the book of Haggai?
9. How does the book of Haggai teach us to rightly order our priorities?
10. What application can we make today of the principle contained in the question, “Is the seed still in the barn?” (2:19)

# Lesson Twenty-Three: 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*, pp. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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, p. 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. Please refer to this section of the previous lesson on Haggai.
- B. 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.
- C. “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*, p. 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*, p. 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 humble 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*, p. 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)
- J. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of the name Zechariah? How does it apply to the message of this book?
2. What is known of the personal life of Zechariah the prophet?
3. With what other prophet was Zechariah contemporary? How do the lengths of their ministries compare?
4. What span of time is encompassed by the book of Zechariah? What three specific dates are mentioned in it?
5. Describe the setting of the book of Zechariah.
6. What is the overall message of the book of Zechariah?
7. Why can the book of Zechariah be thought of as a sequel to the book of Haggai?
8. What seems to be the primary motivation Zechariah uses to get the Judeans to complete the Temple reconstruction?
9. How does the book of Zechariah show we must learn from the lessons of history?
10. Why do you think there are so many specific Messianic prophecies included in the book of Zechariah?



# Lesson Twenty-Four: 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*, p. 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*, p. 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*, pp. 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*, p. 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*, p. 294)

#### IV. The Message

- A. The character of the book.
1. The book is an appeal 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, p. 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 for Review and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of the name “Malachi?” How does it relate to the content and purpose of the book?
2. When was the book of Malachi written? What other Old Testament book dates to that same time period?
3. 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.
4. What is the message of the book of Malachi to:
  - a. The priesthood.
  - b. The Jews in general.

5. What is the “didactic-dialectic” method? What role did it have in Jewish education?
6. Cite some examples (at least 3) of the didactic-dialectic method in the book of Malachi.
7. What do you think is the purpose of the book of Malachi?
8. Why do you think a 400 year silence from God followed the book of Malachi?
9. According to Malachi, what is God’s attitude toward divorce? What application, if any, can be made of that fact today?
10. According to Malachi, how can one “rob God?” What application, if any, can be made of this principle today?

# Lesson Twenty-Five: Prophecy in the New Testament

“So far as their predictive powers are concerned, the Old Testament prophets find their New Testament counterpart in the writer of the Apocalypse; but in their general character, as specially illumined revealers of God’s will, their counterpart will rather be found, first in the great Prophet of the Church and his forerunner, John the Baptist, and next in all those persons who were endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of the apostolic age, the speakers with tongues and the interpreters of tongues, the prophets and discerners of spirits, the teachers and workers of miracles. I Cor. 12:10,28.” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 537)

## I. John the Baptist

- A. His coming had been predicted in the Old Testament.
  - 1. “The one crying in the wilderness.” (Isa. 40:3) All the gospel writers apply this prophecy to John. (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23)
  - 2. “The messenger.” (Mal. 3:1) Jesus directly applied this prophecy to John. (Matt. 11:9-10)
  - 3. “Elijah the prophet” who was to come before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord.” (Mal. 4:5) Jesus likewise applied this prophecy to John. (Matt. 11:14)
- B. He was the last of the prophets of old. (Matt. 11:13)
- C. He was the greatest prophet.
  - 1. “For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (Luke 7:28 - KJV)
  - 2. “He could directly point to Him who completed the old covenant and fulfilled its promises.” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, p. 2464)
- D. His role as a prophet.
  - 1. Prepare the way of the Lord. (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:7; Luke 7:27)
  - 2. “Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” (Mal. 4:6)
- E. His message. He preached:
  - 1. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 3:2)
  - 2. A baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (Mark 1:4)

