

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON THE

MINOR PROPHETS

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Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as L uke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad!

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS

A. Introduction.

1. The Old Testament is not bound upon us today—as a law.
 - a. Ephesians 2:14-15: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."
 - b. Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."
2. However, there is much that we can learn from it that is profitable. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). We can learn how God dealt with people in times past, in blessing or in punishing them. "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known" (Deut. 11:26-28; cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-11).
3. A study of Old Testament literature (including the Minor Prophets) is important.
 - a. It furnishes us with a background which fosters a better understanding of the New Testament. Someone has wisely observed, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."
 - 1) Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
 - 2) Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
 - 3) Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."
 - 4) Hebrews 8:13: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."
 - b. It is likely that there is more ignorance on our part of the Minor Prophets than any other section of the Bible. These prophets had a worthy message for the people of their day, and since human attitudes and practices always follow the same pattern, there are many practical lessons for us today in their writings.
4. The Minor Prophets are called *minor* only because their books are short.
 - a. The Major Prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
 - b. The Minor Prophets are the last 12 books of the Old Testament. All of them are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament except Obadiah and Nahum. New Testament writers knew by inspiration of the value of these short writings.

B. A Brief Review of Old Testament Hebrew History.

1. Abraham entered Canaan about 2072 B.C. [This time differs from the commonly-accepted view; this date is derived from the author's calculations].
 - a. After he entered Palestine, he spent the rest of his life in that land, except for a brief and troublesome sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20).
 - b. His son Isaac spent his whole life in the land of promise, and like his father before him, he actually possessed only a small parcel of land which was used as a burial place.
 - c. Isaac's son, Jacob, spent most of his life in Canaan. In his old age, Jacob moved to Egypt at the invitation of his son Joseph, after that illustrious young man rose to prominence there.
 - d. Jacob and all of his twelve sons likewise died there; and their descendants were enslaved to the Egyptians.
2. After four hundred years of bondage, God raised up Moses, and prepared him for the great work of

- delivering the Israelites from their Egyptian taskmasters.
- a. After a series of harsh measures directed against the idols of Egypt, Pharaoh was forced to permit Israel's departure from the land.
 - b. They soon came to Sinai, where God delivered his Law to Israel through Moses. It contained provisions for governing their civil, societal, religious and spiritual needs.
 - c. Due to sin, the Israelites were forced to remain in the wilderness for forty years, until the rebels had died.
3. Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel entered into the land of promise, taking it from the ungodly Canaanites.
 - a. For the next 450 years (Acts 13:20), the nation was governed by a series of judges, whom God raised up to meet certain emergencies. God was their king, and the judges were selected by the Lord to carry out his will. "And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13:20).
 - b. But the time eventually came when the people were no longer content to continue under this arrangement. They wanted to imitate the other nations. When God's people try to compete with the world, they always come up a poor second.
 - c. When Israel insisted on a king, God selected the man for the job (1 Sam. 8-10).
 4. For 120 years, Israel existed as a United Kingdom.
 - a. Saul reigned for forty years.
 - b. David succeeded him, and he also reigned for forty years.
 - c. At his death, Solomon ruled in David's place, again for forty years.
 5. Then followed the period of the Divided Kingdom: 975-721 B.C.
 - a. At Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam reigned. He was so unwise that he heeded the counsel of young men, while refusing to listen to older and wiser heads. His policies were so stringent that a rift occurred in the nation (1 Kings 12).
 - b. The ten northern tribes, plus elements of the tribe of Levi, united under Jeroboam to form the Northern Kingdom, also called *Israel* and *Ephraim*. Jeroboam quickly saw that his throne would be secure only if he could keep his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. Hence, he established idols at Dan and Bethel, with an attendant religious system.
 - 1) 1 Kings 12:25-33: "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense."
 - 2) The Northern Kingdom went farther and farther into apostasy, rejecting the warnings of the prophets, until they were finally conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 721 B.C.
 - 3) They then lost their identity as a separate nation.
 - c. Meanwhile, the Southern Kingdom, also called *Judah*, existed side-by-side with its idolatrous brothers to the north. It was comprised of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and elements of Levi.
 - 1) When Israel fell in 721 B.C., the Assyrians also tried to take Jerusalem, but were soundly defeated

- by the miraculous work of an angel (Isa. 37; 2 Kings 19).
- 2) But over the years, Judah also fell into idolatry and apostasy, and was overcome by the Babylonians in 606 B.C., and many were taken to Babylon: "In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD came *this* upon Judah, to remove *them* out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon" (2 Kings 24:1-4).
 - 3) In 597 B.C., more of them were carried into Babylonian bondage: "Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was* Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those* carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong *and* apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon" (2 Kings 24:8-16).
 - 4) The final stroke came in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and all but a remnant of the Hebrews were taken away (2 Kings 24:17—25:30; Jer. 39:1-10).
6. After seventy years of bondage (606-536 B.C.), the Israelites were permitted to begin their return to Palestine (2 Chron. 36:21). They were carried to Babylon in three deportations, and they returned to their own land in three operations.
- a. The first return was under the direction of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:14-23; Ezra 1:1-11; 3:1-13; Isa. 44:28; 45:1ff). They had rebuilt the temple by 516 B.C. "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king" (Ezra 6:15).
 - b. The second return was led by Ezra in 457 B.C. This *ready scribe* in the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:6) fulfilled the great work of restoring the Law in the lives of the people (Ezra 7:1—10:14).
 - c. The third return was under Nehemiah in 445 B.C. This devout man led in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (see Book of Nehemiah). With the work of Nehemiah and Malachi, who were contemporaries, the inspired record of Old Testament history came to an end. Four hundred years later, the inspired New Testament record began.
7. The following passages furnish data which helps establish the time for important events of Old Testament history:
- a. Genesis 12:4: "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."
 - b. Genesis 21:5: "And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."
 - c. Genesis 25:7: "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years."
 - d. Genesis 25:26: "And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them."
 - e. Genesis 35:28: "And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years."

