

My Servants



The Prophets

**Lessons From The
Minor Prophets**

Prepared By Jeff Smith

My Servants



The Prophets

Table Of Contents

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Prophet</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
1	General Introduction	1
2	Obadiah	4
3	Joel	8
4	Jonah	14
5	Amos	19
6	Hosea	29
7	Micah	40
8	Zephaniah	48
9	Nahum	54
10	Habakkuk	59
11	Haggai	64
12	Zechariah	70
13	Malachi	84

Copyright © 2000, Jeff Smith

Permission is granted from the author for free use and distribution
of the material, but only as it appears.

My Servants The Prophets

Lessons From The Minor Prophets

Lesson 1 – General Introduction

Overview

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,…”

Heb. 1:1-2a

Quite often we quote this passage to affirm the authority of Christ today, and how that it is He whom we must heed today as God’s final Spokesman. If we believe that, we must also firmly believe the first part of the verse. God did not always speak to man through His Son. There was a time when God spoke through chosen messengers called “prophets.” They were His mouthpieces through which His will was communicated and His expectations were laid out for His people.

“In times of spiritual and moral repression and decay, God raised up men (prophets) in whose mouth He put His word and whom He sent to the people in an effort to turn them back to Himself.”
[Homer Hailey – A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, pg. 12]

The prophets were not all of the same personality, stamped out of a cookie cutter. Different personalities and abilities colored them all, but as a collective group they were able to relate to any problem Israel found herself in. They demonstrated that the God they served “knows the end from the beginning” (**Isa. 46:10**). This is especially made evident in their prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom (**cp. 1 Pet. 1:10-12**). Gradually, the Bible unfolds the purpose God had in Christ (**cp. Eph. 3:10-11**), and the prophets played a major role in the revealing of that mystery.

The language used by the prophets was in no way poor or impoverished. It always fit the occasion and was directly on point. The prophets spoke thunderously of judgment on sin, or with tender compassion showing forth God’s mercy in forgiveness. They appealed directly to the consciousness of the Hebrews, or spoke with parables, metaphors and similes. God’s chosen spokesmen may have used dreams, visions, or a direct word from Jehovah. Whatever the method used, it was always with one purpose: to make known the will of God for His people. That was always constant.

Who Were The Minor Prophets?

What is meant by “The Minor Prophets?” This expression is not an inspired one, but is one invented by Bible students in order to differentiate among all the prophets used by God. The message of the “Minor Prophets” was not minor at all, but generally shorter than the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, commonly called “The Major Prophets.”

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 1

When we speak of “The Minor Prophets,” we refer to Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Though their messages were shorter, they were no less powerful nor no less needed. They should not be shunned simply because they are labeled “minor” and not “major.”

Many have forsaken the truths revealed within these great books and have never taken the time to study them. Such people have deprived themselves of great spiritual lessons that have applicability on New Testament disciples today.

What Was The Work Of A Prophet?

Many have the idea that prophets primarily predicted future events. That really is not true. Basically, we can categorize the prophet’s work as following:

- ◆ To speak for God to men. In **Ex. 7:1**, God told Moses that Aaron would be his “prophet.” A prophet was a spokesman, a mouth for another.
- ◆ To speak God’s words. In recording the call of Jeremiah, we read what God says in **Jer. 1:7** “...everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak.” Additionally, **Jer. 1:9** states “Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.” A prophet then is one who has God’s words in His mouth, and is ready to tell them to others. This is what we understand to be the meaning of **2 Pet. 1:20-21**.
- ◆ To be a “forth teller” more than a “foreteller.” While we cannot overlook the predictive abilities of the prophet, the principal work of a prophet was to preach to the people of his time.
- ◆ To contend with “false” prophets. As one would imagine, there would be counterfeits vying for “equal time” with those who actually spoke for God. They would have to be silenced, as their work would do irreparable damage to the spiritual work of true prophets. God gave instructions on how to deal with false prophets in **Deut. 18:20-22**.

Why Study The Minor Prophets?

The message of the prophets is absolutely up-to-date. Though they don’t speak to us today, their message is contained in Scripture that has been “written for our learning” (**Rom. 15:4**). An understanding of the political, moral, and religious conditions of ancient Israel and Judah as well as the heathen nations round about them makes for a clearer comprehension of the prophets’ message. And with the understanding of their message, our faith today is strengthened when we see the fulfillment of those prophecies and predictions in history in the New Testament.

If we are guilty of the same sins condemned by the prophets, what does that say about us? Rightly so, it can be stated that the same sins that destroyed Israel are in fact the same transgressions that cut off men and women from God today. Consequently, we will suffer the same punishments imposed upon Israel.

Chronological Order Of The Minor Prophets

In our Bibles, The Minor Prophets do not appear in chronological order. Therefore, we will not be studying them in the order as found in the Scripture. While we cannot be absolute about all of them, there is enough evidence for the vast majority to place them in somewhat of a chronological order. We will follow the chart given below throughout this class.

Dates Of The Minor Prophets	
<u>9th Century (Early Assyrian Period)</u>	<u>6th Century (Exilic Period)</u>
♦ Obadiah (ca. 845 B.C.)	<i>Ezekiel (593-570 B.C.)</i>
♦ Joel (ca. 830 B.C.)	<i>Daniel (605-536 B.C.)</i>
♦ Jonah (ca. 790-750 B.C.)	
<u>8th Century (Assyrian Period)</u>	<u>6th-5th Centuries (Post Exilic Period)</u>
♦ Amos (755 B.C.)	♦ Haggai (520 B.C.)
♦ Hosea (750-725 B.C.)	♦ Zechariah (520-518 B.C.)
<i>Isaiah (740-700 B.C.)</i>	♦ Malachi (ca. 440 B.C.)
♦ Micah (735-700 B.C.)	
<u>7th Century (Chaldean Period)</u>	
<i>Jeremiah (626-586 B.C. and after)</i>	
♦ Zephaniah (630-625 B.C.)	
♦ Nahum (625-612 B.C.)	
♦ Habakkuk (ca. 605 B.C.)	

Questions

1. *What is a prophet?*
2. *Summarize the work of a prophet.*
3. *What does the distinction “minor prophet” mean?*
4. *What are the benefits of studying The Minor Prophets today?*

The Prophecy Of Obadiah

Introduction

Obadiah, which translated means “Servant of Jehovah,” was a Bible character we do not know much about. There are other “Obadiah’s” in the Scripture, but of this prophet we have very little information. His prophecy is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and one of the most difficult of the prophets to assign a date.

Date

Two dates have generally been accepted by scholars: 845 B.C. and 586 B.C. Those who take the later date say Obadiah prophesied around the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. However, there is absent in Obadiah’s prophecy the mention of Jerusalem’s destruction, the burning of the temple and royal palace, the carrying off of the Hebrews to Babylon, and the remnant that went into Egypt. Based on these omissions, and coupled with the fact that he alludes to Ephraim (a reference to the Northern Kingdom) as still existing (**v. 19**), we have taken the earlier date of 845 B.C.

The Main Message Of The Prophecy

- 1) A prophecy against the Edomites, the descendants of Esau.
Note these instances in the long history between Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau):
 - ◆ The rivalry among the brothers (**Gen. 25:23; 27:41**)
 - ◆ Edom’s refusal to grant Israel passage on the journey to Canaan (**Num. 20:14-21**)
 - ◆ David’s subjugation of Edom as captives (**2 Sam. 8:13-14**)
 - ◆ Edom’s revolt during rule of Jehoram of Judah (**2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-10a**)
- 2) The exaltation of Zion over Seir (Edom’s mount) and the salvation of God’s people in His kingdom that will triumph over the whole world. [*Messianic*]

Background To The Prophecy

Jerusalem was plundered by a coalition of Arabians and Philistines during the reign of Jehoram sometime around 850-843 B.C. (**cp. 2 Chron. 21:16-17**). In this attack on Judah, Edom gladly participated (**Obad. 11**). Jehovah, therefore, summoned Obadiah to be His spokesman to Edom.

Fulfillment Of The Prophecy

Obadiah prophesied that Edom would be completely cut off forever and be as though they had never been (**vv. 10, 16, 18**). After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites were forced from their mountain stronghold in Seir and pushed south into Judah (**cp. Mal. 1:2-5**). In 126 B.C. they were conquered by the Maccabees and made proselytes by being circumcised. By around 100 A.D., the Edomites had become lost to history and never heard from again. Thus, the prophecy of Obadiah was fulfilled.

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 2

Main Lessons From The Prophecy

- ◆ Pride is self-deceptive and self-destructive (**vv. 3-4; Prov. 16:18**)
- ◆ “Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (**v. 15; Gal. 6:7**)
- ◆ Neutrality is the same as opposing God (**v. 11; Mt. 12:30**)
- ◆ Those who trust in God will ultimately be victorious

Outline Of Obadiah's Prophecy

- I. Utter destruction of Edom decreed (**vv. 1-16**)
- A. Announcement of the judgment (**vv. 1-9**)
 - 1. The decree (**v. 1**)
 - 2. Condition: deceived by pride, despised and debased by Jehovah (**vv. 2-4**)
 - 3. Completeness of the destruction (**vv. 5-6**)
 - 4. Treachery of his allies (**v. 7**)
 - 5. Failure of his wisdom and might (**vv. 8-9**)
 - B. Cause of the judgment (**vv. 10-14**)
 - 1. Violence and unbrotherly conduct toward Judah (**vv. 10-11**)
 - 2. Warning against such conduct (**vv. 12-14**)
 - C. Terrors of the judgment (**vv. 15-16**)
- II. Exaltation of Israel: The kingdom of Jehovah to be established upon Mt. Zion (**vv. 17-21**)
- A. A remnant to escape to Mt. Zion (**v. 17**)
 - B. Conquest of Edom (Mt. Seir) and surrounding nations (**vv. 18-20**)
 - C. Jehovah's universal sway from Mt. Zion (**v. 21**)

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. How did Obadiah get his information? (**v. 1a; cp. Dan. 8:1; Isa. 29:7**) To whom did this information refer? (**v. 1a**)

2. Who was Edom? (**cp. Gen. 36:8**) Who had been sent “among the nations” to arouse them against Edom? (**v. 1b; cp. 1 Kings 22:19-23; Dan. 10:10-21**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 2

3. What was Jehovah going to do to Edom? **(v. 2)** What was the first reason given for His judgment? **(v. 3a)** What do we learn from the Scripture about pride? **(Prov. 16:18; 1 Pet. 5:5b-6)**

4. In **verses 3-9**, list below the 5 sources of Edomite pride Obadiah identifies.

vv. 3-4 _____

vv. 5-6 _____

v. 7 _____

v. 8 _____

v. 9 _____

5. What was the second reason given for Jehovah's judgment against Edom? **(v. 10a)**

Chronicle below the history between Edom and his brother Israel.

Gen. 25:27-34 _____

Gen. 27:30-41 _____

Gen. 33:1-17 _____

Num. 20:14-21 _____

2 Sam. 8:13-14 _____

2 Kings 8:20-22 _____

What was going to happen to Edom? **(v. 10b)**

6. Primarily, what had Edom done with respect to Judah? **(v. 11)** How did God view the "non-action" of Edom? **(v. 11b)** *Thought question:* Where in the New Testament do we read of this principle and how God feels about it?

7. In **verses 12-14**, what three divine warnings does Obadiah give Edom? What do you think each one means?

v. 12 _____

v. 13 _____

v. 14 _____

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 2

8. What does the prophet say is near? **(v. 15a)** What do you think the expression “day of the LORD” means? **(cp. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 10-11; Isa. 13:9-13)** Not only is it a day of terror to the enemies of God and His people, but it is also a day of what to those who follow God? **(cp. Lk. 21:27-28)**

9. What principle do we learn from what will befall the Edomites? **(v. 15b; cp. Gal. 6:7-10)**

10. Whether Edom’s “drinking” was a literal drunken carousal or a figurative expression referring to their desecration of God’s holy city and His people by their violence towards them, what awaits them and all others guilty of this sin? **(v. 16)**

11. Edom’s mount (Mt. Seir) would be abased. However, what will take place on Jehovah’s mountain? **(v. 17)** *Thought question:* Beginning here and going through the remainder of the book, what is the essence of Obadiah’s prophecy? **(cp. Lk. 1:33)**

12. What place does Obadiah mention in **verse 17**? What is this? **(cp. Heb. 12:22-24)** How does the prophet describe God’s mount and those who dwell there? **(vv. 17-18)** Why is it so certain that what Obadiah prophesies will come to pass? **(v. 18b)**

13. What will become of the “mount of Esau” according to **verse 19**? When was this fulfilled? **(cp. Num. 24:15-24)** For help on this prophecy, compare **Amos 9:11-12** with **Acts 15:15-18**. How did James declare the prophecy of Amos against Edom fulfilled?

14. The basic message of Obadiah’s prophecy is contained in **verses 20-21**. Who does he mention? To where will they ascend? Why are they victorious?

The Prophecy Of Joel

Introduction

Like Obadiah, the Scripture does not give us very much information about the prophet Joel. There were 13 other men named "Joel" in the Old Testament. Of this Joel, whose name means "Jehovah is God," we know nothing other than he was the son of Pethuel (1:1). All other information one reads about this prophet is only conjecture. Given his references to Judah, Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple, it is inferred that he prophesied to the Southern Kingdom, Judah (2:1, 15, 23, 32; 3:1, 6, 8, 16-17, 20-21).

Date

This prophecy, like the one from Obadiah, is difficult to date. Therefore, whatever date is chosen must be done so with the admission that it cannot be taken absolutely. The two most popular dates are an early one (ca. 835-830 B.C.) and a later one, sometime after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (ca. 539-536 B.C.). The date we will use for this study is the early one, sometime around 830 B.C. Joel does not mention Babylon, Assyria, nor Syria. As of this early date, they had not yet risen as adversaries to Judah.

Most conservative Biblical scholars believe Joel prophesied during the days when young Joash ruled as a boy king (835-796 B.C.) under the tutelage of the priest Jehoiada (2 Chron. 23-24). While we do not read of any references to a king, we do see the prophet making mention of elders and priests (1:14; 2:16-17). This may be referring to the influence of Jehoiada upon Judah's throne.

Joel mentions Egypt, Edom, Philistia, and Phoenicia as the adversaries to God's people (3:4, 19). During the days of Rehoboam, Egypt had invaded Judah (1 Kings 14:25-28). Both Edom and Philistia fought against Judah during the reign of Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22).

The fact that we cannot be exactly certain about a date for this prophecy in no way takes away from our ability to learn its message. We can learn from it today just as those did to whom it was spoken.

The Main Messages Of The Prophecy

The very essence of Joel's message can be summed up in one word: *repentance*. God is absolute sovereign over all peoples. He judges them for their wickedness. His righteous cause will always prevail. What is sad is that His own people had to hear this same message. His prophets came time and again with this warning. Joel was sent to warn Judah that unless she gave up her sinful practices, she was sure to face the wrath of God as well.

Joel mentions an invading army of locusts (1:4). Some have taken this as figurative, standing for an invading human army sent by God to punish Judah. Others understand this was a literal swarming invasion of locusts sent by God. One only has to read Deut. 28:38-42 to know that God did indeed send

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 3

the devouring insects as judgment for sin. We take the position that they were literal locusts sent by God to punish a rebellious people. Whether the locusts were real or representative of an invading human army, the point is clear: they were from God. They were causing immense devastation in Judah. Only the people's repentance would send them away and avert an even stronger, more severe judgment: "the day of the Lord" (**2:1-17**).

The other main message of Joel's prophecy is Messianic. The judgment from God because of wickedness would be followed by blessings because of repentance. There would be physical blessings once again bestowed upon the people (**2:18-27**). But more importantly, spiritual blessings would flow upon the remnant and would also benefit the followers of God in later days (**2:28-32**). The apostle Peter interprets for us exactly the meaning of the prophet's words. In **Acts 2:17-21**, he shows without a doubt how they were fulfilled. Peter applies Joel's prophecy of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to what happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. This, of course, led to the great spiritual blessings promised to all mankind: salvation in Christ through the preaching of the gospel and the coming of the church of the Lord. For this reason, Joel is often referred to as "The Prophet of Pentecost." Though doom is pronounced upon other nations, ultimate victory and blessedness is promised for those who follow God (**3:1-17**).

Major Outline Of The Prophecy

The prophecy of Joel falls into 2 distinct sections. Here is a succinct look at what is taught in these 2 sections:

♦ **1:1 - 2:17**

In this section, the prophet Joel is the spokesman. He foretells of the coming doom of God's judgment in the form of the locust invasion, and uses this as his call for the people's repentance. What God desires is not merely an outward show, but a true inward change from sin. Thus, the prophet exhorts the people in **2:13**, "And rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting of evil." These words are similar in thought to what David wrote in **Psa. 51:16-17**.

♦ **2:18 - 3:21**

In this section, Jehovah God is the spokesman. He reassures His children that though they must be punished for their sins, there will come future blessings. These blessings will take 3 different forms: 1) a return of material blessings following the locusts and their devastation; 2) spiritual blessings that would benefit all of humanity; and 3) judgment upon the enemy nations of Judah. Of particular note in this section is **2:28-32**, the passage quoted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

On the following page is a more detailed outline for Joel's prophecy.