## II. Jesus Christ

- A. In Jesus, the prophetic office reached its highest stage of development.
  - 1. He was the prophet “like” Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18-19). The apostle Peter identified Jesus as that prophet. (Acts 3:22-23)
    - a. “This likeness may be traced in many subordinate incidents of his history, but lies chiefly in that which distinguishes both Moses and Christ from all other prophets. Moses was a deliverer of his people, and an original law-giver. No prophet had been like him in these two particulars. The chief mission of the other prophets, so far as their contemporaries were concerned, was to enforce the law of Moses. But Christ had now come, speaking by his own authority, offering a more glorious deliverance to the people than that from Egypt, and issuing new laws for the

government of men. This proved that he, and he alone, was the prophet spoken of by Moses, and Peter's hearers now perceive that the authority of Moses himself binds them to the authority of Jesus, and that they must hear him, on the penalty of destruction if they refuse." (J.W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*, p. 59)

- b. "Moses was a lawgiver, leader, ruler, and deliverer, as well as a prophet;... Just as the children of Israel were to obey Moses, their deliverer, lawgiver, ruler, their leader, so the people now are to obey Christ as he is their Deliverer from sin, their Lawgiver, their Leader, their King, and Prophet." (H. Leo Boles, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 60-61)
2. Many of the people regarded Him as a prophet or even as "The Prophet."
- a. **Matthew 21:11.** "So the multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.'"
  - b. **Luke 7:16.** "Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'"
  - c. **Luke 24:19.** "And He said to them, 'What things?' So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.'"
  - d. **John 4:19.** "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.'"
  - e. **John 6:14.** "Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.'"
  - f. **John 7:40.** "Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, 'Truly this is the Prophet.'"
  - g. **John 9:17.** "They said to the blind man again, 'What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?' He said, 'He is a prophet.'"
- B. He stood in a more intimate relation than any other being to His Heavenly Father and He spoke the word of the Father entirely and at all times (John 12:48-50).

### III. Other New Testament Prophets Previous to the Establishment of the Church

- A. Zacharias. "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 'Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.'" (Luke 1:67-68)
- B. Simeon. "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (Luke 2:25-26; cf. vv. 27-35)
- C. Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. "Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Luke 2:36-38)
- D. Caiaphas. "Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation." (John 11:51)

## IV. The Church

A. Prophecy and the prophet are also found in the first century church.

1. The work of the prophet differed from that of apostles, evangelists and teachers. (Eph. 4:11; 2:20)
2. Prophecy was one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the infant church. (1 Cor. 12:10)
  - a. **Propheteia**: “signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God;... in the NT it is used of the gift.” (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dict. of NT Words*, p. 903)
  - b. It was received as were all spiritual gifts: through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. (Acts 6:6; 8:14-19; 19:5-8; 2 Tim. 1:1)
  - c. As all other spiritual gifts, it ceased when “that which is perfect” came. (1 Cor. 13:10)
    - 1) The miraculous gifts were involved in the establishment of the church and were necessary to its early existence, but thereafter the perfect seed of the kingdom, the perfect revelation of God, perpetuated its existence.
    - 2) “With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, I Cor. 13:8,9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cp. the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures.” (*Notes on Thessalonians*, Hogg and Vine, pp. 196,197 via *Expository Dictionary Of NT Words*, p. 903)

B. The purpose of prophecy in the church.

1. During its infancy the church depended upon oral instructions (Acts 20:20-27; 2 Pet. 3:1-2) until inspired teaching was in written form.
2. “...the purpose of their ministry was to edify, to comfort, and to encourage the believers; I Cor. 14:3, while its effect upon unbelievers was to show that the secrets of a man’s heart are known to God, to convict of sin, and to constrain to worship, vv. 24,25.” (Vine, 903)

C. Some prophets in the church.

1. Agabus.
  - a. He prophesied of the famine which would plague Judea. (Acts 11:27f)
  - b. He predicted the sufferings of Paul. (Acts 21:10-11)
2. The prophets in the church at Antioch.
  - a. Barnabas, Symeon (called Niger), Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch) and Saul (the apostle Paul). (Acts 13:1)
  - b. They ministered to the Lord and fasted. (Acts 13:2)
  - c. The Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul to preach to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:2)
3. Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas (Acts 15:32). They were chief men among the brethren at Jerusalem who accompanied Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch after the Jerusalem conference.
4. The daughters of Philip. (Acts 21:8-9)
5. The apostle Paul.
  - a. He was one of the prophets of the church in Antioch. (Acts 13:1)
  - b. While at Troas he received a vision to go preach in Macedonia. (Acts 16:6)
  - c. While at Corinth he received a vision telling him no harm would come to him in that city (Acts 18:9).