- f. Genesis 47:8-9: "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."
 - g. Genesis 47:28: "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years."
 - h. Genesis 50:26: "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."
 - i. Genesis 37:2: "These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report."
 - j. Genesis 15:13: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."
 - k. Exodus 12:40-41: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."
 - l. Galatians 3:17: "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."
 - m. I Kings 6:1: "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD."
 - n. Genesis 41:46: "And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt."
8. Some facts which are shown by the above verses:
- a. Abraham entered Canaan when he was 75 years old.
 - b. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old.
 - c. Isaac was 60 when Jacob and Esau were born.
 - d. Joseph was 17 years old when he got into trouble with his brothers, who sold him into slavery.
 - e. Joseph was 30 years old when he was exalted as Pharaoh's right-hand man.
 - f. Jacob died after living 17 years in Egypt.
 - g. The 7 years of plenty passed (Gen. 41:53-54).
 - h. During the first year of famine, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt (Gen. 42:1-5).
 - i. During the second year of famine, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (Gen. 44).
 - j. Joseph was 39 or 40 when his father learned he was still alive, and Jacob was 130 when he moved to Egypt.
 - k. Since Joseph was about 40 when Jacob was 130 (Gen. 47:9), Jacob was about 90 when Joseph was born.
 - l. Israel spent 430 years in Egypt (Ex. 12:40-41).
 - m. The Exodus took place 480 years before Solomon began to build the temple, during his 4th year.
 - n. Solomon reigned from 974-934 (according to other studies).
 - o. Giving 970 B.C. as the beginning year of the temple's construction, the Exodus occurred in 1450 B.C.
9. Some important events and dates in Israelite history [The dates are the author's deductions]:

ABRAHAM BORN	2147 B.C. *
ABRAHAM TO CANAAN	2072 B.C.
ISAAC BORN	2047 B.C. [Died in 1867 b.c.]
ABRAHAM DIED	1972 B.C.
JACOB BORN	1967 B.C.
ISAAC DIED	1867 B.C.
JOSEPH BORN	1897 B.C.
JOSEPH ENTERS EGYPT	1880 B.C.
JOSEPH EXALTED	1867 B.C. [Age 30]
JACOB TO EGYPT	1857 B.C. [130 years old—Gen. 47:9]
JACOB DIED	1820 B.C.
JOSEPH DIED	1787 B.C.
MOSES BORN	1530 B.C.
EXODUS	1450 B.C.
ISRAEL IN EGYPT 430 YEARS	1880—1450 (Ex. 12:40)
ISRAEL ENTERED CANAAN	1410 B.C.
JOSHUA & ELDERS	1410-1380 B.C. [?]
JUDGES	1380-1054 B.C. [?]
UNITED KINGDOM Saul David Solomon	120 YEARS: 1054-934 B.C. 1054—1014 B.C. 1014—974 B.C. 974—934 B.C.
TEMPLE BEGAN (1 Kings 6:1)	970 B.C. (480 Years After Exodus)
KINGDOM DIVIDED Israel Judah	934 B.C. 934—721 B.C. 934—586 B.C.
ISRAEL CAPTURED BY ASSYRIA	721 B.C.
NINEVEH CAPTURED BY BABYLON	612 B.C.
BABYLON DEFEATS EGYPT	606 B.C.
JUDAH UNDER BABYLON	606-539 B.C.
CAPTIVITY	70 YEARS: 606-536 B.C.
UNDER PERSIA	539-332 B.C.
1st RETURN	ZERUBBABEL: 536 B.C.
2nd RETURN	EZRA: 457 B.C.
3rd RETURN	NEHEMIAH: 444 B.C.
UNDER GREECE	332-63 B.C.
UNDER ROME	FROM 63 B.C.

*Author's Note: These dates are my calculations and are subject to errors; there also may be typos included.

C. What is a prophet?

1. The primary meaning of the word *prophet* is "to speak for another." "And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs" (Ex. 4:17). "And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Ex. 7:1).
 - a. The literal meaning is "to boil up like a fountain" (Jer. 20:9). The secondary meaning is "to foretell." "Many scholars deny that prophecy includes the prediction of future events, but fulfillment was, in fact, the test of a prophet's genuineness (Deut 18:20-22). Whether a prophet's words were fulfilled within his lifetime or centuries later, they were fulfilled to the letter (1 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 23:15-16). But regardless of the time of fulfillment, the prophet's message applied to his generation as well as to ours. The main role of the prophet was to bear God's word for the purpose of teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Whether warning of impending danger or disclosing God's will to the people, they were similar in function to the modern preacher in the church [*but no preacher today is inspired—bw*]. Prophets were referred to as messengers of the Lord (Isa 44:26; Hag 1:13), servants of God (Amos 3:7), shepherds (Zech 11:4,7; Jer 17:16), and watchmen (Isa 62:6)" [Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers].
 - b. A prophet of God was one who, having received the message from heaven, spoke for God, by inspiration.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 23:2: "The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue."
 - 2) Acts 1:16: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."
 - 3) 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."
 - c. The message might relate to the past, or the future, or the present. It could be a message of comfort or warning, or have an instructional theme.
2. The messages of God's prophets were not contrary to the Law, but called people back to the Law: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee" (Deut. 13:1-5).
 - a. The predictions they gave came to pass: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:20-22).
 - b. The prophecies that contained threats of punishment were conditional: "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good" (Jer. 18:5-11).

3. Old Testament prophets were known by several descriptive names.
 - a. They were *seers* because they were given divine insight into certain matters. "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is now called a Prophet* was beforetime called a Seer" (1 Sam. 9:9).
 - b. They were *men of God* because they belonged to the God of Heaven.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 9:6: "And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go."
 - 2) 1 Kings 17:18: "And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"
 - c. They were *servants of God* because their lives were lived in his service.
 - 1) 1 Kings 18:36: "And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have done* all these things at thy word."
 - 2) 1 Chronicles 6:49: "But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded."
 - d. They were *messengers of God* since they acted in his behalf by delivering his prescribed messages: "Who *is* blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger *that I sent*? who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" (Isa. 42:19).
 4. There were many false prophets during the Old Testament era.
 - a. Counterfeits usually arise where there is the genuine (Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 28).
 - b. Some of these "prophesied" for political or financial gain.
- D. There are two classifications of Old Testament prophets.
1. The non-writing prophets included:
 - a. Enoch (Jude 14).
 - b. Abraham (Gen. 20:7,17).
 - c. Miriam (Ex. 15:20).
 - d. Moses (Deut. 18:15-18; 34:10; Hos. 12:13). He authored the first five books of the Old Testament, but the material is not of the same type as that written by such prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets.
 - e. Deborah (Judges 4:4).
 - f. The sons of the prophets (1 Sam. 10:5).
 - g. Samuel; Elijah; Elisha; Micaiah; and many others.
 - h. David (2 Sam. 23:1f) and Solomon (Proverbs; Ecclesiastes) were writers of Old Testament literature, but their type of material is not identical to the Major and Minor writing prophets.
 2. The writing prophets of the Old Testament operated shortly before and after the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles. (See Hailey, pp.18-24).
 - a. Ninth century prophets.
 - 1) Obadiah—845 B.C. (Date uncertain).
 - 2) Joel—830 B.C. (Date uncertain).
 - 3) Jonah—790-750 B.C.
 - b. Eighth century prophets (Assyrian Period).
 - 1) Amos—755 B.C. (Operated in the Northern Kingdom).
 - 2) Hosea—750-725 B.C. (Operated in Northern Kingdom).
 - 3) Isaiah—750-700 B.C. (Worked primarily in Jerusalem).
 - 4) Micah—735-700 B.C. (Worked in villages of Southern Kingdom).