Outline Of Joel's Prophecy

- I The harbinger of the day of Jehovah: the judgment of God and the prophet's call to repentance [*the prophet speaks (1:2 – 2:17)*]
 - A. Devastation of Judah: scourge of locusts, drought, and fire (1:2-20)
 - 1. Graphic description of the locust scourge (vv. 2-4)
 - 2. Call to various classes to mourn, or repent (vv. 5-14)
 - 3. The awful calamity: "day of Jehovah" — prayer for mercy (vv. 15-20)
 - B. A more urgent summons to repentance and prayer: the scourge is a forerunner of the day of judgment (2:1-17)
 - 1. The urgent summons (vv. 1-11)
 - a) The trumpet of warning (vv. 1-3)
 - b) Vivid description of the calamity (vv. 4-11)
 - 2. A more urgent call to repentance (vv. 12-17)
 - a) Rend the heart, not the garments (vv. 12-14)
 - b) Sincerely repent, fervently pray (vv. 15-17)
- II The day of Jehovah: a day of blessing to Israel, a day of terror to her enemies [*Jehovah speaks (2:18 – 3:21)*]
 - A. Blessings promised to Israel (2:18-32)
 - 1. Repentance implied: Jehovah's gracious change (v. 18)
 - 2. The removal of Jehovah's army, temporal blessings promised (vv. 19-27)
 - 3. Outpouring of the Spirit and approaching judgment (vv. 28-32)
 - a) Outpouring of the Spirit (vv. 28-29)
 - b) Judgment upon the wicked parallel to blessings on Israel (vv. 30-31)
 - c) The escape of a remnant in Zion (v. 32)
 - B. Judgment upon the nations (3:1-16a)
 - 1. All wrongs committed against the people are to be avenged (vv. 1-3)
 - 2. Neighbor nations will suffer the severe judgment of slavery in a far land (vv. 4-8)
 - 3. Destruction of all heathen powers by a divine decree (vv. 9-16a)
 - C. Glorification of the people of God: Israel's final happiness and peace contrasted with the desolation of her enemies (3:16b-21)

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 3

Questions

1. What does Joel ask his hearers to do in **1:2-3**? What purpose would be served by future generations being told what the prophet talks about here? (**1:3**; cp. **Deut. 6:20-25**) What group is addressed first? (**1:2**) Why do you think this would be significant?
2. How is this disaster described in **verse 4**? Do you think it describes different waves of invading locusts, or the different stages of locust development and the ruin each stage causes? How severe or complete would the damage be?
3. What group is addressed in **verse 5**? How would they be affected? *Thought question*: what lifestyle is represented by this group? (cp. **1 Pet. 4:3-4**) What does the prophet describe in **1:6-7**? What is so vivid about his descriptions? In a word, how would you describe the damage caused by the locusts?
4. What else has been affected by the locusts' damage? (**1:8-9**) How is this different from the group and their activities from **verse 5**? Who else suffers from what has happened? (**1:10-12**)
5. The descriptions of the locusts and the heavy damage they caused are followed by what in **verse 13**? What are the priests called upon to do? What was the purpose for such actions? What else were they told to do? (**1:14**) What would these activities evidence?
6. This awful calamity pointed towards something else. What was it? (**1:15**) What do you think the phrase "day of Jehovah" means? What evidence did the prophet give for this prediction? (**1:16-20**) In times like these, who is the only source in which to turn? (**1:19**) Any lessons for us in this?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 3

7. What would be the purpose for the blowing of the trumpet in **2:1**? How is “the day of Jehovah” initially described? (**2:2-3**) To what other recorded instances is it like? (**cp. Ex. 10:21-24; 19:16**) What do you think is being described in **2:2-11**?

8. Who do you think is this “great and mighty people” (**2:2**) or “northern army”? (**2:20**) Was it a human army or a more severe dose the same punishment they had already experienced? How is the wording in **2:4-9**, as well as what is said in **2:25**, the key to a proper understanding? How do we know God is behind all this? (**2:11**)

9. In spite of the terror that was coming, was it too late? What did God desire that would stop His judgment from coming? (**2:12**) What is so expressive about the statement in **2:13a**? Compare it to **Psa. 51:17**. What else is emphasized about God in **2:13**? If repentance is realized, what will happen in Judah? (**2:14**)

10. What would be the purpose for the blowing of the trumpet in **2:15**? (**cp. Num. 10:3, 7**) What would be the purpose of this assembly? (**2:16-17**) What is the basic message of the people’s petition before God? (**2:17**)

11. Based upon genuine repentance, how will God react towards His people, their promised land? (**2:18**) What would return? (**2:19, 21-26**) What would be removed? (**2:20**) Based on all these things happening, what would God’s people know? (**2:27**)

12. What would God give that is even a greater blessing than the return of physical blessings? (**2:28-29**) What is being discussed here? Where and how does it have New Testament implications?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 3

13. Put in your own words what you think Joel meant in **2:28** by “all flesh” or “all mankind.”
14. How would the wonders of **2:30-31** show themselves? When, where, and how do you think they were fulfilled?
15. What is the only way to escape the awful tragedies of these events? (**2:32; Obad. 17**) How does one “call upon the name of the Lord”? (**2:32; cp. Acts 22:16**)
16. Following the spiritual blessings upon His people, what does God have in store for those who oppose Him, His children? (**3:1-2**) When will these events take place? (**3:1; cp. Amos 9:11-14 with Acts 15:14-18; Isa. 11:11**) What is the overall message here? *Research question:* What does “Jehoshaphat” mean and where do we read of it in Scripture?
17. What does God have against these peoples whom He will judge? (**3:2b-3**) Who is specifically addressed in **3:4**? What had they done? (**3:5-6**) What will befall them? (**3:7-8**)
18. Looking at **3:9-17** as a whole, what do you think is the main message? What do you see as the main points that stand out in this section that indicate its main message?
19. Despite the judging of God upon wickedness, what will happen to His people? (**3:16b-17**) What is described in **3:18-20**?
20. Though the language of **Joel 3:9-21** is difficult, try writing below the main thought of this section of his prophecy.

The Prophecy Of Jonah

Introduction

Perhaps no other Old Testament prophecy is better known than the story of Jonah. The prophet, whose name means “dove,” is better known by Bible students, even little children, for his adventure with a big fish than he is for his prophetic work. However, a careful study of this book reveals great Biblical themes about God, His love for all men, and what our attitude ought to be towards the duty God places on us.

The Date & Times

While we have no information given in his prophecy as to when the recorded events occurred, other Bible passages reveal to us when Jonah lived and served God as prophet. In **2 Kings 14:23-25**, we read where Jonah served as prophet for God during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. He reigned around 793 B.C. to about 753 B.C. This places Jonah’s prophecy somewhere within this range. (Many conservative Bible scholars choose a date for Jonah’s prophecy around 780 B.C.)

The days of this king were ones of great material prosperity and military victory. They were also ones of great moral and spiritual decay. Jeroboam II “did evil in the sight of the LORD;...” (**2 Kings 14:24**). While apparently God used Jonah as counsel for restoring Israel’s political and material fortunes, He later would use Amos and Hosea to address the deplorable spiritual woes found in Israel.

At the same time, Assyria had been, and still was, on the fast track from nation to world empire. During the days when Jonah prophesied, Assyria was in a state of disarray, even infightings. These disturbances would last until the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (*ca.* 745 B.C.). No doubt the confusion in Assyria and its capital led the Assyrians to be more receptive to Jonah’s preaching than they ordinarily would have been.

The Man

All we know about Jonah from the prophecy bearing his name is that he was the son of Amittai (**Jon. 1:1**). **2 Kings 14:25** states he was from Gath-hepher, a small village about 4 miles northeast of what later would be Nazareth. Given the statements in **2 Kings 14:23-25** and Jonah’s apparent attitude about Ninevah, we safely say that Jonah was very nationalistic in his thinking. “He was narrow in his outlook. In fact, he was nationalistic, totally unconcerned about the spiritual condition of those outside Israel” (James E. Smith, *Old Testament Survey Series – The Minor Prophets*, pg. 38).

Through his work as God’s prophet, he advised Jeroboam II in the regaining of Israel’s borders. However, God called Jonah away from his popular ministry of “national restoration” to a work of greater importance. We can see through his reaction to this call his narrow-mindedness. He was willing to speak about Israel’s victories, but unwilling to speak to foreigners about their salvation.

Jonah’s rebellion to a prophetic call from God is not unique to him. It could be said of other prophets in the Scripture that they “rebelled” against God and the work He called them to do (e.g., Moses, Elijah, etc.).

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 4

However, Jonah took his reluctance to a higher level. He went beyond hesitation to serve. He acted totally opposite to what the Lord said. His fear was not as Moses', a fear of failure (**Ex. 3:11 – 4:13**), but a fear of success. Jonah did not want the Assyrians to repent and be spared by God. He wanted them to be punished (**Jon. 4:2, 5**).

The Book

The prophecy of Jonah holds a unique place among the section we label "The Minor Prophets." This book is *about* a prophet rather than a book *by* a prophet. While the other 11 prophecies are full of oracles against Israel and neighboring nations, the Book of Jonah contains only 1 prophecy or oracle, and it is only 8 words long: "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (**Jon. 3:4**).

The Book of Jonah is mostly in narrative form rather than in prophecies. It resembles more closely the accounts of Elijah and Elisha in **1 & 2 Kings** than it does the other prophecies in the Bible.

The Book of Jonah also holds a unique place among all Old Testament books. Perhaps no other book in the Old Testament shows God's concern for all men and their salvation and His ready mercy if they repent as does the Book of Jonah. This message is easily found in the New Testament, but not so prevalent in the Old Testament.

Many have over the years debated whether the story of Jonah is true or not. There have been several claims that it is only a myth, invented around some event that took place in Israel. After all, who would believe the tale about a man surviving 3 days in the belly of a fish, only to be vomited up on the shore?

We accept the account of Jonah as true and actual. Jesus treated the book as history. He compared Jonah's experience with the great fish to His own death, burial, and resurrection (**Mt. 12:39-41**). The fact that He alludes to what Jonah went through verifies it as real as what He was about to do (**Lk. 11:30**). Also, the Lord's statement, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here" in **Lk. 11:32** bears credible testimony to the "realness" of the Book of Jonah. Mythical people won't be standing up in judgment condemning others.

The Main Message & Lessons From The Prophecy

The main message of the Book of Jonah is primarily two-fold:

- ♦ God desires to save all men, even the heathen, if they repent (**cp. 2 Pet. 3:9**)
- ♦ Jehovah is *the* one true God, *the* God of all the universe

Because of these truths, the lessons one can learn from studying the Book of Jonah are many:

- ♦ We cannot run and hide from God and the obligations He places on us (**cp. Psa. 139:7-11**)
- ♦ We must not long for the conversion of sinners provided they fit our prejudiced thinking
- ♦ Opportunities for God's people to serve are obligations providentially given by God
- ♦ God is able to use life's incidents, even bad ones, to His glory and for the good of His people

Outline Of Jonah's Prophecy

I	Jonah's call and flight to Tarshish (1:1-16)	Jonah running <u>away</u> from God
	A. Jehovah's charge to go to Nineveh, and the prophet's disobedience (vv. 1-3)	
	B. The great wind and Jonah's confession (vv. 4-10)	
	C. Jonah sacrificed – cast into the sea (vv. 11-16)	
II	Jonah's miraculous preservation (1:17 – 2:10)	Jonah running <u>toward</u> God
	A. The fish prepared by Jehovah (1:17)	
	B. Jonah's prayer from the deep (2:1-9)	
	C. Jonah's deliverance (2:10)	
III	Jehovah's second call; Jonah goes to Nineveh (3:1-10)	Jonah running <u>with</u> God
	A. The call, response, and message to Nineveh (vv. 1-4)	
	B. Repentance and Jehovah's gracious change (vv. 5-10)	
IV	A narrow prophet vs. a merciful God (4:1-11)	Jonah running <u>ahead</u> of God
	A. Jonah's anger at Nineveh's repentance (vv. 1-5)	
	B. The gourd vine and the worm (vv. 6-8)	
	C. Jehovah's rebuke and lesson of the gourd vine (vv. 9-11)	

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. Who was Jonah, where was he from, and what was his job? (1:1; 2 Kings 14:25) In the midst of this work, what other work did God have for him? (1:2)

2. Where was Nineveh? What reputation of the Assyrians are you aware of that translates into the "wickedness" of Nineveh? How did Jonah respond to the directive from God? (1:3) [Try locating on a Bible map the locations of Nineveh, Gath-hepher, Joppa, and Tarshish] Based on his actions at this point, how would you label Jonah?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 4

3. What was the Divine response to Jonah's actions? **(1:4)** Chronicle the events recorded in **1:5-6**. What commendable trait do we see in the pagan sailors that apparently was absent in Jonah? How do you account for Jonah's actions in **1:5** during this tense moment?

4. What else do the sailors decide to do in **1:7**? **(cp. Prov. 16:33)** What did they learn from Jonah in **1:9**? How does Jonah's confession of God relate to his actions thus far? What advice did Jonah give the sailors? **(1:12)** What noble spirit do we see in them in **1:13**?

5. What did the sailors do and what was the effect of their actions? **(1:15)** What was their response in **1:16**? What did God do in **1:17**? What is so noteworthy about Jonah's stay in the fish? **(cp. Mt. 12:38-40)**

6. What words would you use to describe Jonah's prayer in **2:1-9**? What does Jonah acknowledge about himself and God in his prayer? How does Jonah confidently end his prayer? **(2:9)** What is God's response in **2:10**?

7. What directive does God have for the prophet in **3:1-2**? How does this compare to **1:2**? After all that has happened in the interim between the two, what do we learn from this? This time, how does Jonah respond? **(3:3-4)**

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 4

8. What was the Ninevite response to Jonah's preaching? **(3:5-9)** Was their repentance genuine? **(cp. Mt. 12:41)** What do you suppose made Jonah so successful? Consider **Lk. 11:30** in your answer.

9. What did God do upon the repentance of the Ninevites in **3:10**? What is emphasized about God in His dealings with Nineveh, both before and after their repentance?

10. How should Jonah have reacted? How did he react to God's decision regarding Nineveh? **(4:1)** What did he say to God in response to Nineveh's being spared? **(4:2)** According to Jonah, what was the only "rational" thing left to do? **(4:3)**

11. What do you make of Jonah's actions in **4:5**? What did God do *for* and *to* Jonah in **4:6-8**? What is the final lesson God wants Jonah to learn that was at the very heart of his God-given mission?

12. Based on his own words, what are we to conclude about Jonah's feelings towards those outside of Israel? Is there anything in this exchange for us to learn who serve God today?

The Prophecy Of Amos

Introduction

Amos, the “Country Prophet” or “Farmer Prophet,” was a man of God compelled from his simple life in Judah to a daunting task of preaching to the “fat” rich and their ungodly self-satisfaction in the northern kingdom of Israel. His call as prophet was indeed a burden, and fit well with his name, which meant “burden bearer.” His message of God’s righteous justice against sin prevails all throughout his prophecy.

The Date & Times

Amos 1:1 gives us some general information as to when this prophet spoke for God. Uzziah sat upon the throne in Judah (*ca.* 792-740 B.C.), and Jeroboam II reigned in Israel (*ca.* 793-753 B.C.). The only other information we are given remains uncertain. Amos also mentions an earthquake in **1:1**. The prophet Zechariah also speaks of this in **Zech. 14:5**. However, we cannot with absolute certainty affix a date when this phenomena occurred. Most conservative Bible scholars place this prophecy somewhere around 760-750 B.C. The date we will use will be 755 B.C.

The times in Israel were deplorable. Materially, Jeroboam II was expanding the borders and increasing Israel’s wealth. As was mentioned when we studied Jonah, all this was made possible due to the delay in the rise of Assyria as world power. Spiritually, Israel was bankrupt. Sin was present on every corner. Smugness could be found among the wealthy class because of their successes. This, in turn, produced indulgence and revelry (**3:12, 15; 4:1-3; 5:12; 6:1-7**). Out of this grew a complete perversion of justice through bribery and political corruption (**5:10-12**). The poor were being mercilessly oppressed (**2:6-8; 4:1; 8:4-6**).

It would do us well to remember the springs from which all this sin flowed. Jeroboam I’s golden calves were still being worshipped (**cp. 2 Kings 14:24**). Add to that the contributions to apostasy made by Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel with Baal worship and we get a very good picture of what was going on in the northern kingdom, and particularly in the capital city of Samaria. All this sinful activity also corrupted the worship that had been ordained by Jehovah. The way He was being worshipped was unacceptable. He considered it to be nothing except “noise” (**5:21-24**).

The Man

Amos was entirely different than those to whom he was called to preach. He was from Tekoa, a village about 6 miles south of Bethlehem and 12 miles south of Jerusalem. The terrain in this territory was rugged and uninviting. He was anything but spoiled and rich. He led a simple life in tending sheep and being a “dresser of sycamore trees.” The fruit produced by these trees has been described as “fig-like, slightly sweet and watery, and somewhat woody in nature” (Homer Hailey, *Commentary On The Minor Prophets*, pg. 82). Usually this was eaten by the poorer people. We can’t help but see the contrast from the life Amos lived and that of luxurious indulgence in Samaria.

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 5

Amos was not of the “school” of the prophets who were prophesying in Israel. They were simply “crowd pleasers,” only telling the people what they wanted to hear. Amos was sent by God with a message that would not be popular. To this charge he was faithful (**3:8b; 7:14-15**).

In Amos, we do not see sympathy, love, and compassion. Although he does intercede for them (**7:1-5**) and calls on them to repent to avoid God’s punishment (**5:4-6, 14-15**), he primarily preached a central message of doom and punishment from a righteous God. He was a stern prophet of righteousness and justice. He did not display affection or sympathy except to the poor in their oppression. He was an outsider sent by God to rebuke the rich of their sins and Israel of her wholesale departure from God.

Amos did not preach without his own opposition. Amaziah, the idolatrous priest of Bethel (**cp. 1 Kings 12:26-31; 13:1-5**), confronted Amos and told him to leave Israel, telling him to preach his message of doom back where he came from (**7:10-13**). Some contend that Amos was actually expelled from Israel, and that **Amos 8-9** were spoken in Judah after this expulsion. This, though, cannot be determined with certainty.

The Message

A good summary of Amos’ message is found in **4:12**, “...Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” God sent him to make Israel understand that He could not be flattered with religious pomp and ceremony, but only by repentance and devotion to His will. Amos declared the coming of “the day of the Lord” to be a day of judgment and doom, not a day of blessing (**5:18-20**). It would result in utter defeat and captivity (**6:7-14; 7:7-17; 9:7-10**). This was a reference to the coming of the Assyrians who would besiege Israel some 32-33 years later.

Though his preaching could be primarily classified as “negative,” Amos also emphasized the “positive” with regard to Israel’s future. He mentions the remnant that would be preserved from the destruction to would come (**9:8**). He closes with a brief prophetic vision of the future glory of God’s restored people (**9:11-15**). This is a Messianic prophecy, as interpreted for us by James in **Acts 15:13-18**, and refers to the inclusion of all under the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Main Lessons From The Prophecy

- ◆ National sin displeases God (**cp. Psa. 9:17; Prov. 14:34; 16:12**)
- ◆ God expects us to treat our fellow man right with social justice (**cp. Lk. 6:31**)
- ◆ Worship offered by those who do not desire to conform to God’s will only insults Him (**cp. Jn. 4:23-24**)

Outline Of Amos’ Prophecy

- I The approaching judgment. The heathen’s and Israel’s sins (**1:3 - 2:16**)
 - A. Punishment of the nations bordering Judah and Israel (**1:3 - 2:3**)
 1. Damascus - for their cruelty in war (**1:3-5**)
 2. Gaza of Philistia - slave traffic (**1:6-8**)
 3. Tyre - delivered up “brothers” (**1:9-10**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

4. Edom - for implacable hatred for Israel **(1:11-12)**
5. Ammon - intense and uncalled for cruelty **(1:13-15)**
6. Moab - vengeance even on a king's carcass **(2:1-3)**

B. Punishment of Judah - her sin was rebellious apostasy **(2:4-5)**. Note the difference between the accusations against the nations and against Judah: cruelty vs. apostasy.