- d. While at Jerusalem, in a trance, he is told to depart quickly from there. (Acts 22:17-21)
- e. While on board ship, an angel appeared to him in the night telling him that the ship would be lost but that there would be no loss of life among those on board. (Acts 27:23-24)

## V. Warnings Against False Prophets

- A. By Jesus. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Matt. 7:15-20)
- B. By Paul.
  - 1. “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:29-30)
  - 2. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
- C. By Peter. “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.” (2 Pet. 2:1-2)
- D. All are urged to “test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1; cf. 1 Cor. 14:29)

## VI. The Book of Revelation: The New Testament Book of Prophecy

- A. The book of Revelation is similar in style and impact to the literary prophets of the Old Testament, especially those such as Daniel and Zechariah who employed apocalyptic language.
- B. It predicts the demise of the Roman Empire and the subsequent victory of the Lord and His church.

# Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Who was John the Baptist? What was his role in relation to Jesus? What Old Testament prophets prophesied of him?
  
2. How can John the Baptist be considered the last of the prophets of old?

3. How could John the Baptist be considered the greatest prophet? (cf. Luke 7:28 - KJV)
  
4. What did Moses mean by the phrase “a prophet like unto me?” Who was that prophet? What allowed him to be designated as that prophet?
  
5. Identify each of the following New Testament characters and tell how he/she can be considered a prophet.
  - a. Zacharias.
  
  - b. Simeon.
  
  - c. Anna.
  
  - d. Caiaphas.
  
6. What was the purpose of the spiritual gift of prophecy? How was it received? When and why did it cease?
  
7. How did the purpose of prophecy in the church differ from its purpose in the Old Testament?
  
8. Seeing that the New Testament identifies the daughters of Philip as “prophetesses,” how do you think they, as women, used their gifts?
  
9. Why do you think the New Testament has so many warnings against false prophets?
  
10. Why is it correct to classify the book of Revelation as a book of prophecy?

# Lesson Twenty-Six: Review

1. What was the main role of the prophets?
2. What was the main purpose of prophets?
3. What are some of the various ways prophets received their messages from God? Briefly define each term.
4. Why is it important to know the spiritual, moral, social and political conditions of time in which the prophets spoke their messages?
5. Describe the function of “wise men.”
6. As given by the Old Law, what were the two main functions of the Levitical priests? Briefly summarize what would be involved in each function. Why were the priests largely responsible for Israel’s apostasies?
7. What were psalmists? What purpose did the psalms serve?
8. What was the role of the prophet in relation to God?
9. Define the following terms and indicate why it is proper to apply each to the prophet.
  - a. Ambassador.
  - b. Seer.
  - c. Man of God.
  - d. Watchman.
10. Why was Abraham referred to as a prophet?

11. Why does Moses, in relation to the other pre-literary prophets, stand in a class by himself?
12. Who were the “sons of the prophets?”
13. In what way(s) was Elijah a type of John the Baptist?
14. Why do you think Elijah, along with Moses, appeared at the transfiguration of Jesus?
15. Contrast Elisha to Elijah.
16. What caused the nation of Israel to divide after the reign of Solomon? Name the nations which resulted from the division. How many tribes were in each?
17. Which prophets were sent to the northern kingdom? Was their overall message effective? Explain.
18. Which prophets were sent to the southern kingdom? How did their overall message differ from that of their counterparts to the northern kingdom?
19. Briefly summarize the religious condition of both Israel and Judah during the ministry of Isaiah.
20. Briefly state what you believe to be the basic message of the book of Isaiah.
21. Why is it fair to refer to Isaiah as “the Messianic prophet?”
22. During what time did Jeremiah prophesy?
23. Briefly summarize the spiritual condition of Judah during the time of Jeremiah.
24. What is the basic message that Jeremiah preached? How was it received by the people? What lessons, if any, can be learned from these facts?