- c. Seventh century prophets (Babylonian Period).
 - 1) Jeremiah—626-586 B.C.
 - 2) Zephaniah—630-625 B.C.
 - 3) Nahum—625-612 B.C.
 - 4) Habakkuk—625-605 B.C.
 - d. Sixth century prophets (Babylonian Exile Period).
 - 1) Ezekiel—593-570 B.C.
 - 2) Daniel—605-536 B.C.
 - e. Sixth and fifth century prophets (Post-exile Period).
 - 1) Haggai—520 B.C.
 - 2) Zechariah—520-518 B.C.
 - 3) Malachi—440 B.C.
- E. Social and moral conditions of the time of the Minor Prophets.
- 1. Economic and social repression was common. The rich got richer and the poor got poorer. Haughty women were often behind these sins. This rebellion led to a corrupted society.
 - 2. Amos preached a message of social justice to the Northern Kingdom.
 - 3. Hosea described Israel's spiritual state as spiritual whoredom.
 - 4. Micah was a prophet who stressed the rights of the common people.
 - 5. Joel issued warnings, often stressing the "day of the Lord."
 - 6. Haggai stirred up the returned Jews to rebuild the temple.
 - 7. Malachi decried the indifference to religion the people of his time showed.
- F. The suggested chronological order of study of the Minor Prophets:
- 1. The order of the study of the Minor Prophets can be better studied in chronological order, not in the order in which they appear in the Old Testament. This approach would keep the study flowing along a "time-line." With this approach, it will be possible to place the work of these great men in their proper time sequence, as near as we can establish it. **However, in this edition of our work on *The Minor Prophets* we will follow the order in which they appear in the Bible.**
 - 2. The Minor Prophets, their times, and the location of their work are set forth in the following table:

PROPHET	TIME	LOCATION
Obadiah	845 B.C.	Against Edom
Joel	830 B.C.	Judah
Jonah	773 B.C.	Nineveh
Amos	755 B.C.	Israel
Hosea	745 B.C.	Israel
Micah	730 B.C.	Judah
Zephaniah	630 B.C.	Judah
Nahum	625 B.C.	Judah
Habakkuk	625 B.C.	Judah
Haggai	520 B.C.	Judah
Zechariah	520 B.C.	Judah
Malachi	440 B.C.	Judah

ISRAEL				JUDAH			
KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND	KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND
Jeroboam	22 years	933-911	Bad	Rehoboam	17 years	933-916	Not Good
Nadab	2 years	911-910	Bad	Abijah	3 years	915-913	Not Good
Baasha	24 years	910-887	Bad	Asa	41 years	912-872	Good
Elah	2 years	887-886	Bad	Jehoshaphat	25 years	874-850	Good
Zimri	7 days	886	Bad	Jehoram	8 years	850-843	Bad
Omri	12 years	886-875	Very Bad	Ahaziah	1 year	843	Bad
Ahab	22 years	875-854	Very Bad	Athaliah	6 years	843-837	Wicked
Ahaziah	2 years	855-854	Bad	Joash	40 years	843-803	Not Bad
Joram	12 years	854-843	Bad	Amaziah	19 years	803-775	Not Bad
Jehu	28 years	843-816	Not Good	Uzziah	52 years	787-735	Good
Jehoahaz	17 years	820-804	Bad	Jotham	16 years	749-734	Good
Joash	16 years	806-790	Bad	Ahaz	16 years	741-726	Bad
Jeroboam	41 years	790-748	Bad	Hezekiah	29 years	726-697	Good
Zechariah	6 months	748	Bad	Manasseh	55 years	697-642	Bad
Shallum	1 month	748	Bad	Amon	2 years	641-640	Bad
Menahem	10 years	748-738	Bad	Josiah	31 years	639-608	Good
Pekahiah	2 years	738-736	Bad	Jehoahaz	3 months	608	Bad
Pekah	20 years	748-730	Bad	Jehoiakim	11 years	608-597	Bad
Hoshea	9 years	730-721	Bad	Jehoiachin	3 months	597	Bad
				Zedekiah	11 years	597-586	Bad

* The names, dates, and years in the table were taken from *Halley's Bible Handbook*, pp.194f.

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA

A. Hosea, the Prophet.

1. Hosea's name means God is *salvation, help, or deliverance*. It is equivalent to *Joshua* and *Hoshea*. The Greek form of the name is *Jesus*.
2. He was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was also known as "Ephraim."
 - a. Hosea 4:17: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."
 - b. Hosea 6:4: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."
3. This latter name derived from the tribe of Ephraim, the most prominent of the ten tribes which comprised the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom was known as *Judah*, owing to the fact that it was more prominent than Benjamin, the other tribe in the Southern Kingdom.
4. Hosea did his work about 745 B.C. In Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah reigned; in Israel, Jeroboam, the son of Joash, was king.
 - a. Hosea began preaching in a time of great prosperity, but at the death of Jeroboam, the nation's power began to weaken. They lost their independence, and paid tribute to Assyria and Egypt.
 - b. Robinson points out that the priests turned bandit and rejoiced in the sins of the people, because it increased their revenue.
 - c. Some scholars think Hosea's work lasted only about ten years, but others assign him a time frame including 750-725 B.C.
5. Hosea's family.
 - a. He was commanded to marry a harlot. It is likely that Gomer was not a harlot at the time of his marriage to her, that she was "brought up under the influence of idolatry and in whose character would have been planted the seeds of immorality. She was not unchaste at the time of the marriage but was a maiden of such background that in later conduct the fruit of idolatry was fully borne" (Hailey, p.128).
 - b. The children born to this union were given significant names by the Lord, names which depicted the condition of the people of Israel before God.