C. Punishment of Israel - the theme of Amos' prophecy **(2:6-16)**

1. Sins of Israel: injustice and oppression, shameless immorality, contempt for the Lord **(vv. 6-8)**
2. Scornful contempt of the divine benefits bestowed **(vv. 9-12)**
3. Inevitable consequences **(vv. 13-16)**

In the accusations against the nations they are pictured as cruel, barbarous, etc.; against Judah and Israel the accusations are civil, religious, and charges of oppressions. This accusation becomes the thesis of the book; the remainder of the book is an elaboration of these charges.

II Israel's crimes and her condemnation **(3:1 - 6:14)**

A. Condemnation of the wealthy ruling classes for civil and religious inequities **(3:1 - 4:5)**

1. Jehovah had known Israel, which makes her crimes greater **(3:1-8)**
 - a) Because chosen for Jehovah, her sins must be visited **(vv. 1-2)**
 - b) The prophet's right to speak: chosen of God **(vv. 3-8)**
2. Civil oppression and inevitable judgment on the ruling class **(3:9 - 4:3)**
 - a) The ruling class: their sins **(3:9-15)**
 - b) The luxury-loving women: a special judgment **(4:1-3)**
3. Condemnation of their religious festivities - "which please you," not Jehovah **(4:4-5)**

B. Unheeded chastisements - the prophet turns to the nation **(4:6-13)**

1. Chastisements from Jehovah, which have gone unheeded **(vv. 6-11)**
 - a) General famine, "cleanness of teeth" **(v. 6)**
 - b) Drought **(vv. 7-8)**
 - c) Blasting, mildew, locusts **(v. 9)**
 - d) Pestilence, at the same time enemy attacks **(v. 10)**
 - e) Earthquake, burning **(v. 11)**
2. Final doom, for which prepare **(vv. 12-13)**

They had looked upon God as a Being to be flattered. He looked upon them as children to be disciplined. Discipline had availed nothing; therefore, "Prepare to meet thy God."

C. Overthrow of the kingdom of the ten tribes **(5:1 - 6:14)**

1. Lamentations, denunciations, exhortations, and threats **(5:1-17)**
 - a) Lamentation - Israel is fallen **(vv. 1-3)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

- b) Seek Jehovah, forsake idolatry and live (vv. 4-6)
- c) But Israel turns righteousness into unrighteousness (vv. 7-9)
- d) This unrighteousness God must punish, unless they seek Jehovah (vv. 10-15)
- e) The announcement of judgment (vv. 16-17)
- 2. First woe - terrors of the day of Jehovah (5:18-27)
 - a) Terrors of the day (vv. 18-20)
 - b) Their heartless worship will not avert the day (vv. 21-24)
 - c) They have followed the steps of their fathers (vv. 25-27)
- 3. Second woe - upon the careless heads of the nation (6:1-14)
 - a) The luxury-loving wealthy rulers (vv. 1-6)
 - b) Exile and destruction are certain (vv. 7-11)
 - c) Cannot be averted by their foolish trust in power (vv. 12-14)

III Five visions, which the prophet explains (7:1 - 9:10)

- A. The vision of the locusts, in which the mercy of God averts the catastrophe (7:1-3)
- B. The vision of the devouring fire - a severer judgment than that of the locusts, again averted by the mercy of Jehovah (7:4-6)
- C. The vision of the plumb line - destruction on the idolatrous nation of Israel (7:7-9)

An interlude: antagonism of Amaziah toward Amos (7:10-17)

- D. The vision of the basket of summer fruit - the ripeness of Israel for judgment (8:1-14)
 - 1. The vision and its significance: the time of mercy is now past, destruction is at hand (vv. 1-3)
 - 2. The final eclipse of the nation - her sun sets at noon (vv. 4-14)
- E. The vision of the smitten sanctuary - destruction of the sinful kingdom (9:1-10)

IV Promise of a bright future - the Messianic hope (9:11-15)

This conclusion is the only optimistic note in the book. Notice how each book directed to Judah or Israel has an optimistic note of future glory. Compare this passage with **Acts 15:14-18**.

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. What was Amos' occupation, where was he from, and how did he get his information from God? (1:1) Who were the kings in the divided kingdoms when God called him to prophesy? What else does Amos mention in 1:1? (cp. Zech. 14:5)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

2. Before actually prophesying, what warning does Amos give his listeners? **(1:2)** What images are brought to your mind by these words?

3. Beginning in **1:3** and going through **2:3**, what is the prophet doing? What do you think is meant by the expression, “For three transgressions of...and for four...”?

4. List below what you think is the main message to each nation.
Damascus **(1:3-5)** _____
Gaza **(1:6-8)** _____
Tyre **(1:9-10)** _____
Edom **(1:11-12)** _____
Ammon **(1:13-15)** _____
Moab **(2:1-3)** _____

5. Who is addressed next in **2:4-5**? What is the nature of Judah’s “crime?” What was going to happen to her?

6. Beginning in **2:6**, who is addressed? What are the things for which Israel stands guilty? **(2:6b-8; cp. Lev. 25:39-46; Deut. 24:12-13)**

7. What does God remind them of in **2:9-11**? To what momentous events does He make reference? **(cp. Num. 13:33; Deut. 29:5)** Who was a Nazarite? **(cp. Num. 6:1-21)** What purpose would they have served in Israel? What do you think would be the reason for God offering all these reminders?

8. How had Israel responded to all God had done for them? **(2:12)** What do these actions reflect?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

9. How does God illustrate what awaits Israel because of her sins? **(2:13)** What do you think this means? How does **2:14-16** further explain?

10. How does God further emphasize the need for punishing Israel for her sins? **(3:1-2; cp. Ex. 19:5-6)**

11. Before announcing the punishment from God upon Israel, what does Amos do in **3:3-6**? What do you think the prophet is trying to accomplish by asking these questions? How do vv. **7-8** help us understand vv. **3-6**?

12. On whom does Amos call upon in **3:9**? What does he ask them to do? What does he say they will see in Samaria that will bring God's judgment upon Israel? How does the prophet further describe God's people in **3:10**? **(cp. Eph. 2:1-3)**

13. What punishment does Amos begin in **3:11** to say will happen to Israel? Specifically, what 3 things does he mention? What imagery is given in **3:12** as to the force of this punishment?

14. Not only will God judge Israel for her social crimes, but what also will be the object of Jehovah's wrath in punishing Israel? **(3:14)** What else will "come to an end?" **(3:15)**

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 5

15. Who does the prophet address in **4:1**? Why the reference to “cows of Bashan”? What were they being judged for?

16. How did God assure His judgment to be so certain? (**4:2**) What was going to be their fate? (**4:2**) What do you make of “...they will take you away with meat hooks, and the last of you with fish hooks”? Is this literal (**cp. 2 Chron. 33:11**), or a metaphor? If a metaphor, what is the image?

17. In irony, what does Amos encourage the people to do in **4:4-5**? What was he condemning? (**cp. Lev. 2:11; 7:11**)

18. From **4:6-11**, list below the 5 punishments from the Lord mentioned by Amos.

What was the purpose of each one? What was going to be the result of their disobedience? (**4:12**)
What made this so certain? (**4:13**)

19. What lamentation does Amos express in **5:1-3**? Though classifying Israel as a “virgin” (**v. 2**) could not be indicative of her purity, in what way was she a virgin? How does **verse 3** describe the staggering magnitude of her punishment?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

20. Faced with this certain judgment, what does the prophet begin to do in **5:4**? What is the point being made in **5:5**? How is God's judgment described in **5:6**? Specifically, what two things were bringing on God's wrath? (**5:7**) What made this judgment so certain? (**5:8**)
21. What serious accusations are leveled by Amos in **5:10-13**? (**cp. Ex. 23:6-9; Deut. 16:18-20**) How does what Amos says in **5:13** pertain especially to him? Yet, what was his obligation?
22. What is Amos' exhortation in **5:14-15**? Notice the verbs, "*Seek... hate... love... establish*"? What is the implication by using them? What would be the result of such actions? (**5:15**)
23. What is described in **5:16-20**? What apparent misunderstanding did Israel have about the "day of the Lord"? What imagery does Amos use to dispel this? (**5:19**) Again, why is Jehovah displeased with Israel? (**5:21-24**)
24. How does He describe their worship? (**5:23**) What does He demand? (**5:24**) What practical applications are here for us in our worship of God today?
25. What bitter reminders are made to Israel in **5:25-27**? (**cp. Josh. 24:14**) Why do you think they are brought up now?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

26. Based on **6:1**, what was Israel's guilt: hostility or indifference? What does Amos ask Israel to consider? (**6:2**) What caused this indifference all throughout Israel? (**6:4-6**)
27. What was Jehovah's response to Israel's sinfulness? (**6:7-11**) Again, how is the Divine response assured? (**6:8a**) What do you think is the point being made in **verse 10**?
28. What is emphasized in **6:12-14**? What do you think was to be emphasized by asking the questions found in **verse 12**? What was the Divine reminder? (**6:14**)
29. Beginning in **7:1**, what does Amos begin to mention that he received from the Lord? What was the first vision? (**7:1-3**) What do you see as its main message?
30. What was the second vision? (**7:4-6**) What do you see as its main message?
31. What was the third vision? (**7:7-9**) What do you see as its main message? What is different about what we saw with the first two visions than with what God says in conjunction with the third one? (**7:8**)
32. How is what God says in **7:9b** a fulfillment of **2 Kings 10:30**?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 5

33. What interlude is narrated after the third vision? **(7:10-17)** What is it about? Who was Amaziah? **(7:10; cp. 1 Kings 12:31)** What did he say to Amos? **(7:12-13)** How did Amos reply? **(7:14-17)**
34. What was the fourth vision? **(8:1-3)** What do you see as its main message? What things does Amos mention that indicates Israel's "ripeness" for judgment? **(8:4-6)**
35. What similes does the prophet use in **8:7-10** to describe the fury of the Lord's wrath that will be felt in judgment? What else will happen as a result of Israel's rejection of God? **(8:11-14)**
36. What was the fifth vision? **(9:1-4)** What do you see as its main message? What is being expressed in **9:1**? How does Amos confirm all this that will happen? **(9:5-6)**
37. What do you think God is saying in **9:7**? In **9:8-10**, what is the main message? **(cp. Jer. 30:11)** What imagery is used?
38. Despite what God intends to do to His people, with what hope does Amos conclude his prophecy? **(9:11-15)** What is the "house" of David? **(9:11; cp. 2 Sam. 7:16)** How do we know that this has already been fulfilled? **(Acts 15:14-17)**

The Prophecy Of Hosea

Introduction

Hosea, whose name means “salvation,” or “deliverance,” was a contemporary of Amos. He also preached when Isaiah was preaching in the southern kingdom of Judah. It is apparent that Amos’ preaching did little to sway the people to repent of their sins and return to faithful service to God. Therefore, Hosea was pressed into service as God tried yet again to gain the people’s repentance. As Amos stressed the justice of God and His righteous punishment, Hosea emphasizes God’s lovingkindness and how much Israel had disappointed Him as His spiritual bride.

The Date

Hosea 1:1 provides information as to when he spoke for God to Israel. He prophesied when Jeroboam II sat upon Israel’s throne, and during the reigns of Uzziah (or Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah when they occupied Judah’s monarchy. Considering this list of Judah’s kings, it must be understood that Hosea spoke in the latter years of Jeroboam II’s reign when the end for Israel was not many years off. Looking at the prophets who spoke to Israel as a group, Hosea has the distinction as being the last prophet God sent to that nation.

Because he does not mention specifically the Assyrian destruction of Samaria and carrying off of the Hebrews into captivity, many have come to the conclusion that Hosea ended his prophecy shortly before 722/21 B.C. Therefore, the date most conservative Biblical students take for the prophecy of Hosea is between 750 B.C. and 725 B.C. That is the date we will take for our study.

The Times

The times in Israel during Jeroboam II’s reign were days of ease, prosperity, and complacency (*see also remarks on Jonah – pg. 14 and Amos – pg. 19*). He continued to preach during the anarchy and violence that characterized the days following Jeroboam II. Political coups and assassinations were commonplace as men struggled for Israel’s throne. Jeroboam II’s son Zechariah reigned only 6 months before being murdered by Shallum, who in turn was killed by Menahem after ruling only 1 month (**cp. 2 Kings 15:8-16**).

Given these political conditions, we are not surprised that what Hosea faced out among the people was only reflective of that found close to the throne. The priests were also involved in violence and bloodshed (**6:9**). The people’s conduct was nothing close to that demanded by God. “The people were guilty of swearing, breaking faith, murder, stealing, committing adultery, deceit, lying, drunkenness, dishonesty in business, and other crimes equally abominable before Jehovah (**4:1-2, 11; 6:8-9; 10:4; 13:1-2; etc**).

The picture painted in the Book of Hosea is truly that of a nation in decay...These were trying years of political conniving and intrigue, of anarchy and rebellion, of treachery and murder. God was completely left out of the people’s thinking. The prophet’s task was to turn the thinking of the people back to God, but they were too deeply steeped in their idolatry to heed his warning. They had passed the point of no return; they refused to hear” [*Homer Hailey, Commentary On The Minor Prophets, ppg. 129, 130*].

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

However, the greatest crime found in Israel in Hosea's view was her "whoredom," or spiritual adultery against God. Israel had left her true husband and sold herself to false gods (**4:12-13; 8:4, 10; 10:1-3; 13:1-2**). When the time came for seeking help and an answer for her spiritual woes, Israel did not seek repentance towards God as a way to solve her dilemma. Rather, she sought political alliances to avert what Amos & Hosea said was being sent by God – another nation to punish them. This was likened to "a silly dove without sense" flitting back and forth between political powers for refuge (**7:11**).

Tiglath-pileser III was now leading Assyria on the rise to world dominance. He invaded Israel during the reign of Menahem and put the nation under heavy tribute (**2 Kings 15:8-20**). Then, during the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser III conquered much of Israel's territory and carried away many captives (**2 Kings 15:29**). The warnings of Amos which seemed too unbelievable were coming to pass.

The Prophet

Not much is known about Hosea. We know his father's name – Beeri (**1:1**). It is assumed that he came from the northern kingdom because he does not speak like an outsider as did Amos. He seems well acquainted with the people due to his sympathy towards them. However, of his occupation and other information (native home, early life, etc.), the Scripture is silent.

The key to Hosea's prophecy is the parallel of Hosea's personal life to that of God's relationship with Israel. Hosea was instructed to take a wife "of harlotry (whoredom), and have children of harlotry" (**1:2**). He married Gomer, who undoubtedly broke his heart with her unfaithfulness. Gomer's actions, coupled with the knowledge that the children she bore were not his, gave Hosea an insight into Israel's standing before God. Only then could the prophet gain a glimpse of what God must have felt towards Israel. It is probable that Gomer was not a harlot when they married, but became one because of the influence of idolatry. Based upon all this, Hosea gained the courage to appeal for Israel's repentance before the coming doom announced by God.

The Message

The main message of Hosea's prophecy is God's unconditional love for undeserving sinners. No one has ever doubted that God truly loved His people. With all that He had to endure, the appeals made by servants of God like Hosea only make this point more clear. Time after time, God had demonstrated His love. Love was always the motivating force behind His actions on behalf of Israel. Through his own broken heart, Hosea came to learn this lesson all too well. It was through this agony that the prophet spoke to his brethren about their unfaithfulness.

Sixteen times in his prophecy Hosea uses the word "whoredom" or "harlotry" to describe Israel's sin before God. As repulsive as literal harlotry is to us, even more so was Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness to God.

The message of Hosea is clearly the message of the Bible – God's love for undeserving man. Along with Jonah, Hosea emphasizes this theme more than any other O.T. writer. For this reason, Hosea is quoted

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 6

or referenced in the N.T. by both Paul and Peter when teaching on God's love to undeserving sinners.

- Rom. 9:25-26** When talking about God "making known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (**v. 23**), Paul teaches the Gentiles have every much as right in the gospel as do the Jews (**v. 24**). To prove this, he quotes **Hosea 2:23 & 1:10**.
- 2 Cor. 6:17-18** While exhorting the Corinthians to distance themselves from sin (**vv. 14-16**), Paul reminds them of the blessing that will be theirs if they do. What they gain is recognition as children of God. To illustrate this, he references **Hosea 1:10**.
- 1 Pet. 2:10** Peter teaches on the priesthood under Jesus Christ today. This priesthood is "royal, a chosen race, a holy people" (**v. 9**). It is comprised of people who have no right to occupy this role, people who have been shown great mercy. To show this, he quotes from **Hosea 1:10 & 2:23**.