25. Who is the author of Lamentations? How does the nature of Lamentations show kinship to the other book this prophet authored?
26. What does “Lamentations” mean? Why is it an appropriate title for the book?
27. Why is it proper to refer to the five poems of Lamentations as “funeral songs?” Over what, or whom, were they mourning?
28. With what other prophets was Ezekiel contemporary? How does his mission and message compare or contrast with theirs?
29. What is the basic message of Ezekiel to his people?
30. What is the basic message of the book of Daniel?
31. How does the book of Daniel illustrate that God rules in the kingdoms of men?
32. What is the basic message of the book of Obadiah?
33. What does Edom symbolize in the writings of the prophets?
34. In the book of Joel, what does the phrase “the day of the Lord” mean? To what does Joel apply it?
35. 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?
36. To whom was Jonah a prophet?
37. How does the book of Jonah and Jonah himself differ from the other minor prophets?
38. What is the basic message(s) to be found in the book of Jonah?

39. What is the main message of the book of Amos? To whom was this message delivered?
40. Why do you think God chose Amos to deliver this message seeing that he was from Judah?
41. Describe Hosea's family. What lesson did God teach him by using his family situation?
42. What is the basic message of the book of Hosea?
43. How does the book of Hosea illustrate the love and mercy of God?
44. What are the main messages of the book of Micah? To whom, mainly, were these messages given?
45. Why is Micah 5:2 such a significant Messianic prophecy?
46. What is the basic message of the book of Nahum? To whom was it directed?
47. Compare and contrast the basic message of the book of Nahum to that of the book of Jonah.
48. What might be a secondary purpose of the book of Nahum?
49. What is the basic message of the book of Zephaniah? To whom was that message primarily directed? Why?
50. How does the message of judgment on Judah delivered by Zephaniah differ from that of Isaiah (39:6); Habakkuk (1:6); and Jeremiah (20:4)?
51. What is meant by the phrase the "day of the Lord" as it is used by Zephaniah (1:13-14)? How was the "day of the Lord" both a curse and a blessing to Judah?
52. How does the book of Habakkuk differ from the other prophetic books of the Old Testament?

53. What is the basic message of the book of Habakkuk?
54. What is the basic message of the book of Haggai?
55. How does the book of Haggai teach us to rightly order our priorities?
56. What is the overall message of the book of Zechariah?
57. Why can the book of Zechariah be thought of as a sequel to the book of Haggai?
58. What seems to be the primary motivation Zechariah uses to get the Judeans to complete the Temple reconstruction?
59. 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.
60. What is the message of the book of Malachi to:
- a. The priesthood.
  - b. The Jews in general.
61. Who was John the Baptist? What was his role in relation to Jesus? What Old Testament prophets prophesied of him?
62. What did Moses mean by the phrase “a prophet like unto me?” Who was that prophet? What allowed him to be designated as that prophet?
63. How did the purpose of prophecy in the church differ from its purpose in the Old Testament?

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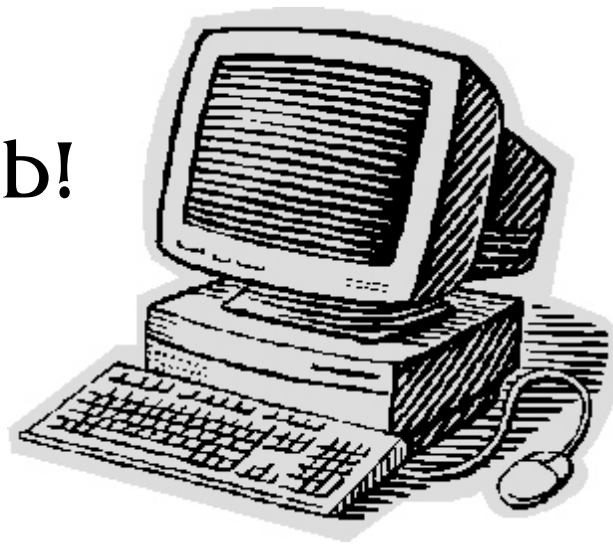
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