B. The Condition of the Northern Kingdom at the time of Hosea.

1. "Two systems of religious worship prevailed in Israel, and each was a reproach against God—namely, the calf worship and the Baal worship. Jeroboam I had introduced the calf worship...[I Kings 12].... Thus, he changed the object of worship, the place of worship, the time of worship, and the access of worship.... The Baal worship had been introduced and stressed since the time of Ahab and Jezebel (I Kng. 18)" (Rex A. Turner, Power Lectures, *The Minor Prophets*, p.34).
2. Israel had plunged into various kinds of sin.
 - a. They offered illegal sacrifices from the high places.
 - b. They practiced open idolatry.
 - c. Women prostituted themselves at the local shrines.
 - d. The nation entered entangling alliances with other nations.
 - e. The nation put its trust in material armaments instead of in the Lord.
3. Seven steps (or causes) are given in Hosea which trace Israel's downfall.
 - a. **Lack of knowledge.** "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart" (Hos. 4:6-11).
 - b. **Pride.** "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them" (Hos. 5:5).
 - c. **Instability.** "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hos. 6:4).
 - d. **Worldliness.**
 - 1) Hosea 7:8: "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned."

- 2) Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
- 3) Their kings led the way: "They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. They *are* all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, *who* ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened" (Hos. 7:3-4).
- e. **Corruption.** "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved" (Hos. 9:9-10).
- f. **Backsliding.** "And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hos. 11:6-8).
- g. **Idolatry.** "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves" (Hos. 13:2).

C. The Message of Hosea.

1. The prophet featured the lovingkindness of God. Hosea has, therefore, been called "the prophet of love" and "the prophet of a broken heart."
2. He showed the inevitable doom they would face because of their departures from God.
3. There are three views of Hosea's marriage to Gomer.
 - a. That the account is just an allegory, that it did not really occur.
 - b. That it did take place, and that she was a prostitute sent by God to show, or describe, the true situation of the people of Israel.
 - c. That it did actually occur, but Gomer was faithful when she and Hosea married. This is the most seemly of the views.

D. Outline of Hosea.

1. Israel's adultery: chapters 1-3.
 - a. Hosea and Gomer are used representatively of God and Israel: 1:1—2:1.
 - b. The chastisement of idolatrous Israel, their conversion and restoration: 2:2-23.
 - c. The prophet's symbolic marriage: chapter 3.
2. Prophetic discourses: chapters 4-13.
 - a. Jehovah's controversy with Israel: chapters 4-6.
 - b. Israel's corrupt political condition and consequences: chapters 7-8.
 - c. Israel's apostasy—its punishment, exile, and destruction: chapters 9-11.
 - d. Israel's apostasy and God's fidelity: chapters 12-13.
3. Israel's conversion and pardon: chapter 14.
 - a. God's grace once more will be shown those who turn to him: verses 1-8.
 - b. Epilogue: verse 9.

HOSEA 1

A. Hosea 1:1-5: the Call of Hosea, and His First Duty.

1. Verse 1: "The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel."
 - a. Hosea was the son of Beeri; his work took place during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah, and began during the rule of Jeroboam II in Israel. He did not live and prophesy throughout the reign of all these kings, but rather prophesied during part of their rule. Likely his ministry began during the latter part of Uzziah's time, and continued into the first part of Hezekiah's reign.
 - b. Since Amos mentioned only Uzziah and Jeroboam, it is concluded that he preceded Hosea in prophesying to Israel.
 - c. If Robinson is correct in assigning the time of 750-725 B.C. to Hosea, then he concluded his work just prior to the Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C.
 - d. Notice that from the very first of the book he specified that the message was the Lord's, not his own. Compare these passages:
 - 1) Deuteronomy 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."
 - 2) Jeremiah 1:2: "To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."
 - 3) Joel 1:1: "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel."
 - 4) Micah 1:1: "The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."
 - 5) Zephaniah 1:1: "The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah."
 - 6) Haggai 1:1: "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying."
 - 7) Zechariah 1:1: "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying."
 - 8) 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."
2. Verse 2: "The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD."
 - a. The first thing he was told to do was to take a wife "of whoredoms and children of whoredoms." *Whoredom* is used 16 times in Hosea. From the parallel intended in the text, that Hosea and Gomer (his wife) represent the relationship between God and Israel, it appears that Gomer was not a harlot at the time of her marriage to Hosea. As Israel was faithful for a time before drifting off into idolatry, so Gomer was faithful to Hosea for a while before her infidelity.
 - b. Gomer's background was such that she had a bent toward an evil, adulterous practice. One who is reared under the influence of sin, is likely to live as his parents and friends live. The individual from such a background is an exceptional case if he departs from such evil influences in his own life.
 - c. The reason for commanding Hosea to take a wife who had the background indicated, was for the purpose of illustrating to the nation of Israel its departure from God. The whole land had committed spiritual adultery, in departing from Jehovah.
3. Verses 3-5: "So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."
 - a. Hosea married the daughter of Diblaim. We know very little of Diblaim and his daughter, Gomer; only what is related in the book of Hosea.
 - b. Gomer conceived, and bore a son to Hosea. God told Hosea to name him Jezreel. Names were of greater significance then than now. Jezreel means God sows or God scatters. The meaning was that

God would scatter his people, with perhaps the idea included that he would sow them in a land of exile.

- c. God had ordered the extermination of Ahab's seventy sons; Jehu had carried out these directions, and the heads of those executed were sent to Jehu in Jezreel (2 Kings 10:1-8). Jezreel was another name for the valley of Esdraelon. God commended Jehu for following his instructions in having the house of Ahab exterminated.
 - 1) Why, then, did God say here that he would "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu...?" It was not because Jehu had slain Ahab's sons, for this had been ordered by the Lord.
 - 2) "But this judgment was pronounced upon the house of Jehu because, though he had carried out the command of God, he had been motivated by selfishness and an unholy aim and desire on his part. He had no concern for the will of God, but only for his own will. He walked in the ways and sins of Jeroboam I, and 'took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah, the God of Israel' (II Kings 10:31). One may do the command of the Lord and yet be in rebellion against Him, doing the thing commanded because it is what the individual desires and not because it is what God desires" (Hailey, p.137).
- d. The Lord promised that he would cause the kingdom of Israel to cease. This he did in the Assyrian invasion which occurred about twenty years later.
- e. God also promised to break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. To "break the bow of Israel" means to destroy the military might of the nation. A warrior whose bow was broken could not use that weapon. Jezreel would be the focal point of the destruction of Israel's military. Many battles were fought there.