Outline Of Hosea's Prophecy

- I Israel's adultery (**1:1 - 3:5**)
- A. Hosea and Gomer – Jehovah and Israel: Israel the adulteress and her children (**1:2 - 2:1**)
1. The prophet's marriage to Gomer by divine command, and the three children who are given prophetic names (**1:2-9**)
 - a) Hosea charged to take a wife of "whoredom" (**vv. 2-3**)
 - b) Jezreel symbolizing the overthrow of Jehu's dynasty (**vv. 4-5**)
 - c) Lo-ruhamah => Jehovah will no more have mercy upon Israel (**vv. 6-7**)
 - d) Lo-ammi => the utter rejection of Israel (**vv. 8-9**)
 2. The restoration of children of Judah and Israel (**1:10 - 2:1**)
- B. Chastisement of idolatrous Israel, conversion, and final restoration (**2:2-23**)
1. The threat of punishment (**2:2-13**)
 - a) Condemnation of sinful conduct (**vv. 2-7**)
 - b) Punishment more fully developed (**vv. 8-13**)
 2. Conversion and final restoration (**2:14-23**)
 - a) The promise of their conversion (**vv. 14-17**)
 - b) The renewal of a covenant and mercies (**vv. 18-23**)
- C. The prophet's second symbolic marriage (**3:1-5**)
1. The symbolic action of the prophet (**3:1-3**)
 2. The application to Israel (**3:4-5**)

- II Prophetic discourses: The ungodliness of Israel and her inevitable punishment (4:1 - 13:16)
- A. Jehovah's controversy with Israel (4:1 - 6:11)
1. The controversy: over the national guilt (4:1-19)
 - a) Moral corruption in everyday life (vv. 1-5)
 - b) Lack of knowledge => failure of the priests (vv. 6-10)
 - c) Immoral religious practices (vv. 11-14)
 - d) Ephraim joined to his idols, but let Judah be warned (vv. 15-19)
 2. Corruption in all phases of life (5:1-15)
 - a) Guilt of the priests, people, and princes (vv. 1-7)
 - b) Judgment must follow – all to suffer the consequences; destruction slow, but sure (vv. 8-15)
 3. Insincerity – an abomination before Jehovah (6:1-11)
 - a) Israel's return, but without heartfelt repentance (vv. 1-3)
 - b) Jehovah not deceived – no sorrow for sin on Israel's part (vv. 4-11)
- B. Israel's corrupt political condition and consequence (7:1 - 8:14)
1. The national government internally => moral degradation, anarchy (7:1-7)
 2. The nation's corrupt foreign policy => appeal to foreign nations is to end in destruction (7:8-16)
 3. Judgment => national corruption and its consequence (8:1-14)
 - a) Judgment has become inevitable – idolatry is an abomination: as we have sown, so shall we reap (vv. 1-7)
 - b) Appeals to the nations will not save Israel (vv. 8-10)
 - c) Multiplied idolatry – its harvest: condemnation and judgment (vv. 11-14)
- C. Israel's religious & moral apostasy – its punishment, exile, and destruction (9:1 - 11:11)
1. The degeneracy of Israel and ruin of its kingdom (9:1-17)
 - a) The apostasy and its punishment: exile (vv. 1-9)
 - b) As God found Israel and as they became (vv. 10-17)
 2. Guilt in rebellion against God (10:1-15)
 - a) The guilt and the imminent destruction (vv. 1-8)
 - (1) Puppet kings and puppet gods (vv. 1-3)
 - (2) Their righteousness now becomes poison (vv. 4-5)
 - (3) Assyria is now named, the instrument of judgment (vv. 6-7)
 - (4) The terror of the judgment (v. 8)
 - b) Israel's persistence in rebellion (vv. 9-15)
 3. Jehovah's love for prodigal Israel vs. Israel's ingratitude (11:1-11)
 - a) Israel's ingratitude [back to Israel's history a third time] (vv. 1-7)
 - (1) Love vs. ingratitude (vv. 1-4)
 - (2) Ingratitude demands punishment (vv. 5-7)
 - b) Deserved utter destruction – God's love tempers judgment with mercy (vv. 8-11)

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

- D. Israel's apostasy and God's fidelity (11:12 - 13:16)
 - 1. Israel's degeneracy into Canaanitish ways (11:12 - 12:14)
 - a) Worldliness => Ephraim deceitful; Judah unsteadfast (11:12 - 12:6)
 - (1) Faithlessness of Ephraim brings punishment on all prosperity (11:12 - 12:2)
 - (2) Example of forefather should have led to faithfulness (12:3-6)
 - b) But Israel has become Canaan (12:7-14)
 - 2. Israel's deep fall (13:1-16)
 - a) Idolatry, the basis of Israel's destruction (vv. 1-8)
 - (1) Idolatry, the curse (vv. 1-3)
 - (2) Jehovah, their benefactor and judge (vv. 4-8)
 - b) Distrust in Jehovah => this was the destruction of Israel (vv. 9-16)

III Israel's conversion and pardon (14:1-9)

- A. God's grace once more to those who turn to Him (vv. 1-8)
 - 1. Call to repentance (vv. 1-3)
 - 2. The promise of healing (vv. 4-8)
- B. Epilogue (v. 9)

Israel cries to Jehovah; He hears their cry and responds by an outpouring of rich blessings

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. Where did Hosea say he got his information? (1:1-2) What does God tell the prophet to do in 1:2? Was his wife already a literal harlot, or the product of Israel's idolatrous environment? (1:2)
2. What was Hosea's wife's name? (1:3) What was the name of their first child? (1:4) What do you know about Jezreel? (cp. Judg. 6:33; 1 Kings 21:1; 2 Kings 9:30-37; 10:1-11)

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

3. What do you think is meant by “I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel”? (**1:4; cp. 2 Kings 10:31**) What other ominous promise does God make through Hosea in **1:4**?

4. On the day that God breaks up the kingdom of Israel (**1:4**), what else does He say will happen? (**1:5**) What is the importance of the phrase “breaking the bow”?

5. What is recorded in **1:6**? What was the child’s name? What does “Lo-ruhamah” mean and why was this significant? Compare how **verse 3** records Jezreel’s birth and how **verse 6** records Lo-ruhamah’s birth. What is the obvious difference?

6. By contrast, what does God say in **verse 7**? When did this take place? (**cp. 2 Kings 18:13 - 19:36**) What does God say about Judah’s deliverance in **verse 7**? What overall truth is reinforced here about man and his salvation?

7. What is recorded in **1:8-9**? What was this child’s name? What does “Lo-ammi” mean and why was this significant? Like before, what is the obvious implication?

8. In spite of God’s rejection of Israel, what does He say through Hosea in **1:10-11**? To what do you think He is referring? (**cp. Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10**) What is implied about Judah in **1:11**? Who do you think is “the leader” in **1:11**? (**cp. 3:5**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 6

9. How does **2:1** further emphasize what **1:10-11** teaches?

10. In **2:2-7**, what are the charges from Jehovah against Israel? Who do you think is being told to “contend” with the unfaithful wife of God? What bitter lesson are we reminded of in **2:5-7**? How does **Num. 33:50-56** factor in all of this?

11. What had Israel apparently forgot? (**2:8**) What was God going to do? (**2:9-13**) In spite of rejecting God for idols, what was God going to do for his bride? (**2:14-20**) What does this say about God?

12. What is being described in **2:18-20**? Compare this to **Isa. 11:1-8; 2:4; Mic. 4:3; Jer. 23:6**. To what “covenant” is God referring? How do we know that the blessings referred to in **2:21-23** have already been fulfilled? (**Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10**)

13. What were God’s instructions to Hosea in **3:1-2**? Who do you think this woman is? What is the point of **3:3-5**? What are the comparisons between Hosea & Gomer and Jehovah & Israel?

14. What is said that God has against Israel in **4:1**? How does this continue the marriage imagery begun in **chs. 1-3**? What evidence does God have against Israel? (**4:2-3**) What do you think is the point being made in **4:4-5**?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

15. Who is Hosea primarily addressing in **4:6-10**? What is the lesson to learn from this? How is this further emphasized in **4:11-14**?

16. Who is addressed in **4:15-19** and what is the message? To what is Ephraim (Israel) likened, and what is going to happen to him?

17. Again, who is the targeted audience in **5:1-7**? (**cp. 4:6-10**) What had they done to Israel? (**5:1b**) What label does God place upon Israel? (**5:2**) Upon what is God's judgment based? (**5:3; cp. Heb. 4:13**) What is the irony between **5:3a** and **5:4b**? What does **5:6** teach us about God and sin?

18. What does Hosea begin to describe in **5:8-15**? How does **5:11** relate to **Amos 4:1**? What "man's command" do you think is referenced in **5:11**?

19. What is the imagery of a moth and rottenness? (**5:12**) What was Ephraim's solution when he saw his "sickness"? (**5:13**) Was it successful? (**cp. 2:5-7a**) To what else does God liken Himself? (**5:14**) What did Jehovah desire? (**5:15**)

20. What thoughts are expressed in **6:1-3**? Do you think these were genuinely offered? How does **6:4** offer help? Because of Jehovah's knowledge of Israel, what has He already done? (**6:5-6**)

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

21. What analogy is given in **6:7**? How does Hosea describe Israel's treacherous conduct in **6:8-10**? What was going to happen? (**6:11**)

22. What is God's desire? (**7:1**) Yet, what makes this impossible? (**7:2-3**) What general description does this give of life in Israel?

23. **7:4-7** is admittedly difficult. What do you think is its meaning? [*Consider 2 Kings 15:8-31 for help*]

24. What does Hosea condemn in **7:8-16**? What is the analogy of Ephraim being "a cake not turned"? (**7:8**) In what way was Israel like a "silly dove, without sense"? (**7:11**)

25. If the trumpet in **8:1** is one of alarm, what is the warning? Why is the enemy coming? (**8:2-6**) Explain the expression "they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind" (**8:7**) Make practical application of this. (**cp. Gal. 6:7-8**)

26. What does God condemn in **8:8-10**? What specifically is cataloged in **8:11-14**? What is going to happen to Israel? What do you think is meant by "Egypt"?

27. What was found in Israel? (**9:1**) Yet, why was this rejoicing inappropriate? (**9:2-3**) What is in Israel's future? (**9:4-9**) Of what does God remind Israel in **9:10-14**? Despite this, how have things turned out? What will happen to them? (**9:15-17**)

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

28. What realization will Israel come to in **10:1-3**? What will be the cry of all the false worshippers when God's judgment comes? (**10:4-7**) What will be expressed in fear when God sends the Assyrians to judge Israel? (**10:8**)
29. What tendency from Israel's history is reviewed in **10:9-11**? Why do you think this is brought up? How is "Ephraim" described in **10:11**?
30. How does the prophet exhort the people in **10:12**? (**cp. 8:7**) Yet, what indication is there that the people have gone too far to come back? (**10:13-15**)
31. What tender reminiscing does God do in **11:1-4**? Yet, what awaits Israel? (**11:5-7**) How does all this make God feel? (**11:8-11**) What emotions or dispositions from God do you see highlighted in these verses?
32. In **11:12 – 12:14**, notice this major contrast: Israel's rebellion and God's faithfulness. Look for and be able to provide examples of this.

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 6

33. How does Hosea illustrate how far “Ephraim” has fallen? **(13:1; cp. Gen. 48:18-20; Judg. 8:1-3; 12:1; 1 Kings 11:26)** Yet, what has happened to him? Of what is he guilty? **(13:2)** What is his fate? **(13:3)**
34. What historical reminder does God have for Ephraim? **(13:4-5, 9-11)** How did His people react to God’s blessings, and what was going to be the Divine response? **(13:6-8, 12-16)**
35. What does the prophet exhort the people to say in **14:1-3**? What would such words indicate?
36. In response to such a plea from His people, how will Jehovah reply? **(14:4-7)** What would be the result of Israel’s punishment? **(14:8)**
37. How does Hosea close his prophecy? **(14:9; cp. Prov. 9:10; 10:29)**

The Prophecy Of Micah

Introduction

Micah's name means "Who Is Like Jehovah?" There are six others named Micah in the Old Testament, but perhaps among all God's spokesmen labeled "the minor prophets," this Micah has become one of the least recognized. However, God recognized him for the valuable service he rendered to Judah. Considering his name in light of his prophecy, it is entirely appropriate. The significance of this is the "...peaks of prophecy that point heavenward to the majestic wisdom and power of the Creator" (James E. Smith, *Old Testament Survey Series* – The Minor Prophets, pg. 136).

The Date

Micah began prophesying during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah (**1:1; Jer. 26:18-19**). **Mic. 1:1** also states that his prophecy pertained to things which he saw "concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." Also noting **1:5-7**, it is highly likely that he began prophesying before Samaria's fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Most conservative Bible commentators choose a date between 735 B.C. and 700 B.C. This range is as good as any, and is the one we will choose as well.

The Times In Judah

During the days of Uzziah (or Azariah), Judah enjoyed immense material prosperity, perhaps not as had been seen since the days of Solomon's reign. This was due in large part to Uzziah's success in wars and in reviving commerce and agriculture (**2 Chron. 26:6-15**). Yet, pride was Uzziah's undoing (**2 Chron. 26:16-21**) and his son Jotham succeeded him. Jotham followed in his father's steps in trying to walk after Jehovah's precepts (**2 Chron. 27:2**), but his son Ahaz did not. He imitated the kings of Israel and served the Baals, even to the point of engaging in child sacrifice (**2 Chron. 28:1-4**).

During the reign of Ahaz, Judah was threatened by an alliance of Israel and Syria because Judah would not join them in rebellion to Assyria (**2 Chron. 28:5-15**). Ahaz made his appeal to Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, for help (**2 Chron. 28:16-21**). This political move cost him dearly in heavy tribute. When his godly son Hezekiah took the throne, his legendary reforms were his attempt to lead the people back to Jehovah (**2 Chron. 29:5 - 31:20**). During the days of Hezekiah, both Sargon II and Sennacherib, kings of Assyria, attempted to invade Judah and destroy Jerusalem (**2 Chron. 32**). It is understood that had it not been for the rule of the good king Hezekiah, plus the preaching of Isaiah and Micah, it is very likely that Judah would have gone the same way as Israel – to the captivity of the Assyrians.

Despite the prosperity brought by Uzziah, Judah was morally bankrupt and impoverished. The rulers and "the privileged" were obsessed by greed. The rich enlarged their possessions by driving small land-owners from their property (**2:1-2**). The poor were robbed and stripped of what was rightfully theirs (**2:8-9**). The rich "ate up" those who borrowed from them (**3:1-3**). Judges could be bought with bribery (**3:9-11**). Merchants cheated their customers (**6:10-12**).

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 7

Despite the religious reforms of Hezekiah, the hearts of the people were wholly engrossed in evil and wickedness. Priests and prophets spoke for hire (**3:11**). The people “bought” prophets who would tell them what they liked (**2:11**). Micah apparently was not very impressed with the “reforms” of Hezekiah. He hardly mentions them at all. He emphasized changing one’s heart before God rather than an outward show of piety (**6:6-8**). As far as he was concerned, there was not a righteous man to be found in Judah, and the best to be found was no better than a “thorn hedge” (**7:2-4**).

The Prophet

Nothing is known of Micah’s upbringing or his occupation. He hailed from the village of Moresheth-gath (**1:1, 14; Jer. 26:18**). This was a small village on the border between Judah and Philistia, about 22 miles SW of Jerusalem.

He was a contemporary to Isaiah in Judah and to Hosea in Israel. He may have even known Amos, who was older but did not live far from him. Truly we see the wisdom of God at work in His calling both Micah and Isaiah at the same time to preach in Judah. Isaiah was “of the city.” He was in “close contact with world affairs, and was the associate of kings and princes” (*Homer Hailey, Commentary On The Minor Prophets, pg. 187*). Micah, on the other hand, appeared to be a simple country man, much like Amos. He seems to have not been interested in the political affairs, but instead focused on the pressing spiritual and moral problems facing Judah. This may have been what gave him such a sympathetic awareness of the downtrodden and abused.

The Message

The message of Micah’s prophesying can be summed up in the words “the holiness and righteousness of Jehovah.” Judah had forgotten that she served a holy God. Righteousness before this God would bring blessing. Injustice and wickedness would invite His certain wrath. The out-working of this is applicable to us today as it was to Micah’s audience: good favor with God will not be obtained by simply following religious rituals or rules. Only a humbled heart before Him and brotherly love towards others is the only recipe for success in serving God (**cp. Mt. 22:36-40**). Amos spoke of justice; Hosea emphasized love. Micah combined both in his statement, “...And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (**6:8**).

While the immediate purpose of Micah’s preaching was to correct inequity and injustice in Judah, he, like other prophets, looked into the future and spoke of the future kingdom of God under the coming Ruler, the Messiah. He foretold of His birth, the establishment of “the mountain of the house of the Lord”, and the acceptance of the “remnant” into this kingdom (**4:1 – 5:4**).

On the following pages is a detailed outline of Micah’s prophecy.

Outline Of Micah's Prophecy

- I Judgment on Samaria and Judah – salvation of a remnant **(1:1 – 2:13)**
 - A. Judgment on Samaria and judgment on Judah **(1:2-16)**
 - 1. Samaria – her destruction **(1:2-7)**
 - a) General announcement of judgment **(vv. 2-4)**
 - b) Destruction of Samaria **(vv. 5-7)**
 - 2. Lament over the destruction of Judah **(1:8-16)**
 - B. Causes that make the judgment inevitable **(2:1-11)**
 - 1. Arrogance and violence of the nobles **(vv. 1-5)**
 - 2. False prophets who would silence the true prophet **(vv. 6-11)**
 - C. Eventual restoration of a remnant **(2:12-13)**
- II Contrast between present devastation and future exaltation **(3:1 – 5:15)**
 - A. The sins and crimes of the heads of the nation **(3:1-12)**
 - 1. Civil rulers – outrages committed by them **(3:1-4)**
 - 2. False prophets – condemnation of their mercenary practices **(3:5-8)**
 - 3. Rulers, prophets, and priests – renewed condemnation **(3:9-12)**
 - a) The accusation against them **(vv. 9-11)**
 - b) Consequence: Jerusalem to be plowed as a field **(v. 12)**
 - B. The Messianic hope in contrast to present destruction **(4:1 – 5:15)**
 - 1. The glory of the latter days **(4:1-8)**
 - a) The glorification of Zion – the center of universal religion of Jehovah **(vv. 1-5)**
 - b) The restoration of “the former dominion” – healing of the dispersed **(vv. 6-8)**
 - 2. Distress and captivity before restoration, “now” **(4:9 – 5:1)**
 - a) Distress – into Babylon before restoration **(4:9-10)**
 - b) Deliverance of Zion and destruction of the enemy – Jehovah’s purpose **(4:11 – 5:1)**
 - 3. The Messiah and the Messianic era **(5:2-15)**
 - a) The Messiah who shall arise out of Bethlehem, shall feed the flock **(vv. 2-4)**
 - b) The Messiah to be the peace of His people **(vv. 5-6)**
 - c) The Messiah provides power to His people **(vv. 7-9)**
 - (1) The remnant to be as dew among the peoples **(v. 7)**
 - (2) To be as a lion **(v. 8)**
 - (3) To triumph over their enemies **(v. 9)**
 - d) In this strength and power Israel is to triumph **(vv. 10-15)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 7

- III Jehovah and Israel in controversy (judicial contest) – the way to salvation **(6:1 – 7:20)**
- A. The case against Israel **(6:1-16)**
1. Israel's ingratitude for blessings bestowed **(vv. 1-5)**
 2. Not outward sacrifice, but righteous conduct, is God's requirement **(vv. 6-8)**
 3. Jehovah's threat of judgment – denunciation of prevalent crimes **(6:9-16)**
- B. Penitential prayer and divine promise **(7:1-20)**
1. Confession of nation's guilt – people or prophet **(vv. 1-6)**
 2. Confession of faith – prayer of the penitent **(vv. 7-13)**
 3. Prayer for renewal of grace and the Lord's answer **(vv. 14-17)**
 4. Doxology: praise to Jehovah who alone is God **(vv. 18-20)**

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. Who is summoned in **1:2**? For what purpose? **(1:3)** What would be gained by the nations gathering for this?
2. How is Jehovah's anger and wrath described in **1:4**? Specifically, why is He executing this judgment? **(1:5)** What will be the fate of Samaria? **(1:6-7)** What do you think is the point made with the reference to "harlot" in **1:7**?
3. Because of Jehovah's actions, what was Micah led to do? **(1:8)** Was this for Samaria or Jerusalem? **(1:9)** What are Micah's mournful instructions in **1:10-16**? [*Use a Bible map to try locating the places Micah names*]
4. Who do you think Micah addresses beginning in **2:1**? What in them does the prophet rebuke? What specific wickedness is mentioned in **2:2**? What will be the Lord's judgment against them? **(2:3-5)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 7

5. What do you think is being said in **2:6**? [*Consult other versions besides your own*]

6. What false notion does Micah address in **2:7a**? Of what does the prophet remind them about the word of God, whether it is in the form of rebuke or instruction? (**2:7b**; cp. **2 Tim. 3:16-17**; **Titus 2:11-15**)
To what kind of person will the word of God benefit?