B. Hosea 1:6-9: Two Other Children Were Born to Gomer.

1. Verses 6-7: "And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."
 - a. The next child was a daughter. The Lord provided the name Loruhamah for her. This name was also significant; its meaning was "Not Pitied." God would have no pity on his people.
 - b. God would have no mercy upon Israel; he would take them away from the land. He had given them more than sufficient warning to turn back to him, but they would not. The time for long suffering was about over; the time of punishment was at hand.
 - c. The Lord would continue to show mercy toward Judah. However, their deliverance would not be by military power. When Assyria took Samaria, they endeavored to conquer the entire land, and came to lay siege to Jerusalem. An angel of the Lord swept over their vast army one night, leaving a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers dead (2 Kings 18-19). Just as he had promised, so he fulfilled.
2. Verses 8-9: "Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God."
 - a. After Loruhamah was weaned, Gomer conceived again and bore another son. This boy was named Loammi by the Lord. This name carried the meaning of "Not My People." Once more, a significance is attached to the name; Israel was no longer considered by the Lord to be his people.
 - b. God had not changed; he had not moved. He had given Israel instructions by which they were to live; these directions were for their good, and the good of others. But Israel wanted to be like the nations around them.

C. Hosea 1:10-11: God Held Out a Promise of Israel's Increase.

1. Verse 10: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."
 - a. Their number would once again be as the sand of the sea. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:25-26, and applies it to the Gentiles.
 - 1) Romans 9:25-26: "As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:10: "Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."
 - b. The population of the kingdom of Christ would be without number, including Jews and Gentiles: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from

thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

2. Verse 11: "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel."
 - a. Here is a prophecy of the reunification of Israel and Judah. It would occur after the captivity in Babylonia. When Judah was captured and carried off by the Babylonians, the remnant of Israel captivated by Assyria were by now under Babylonian control, since this latter nation had conquered the empire of Assyria. Then, when the Jews were released from their bondage, they were able to return to their own land. Included in that number, were people from the various tribes. As they had gone up to Canaan from their bondage in Egypt, so they would eventually return from the land of their later exile.
 - b. But the complete fulfillment of this prophecy would be realized under the Messiah (Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:16-29). The One Head is Christ (Gal. 3:16; Acts 4:12; cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:31-34).
 - 1) Ephesians 2:14-16: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."
 - 2) Galatians 3:16-29: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - 3) Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - 4) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 5) Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
 - c. A play is made on the word "Jezreel." In its earlier use in this chapter, the people would be scattered from their land; but here their being resown in Canaan is seen.

HOSEA 2

A. Hosea 2:1-5: A Plea is Made to Gomer that She Give Up Her Unfaithfulness.

1. Verse 1: "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah."
 - a. God now makes a play on the names of the children of Hosea. The changed form of Loammi (Ammi) means "shall be my people," while Ruhamah means "having obtained mercy."
 - b. In the following verses, Israel is represented by Gomer, and God is the injured husband.
2. Verse 2: "Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts."
 - a. The children were told to plead with their mother to give up her whoredoms. The real point is that Israel is to give up her spiritual adulteries. But it is clear that Gomer had deserted her husband and children, and gone into harlotry.
 - b. The children represent the righteous within the nation; they are to plead with (contend with) the unholy element of the nation.
 - c. The marriage could not continue when one is devoted to unfaithfulness to the other; so God's relationship with Israel could not continue when she was dedicated to living in open rebellion to his will.
3. Verse 3: "Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst."
 - a. Gomer (Israel) was warned, that if she did not purify her life, she would be stripped to be as naked as she was at birth; and she would be made as a wilderness—devoid of the common blessings otherwise enjoyed.
 - b. The words were directed toward Gomer, but the real application was to Israel. As an unfaithful wife would expect punishment from her wounded husband, so Israel would be stripped of their God-given blessings, and left to die of spiritual thirst.
 - c. Compare: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again" (Amos 8:11-14).
4. Verse 4: "And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms."
 - a. God would not show mercy to Israel's children because they were corrupted. Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter. One generation's sinfulness often produces horrible consequences for the next generation: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5-6).
 - b. The people in Germany who fomented World War I brought indescribable suffering upon the following generation in the form of economic hardship. The Allies, by burdening Germany with extremely heavy penalties in the years after the war, created thereby the conditions which led to the rise of Hitler, who in turn began World War II.
 - c. In our time, the preceding generation in America has evicted the Bible and God from the public school classroom, and replaced these with godless evolution. Along with this, an attitude of selfishness, and a demand for pleasure at any cost, has developed in our land. We are presently suffering the consequences of these evil developments, but future generations will surely face even more agonizing problems which will grow out of the present sinfulness.
5. Verse 5: "For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."
 - a. The mother of Hosea's children played the harlot; she was determined to be with her lovers who provided her with her daily sustenance and other supplies. She looked to them, and not to her husband, for what she wanted. And her favors were shown to others, and not to her husband.
 - b. The real point is directed toward faithless Israel; she had gone to others "gods," and looked to them for her blessings, and had given them her devotion. She foolishly thought that these lifeless gods could provide for her, and that she could turn her back on the Living God with impunity.