7. Instead of being recognized as those who walk uprightly, how did God regard His people? (**2:8a**) Of what were they guilty that rightly classified them this way? (**2:8b-9**) Because of their guilt, what was their Divine sentence? (**2:10**)

8. What hypocrisy does Micah expose in **2:11**? How does this same activity still go on today regarding teachers? (cp. **2 Tim. 4:3-4**)

9. Interrupting his message of judgment, on what hope does Micah elaborate in **2:12-13**?

10. What groups are addressed in **3:1-4**, **3:5-8**, and **3:9-12**?

11. What was the disappointing truth Micah emphasizes in **3:1**? Yet, of what is the ruling class of Judah guilty that Micah graphically describes? (**3:2-3**) What will happen when they cry to Jehovah for deliverance? (**3:4**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 7

12. How did the false prophets contribute to Judah's decline before God? **(3:5a)** How does Micah properly describe the false prophets in **3:5b**? Because of their error, what awaits these false teachers from Jehovah? **(3:6-8)**

13. How does Micah address the state of political affairs in **3:9-11a**? What pitiful description does he give regarding God's people in Jerusalem? **(3:11b)** What will come upon them for their disobedience? **(3:12)**

14. What do you see Micah begin to address in **4:1-5**? **(cp. Isa. 2:1-4)** When are the "last days"? What is the "mountain of the house of the Lord"? *Be able to show from the New Testament that we can with certainty know this is a Messianic passage.*

15. How are those who make up the remnant under the Messiah described in **4:6**? What else is emphasized about the Messiah in **4:7-8**?

16. Before such glory can be realized, what first must happen? **(4:9-10)** How is the coming calamity vividly described? Where was Judah's destination? **(4:10; cp. Isa. 39:1-6)**

17. What was the present threat against Judah? **(4:11)** How was Jehovah going to meet this threat? **(4:12 – 5:1)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 7

18. What additional hope does Jehovah give Judah that she is destined for greater things besides falling captive to the Assyrians? **(5:2-4)** What is this “One” said to be? **(5:5; cp. Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:14)**
19. Who do you think “the Assyrian” is in **5:5**? What will the kingdom ruled by the Messiah do when he invades? **(5:5b-6)** What kind of “battle” will this be? **(cp. 4:3; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-17)** How else is the remnant described in **5:7-9**?
20. What else will be destroyed in the days of the Messiah’s reign? **(5:10-15)**
21. Returning to the disappointing present, recall what God had already done in **1:2**. What does God now give the people a chance to do in **6:1-2**? What do you think is the reason for God’s question in **6:3**? In fact, what had God done? **(6:4-5)**
22. Apparently convinced, and speaking for the people, what does Micah initially offer in response to be reconciled back to Jehovah? **(6:6-7)** Has this solution ever worked? **(cp. 1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51:16-17)** How might we see this same disposition played out among unfaithful Christians today?
23. What did Micah say God required of His people for them to be reconciled? **(6:8)**
24. What advice does the prophet have for Judah? **(6:9)** What are his rhetorical questions? **(6:10-11)** What fate awaits God’s people? **(6:12-16)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 7

25. How does Micah acknowledge Judah's woeful condition for which God has declared His righteous judgment? **(7:1-6)** Just how bad had it gotten in Jerusalem? **(7:5-6)** Where and how is this passage used in the New Testament?
26. From whose perspective do you think Micah speaks in **7:7-17**? What does this group readily admit? **(7:9)** Yet, what do they know? **(7:11-13)** What is the prayerful request of the remnant? **(7:14-17)**
27. In closing his prophecy, how does Micah praise Jehovah? **(7:18-20)** What theme(s) do you see that are also emphasized under Christ's covenant today?

The Prophecy Of Zephaniah

Introduction

Zephaniah, whose name means “Jehovah hides” or “Jehovah treasures,” spoke for God towards the latter end of Judah’s existence. Like Micah, his prophecy is not studied as much as the other prophets, and thus his message is obscure to many. Yet what he preached was vital, and came at a crossroads in Judah’s history when the political landscape around her was undergoing vast changes. The changing world events of which Zephaniah foretold would have a direct bearing upon the future of the Southern Kingdom.

The Date

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, Judah’s last good king **(1:1)**. The dates for his reign are somewhere around 639 – 608 B.C. There are other dates that help in dating Zephaniah’s prophecy:

- ♦ Josiah’s reforms occurred in his 18th year, around 621 B.C. **(2 Kings 22:3; 2 Chron. 34:8)**. Zephaniah’s scathing denunciation of Judah seems to indicate his preaching was prior to this.
- ♦ Ninevah, the capital of Assyria, fell to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Zephaniah’s prophecy definitely predates this **(2:13)**.

Without absolute certainty, the date most conservative Bible students select for Zephaniah’s prophecy is somewhere around 630 to 625 B.C. This is the date we choose for this study.

The Prophet

Zephaniah traces his heritage back four generations to Hezekiah, the good king who reigned during the prophesying of Micah and Isaiah **(1:1)**. This made the prophet of royal lineage. It is inferred from his mention of Jerusalem as “this place” in **1:4** and his knowledge of what was taking place in the city **(3:1-4)** that Jerusalem was his home. Nothing is known of his occupation, nor do we have any other information.

The Times In Judah

The political climate affecting Judah was undergoing sweeping changes. From the nearly 100 years from the time of Micah and Isaiah to the time of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, Assyria was supreme ruler of the world. However, all this was about to change. Assurbanipal, Assyria’s last great ruler, died around 633 B.C. From this point, the empire started to decline. Nabopolassar, the ruler of the Babylonians, declared independence of the Chaldeans from Assyrian rule in 625 B.C., which led to war. Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar and general of the army, led the Babylonians in attacking Ninevah, completely destroying the Assyrian capital in 612 B.C. In 609 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar wiped out the remains of the Assyrian forces at Haran. Babylon was now the undisputed master of the world.

Pharaoh Neco of Egypt went out to help Assyria against Babylon at Haran. Josiah was determined to stop him. In this attempt, Judah’s king was killed at Megiddo **(2 Kings 23:28-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-27)**. Four years later, around 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco’s army and pushed farther south towards Judah. Upon hearing of his father’s death, Nebuchadnezzar raced back to Babylon to receive the crown,

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 8

taking with him several captives of war. Among this group were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The rise of the Babylonians and their westward expansion very likely prompted Zephaniah's prophecy.

From a religious perspective, although Zephaniah prophesied during the kingship of Josiah, the problems he faced among the people were attributable to the kings who came before Josiah. Following Hezekiah's good reign, his son Manasseh took the throne. It is doubtful that any ruler in Judah was ever more wicked than Manasseh. He practically undid all the good that his father had done. The 55 years he ruled Judah were largely marked by its grossness in idolatry, especially when considering his practice of offering his own children in human sacrifice (**2 Kings 21:6**). On top of all this he "shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (**2 Kings 21:16**). He tried to undo all his iniquity late in life, but it was too late (**2 Chron. 33:10-13**). His son Amon succeeded him, and continued all his wicked practices (**2 Chron. 33:22-24**). His servants conspired against him, and he was assassinated. His son Josiah became king at the age of 8 (**2 Chron. 34:1**).

Josiah "began to seek the God of his father David" in the 8th year of his reign, when he was 16 (**2 Chron. 34:3**). Four years later, when he was 20, he began purging all of Judah of the idolatrous sin brought upon it by his grandfather and father (**2 Chron. 34:3**). In his 18th year as king, upon being made aware of the will of God through a lost copy of the law found in the temple, Josiah began repairing the temple, called for national repentance, and a return to the true worship of Jehovah (**2 Chron. 34:8 - 35:19**). While he applied pressure from the throne, prophets like Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah spoke among the people. However, it was all to no avail. The people remained cruel and corrupt. They worshipped God as if He were just another heathen deity (**1:4-6**). The people were indifferent and unteachable, the rulers violent and oppressive, the judges merciless and corrupt, the prophets were traitors, and the priests were profane (**3:1-4**). Josiah's reforms and Zephaniah's preaching notwithstanding, the people would not change. Interestingly, Zephaniah makes no mention of Josiah's reforms. This only emphasizes how wicked the nation had become. As Jehovah saw it, the time was ripe for judgment.

The Message

The main message and lessons from Zephaniah's prophesying are two-fold:

- ◆ ***The Day of the Lord***

Like Joel, Zephaniah gives great emphasis to "the day of Jehovah" as a day of ominous, divine judgment upon the ungodly. It was "at hand" (**1:7**); it was "near" (**1:14**); it was a day of "wrath, desolation, darkness, and terror" (**1:15-16**). It was a day of judgment upon all, regardless of geographic location. God ruled over all the nations, not just Judah. He was bringing His judgment upon all sinners (**2:1-15; 3:8**). No one would escape the universal wrath of this universal God.

- ◆ ***The Redeemed Remnant***

Only a remnant would escape this judgment, a remnant composed of people who repented of sin and put their faith and trust back in God and His will (**2:3**). For them, this day would not be a day of doom, but a day of deliverance. This ultimate deliverance would be found in the reign of the Messiah (**3:14-20**). Though Zephaniah never mentions or describes the Messiah Himself, the other prophets make clear that this redemptive work was ultimately fulfilled through Christ.

Outline Of Zephaniah's Prophecy

- I Judgment on the whole world – Judah in particular **(1:2-18)**
 - A. A world judgment **(vv. 2-6)**
 - 1. Prelude: judgment on the whole world **(vv. 2-3)**
 - 2. Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem for idolatry **(vv. 4-6)**
 - B. Judgment on sinners of every rank **(vv. 7-13)**
 - 1. On princes **(vv. 7-8)**
 - 2. On thieves (or idolaters) **(v. 9)**
 - 3. On traders **(vv. 10-11)**
 - 4. On indifferent and wealthy **(vv. 12-13)**
 - C. The imminence and terrible nature of the judgment **(vv. 14-18)**
 - 1. Imminent **(v. 14)**
 - 2. A terribly dark day **(vv. 15-17)**
 - 3. There will be no deliverance **(v. 18)**
- II Exhortation to repentance and perseverance **(2:1 – 3:8)**
 - A. Call to repentance, seek the Lord that they may be hidden in the day of the Lord **(2:1-3)**
 - B. Reason: God will judge the nations near and far **(2:4-15)**
 - 1. Judgment upon the nations that are near **(vv. 4-11)**
 - a) Upon Philistia **(vv. 4-7)**
 - b) Upon Moab and Ammon **(vv. 8-10)**
 - c) Upon all the gods of the earth **(v. 11)**
 - 2. Judgment upon powerful nations afar **(vv. 12-15)**
 - a) Upon Ethiopa **(v. 12)**
 - b) Upon Assyria and Ninevah **(vv. 13-15)**
 - C. If God punishes the heathen, He will not spare Judah **(3:1-8)**
 - 1. Woe to the polluted city – classes of sinners and sin **(vv. 1-7)**
 - a) Princes, judges, prophets, priests **(vv. 1-4)**
 - b) Jehovah's constant reminder of His sovereignty **(vv. 5-7)**
 - 2. God has called; they have refused – therefore, Woe! **(v. 8)**
- III After the judgment, salvation and glorification for the remnant **(3:9-20)**
 - A. From among the heathen will God's remnant come **(vv. 9-10)**
 - B. Israel restored will be cleansed and sanctified **(vv. 11-13)**
 - C. Israel comforted and exalted to honor **(vv. 14-20)**

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 8

Questions

1. How does the prophet identify himself? **(1:1)** Given what he preached, how does this fact speak to his character?
2. In **1:2-6**, what is the initial prophecy from Zephaniah? What will be affected? **(1:2-3)** Who receives particular attention in this oracle? **(1:4a)** What was it about them that displeased God? **(1:4b)**
3. What three “classes” of worshipers are mentioned in **1:5-6**? **(cp. Deut. 4:19; 17:3-7)**
4. What do you think is meant in **1:7-13**? What is “the day of the Lord”? What do you think is the “sacrifice”? Who is singled out first and for what reason? **(1:8)** What else is mentioned that is deserving of God’s wrath? **(1:9)** What else will happen in Jerusalem? **(1:10-13)**
5. How does Zephaniah describe “the day of the Lord”? **(1:14-16a)** In what descriptive ways does the prophet portray the results of this terrifying day of Divine wrath? **(1:17)** What oft-tried answer would not bring relief to Judah? **(1:18a)** How does the prophet conclude his descriptions of the events sure to come? **(1:18b)**
6. What is the Divine challenge and offer in **2:1-3**? Do you think this is spoken to another nation, or better serves as a climax to what was spoken to Judah **1:14-18**? To what will they be likened in this judgment? **(2:2)** What are God’s requirements of them? **(2:3)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 8

7. From **2:4** to **2:15**, what is the prophetic message? To whom is it addressed? [*On a Bible map, locate the four general areas. What is suggested by this?*]

8. What awaits Philistia? (**2:4**) What would become of the land of the once-proud Philistines? (**2:6**) Who would dwell there? (**2:7; cp. Jer. 32:42-44**)

9. Who is mentioned next in **2:8-11**? What does Jehovah have against them? (**2:8, 10; cp. Num. 22-24; Amos 1:13-15; 2:1-3**) What would become of these long-time enemies of God's people? (**2:9**) By their destruction, what statement would be made against their gods? (**2:11**)

10. Who is mentioned next? (**2:12**) Who do you think is particularly meant by the reference to Ethiopia? (**cp. Ezek. 30:1-5**) When would this "sword" fall upon them? (**cp. Ezek. 30:24-25**)

11. Who is mentioned last? (**2:13-15**) What is especially noteworthy about the timing of this prophecy against Assyria? (**2:15**) [*Notice the tense of the verbs*] What vivid picture is portrayed about her future? (**2:14**)

12. To whom does the prophet return in **3:1**? From **3:2**, list below the four charges leveled against Jerusalem, and write what you think each one means.

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 8

13. How is Jerusalem further described in **3:3-4**? Why do you think Jehovah singles out these particular groups? By contrast, how does God describe Himself? (**3:5**; cp. **2 Tim. 2:13**)

14. What “reminder” does God give Judah? (**3:6**) What had He hoped this would produce? (**3:7a**) Yet, what was the sad truth? (**3:7b**)

15. Because of what He is going to do, what does God say to the faithful few in **3:8**? Considering what will happen to those who would receive God’s wrath, what do you think is meant by “wait for Me”?

16. What will happen following God’s wrathful dealings with the guilty? (**3:9-13**) To what do you think this refers? How are such people described? (**3:9-11**) Who would be included in this group? (**3:10**) What is God’s “holy mountain”? (**3:11**; cp. **Isa. 2:1-4**; **Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45**; **Mic. 4:1-5**)

17. Compared to the nation judged by God, how will this redeemed people be known? (**3:12-13**) Rather than commit the same sins that caused God’s judgment upon Judah, what will this people be content to do? (**3:13b**; cp. **Jn. 10:11-16**)

18. What is the saved remnant told to do in **3:14-17**? By what 3 names is this group called? (**3:14**) Why is it proper for them to rejoice? (**3:15-17**)

19. What will God do for those who sorrow over their judgment? (**3:18**) What will He do to those who oppose His people? (**3:19**) With what final promise of restoration does the prophet conclude his prophecy? (**3:20**)

The Prophecy Of Nahum

Introduction

Nahum, which means “Consolation” or “Consoler,” had a specific mission, possibly the most specified of all The Minor Prophets. He was called by God to prophesy to the Assyrians, telling them of the judgment that was coming against them. While some have said such a message was hardly consoling, it did give comfort to God’s people who had long been oppressed and terrorized by this wicked empire for decades.

The Date

There is no concrete evidence that affixes a date for Nahum’s prophecy with certainty. Unlike most of the other prophets, no king is mentioned that would help in dating his preaching. Yet, there are pieces of evidence (one internal, one external) that help in determining general parameters. In **3:8**, the prophet mentions No-amon, the ancient Egyptian city of Thebes which was some 400 miles up the Nile River from present-day Cairo. It was destroyed by the Assyrians in 663 B.C. Nahum mentions the destruction as having already occurred. The other parameter is the historical fact of Babylon’s destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. This is the main theme of Nahum’s prophecy, and is in the future. Thus, the general guidelines for his prophecy are somewhere between 663 – 612 B.C. Most conservative scholars narrow the date to 630 – 612 B.C.

The Man

Nahum’s home was Elkosh (**1:1**). Nothing is known of the exact location of this city. Some have concluded from his mention of Judah in **1:15** that he came from the Southern Kingdom. Others have suggested that his home was Capernaum (translation => “village of Nahum”), beside the Sea of Galilee. That would have certainly placed him geographically closer to the Assyrians. However, there is no evidence to confirm this.

We also know nothing of his occupation. Yet, God saw in this servant the ability to accomplish His mission upon the Assyrians.

The Message

Nahum is the second prophet to deal with the Assyrians. Earlier, in the 9th century, around 780 B.C., Jonah was called upon to seek their repentance. Reluctantly, he carried out his mission. Now, some 150 years later, Nahum is to deliver a message of inescapable doom to the same people. He emphasizes God’s slow but sure wrath upon the godless and wicked (**1:2-3**). He also stresses His mercy upon those who seek refuge in Him (**1:7**). How the prophet describes God’s wrath in **1:3** is one of the main messages in all of Scripture (**cp. 2 Pet. 3:9**).

Nahum says nothing of Judah’s internal conditions and her need for repentance; he leaves this to his contemporaries (Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah). “He is a prophet of a single theme: the fall and

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 9

destruction of Nineveh, that city of great and dreadful people” (*Homer Hailey, Commentary On The Minor Prophets, pg. 249*). The intent was to comfort Judah which, along with all the other nations, had long been brutalized by the Assyrians. Though God had used this wicked empire as His judgment tool against faithless Israel (**2 Kings 17:1-18, 21-23**) and Judah (**Isa. 7:18-20; 10:5-7**), time had now come for her reckoning before Jehovah, the God of all nations. Her judgment had been long in coming, for Isaiah had spoken of Nineveh’s fall some 100 years earlier (**Isa. 10:12-16, 24-27**). In this we see a timelessness of the main lesson of Nahum’s prophecy. He reveals an eternal truth that for any nation to survive, it must be established upon and directed by principles of righteousness and truth (**cp. Prov. 14:34**). Wickedness will only spell ruin for any nation, regardless in which generation it exists. Present-day nations, especially our own country, would do well to heed this lesson.