- c. In this context, a strong plea is made for her to return to God, and a strong warning is issued to Israel that there would be horrible penalties to pay if she did not return.
- B. Hosea 2:6-13: Specific Penalties are Threatened if Israel does not Repent.
1. Verse 6: "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths."
 - a. Israel did what many people today try to do: ignore the will of God, and do as they please, and think that there will be no penalty: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him" (Eccl. 8:11-12).
 - b. God would make her way difficult by hedging up the path with thorns, and hiding it with a wall. This wall of thorns would hem her in, making it impossible for her to escape.
 - c. Many think that if they can throw off the "yoke of the Bible," that they will be free indeed! Many have boasted about being out from under the oppressive weight of restraint which they consider the Bible to be. But Christ said that one who lives in sin, is the servant of sin (John 8:34). "...Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Pet. 2:19). One is a servant of God or he is a servant of sin (Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:14-18); there is no other alternative.
 - d. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8). We deceive ourselves if we think we do not have to reap what we sow, that others will not reap from our sowing, or that we will not reap more than we sow.
 2. Verses 7-8: "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal."
 - a. Too late, Gomer would discover the great worth of her husband; too late, she would realize how wonderfully blessed she was when at her loving husband's side. Israel would perceive, when it was too late, that God was her only true friend and benefactor, and that his will was not too demanding.
 - b. When Israel tried to catch up with her "lovers," they would evade her; she would be able to obtain nothing from them. They had promised her the world, but could give nothing!
 - c. Neither a lifeless god, nor any other form of sin, can provide what they seem to promise. One is as devoid of good as the other. But most sinners learn too late!
 - d. The generosity God had bestowed upon Israel, she had in turn wasted on Baal.
 3. Verses 9-10: "Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand."
 - a. God would remove the bounties Israel had been receiving and would punish her for her sinful conduct. Ezekiel 16 provides a description of how sinful the people of God had become, even indicating that they were worse than Sodom! "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezek. 16:49).
 - b. These blessings they doubtless had taken for granted, thinking that their own skill and wisdom had provided them. Too late they would discover that these were not permanent, that they did not have a title to these things, and did not have the power to supply them for themselves. We Americans are prone to attribute our great wealth and power to our technology and ingenuity.
 - c. But the last statement implies that God would also punish them, and there would be no one who could rescue them from his wrath. Their idols could not help them; there could be no help from their heathen neighbors. The time of mercy was past; the time of retribution was at hand. The Assyrians were soon to subjugate the Northern Kingdom.
 4. Verse 11: "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."
 - a. Jeroboam I had instituted a system of religion when the division occurred at the death of Solomon: "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold,

and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense" (1 Kings 12:25-33). They apparently maintained a token conformity to the major features of the Mosaic Law, but at best their compliance would be greatly polluted.

- b. God warned that he would remove their festivities; he would cause their feast days to end, including the observance of the new moon and the sabbath. This suggests that they had continued these observances to some degree. Notice the emphasis God placed on the items named; each is said to belong to her (Israel). Not even those religious activities which they derived from the Law would be allowed to continue. They brought no glory to God, and procured shame instead of edification for them.
 - c. He did not specify how or when these would be taken away, but it is certain that they were unable to carry on their usual activities after the Assyrians carried them into slavery. Can you imagine a Jewish slave demanding of his heathen master that he be allowed to take every Saturday off for religious services?
 - d. The occasion when these Mosaic features would be truly removed was when Christ was crucified: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ" (Col. 2:14-17).
5. Verse 12: "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them."
 - a. Another punishment God would send upon them would be the destruction of their vineyards and fig trees. They took great pride in these. They gave credit for these possessions to their false gods, not to Jehovah who had provided them.
 - b. "Throughout all the Bible, nothing is represented as being any more reprehensible in the sight of God than the failure to recognize him as the rightful ruler and head of all things and the Giver of every blessing" (Coffman, Vol. II, p.44).
 - c. The product of their vineyards and orchards they dedicated to Baal. Their religion was a mixture of true and false worship; God would not accept any of it. But God would turn these valuable assets into a forest, and the beasts of the field would eat the precious fruit.
 6. Verse 13: "And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the LORD."
 - a. It is God who makes the statement, not Hosea. The remarks are directed toward Israel, and not primarily to Gomer. Baalim is plural for Baal. They committed two errors which are named here and in Jeremiah 2:13: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living water, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." [This verse was directed at the Souther Kingdom, Judah.
 - b. One of their errors was the worship of Baal. "There is a picture in this verse of what went on in the worship of Baal. Sensuous women ornamented themselves with jewels and offered themselves to all who desired them, a couple of raisin cakes being the customary price!" (Coffman, p.45).
 - c. The other error named here is that they had forgotten God. One who forsakes God will naturally and inevitably turn to false religion and immorality. The ancient Gentiles did so (Rom. 1:18-32), and Israel had done the same.

C. Hosea 2:14-23: Under a New Covenant, God Would Bless His People.

1. Verses 14-15: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."

- a. This passage begins with the third "therefore" of the chapter. Here the word shows the shift from a picture of punishment to a depiction of loving concern.
 - b. The Lord is described as seeking to win a bride, but not the harlot that Israel had become. One who is so brazen to do such as Gomer (and Israel) had done would not be interested, and the Lord would not want such to be his bride. He speaks of taking her into the wilderness where he would speak comforting, friendly words to her. Old Israel was taken into the wilderness where she was put on trial to determine her devotion, and to develop commitment to God. The new bride would likewise undergo a period of probation.
 - c. God would provide his bride with vineyards; and the valley of Achor would become a door of hope for her.
 - 1) "'The valley of Achor' (of troubling), a barren and desolate area west of the north end of the Dead Sea, where Achan and his family had been stoned, would be to them a door of hope" (Hailey, p.143).
 - 2) Smith: "The spot at which Achan was stoned. Josh 7:24,26. On the northern boundary of Judah, Josh 15:7, near Jericho."
 - 3) "It was in this place that the sin of Achan involved all of Israel in a disastrous defeat; but, after Achan was put to death, the same place became 'a door of hope,' leading to a great victory that opened up the entire land of Canaan for Israel. What is the application? The spiritual death and defeat of the old Israel, after they (in the sense of the apostate nation) were formally sentenced to death by the Lord Jesus Christ, that very defeat of the old Israel, became the principal means of winning the new bride of Jehovah, the church of Jesus Christ, composed of the spiritual remnant of the old Israel and also of vast numbers of the whole Gentile world" (Coffman, II, p.47).
 - 4) Compare: "For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of them *be*, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15).
 - d. A picture of the old happy days is given in the passage, when God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness. He provided all Israel needed: shoes, clothes, food, protection, and guidance. As he supplied old Israel with their necessities, so he would provide for this bride.
 - e. Barnes:
 - 1) As, at the first taking possession of the promised land, Israel learned through the transgression and punishment of Achan, to stand in awe of God, and thenceforth, all went well with them, when they had wholly freed themselves from the accursed thing, so to them shall "sorrow be turned into joy, and hope dawn there, where there had been despair." "Therefore, only had they to endure chastisements, that through them they might attain blessings."
 - 2) It was through the punishment of those who "troubled" the true "Israel," the destruction of Jerusalem, that to the Apostles and the rest who believed, the hope of victory over the whole world was opened." "Hope." The word more fully means, a "patient, enduring longing."
 - 3) To each returning soul, "the valley of trouble," or the lowliness of repentance, becometh a door of patient longing, not in itself, but because "God giveth" it to be so; a longing which "reacheth on, awaiteth on," entering within the veil, and bound first to the Throne of God. But then only, when none of the "accursed thing" (Josh 7:11-15) cleaveth to it, when it has no reserves with God, and retains nothing for itself, which God hath condemned. [Via Biblesoft].
2. Verses 16-17: "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."
 - a. Still describing this new bride, God refers to that time as "at that day." The time frame is evidently far in the future from Hosea's day. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11).
 - b. His people would call him "Ishi" (my husband). This is a word of tenderness and affection. Baali ("my master") is connected with idolatry, and indicates fear. The name Baal itself excited fear and apprehension (see 1 Kings 18). Some prominent men of ancient Israel were named after Baal (Esh-Baal and Meri-Baal (1 Chron. 9:40)).
 - c. God would remove Baalim from their speech, so that they would no longer have any real connection with that awful image of idolatry. Following the captivity of Judah, the Jews never fell victim to idolatry again; and in the church, idolatry is especially and forever excluded, even idolatry in its most incipient forms:
 - 1) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