Assyrian Background

Given that Nahum’s message did not touch on conditions in Judah, it might be helpful to catalog some main points of the historical background of Assyria’s empire:

- ◆ Tiglath-Pileser III (745 - 727 B.C.) On a course of world conquest, invaded the West and deported many from northern Israel to an area north of Nineveh.
- ◆ Shalmaneser V (727 - 722 B.C.) Began the siege of Samaria, but died before the city fell (722/721 B.C.)
- ◆ Sargon II (722 - 705 B.C.) Completed the siege and conquest of Samaria; murdered in 705 B.C.
- ◆ Sennacherib (705 - 681 B.C.) Boasted on his monuments how he had shut up Hezekiah, King of Judah, “as a bird in a cage.” He was murdered by his own two sons; another son, Esarhaddon, drove them out and became king (681 - 668 B.C.)
- ◆ Assurbanipal (668 - 625 B.C.) Captured Thebes in 663 B.C. (**Nah. 3:8**). He carried tremendous spoil back to Assyria; noted for his great cruelty.
- ◆ Esarhaddon II (620 - 612 B.C.) The Babylonians & Medes besieged Nineveh. He took his wives, children, and wealth into the palace and set it on fire, dying in the process.

Quite possibly, there has never been a more cruel people on the face of the earth. In their own records of their conquerings are found inscriptions detailing “how space failed for corpses; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they impaled ‘heaps of men’ on stakes; and how they covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs.” The population of this kingdom was never homogenous; it was made up of foreigners drawn to them by trade and wealth, and full of conquered peoples. It was a siege waiting to happen.

Outline Of Nahum's Prophecy

- I Nineveh's doom – by the decree of Jehovah **(1:1-15)**
 - A. The goodness and severity of Jehovah **(1:2-8)**
 - 1. Vengeance and mercy of God **(vv. 2-3)**
 - 2. The terribleness of His anger against sin **(vv. 4-6)**
 - 3. The greatness of His mercy – a stronghold to the faithful **(v. 7)**
 - 4. The pursuer of His enemies **(v. 8)**
 - B. The complete overthrow of Nineveh **(1:9-15)**
 - 1. God's faithfulness in present crises: affliction not again to come from Assyria (as in the past) **(vv. 9-11)**
 - 2. Judah delivered from the yoke of Assyria by destruction of Nineveh's power **(vv. 12-13)**
 - 3. Destruction of Assyria **(v. 14)**
 - 4. Rejoicing in Zion **(v. 15)**
- II Siege and destruction of Nineveh – decreed by Jehovah **(2:1-13)**
 - A. Assault upon Nineveh: doom of the city **(2:1-7)**
 - 1. Furious preparation for battle **(vv. 1-4)**
 - 2. Hopelessness of resistance **(vv. 5-6)**
 - 3. The city, as a queen, is captured and moans **(v. 7)**
 - B. Flight of the people and sack of the city **(2:8-13)**
 - 1. The inhabitants flee, the city is plundered **(vv. 8-10)**
 - 2. The destruction is complete **(vv. 11-13)**
- III Nineveh's sins and her inevitable doom **(3:1-19)**
 - A. Nineveh's fate brought upon herself as retribution for her crimes **(3:1-7)**
 - 1. The graphic description of the battle **(vv. 1-3)**
 - 2. The cause: her sins **(v. 4)**
 - 3. The uncovering of her shame is of Jehovah **(vv. 5-7)**
 - B. The fate of No-amon is to be the fate of Nineveh **(3:8-11)**
 - C. Inability of Nineveh's resources to save the city **(3:12-19)**
 - 1. Fall of the outlying strongholds **(vv. 12-13)**
 - 2. Siege and destruction of the city **(vv. 14-19a)**
 - 3. Universal exultation over the fall of Nineveh **(v. 19b)**

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 9

Questions

1. How does Nahum describe God in **1:2-8**? In what is His power revealed? (**1:3b-5**) Despite the certainty of God's wrath upon the disobedient, what else does the prophet emphasize? (**1:7**) Compare all this to **Rom. 11:22**.
2. What do you think is meant by "the place thereof" [*KJV*], "its place" [*NKJV*], or "its site" [*NASV*] in **1:8**? (**cp. 1:1**) What will be the results of God's wrath? (**cp. Zeph. 2:13**)
3. **1:9-15** is admittedly difficult because of the apparent changes in who is being addressed. Write below whom you think Jehovah is addressing and what you think His message is to each group.

[For background information, read 2 Kings 18-19 and Isa. 10:5-21]

vv. 9-11 _____

vv. 12-13 _____

vv. 14-15 _____

4. How is Assyria described? (**1:12a**) Despite this, what awaits her? (**1:12b, 14**) What is Judah exhorted to do? (**1:15**)
5. What do you think is being described in **2:1-7**? Why do you think they are so instructed? Though "the one who scatters" is not named, to whom does history tell us this refers? What is it that God wants vindicated? (**2:2**)
6. How is the approaching "scatterer" described? (**2:3-5**) What do you think **2:6** is saying? (**cp. Isa. 28:2; 30:28; 45:1-2**) What will be the result in Nineveh when all this occurs? (**2:7**)

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 9

7. Prior to this judgment, how had Nineveh been described? **(2:8a)** Now, what is her reality? **(2:8b)**
What are Jehovah's instructions to Assyria's invaders? **(2:9)**

8. Describe Nineveh's (Assyria's) condition. **(2:10-13)** What was she formerly? What is she going to become? Why is all this going to happen? **(2:13)** *Thought question:* What is the Biblical principle taught here? **(cp. Mt. 7:2)**

9. Who is being described in **3:1**? What description follows in **3:2-3**? What does Nahum say is the cause for all this carnage? **(3:4)** In what way(s) was Assyria (Nineveh) a "harlot"? How does Jehovah show His disfavor upon this wicked nation? **(3:5-6)** What will be the worldwide response to her fall? **(3:7)**

10. Who is mentioned in **3:8**? What does this reference mean? What does this have to do with the judgment upon Assyria (Nineveh)? **(3:9-11)**

11. How are Nineveh's resources to defend herself pitifully described? **(3:12-13)** In irony, what does the prophet encourage the Assyrians to do to no avail? **(3:14-15)**

12. What else about Nineveh's position will not be able to save her? **(3:16)** What will happen to the military strength? **(3:17)**

13. Who does Nahum address as he brings his prophecy to a close? **(3:18-19)** What is he told? What is Nineveh's (Assyria's) future? **(3:19)** What will be the world response? **(3:19)**

The Prophecy Of Habakkuk

Introduction

Habakkuk's place among The Minor Prophets is unique. He is the last prophet God called during the years we label The Divided Kingdom. Habakkuk, whose name means "Embrace," truly embraced the cause of justice in his own country. He also took to heart the cause of his own people when he learned of God's choice of unrighteous Babylon to judge rebellious Judah. He is different from the other prophets in a significant respect. Rather than speaking to the people on behalf of God, this prophet speaks to Jehovah on behalf of the people. Habakkuk's struggles with what he sees going on around him are very current, for they are also our struggles as we observe a wicked world and try to understand it in light of what we know about a righteous God.

The Date

A date cannot be affixed to Habakkuk's prophecy with certainty. Like Nahum's prophecy, no king is mentioned. Jehovah mentions Babylon as His judgment tool upon Judah (**1:6**). This indicates their westward expansion is already underway. Such would place this prophecy at least after the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. It is also obvious from **3:16** that Babylon has yet to reach Judah. The first group of Hebrew captives (Daniel, his 3 friends, et al) were taken by Nebuchadnezzar back to Babylon after the battle at Carchemish around 605 B.C. This range will suffice for a suitable dating of Habakkuk's preaching.

The Prophet

Habakkuk might very well be the most obscure of the 12 prophets we study in this series. Nothing is known about him, his occupation, or his hometown. It is safely inferred from the context of the book that his home was somewhere in Judah, possibly even Jerusalem. What we do know about him is his struggle with faith in trusting God's providential management of an uncertain world.

The Message

If the dates used above are correct, Habakkuk prophesied in the early years of Jehoiakim's rule in Judah (*ca.* 609-598 B.C.). **2 Kings 23:37** records his reign as "evil in the sight of the Lord." This would certainly account for the description the prophet gives of the conditions found in Judah when he takes his complaint to Jehovah (**1:3-4**). Habakkuk's problem is the same problem still found among God's people today: *a lack of trusting faith*. His question of "How long...?" (**1:2**) indicates a lack of trust in God, and a failure to wait for Jehovah as He would work things out. He even accuses God of showing no concern for the woeful conditions found in Judah (**1:2**). He further compounds his problem by not accepting the Lord's answer given to his plea (**1:12-17**).

The immediate lesson of Habakkuk's prophecy is the foretelling of God's use of Babylon as His tool of judgment upon wicked Judah as well as His punishment upon the Chaldeans themselves for their own evils. The long-range lesson is timeless, and apropos for Christians as we serve God under His Son Jesus

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 10

Christ today. "The just shall live by faith" (2:4). This is repeated in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). All we see around may at times not make sense. We long for Divine retribution to "right the wrongs" that seem to challenge God's providence. The one who truly serves God must learn to restrain the impulses that demand "instant justice." Such a follower of God knows "the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him" (2:20). The one justified in His sight will only live by faith (trust) in the Almighty. No matter how trying the days, the righteous live by their faith while awaiting the final salvation God at last will bring to His people (3:16-20).

Outline Of Habakkuk's Prophecy

- I God's judgment upon Judah, the wicked people of God, through the Chaldeans (1:2 - 2:3)
 - A. First perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:2-11)
 - 1. The prophet's lamentation over the rule of wickedness and violence (vv. 2-4)
Perplexity: How can Jehovah justify His indifference in the presence of wickedness and violence?
 - 2. Jehovah's reply: He is not indifferent; He will raise up the Chaldeans to execute His judgment (vv. 5-11)
 - a) Their rise is of Jehovah (vv. 5-6)
 - b) Their character is of themselves (vv. 7-11)
 - B. Second perplexity, and Jehovah's reply (1:12 - 2:3)
 - 1. How can a holy God employ an impure and godless agent? (1:12-17)
 - a) The confident hope that God's people will not perish (v. 12)
 - b) Perplexity: God's use of so wicked a nation as Chaldea (vv. 13-17)
 - 2. Jehovah's reply: The judgment is sure, but not immediate (2:1-3)
 - a) The prophet's decision (v. 1)
 - b) The command: write plainly, for the promise is certain (vv. 2-3)
- II God's judgment upon the Chaldeans, the ungodly world power (2:4-20)
 - A. Fundamental principle in world government (2:4-5)
 - 1. The righteous live by faith (v. 4)
 - 2. The wicked – drunken on pride, power, greed – will not continue (v. 5)
 - B. Woes upon the Chaldeans: a taunt song (2:6-20)
 - 1. Woe upon lust of conquest and plunder (vv. 6-8)
 - 2. Woe upon building an empire through cruelty and godless gain (vv. 9-11)
 - 3. Woe upon building cities with blood (vv. 12-14)
 - 4. Woe upon cruelty in the treatment of conquered kings and nations (vv. 15-17)
 - 5. Woe upon idolatry (vv. 18-20)
- III Prayer for compassion in the midst of judgment (3:1-19)
 - A. Petition (3:1-2)
 - 1. Title: author and melody (v. 1)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 10

5. Upon hearing God's reply, what 3 truths (2 about God, 1 about Judah) does Habakkuk utter? **(1:12)**
Despite knowing these things, what greater perplexity does the prophet now have? **(1:13)** What is Habakkuk's implied accusation against God in **1:14-17**?

6. Despite what he has said, what admirable quality does Habakkuk show in waiting for Jehovah to answer his second complaint? **(2:1)**

7. What does the Lord tell the prophet to do in initially answering him a second time? **(2:2)** What assurance does He give him? **(2:3)**

8. In beginning to answer the prophet's second question, what 2 approaches to life does Jehovah give? **(2:4)** What is the basic difference between them? What is the relationship between God and the proud? **(Jas. 4:6a; 1 Pet. 5:5b)**

9. Be prepared to show how the New Testament uses **Hab. 2:4**.

10. How does God begin to describe the Chaldeans to satisfy Habakkuk's inquiry? **(2:5)**

11. Jehovah illustrates to Habakkuk Babylon's guilt before Him by using 5 woes that nations will chant over her destruction. Be able to describe them. **(2:6-20)**

vv. 6-8 _____

vv. 9-11 _____

vv. 12-14 _____

vv. 15-17 _____

vv. 18-20 _____

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 10

12. What is the significance of **Hab. 2:20** in this context? (**cp. Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 2:13**)
13. Now that he understands, what request does Habakkuk make of Jehovah? (**3:2a**) With what does the prophet ask God to complete His judgment upon Judah? (**3:2b**)
14. In **3:3-15**, Habakkuk emphasizes Jehovah's help for Israel in the past. In the space below, write what you think are the major points emphasized and cite the verses in which they are contained.
15. Because of Jehovah's answers to his questions, and because of his remembrance of Jehovah's care for His people in the past, how does the prophet confidently end his prophecy? (**3:16-19**) What does he admit as real possibilities? (**3:17**) How does he show his faith has grown? (**3:18-19**)
16. What practical lessons have you learned from studying Habakkuk's prophecy?

The Prophecy Of Haggai

Introduction

The last 3 prophets in our series (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) all prophesied in the post-exilic years. Haggai was the first prophet to speak for Jehovah after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity. This prophet, whose name means “Festival,” was a lot like Nahum: a single purpose and message. God sent Haggai, and his younger contemporary Zechariah, to stir up the hearts of the people to complete the task of rebuilding the temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Before the Jewish captivity became real, the prophets had assured the people of a glorious future following their punishment (**cp. Jer. 30-33**). However, times in Jerusalem were anything but glorious. They were discouraging and filled with opposition from surrounding nations. To this end, God raised up Haggai and Zechariah.

The Date

Haggai’s prophecy is the easiest to date of all the prophecies we have studied thus far. He began speaking for Jehovah in “the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month,…” (**1:1**). Darius the Great, also known as Darius I or Darius Hystaspes, is not to be confused with Darius the Mede whom Cyrus placed on the throne after he conquered Babylon and who reluctantly threw Daniel into the lions’ den (**Dan. 6**). The Darius of Haggai’s day seized the Persian kingdom following the death of Cyrus and subsequent weak years of his son Cambyses. Darius I reigned from 522 - 486 B.C. Thus, the date for Haggai’s preaching, as well as Zechariah’s (**Zech. 1:1**), would be 520 B.C.

The Prophet

Of Haggai’s home, occupation, or family, we know nothing specific. He must have been among the nearly 50,000 Jews who returned home under Zerubbabel (**Ezra 2:1-67**). Some have inferred from his statement in **2:3** that he had seen the original temple built by Solomon. This would have made him at least 80 years old by the time he began prophesying. Others believe that Haggai was of the priestly descent because of what he says in **2:10-14**. However, both of these observations are conjecture and cannot be proven absolutely. All we know about Haggai is what is recorded in **Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14-16**, and the short book that bears his name.

The Times In Restored Judah

In order to understand the conditions into which God called Haggai, it would be helpful to review the events regarding Judah’s return from captivity as they happened chronologically. The information below depicts the events that eventually led to Haggai’s call to prophesy:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
562 B.C.	Death of Nebuchadnezzar; beginning of decline of Babylonian empire.
549 B.C.	Cyrus unites the Medes and Persians into one empire.
539 B.C.	Cyrus seizes control of Babylon; releases all captives back to their homelands.

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 11

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
538 B.C.	Cyrus issues edict for return to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1).
536 B.C.	First return led by Zerubbabel and Joshua; initial work on the temple (altar and foundation) begun (Ezra 3:8). Opposition from inhabitants of the land, discouragement among the Jews, and the death of Cyrus in 530 B.C. caused the work to stop for 16 years.
522 B.C.	Darius Hystaspes begins to rule; shows favor to the Jews' efforts in rebuilding.
520 B.C.	Haggai, Zechariah called to urge the completion of the temple; work on the temple resumes (Ezra 4:24).

The Message

In 3 words, it was: *BUILD THE TEMPLE!!* In length of time, Haggai preached a little less than 4 months (**cp. 1:1; 2:1, 10, 20**). The people had neglected the Lord's house for 16 years while busying themselves with their own interests. They had convinced themselves that "the time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt" (**1:2-4**). Furthermore, because of their neglect, God was punishing them with a drought (**1:6-11**).

By inspiration, Haggai links his urging of the temple's completion to the future glory of the Messiah's reign in His "house" (**2:6-9**). This is a reference to the establishment of the New Testament church and reign of Christ, as noted by the quoting and application of **Hag. 2:6** by the writer of Hebrews (**Heb. 12:26-28**). Thus, Haggai takes his place along side all the other Minor Prophets who uttered Messianic prophecies.

Lessons From Haggai's Prophecy

There are several lessons that can be learned or emphasized by studying what Jehovah spoke through Haggai. Of course, these words were not for us but for the Jews who returned to rebuild Jerusalem in the 6th century B.C. However, since they were written for our learning (**cp. Rom. 15:4**), they contain many principled lessons we would do well to heed today:

- ◆ The survival of God's people always depends upon their willingness to put obedient service to Him before their own selfish interests (**cp. Mt. 6:31-34**). The problem of the Jews upon their return was not idolatry, but indifference.
- ◆ God views the ignoring of religious responsibilities very seriously (**cp. Jn. 4:23-24**). He still seeks zealous servants who not only will worship, but who want to worship.
- ◆ The sin of procrastination is deadly (**cp. Jas. 4:17**). When a vital issue is at stake, *now* is the time to deal with it, even in the face of discouragement or adversity.
- ◆ The greatest preaching is that filled with a "thus sayeth the LORD" (**cp. Mt. 28:20; 2 Jn. 9-11**). Haggai was a plain-spoken preacher and his preaching was successful. Within one month, the prophet stirred the people to action (**1:1, 15**). Such preaching will be successful in stirring honest hearts to action today as well.

Outline Of Haggai's Prophecy

- I First message – Rebuke for religious indifference and admonition to build the temple **(1:1-15)**
 - A. The message **(1:2-11)**
 - 1. The people's selfishness and unconcern **(vv. 2-6)**
 - a) Their selfishness **(vv. 2-4)**
 - b) Their ways and the result: curse **(vv. 5-6)**
 - 2. The divine displeasure and exhortation to resume the building operation **(vv. 7-15)**
 - a) Consider your ways – get busy **(vv. 7-8)**
 - b) The visitation from God **(vv. 9-11)**
 - c) The response from the people: they build! **(vv. 12-15)**

 - II Second message – Consolation to those in despair: the glory of the new temple **(2:1-9)**
 - A. Jehovah's presence with the builders **(2:1-5)**
 - B. The temple's future glory **(2:6-9)**

 - III Third message – Completion of the temple a guarantee of blessings of nature **(2:10-19)**
 - A. The people's uncleanness a result of their own conduct **(2:10-14)**
 - 1. Punishment result of their own uncleanness impressed by 2 questions **(vv. 10-13)**
 - a) # 1 => Communication of holiness by holy objects on contact **(vv. 10-12)**
 - b) # 2 => Communication of legal defilement by contact **(v. 13)**
 - 2. Application to Israel – the cause of their uncleanness **(v. 14)**

 - IV Fourth message – Renewal of the promise of salvation: exaltation of Zerubbabel **(2:20-23)**
 - A. Overthrow of the nations **(2:20-22)**
 - B. Messianic hope preserved in Zerubbabel **(2:23)**
- [Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. When did Haggai begin to prophesy? **(1:1)** To whom was his message spoken? **(1:1)** Why do you think they were initially addressed? **(cp. 1:14a)**

2. What was the basic message from the Lord through Haggai? **(1:2)** What do you make of the statement attributed to the people? *Thought question*: when is it time to do the Lord's work?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 11

3. With what rhetorical question does Haggai rebuke this slothful attitude in the people? **(1:3-4)**
Thought question: compare the people's attitude with that of David in **2 Sam. 7:1-2**. What is the obvious difference?

4. What point do you think is made by how the houses of the people are described in **1:4**? What disposition does this reveal in the people? Do we still see evidence of the same thing today? Give examples.

5. What does Jehovah ask them to do in **1:5**? What do you think this means? What three observations does Jehovah make to illustrate the pitiful conditions that existed in restored Jerusalem? **(1:6)**

6. To solve their dilemma, what does the prophet say the people should do? **(1:7-8a)** What two reasons (one positive, one negative) does Haggai give that should have been incentive for the people to build the temple? **(1:8b-11)**

7. What was the response to Haggai's preaching? **(1:12-15)** In terms of time, how quickly did the people respond to Haggai's preaching? **(1:15 cp. to 1:1)** What words of encouragement aided the people in this important labor, and what practical lessons can we learn from this? **(1:13)**

8. How long had the restoration work on the temple been laying in ruins?

9. When did Haggai's second message begin? **(2:1)** What was the time lapse from the first message? What was its basic contents? **(2:2-3)** Why do you think this question was asked? **(cp. Ezra 3:12)**

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 11

10. What did God seek to do through Haggai for the people? **(2:4-5)** What were the people to do to answer their discouragement? **(2:4b)** Of what 2 things did Jehovah remind them? **(2:4b-5)**
Thought question: make the comparison to our present-day admonition in **Eph. 6:10-17**.
11. **Hag. 2:6-9** is admittedly difficult, and open to various interpretations. To further remove the people's discouragement over the "inadequacy" of the restored temple, what did Jehovah promise? **(2:6-7)**
What do you think **2:7** is saying?
12. What do you think **2:8** is saying? In what is the fulfillment of these verses to be found: in the literal building of the restored temple, or in the Messianic age and the completion of the Lord's church?
(cp. Heb. 12:26-28; 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 1 Pet. 2:4-10)
13. What will be the result of all that Jehovah will do for His house? **(2:9)** What will be present "in this place"? What kind of peace do you think is meant? **(cp. Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:5; Eph. 2:14; Mt. 10:34-39)**
14. When did Haggai deliver his third message? **(2:10)** What was its basic contents? **(2:11)** Why ask the priests? **(cp. Lev. 10:8-11; Mal. 2:7)**
15. What was the first question and answer? **(2:12; cp. Lev. 6:27)** What was the second question and answer? **(2:13; cp. Num. 19:11-13)** In what way does the prophet make the application of these answers to the people? **(2:14)** What do you suppose was their "uncleanness"? **(2:14)**

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 11

16. What calamities had the people suffered as a result of their uncleanness? **(2:15-16)** For what reason had God sent those disasters upon them? **(2:17)** What do you suppose is the meaning of God's question in **2:19**?
17. Yet, despite their past, how were things going to work out now? **(2:19)** Why?
18. When did Haggai deliver his final message? **(2:20)** What was its basic contents? **(2:21-23)** Do you think it relates to **2:6-9**? What is the significance of a "signet?" **(2:23)** How was all this fulfilled? **(cp. Mt. 1:12-16; Lk. 1:32-33; 2 Sam. 7:11-16)**

The Prophecy Of Zechariah

Introduction

This prophecy is by far the longest and most difficult of all the writings known as the Minor Prophets. Zechariah, whose name means “Whom Jehovah Remembers,” prophesied with his older colleague Haggai when the Jews returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. His is one of the most popular names among the Hebrews; at least 26 other men are mentioned in the Old Testament bearing this name. Like the books of **Ezekiel**, **Daniel**, and **Revelation**, this prophecy is a book of visions, and hence, difficult to interpret. One must approach it without dogmatism, but with humility, prayer, and a reluctance to be carried away with fanciful interpretations that have no other Biblical basis.

The Date

Given the highly apocalyptic nature of this book, one is not surprised to find controversy on any aspect of it, even in assigning a date. Regarding the early chapters (**chs. 1-8**), there is almost unanimous support among conservative Biblical scholars. The book itself sets the date at 520 – 518 B.C. (**cp. 1:1; 7:1**). Zechariah begins preaching to the Jews two months after Haggai started (**1:1; cp. Hag. 1:1**). The later chapters (**chs. 9-14**) are undated, and much debate surrounds any attempts to date them. “Keil explains the omission of dating the last six chapters on the ground that the first section of the book was concerned with times in the days of Darius I, and that the latter section dealt with times future” [*Homer Hailey – A Commentary On The Minor Prophets*, pg. 317]. Suffice it to say, the later chapters deal with a time after the temple has been completed. To say with certainty beyond that is to say too much.

The Prophet

Zechariah identifies himself as “the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo” (**1:1**). He was probably younger than Haggai, though that cannot be confirmed. He was also of the priestly order, for his grandfather Iddo is identified as a priest who returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. (**Neh. 12:4, 16**). He joins Jeremiah and Ezekiel as men who were priests but who were also called to be prophets. Some have reasoned he was born and reared in Babylon.

The Times In Restored Judah

Since Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai and worked in the same conditions, one can read a detailed discussion of the post-exilic times in Jerusalem in the material on Haggai (*pages 64-65*).

The Message

Like Haggai, Zechariah urges the people of restored Jerusalem to complete the temple of Jehovah in spite of conflict and adversity. However, Zechariah looks way beyond the completion of the physical structure. He envisions the completion of the Lord’s spiritual temple under the Messiah. It, too, would come about amidst great opposition, but the Lord would battle for His people and bring them to ultimate victory.

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 12

Highly Messianic, Zechariah speaks of the “branch of David” (**3:8; 6:12**). Isaiah and Jeremiah also refer to this Servant of God (**Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15**). He would come as a lowly shepherd rejected by the sheep, sold for the price of a wounded slave, and finally pierced for the sheep who would then scatter. Yet, He would at last redeem His remnant and defeat all the enemies who stood opposed to Jehovah. All these references pointed toward Jesus Christ coming as the Messiah.

The book is filled with visions => 8 were received at night (**1:7 – 6:8**). Angelic visits, interpretations, and dialogue figure prominently. Some writers have calculated that there are 78 predictions involving 144 verses, or 69% of the book. The book is rich in Messianic prophecy, and in this regard is without equal in the Minor Prophets.

Outline Of Zechariah’s Prophecy

- I Visions, and messages of exhortation, consolation, and encouragement (**1:1 – 8:23**)
 - A. Call to repentance (**1:1-6**)
 - B. Eight night visions and their interpretations (**1:7 – 6:8**)
 - 1. The rider and the horsemen among the myrtle trees (**1:7-17**)
 - a) The date (**v. 7**)
 - b) The vision: the horsemen among the myrtles (**vv. 8-11**)
 - c) Jehovah’s promise of mercy on Zion (**vv. 12-17**)
 - 2. The four horns and the four smiths (**1:18-21**)
 - a) This vision of the horns and smiths (**vv. 18-20**)
 - b) Every hostile nation has its match in Jehovah (**v. 21**)
 - 3. The man with the measuring line (**2:1-13**)
 - a) The vision of the man with the measuring line (**vv. 1-5**)
 - b) The prophecy: the people will return to Zion (**vv. 6-13**)
 - 4. The trial and acquittal of the high priest, Joshua (**3:1-10**)
 - a) The accusation, acquittal, and cleansing of the high priest (**vv. 1-5**)
 - b) Prophetic address: significance of the symbolic action (**vv. 6-10**)
 - 5. The golden lampstand and the two olive trees (**4:1-14**)
 - a) The vision of the lampstand and the two trees (**vv. 1-3**)
 - b) The prophet’s questions and the angel’s explanations (**vv. 4-14**)
 - (1) The first question and explanation (**vv. 4-10**)
 - (2) The second question and explanation (**vv. 11-14**)
 - 6. The flying roll (**5:1-4**)
 - a) The vision of the flying roll (**vv. 1-2**)
 - b) The prophetic significance: the curse => sinners and their houses will be swept away (**vv. 3-4**)
 - 7. The woman in the ephah (**5:5-11**)
 - a) The vision of the ephah and the woman (**vv. 5-7**)
 - b) The significance: wickedness transported out of the land (**vv. 8-11**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

8. The four chariots and horses of various colors **(6:1-8)**
 - a) The vision of the chariots and horses **(vv. 1-3)**
 - b) The prophet's question and the angel's explanation **(vv. 4-8)**
 - C. Symbolic crowning of the high priest, Joshua **(6:9-15)**
 1. Children of captivity provide the gold and silver for the crown **(vv. 9-11)**
 2. Explanation: symbolic of the Branch, crowned king and priest **(vv. 12-15)**
- II The question of fasting, and Jehovah's answer **(7:1 – 8:23)**
- A. The fast-days of Israel, and obedience to the word **(7:1-7)**
 1. The occasion of the prophecy **(vv. 1-3)**
 2. Fasting not essential, but hearing is **(vv. 4-7)**
 - B. The first half of the Lord's answer to the question of fasting **(7:8-14)**
 1. What Jehovah had required of the fathers **(vv. 8-10)**
 2. Refusal of the fathers to hearken – lesson that should have been learned **(vv. 9-11)**
 - C. The second half of the Lord's answer – the promise of restoration to His favor **(8:1-23)**
 1. The time of redemption draws nigh **(vv. 1-8)**
 2. Message of encouragement and admonition **(vv. 9-17)**
 3. Fasting to be changed into rejoicing **(vv. 18-23)**
- III World powers and the kingdom of God **(9:1 – 14:21)**
- A. First oracle – judgment! Destruction of heathen powers over Israel **(9:1 – 11:17)**
 1. Fall of the heathen world, and deliverance and glorification of Zion **(9:1 – 10:12)**
 - a) Judgment – fall of heathen world **(9:1-7)**
 - b) The Messianic King and His reign **(9:8-10)**
 - c) Complete victory of the sons of God over the sons of Greece **(9:11-17)**
 - d) Complete redemption of the people of God **(10:1-12)**
 2. Allegories of the good and foolish shepherds **(11:1-17)**
 - a) Lamentation of the humiliated land **(vv. 1-3)**
 - b) Allegory of the good shepherd **(vv. 4-14)**
 - (1) The shepherd's loving care **(vv. 4-6)**
 - (2) The people's lack of appreciation **(vv. 7-8)**
 - (3) Withdrawal of the good shepherd **(vv. 9-14)**
 - c) Allegory of the foolish shepherd **(vv. 15-17)**
 - (1) Conduct of the foolish shepherd **(vv. 15-16)**
 - (2) Overthrow of the foolish shepherd **(v. 17)**
 - B. The future of the people of Jehovah; judgment which sifted and refined **(12:1 – 14:21)**
 1. Israel's conflict and victory, conversion and sanctification **(12:1 – 13:6)**
 - a) Marvelous deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem **(12:1-9)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

- (1) Conflict of nations and Jerusalem; destruction of the new nations (**vv. 1-4**)
- (2) Strength by which to overcome (**vv. 5-9**)
 - b) Spirit of grace and of penitential lamentation (**12:10-14**)
 - c) A fountain of grace for salvation (**13:1-6**)
- 2. Judgment of refinement for Israel, and glorious end for Jerusalem (**13:7 – 14:21**)
 - a) Fate of shepherd's flock by which refined (**13:7-9**)
 - b) Judgment and deliverance (**14:1-5**)
 - c) Complete salvation (**14:6-11**)
 - d) Destruction of enemy nations (**14:12-15**)
 - e) Conversion of the heathen nations (**14:16-19**)
 - f) Everything unholy removed; all is holy to Jehovah (**14:20-21**)

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

Questions

1. When did Zechariah begin to prophesy? (**1:1**) Relate the timing of his work to that of his partner Haggai. (**Hag. 1:1; 2:1**)
2. How does Zechariah identify himself? (**1:1; cp. Neh. 12:4, 16**)
3. What is the general message of Zechariah's first oracle? (**1:2-6**) To what does the prophet initially refer? (**1:2, 4-6a**) Why do you think this was done? *Thought question:* refer to **1 Cor. 10:1-13** and **Heb. 2:1-4** and make the application for us today.
4. What are the instructions Zechariah gives the remnant? (**1:3**) From what does this people need to repent?
5. *Thought question:* by comparing **Mt. 24:35** and **1 Pet. 1:22-25** to **Zech. 1:5-6a**, what do you see as the abiding Biblical principle? What was the response from the people? (**1:6b**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

6. When did Zechariah see the first vision at night? **(1:7)** Compare the time of this vision to Haggai's last 3 addresses. **(Hag. 2:1,10, 20)** How long has it been since the work on the temple was begun? **(cp. Hag. 1:15)** What did Zechariah see? **(1:8)** Who did the figures represent in the vision? **(1:10)**

7. What was the result of their mission? **(1:11)** How did this compare with what Haggai had already prophesied of? **(cp. Hag. 2:6-9, 20-23)** This report from Jehovah's servants led to what question? **(1:12)** *Thought question:* the "70 years" can be dated either from 606 – 536 B.C., or 586 – 516 B.C. Which range do you think is mentioned in **1:12** and why?

8. How does the Lord answer the cry of "How long?" in **1:13-17**? What assurance is given that the Jews will once again enjoy God's favor? **(1:16)** For what purpose would a measuring line serve? **(1:16)** What other indications does Jehovah give that a bright future awaits His people despite their present conditions? **(1:17)**

9. What was the second vision Zechariah saw at night? **(1:18-21)** What do you think is represented by the horns? **(cp. Dan. 7:7, 24; 8:3; Rev. 12:3; etc.)** What had these "horns" done? **(1:19)**

10. What else was shown the prophet in this vision? **(1:20)** What was their purpose? **(1:21)** What do you think is the general message of this vision?

11. What was the third vision Zechariah saw at night? **(2:1-5)** What was the young man's intentions? **(2:2)** What was Jehovah's response to this? **(2:4-5)** *Thought questions:* Whom do you think the young man represents? Which "Jerusalem" do you think God had under consideration?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

12. The conditions in and around Jerusalem in Zechariah's day and later would be described to Nehemiah around 445 B.C. (**Neh. 1:3; 7:4**) How does Jehovah offer a bright contrasting future? (**2:4-5**)
13. Following the 3rd vision, what does Jehovah command His people to do? (**2:6-7**) What application can we make of this today under the gospel? (**cp. Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1**) For what purpose has Jehovah sent His angel against the nations? (**2:8**) What will happen to those peoples who have opposed the Lord? (**2:9**)
14. From what perspective, physical or spiritual, do you think we are to understand **2:10-13**? What response was to be found in the Lord's people because of His actions? (**2:10**) What was God going to do for all the nations? (**2:11**) Through what was this accomplished? (**cp. Gen. 12:3; Isa. 2:2-4**)
15. What do you think **2:12-13** is saying? (**cp. Hab. 2:20**)
16. What was the 4th vision Zechariah saw at night? (**3:1-5**) What role did Satan play in this vision? (**3:1; cp. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6**) Why was the role of the priest critical to the relationship between God and His people?
17. What do you think the change in Joshua's garments represents? (**3:3-5; cp. Ezek. 22:26; Hos. 4:6, 8; Mic. 3:11**) In what way was he "a brand plucked from the fire?" (**3:2b**) *Thought question*: when you consider Satan's accusation and the state of Joshua's garments, what is emphasized about God in this vision?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 12

18. Because of what was done to Joshua, what solemn charges did Jehovah give him? **(3:7a)** If he was faithful, what blessings were promised to him? **(3:7b)** In what way would these promised blessings find their ultimate fulfillment? **(3:8-10)** Who is “the Branch”? **(cp. Isa. 4:2; 11:1-10; Jer. 23:5)**
19. What was set before Joshua? **(3:9)** To what do you think this refers? **(cp. Dan. 2:34, 44-45)** What was on it, and what resulted from its presentation? **(3:9)** When was all this accomplished? **(cp. Heb. 7:27; 9:26; 10:10-14)** What do you think is symbolized in **3:10**?
20. What was the 5th vision Zechariah saw at night? **(4:1-14)** What was the prophet’s initial reaction and how did the angel respond? **(4:4-5)** What do you think is the main message of this vision, and why do you suppose it was given? **(4:6)**
21. How else was Zerubbabel to be encouraged? **(4:7-10)** What is meant by “small things” in **4:10**? **(cp. Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3)** What do you think the “eyes” in **4:10** represent?
22. What does the prophet question next, and what was the response? **(4:11-14)** *Thought question:* upon what servants of God was anointing oil used? **(Lev. 8:6-13; 21:10; 1 Sam. 10:1)** Whom do you think is being represented by the two olive trees? **(4:14; cp. 3:1 & 4:6)** In what one person would both these anointed ones finally come together? **(cp. 6:13)**
23. What was the 6th vision Zechariah saw at night? **(5:1-4)** What was written on both sides of the scroll? **(5:3)** What two themes do you think are represented by what was written? Do you think these two sins are exhaustive, or simply represent all sin?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