- 2) Ephesians 5:5: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
3. Verse 18: "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely."
- a. This is one of the many references to the peaceful nature of the kingdom of God which he would establish: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:11-16; cf. Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-12).
 - b. This new kingdom would require a new constitution (a covenant; an agreement). This new law would be the New Testament (the gospel of Christ). See Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:1-13; 9:12.
 - c. The covenant would be a peace-making arrangement, which is figuratively defined as being between the citizens of the kingdom and the beasts of earth. Within the kingdom, there is no animosity, malice, or hatred between the faithful citizens; even those of diverse backgrounds can co-exist in mutual love and respect. Mark 12:29-31.
4. Verses 19-20: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD."
- a. ASV: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah."
 - b. In this new arrangement, the Lord's people will be betrothed to him in an age-lasting marriage. Peace and happiness would ensue.
 - c. In Romans 7:1-7, Paul speaks of the relationship between Christians and Christ under the figure of a marriage. Those first century Jews who obeyed the gospel of Christ, were separated from the Mosaic Law so that they could legitimately be married to him.
 - d. Five words describe the marital arrangement envisioned by the prophet: righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, mercies, and faithfulness. Those in this relationship would be those who obey God's word (Ps. 119:172; Acts 10:34-35), exemplify justice in their dealings with their fellowman, operate with loving-kindness toward God and all other men, enjoy and extend mercy, and maintain a faithful adherence to their Lord.
 - 1) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - e. The result of all of this is, "Thou shalt know the Lord." Much more is involved in knowing the Lord than knowing about him; it necessarily includes being influenced by his will so as to become like him.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
5. Verses 21-22: "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."
- a. "In that day" indicates clearly that the fulfillment is to be found in the New Testament system.
 - b. The Lord would hear (the prayers of his people) and would respond; the earth would bring forth its bounty to the saints (a reference to literal blessings, but which would have primarily a spiritual application.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with

- all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
- 3) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
 - 4) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
6. Verse 23: "And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."
- a. That the prediction is fulfilled under the gospel age, is seen by Paul's use of this statement which he applied to the Gentiles: "As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Rom. 9:25-26).
 - b. Peter likewise used it in 1 Peter 2:10: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."
 - c. God would gladly acknowledge them as his people, and they just as happily acknowledge that he is their God. Compare: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

HOSEA 3

A. This Chapter Gives the Picture of Gomer Returning to Hosea.

1. She had earlier forsaken her husband, and took up with various lovers while she played the harlot. "In Chapter three, Gomer is presented as a woman who has run after and had relations with other men, but now she is old and unattractive. In spite of all she has done, Hosea still loves her, though her former lovers regard her as almost worthless, ready for sale on the auction block. Likewise, though Israel had practiced spiritual prostitution with idolatry of the land, yet God still loved her" (Garland Elkins, *The Minor Prophets*, Power Lectures, p.41).
2. "After Gomer had lost her beauty and was unattractive, Hosea bought her back—at the lowest price paid for a common slave (3:2), the equivalent of 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32). However, for an extended period of time, she would neither be able to be with her foreign lovers, nor would conjugal relations take place between Hosea and Gomer (3:3). Gomer would be tested to see if she would bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). In like manner Israel was to abide for many years without blessing, until the coming of Christ, the Messiah. After Israel was carried into Assyrian captivity, Israel would have neither king nor things necessary for worship. She would have neither 'ephod' (pure religion) nor 'teraphim' (idolatry) (3:4). In time to come though, countless Israelites would seek out David (3:5). They had been opposed to David and the worship and service of the true God. For more than 700 years they would be without prophet, priest, or king [see under verse 4]. Afterward, they would return to Christ the Messiah, the promised descendant of David, whose kingdom God would establish forever (II Sam. 7:12,13; Acts 2:29-36). Their salvation would depend upon their obedience to Christ, the Messiah, as does the salvation of the entire world! (Jno. 1:29; I Jno. 2:2; I Tim. 2:4)" (ibid., pp.41f).

B. Hosea 3:1-3: Hosea Buys Back Gomer.

1. Verse 1: "Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine" (KJV).
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) "And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a woman beloved of her friend, and an adulteress, even as Jehovah loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods, and love cakes of raisins" (ASV).
 - 2) "Then the LORD said to me, 'Go again, love a woman *who is* loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love *the raisin cakes of the pagans*'" (NKJV).
 - b. Although the woman's name is not given, it is evidently Gomer that is the object of this exchange. For the analogy to be kept intact, it would have to be Gomer, for she represented Israel; if another woman was meant, the figure would not be kept intact. The ASV gives "again" in place of "yet" in the KJV, indicating that Gomer is the woman.
 - c. Hosea is to go and love a woman who was beloved of her friend. In the narrative, the friend who loved Gomer was the prophet himself; her lovers merely used her until they were through with her. Hosea is to take her back, which would symbolize the willingness of God to take back sinful and corrupted Israel. There were conditions stated in verse three which were to be met by both Gomer and Israel.
 - d. Gomer had taken up with other men, thus showing unfaithfulness to Hosea; Israel had shown her unfaithfulness to God by taking up with idols and other sinful activities.
 - e. The people are accused of looking to other gods and "love flagons of wine." The ASV translates this last phrase as "love cakes of raisins." The reference is to certain delicacies used in idolatry; Keil says these were made of flour and raisins.
 - f. These delicacies were symbolic of the corrupt practices of involved in their idolatry: "The customary price paid by those frequenting the pagan shrines and given in exchange for the use of their so-called priestesses in fornication was simply the 'raisin cakes' mentioned here. Thus, it was the love of Israel for the gross sensuality of the pagan cult which formed the principal motivation for their departure from the Lord" (Coffman, pp.55f).
2. Verse 2: "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley."
 - a. Hosea paid fifteen pieces of silver and one and a half homers of barley to buy Gomer back. Evidently, she had been placed on the auction block.
 - b. A common slave was valued at 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32), so the barley must have been worth

half that.