24. What action by God is symbolized in **5:4**? (**cp. Heb. 4:12-13**) *Thought question*: What do you think is the main message of this vision, especially considering the Messianic implications of the previous visions?
25. What was the 7th vision Zechariah saw at night? (**5:5-11**) What was an ephah? (**5:6**) What was particular about this ephah? (**5:7**) Who was this woman? (**5:8**)
26. What happened to the woman in the ephah? (**5:9-11**) Whom do you think she represents? Why the mention of Shinar? (**5:11; cp. Gen. 10:10; 11:1-9**) What do you think is the main message of this vision? Do you see a connection between this vision and the previous one?
27. What was the 8th vision Zechariah saw at night? (**6:1-8**) Is it possible that the colors of the horses have any significance? (**cp. Rev. 6:1-6**) How did Jehovah's angel describe the horses and their chariots? (**6:5; cp. Psa. 104:4; Mt. 24:31**)
28. What do you think is the main message of this vision? How does it relate to the first one? (**cp. 1:7-11**) Is there anything to learn from viewing all 8 visions collectively?
29. Following the final vision, what instructions were given to Zechariah? (**6:9-15**) What would this symbolize? (**cp. 3:8**) Be able to show the Messianic importance of **6:13**, using the following passages to support your answer: **Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5; Acts 2:29-31; Heb. 1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 7:1-3, 25.**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

30. What else was to happen because of the reign of the Priest-King and His temple? **(6:15; cp. Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:13, 17)**
31. What question is brought to Zechariah? **(7:1-3)** How long has it been since the prophet had seen the 8 visions? **(7:1; cp. 1:7)** Why do you think this question has been asked?
32. What was Jehovah's answer through Zechariah? **(7:4-7)** What fast was commanded in the Law? **(Lev. 23:27)** What fasts were these? **(cp. 8:19)** What do you think is the point God is making in reply?
33. What does Jehovah really want of the remnant? **(7:8-10)** How does He illustrate the unchangeableness of His demands? **(7:11-14)**
34. As **7:11-14** portrayed in a negative aspect God carrying out His purpose, how does **8:1-8** portray the same in a positive way? Do you think it was only speaking of better times in restored Jerusalem, or also looked forward to the eventual kingdom of the Messiah?
35. What does God address through Zechariah in **8:9-13**? What changes had He made in their condition? **(cp. Hag. 1:6-11; 2:16-19)** How does God further explain His plan for the remnant? **(8:14-15)** What does He require of them? **(8:16-17)**

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

36. What does Jehovah finally give as to His answer to the fasting question? **(8:18-23)** What impact would this “new outlook” among God’s people have on others? **(8:20-23)** What do you think is meant by “ten men”? **(8:23)** When do you think this would happen?
37. What does Jehovah tell Zechariah to begin to do in **9:1-7**? What nations are listed, and what was their approximate location to Judah?
38. What kinds of things does the prophet say would happen to the peoples of these nations? *Thought questions*: when were these prophecies eventually fulfilled? On a broader scale, when would these peoples become “a remnant for our God”? **(9:7)**
39. By contrast, what would God do for His people? **(9:8-10)** What is eventually being planned by God? **(9:9)** How do we know this has ultimate reference to the Messiah’s kingdom? How is His kingdom described in **9:10**? **(cp. Mic. 5:10; Isa. 2:4; 2 Cor. 10:3-5)**
40. What else will be characteristic of the Messiah’s kingdom? **(9:11-12)** Who are the “prisoners” and what is their “pit”? **(cp. Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:16-18; 2 Tim. 2:26)** What is the image portrayed in **9:13-17** as God acts on behalf of His people in the Messiah’s kingdom?
41. How does the prophet further indicate prosperity under the Messiah’s reign? **(10:1-2)** To what is this contrasted? **(10:2)** *Thought question*: how would Israel know this to be so true?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

42. Who are the “shepherds” and the “he-goats” and would happen to them? **(10:3)** What is the apparent theme of **10:4-7**, and how do you think this was fulfilled?
43. How else does the prophet describe conditions in the Messiah’s kingdom? **(10:8-12)** What 3 things are mentioned regarding the people of this kingdom? **(10:9)**
44. What is stated in **10:11-12** that gives further comfort to the people of God that it is they who at last will be victorious under the Messiah?
45. Who is being addressed in **11:1-3**? What are they called upon to do? Why do you think they were to react in such a way?
46. What role does Jehovah command Zechariah to play in **11:4**? How does God view His people? **(11:4)** Why do you think this was so? What is mentioned that speaks to their guilt? **(11:5)** What was God’s reaction to their behavior? **(11:6)** *Thought question:* when do you think would be this “slaughter”?
47. What does Zechariah do in **11:7**? Particularly whom does he shepherd? **(11:7)** What else does he do? What do you think is meant by the names of the two staves?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

48. What does Zechariah do next in **11:8**? Who do you think are the “three shepherds” (**cp. 11:5**) What were the feelings between this “good shepherd” and the flock? (**11:8b-9; cp. Mt. 23:13-33; Jn. 15:18-25; Mt. 26:4-5**) What “sign” was given in **11:10-11** and what did it indicate?
49. As a result, what does the “good shepherd” request? (**11:12**) *Thought question:* for what “wages” do you think he was looking? What was given instead? In what do you think this was finally fulfilled? (**cp. Mt. 26:15**)
50. What was done with the wages paid to the “good shepherd?” (**11:13**) When and how was this fulfilled in the New Testament? (**cp. Mt. 27:7-9**) What did the “good shepherd” do next? (**11:14**) What do you think was symbolized by this?
51. What second parable was Zechariah told to act out? (**11:15-17**) How was this “foolish shepherd” described? (**11:16**) What would happen to him? (**11:17**) Whom do you think this represented?
52. How is the final “oracle” or “burden” of the word of the Lord to Zechariah validated? (**12:1**)
53. *Thought questions:* What “siege” against Jerusalem do you think is under consideration? (**12:2**) Which “Jerusalem” is under consideration?
54. What was Jehovah going to do for Jerusalem in this siege? (**12:2-4**) How did the inhabitants of Jerusalem react to this “siege?” (**12:5**) Because of their trust in God, what will be the results of this attack? (**12:6-9**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

55. How are the “inhabitants of Jerusalem” further described in **12:10**? What would God “pour” upon them? What would be their response? (**12:10-14; cp. 2 Cor. 7:10**) Is there any N.T. significance to **12:10**? (**cp. Jn. 19:37**)
56. What else would happen “in that day” in “Jerusalem?” (**13:1**) *Thought question*: what is suggested by the word “fountain?” (**13:1b; cp. Jn. 4:14; 1 Jn. 1:7**) What else will happen “in that day?” (**13:2-6**) From these verses, what is indicated by the opposition to idolatry and false prophecy? Would all prophets be silenced? (**cp. Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11**)
57. What does Jehovah say in **13:7**? How does **Mt. 26:31-32** interpret for us which shepherd is being considered here? When was all this fulfilled? What else is said to take place? (**13:8-9**)
58. What point do you think is being made by “fire” in **13:9**? (**cp. 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12**) What will be the result of this “trial by fire?” (**13:9b**) *Thought questions*: what other Minor Prophet made this point? Where and how does Paul make application in the New Testament?
59. What scene is being described in **14:1-8**? *Thought question*: which Jerusalem is being discussed, physical or spiritual? What will Jehovah do to the nations that fight against His people? (**14:3**)
60. On the day in which the Lord fights for His people, how are His efforts described? (**14:4-5**) What provisions of Jehovah are poetically described in **14:6-8**? How do these verses help us determine whether this is a physical or spiritual battle?

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 12

61. What will be the results following this great victory in battle? **(14:9-11)** To what do you think this refers?
62. Instead of the curse being upon Jerusalem, what will be found among the nations who opposed God's kingdom? **(14:12-15)**
63. What also will happen out of the nations that opposed Jehovah and His people? **(14:16-19)**
Summarize these two basic thoughts: what happens to the ones who turn to Jehovah, and to the ones who do not come to Him? [Use the principle found in **Eph. 1:3** in your answer.]
64. With what final thought does Zechariah close his prophecy? **(14:20-21; cp. Eph. 5:26-27)** How does this thematically summarize Zechariah's prophecy, especially considering the sections that dealt with them rebuilding the temple in restored Jerusalem?

The Prophecy Of Malachi

Introduction

Malachi was the last prophetic spokesman Jehovah called to Old Testament Israel. This prophet, whose name means “My Messenger,” has a style unlike any of the other Minor Prophets. Jehovah sends among His people a man who directly addresses the complacent sins prevalent among them as well as their flagrant rebellions against the Law. As the inspired record of God’s dealing with Israel draws to a close, God was preparing the way for His Son. Malachi came boldly preaching zeal and commitment among the people. He also pointed to the coming of “Elijah the prophet,” a reference to John the Baptist, who himself would announce the Messiah and His coming kingdom (4:5).

The Date

In order to determine a date for Malachi’s preaching, we must look to other books in the Scripture for assistance. What this prophet encounters coincides with conditions recorded in the book of **Nehemiah**. Nehemiah was the leader of the 3rd and final exilic return from captivity around 445 B.C.. It has been suggested by many commentators that Malachi prophesied between Nehemiah’s 2 stints as governor in Judah (cp. **Neh. 5:14; 13:6**).

- ♦ Malachi makes no reference to the rebuilding of the city walls, which were completed in 52 days by the 6th month in 445 B.C. (**Neh. 6:15**)
- ♦ Malachi rebukes the people for their intermarriage with the heathen, something Nehemiah himself addressed in his 2nd term as governor (**Neh. 13:23-31**)

If this suggestion is accurate, Malachi’s prophecy can be dated around 432 – 425 B.C. This is the range we will use.

The Prophet

Nothing is known of Malachi’s hometown, family, or occupation. His name is not even mentioned in the New Testament. In fact, his name is only found in one verse in the entire Bible, **Mal. 1:1**. For these reasons, many traditions have sought to discredit the existence of Malachi. However, we find no reason to reject his existence. The only thing that can be known about him is inferred from his prophecy. He was an excellent teacher, refuting false ideas (cp. **1:2, 6,7; etc.**). He was deeply devoted to sincere worship of the Lord (cp. **1:8-9**). He encouraged his brethren to live morally pure lives as directed by the Law (cp. **2:10-16**).

The Times

We must remember that at this time, the Persians were still rulers of the world. “Their philosophy generally was to grant religious freedom to subject peoples. While some of the neighboring peoples made life difficult for the Jews, for the most part during this period the Jews were free to practice their faith as they saw fit” [*James E. Smith – Old Testament Survey Series (The Minor Prophets), pg. 485*]. No doubt this

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 13

contributed to the apathy Malachi had to face. By the time God calls Malachi, it has been over 100 years since they returned from Babylonian captivity. It has been almost 80 years since the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah. And, it has been some 13 years since Ezra returned with the 2nd installment of refugees, attempting to restore the spiritual condition of Jerusalem by teaching the Law. Instead of getting better, they had gotten worse.

It appears that since the glorious prophecies of Zechariah about the Messiah and His kingdom did not materialize immediately, the people fell into spiritual indifference and began pursuing carnal interests. The Temple and its sacrifices were treated with contempt **(1:13)**. The people were not diligent in tithing, resulting in God charging them of “robbing” Him **(3:8)**. The priests were corrupt **(2:1-9)**. Morality was in decay, as evidenced by the Jews exacting usury upon each other **(cp. Neh. 5:1-13)**, and the rampant divorce among the Jews **(2:13-16; cp. Ezra 9-10)**.

Yet, among all this, the people refused to admit that anything was wrong. Whatever they were doing towards Him, it was empty and ritualistic. God has never been happy with “religious formalism,” and He wasn’t pleased with it here. As far as He was concerned, He wished someone would just close the gates and prevent the people from offering “useless” sacrifices **(1:10)**. Thus, He called Malachi to address these shortcomings.

The Message

The form of Malachi’s prophecy is unique. It takes the form of a debate, even a legal showdown in the courtroom. Technically, it has been labeled the “didactic-dialectic” form of public speaking. In such a style, an assertion or charge is made against someone, an objection to that charge is voiced, and the objection is answered with evidence of the charge’s validity. Ten times **(1:2, 6, 7, 12, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 17)**, Malachi asserts a charge against Israel, the people are portrayed as disagreeing with him by responding with the objection, “How...?”, and the prophet answers with exact preciseness of their guilt before God.

Another feature of Malachi’s prophecy is his constant references to Jehovah as his Source. He begins his preaching by stating, “...says the Lord” **(1:2)**. With other similar statements, he makes a total of some 25 such references to Jehovah. This gave his prophesying an air of authority and conviction. If there is any preaching that will cure people of apathy and disobedience to the Lord, it will be preaching filled with a “thus saith the Lord.” It worked in Malachi’s day; it will work in ours.

Throughout Malachi’s “dialogue” with the people, he proclaims God’s love for them.

- ◆ God had forgiven their sins and brought them back from captivity. Concurrently, Malachi contrasted the people’s faithlessness and ingratitude. He had shown His ability to keep His promises while they did not keep theirs.
- ◆ Malachi calls for their repentance. After this prophet, God will say nothing more until He sends Him whom He has promised to set up an eternal kingdom for all nations. Therefore, the people listening to Malachi need to repent, and prepare themselves for their role in the coming of the Christ.

Outline Of Malachi's Prophecy

- I Condemnation of the priests' faithlessness **(1:2 – 2:9)**
 - A. Jehovah's love for Israel **(1:2-5)**
 - 1. The Divine love asserted **(v. 2)**
 - 2. The Divine love demonstrated **(vv. 3-5)**

 - B. Rebuke of the faithless priests and people **(1:6-14)**
 - 1. Worthlessness of the people's sacrifices **(vv. 6-8)**
 - 2. Better to close the temple **(vv. 9-10)**
 - 3. A superior service rendered among the Gentiles **(vv. 11-13)**
 - 4. The curse of Jehovah **(v. 14)**

 - C. Curse pronounced upon the faithless priests **(2:1-9)**
 - 1. Immediate reformation the only way of escape **(vv. 1-4)**
 - 2. Covenant with Levi and the ideal priest **(vv. 5-7)**
 - 3. The apostate priests and their disgrace **(vv. 8-9)**

- II Condemnation of divorce and mixed marriages **(2:10-16)**

- III Day of the Lord – Condemnation of religious indifference and skepticism **(2:17 – 4:6)**
 - A. Jehovah's approach in judgment **(2:17 – 3:6)**
 - 1. Their question, "Where is the God of justice?" **(2:17)**
 - 2. Jehovah's appearance as a refining fire **(3:1-2)**
 - 3. Purification of priests and people **(3:3-5)**
 - 4. Jehovah's unchangeableness **(3:6)**

 - B. Wrongful withholding of tithes and offerings **(3:7-12)**
 - 1. The people's fickleness and Jehovah's curse **(3:7-9)**
 - 2. Jehovah's bountiful reward for their respect and faithful discharge of duty **(3:10-12)**

 - C. New defense of Jehovah's justice **(3:13 – 4:3)**
 - 1. Complaint: the wicked prosper, the righteous suffer **(3:13-15)**
 - 2. Separation of the pious from the wicked **(3:16-18)**
 - 3. Utter destruction of the wicked **(4:1)**
 - 4. Exaltation and glorification of the righteous **(4:2-3)**

 - D. Closing admonitions **(4:4-6)**
 - 1. Exhortation to faithful observance of the law **(4:4)**
 - 2. Elijah the messenger and his work of preparation **(4:5-6)**

[Outline from *Commentary On The Minor Prophets* by Homer Hailey]

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 13

Questions

1. Based on **1:1**, who is the messenger, and to whom is the message intended?
2. What is the initial message the prophet gives Israel? (**1:2**) Why do you think Malachi would even question on behalf of the people whether Jehovah loved them or not?
3. How does God evidence His love for Israel? (**1:3-5; cp. Gen. 25:23**) How had He showed His hatred for Edom? (**v. 3; cp. Obad. 3-10; Jer. 49:7-11**) Did Edom have a “future?” (**v. 4**)
4. To what principle does Jehovah refer as He begins to address Israel’s ingratitude towards Him? (**1:6**) Instead, how had God been treated? (**1:6**) How does He answer their objection to this charge? (**1:7-8**) How does Malachi ironically exhort the people in **1:9**?
5. How does God express how He feels about the whole process in **1:10**? *Thought question:* with respect to our acts of worship today, make application of what God says in this verse.
6. What does God anticipate, and to what do you think this refers? (**1:11**) What attitude is exposed among the priests, and through them, the people? (**1:12-13**) What is God’s judgment upon such actions? (**1:14**)

My Servants The Prophets
Lesson 13

7. To whom does God specifically address in **2:1-4**? What does Jehovah say to them in **2:2**? What two things does God say He will do in judging the priests for their unholy conduct? (**2:3**) What will be the result of this judgment? (**2:4a**)

8. What is the comparison God makes in **2:4b-9**? For what purpose do you think this comparison was made? (**cp. Deut. 33:8-11**)

9. What descriptions are given of God's "ideal" priest from Levi? (**2:5-7**) Yet, in "reality," what kind of priest did God have from Levi? (**2:8-9**)

10. What grievous sin is dealt with next in **2:10-16**? What had the Law said about such marriages? (**cp. Ex. 34:16**) Hadn't Israel already suffered from Solomon's transgressions in this area? (**cp. 1 Kings 11:1-2; Neh. 13:23-27**)

11. How does Jehovah label this sin? (**2:11**) What do you think **2:12** is saying?

12. Arising out of this sin, what other abomination is addressed? (**2:13-16**) What do you think is being expressed in **2:13**? Do we gain an insight into how Jehovah views marriage from **2:14**, and how He views divorce from **2:16**? What lessons should we take from this today?

My Servants The Prophets

Lesson 13

13. What disposition of the people does God address in **2:17**? What charges does He make against the people based on this verse?

14. How will Jehovah begin to deal with His people? (**3:1**) Who is the first “messenger” mentioned? (**3:1; cp. 4:5; Mt. 11:7-10, 13-14; Mk. 1:2**) Who do you think is the second “messenger”? (**3:1-3**)

15. How is this “messenger” described in **3:2-3**? What will result from His coming? (**3:4-6**) What principle of God is expressed in **3:6**? How does He assure the people of His compassion? (**3:6**)

16. How does Jehovah continue to describe the people in **3:7**? As evidence of this charge, what does the prophet mention in **3:8-10a**? If the people repent of this sin, what does God promise He will do for them? (**3:10b-12**)

17. With what other sin does God indict the people? (**3:13-15**) In contrast to such a people, what other group is described in **3:16-18**? How did Jehovah feel about them?

18. What final admonition does God give through Malachi? (**4:1-6**) To what “day” do you think He refers? (**cp. 2 Thess. 1:9**) To those who feared the Lord, what was awaiting them? (**4:2-3**)

19. What are the people exhorted to do in **4:4**? *Thought question:* why was this a fitting final admonition through Malachi to Israel? Before this great day would come, what promise does Jehovah reiterate? (**4:5; cp. Mt. 17:9-13**) How is the mission of “Elijah” detailed in **4:6**?

20. How does Malachi’s prophecy bring a fitting close to Old Testament revelation?