3. Verse 3: "And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee."
 - a. The prophet gave Gomer some conditions to meet: she was to abide for him for many days; she was not to play the harlot; she was to keep herself for her husband, and he would keep himself for her.
 - b. According to the Mosaic Law, Gomer deserved being executed; she did not rate a second chance, or mercy in any other way. But the book of Hosea is filled with grace and loving kindness, on the part of the prophet and of God.
 - c. Israel did not deserve a second chance; she had violated God's law in the face of many warnings. But God was willing to extend mercy. Without loving Gomer, Hosea would not have taken her back; without loving Israel, God would not have offered an invitation for them to return. Later, Israel was ultimately and completely rejected for her unfaithfulness (see Rom. 11:5-27; Matt. 23:37—24:35).
 - d. Both Gomer and Israel would be on probation for a period of time. They were to "abide for me many days." The idea suggested is "sit still for me for many days" (see Coffman, p.59).

C. Hosea 3:4-5: Hosea Gives a Brief Glimpse into the Future.

1. Verse 4: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and [without] teraphim."
 - a. The children of Israel would abide many days without a king, and without other things which they had known before. The reference would include the Assyrian bondage, and the time the rest of the people spent in Babylonian captivity and the time between the end of the Old Testament until the time of the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.
 - b. From the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. until the ascension of Christ in Acts 2 and subsequent coronation (Dan. 7:13-14), there was no king over the people of the ten northern tribes; and from the fall of Judah to the Babylonians until the same time, the southern tribes had no king.
 - c. During the respective captivities, the Israelites would have no capability to offer the normal sacrifices required under the Law. Even after the return from captivity, they never again achieved the exalted plane they enjoyed during their days of prosperity in the time of David and Solomon.
 - d. During the time depicted, the ephod would be removed. The "ephod" is the garment designed for and worn by the high priest (Ex. 28:6). It may be used here as a symbol of the true religion as originally instituted by Moses.
 - e. Paired with sacrifices, is image; and paired with ephod, is teraphim. "Sacrifice" is a reference to the proper worship as ordained by God; "image" is a reference to the idolatry they later practiced. And as "ephod" indicates true worship, "teraphim" suggests the false worship of idolatry.
2. Verse 5: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."
 - a. After the period of time indicated, the children of Israel (a remnant of them) would return to right thinking, and seek the Lord their God and David their king.
 - b. They would again, during the time following the period indicated in verse four, seek to be faithful to God; and they would seek to serve David their king. But David will never again reign as king; his more illustrious Son (Christ) would ascend David's throne. The obvious reference is to the fact that some of the Israelites would turn back to God by submitting to the gospel of Christ (Isa. 42).
 - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 2) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 3) Acts 2:29-36: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto

my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

- c. They would fear the Lord and his goodness during this latter time. All of those who become citizens of Christ's kingdom (the church), and remain loyal to his gospel, are those who fear God and his goodness in this present dispensation, the Christian Age.
- d. The *latter day* is a familiar term to experienced Bible students.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."
 - 2) Joel 2:28-29: "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."
 - 3) Acts 2:17: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
 - 4) Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

D. Summary of Hosea 1-3.

1. "These three chapters are very important. The parallel between Hosea and Gomer and between Jehovah and Israel is clear and striking. Hosea's experience with Gomer was parallel with Jehovah's experience with the nation. The nation's sin was that of idolatry, by which she had committed spiritual adultery and 'whoredom.' The kingdom would be destroyed, the nation scattered (Jezreel); they would be without mercy (Loruhamah), not God's people (Lo-ammi). But the time would come when they would be gathered together, sown to Jehovah (Jezreel), become God's people (Ammi), having obtained mercy (Ruhamah). For many days they would be without true worship. But the time would come when they would seek Jehovah under David (Christ), and in Him find their fulness of all spiritual blessings 'in the latter days' (the Messianic, or present dispensation). These chapters [Hosea 1-3] stand out in the Book of Hosea as of special importance" (Hailey, pp.146f).
2. "This whole terrible picture of the apostasy of ancient Israel was a product of their own arrogant presumption. It began when they rejected God as their ruler and demanded a king like other nations; and through those kings they were led into the grossest immoralities and idolatrous worship of the Baalim, even rejecting God outright and attributing all of their blessings to pagan deities. Throughout that long period of progressive apostasy, there was still the presumption that they were the 'chosen people' of God; and Hosea's prophecy was designed to destroy that conceit" (Coffman, p.66).

HOSEA 4

A. Hosea 4:1-5: God Has a Controversy With Israel.

1. The prophetic type has ended, and the prophet takes up straightforward prophesying. God has illustrated the situation that exists between himself and his people by the unfaithfulness of Gomer to Hosea, and now he turns to plain talk to describe their condition and the punishment that awaits them.
2. Verse 1: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."
 - a. Because of the absence of any further references to the king, some have supposed that Jeroboam II had died (JFB, Vol. II, p.409). The Lord declares that he has a controversy with the people. This controversy is on the order of a lawsuit, with God being the plaintiff and Israel the defendant. God and Israel are estranged. God states the specification of his case against Israel in three plain charges, which summarize all of their failings.
 - b. There was no truth in the land. They are charged with prevarication in verse two; here the charge is that God's truth (his word) was not followed, since there was no knowledge of God among the people. They had turned from God to idols. Where God's will is held in contempt, or if there is a general indifference toward it, all sorts of sinful activities will arise, such as are identified specifically in verse two.
 - c. There was no mercy in the land. When God's word is not respected, harshness will inevitably be shown among the people. When man loses reverence for God, he will soon have little regard for human life, will become selfish, and will be uncharitable in his treatment of others. Amos had shown earlier that one of Israel's chief faults was their lack of mercy toward the poor.
 - 1) Amos 8:6: "That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"
 - 2) Jeremiah 22:16: "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then *it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.*"
 - 3) Hosea 2:6: "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths."
 - 4) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - d. There was no knowledge of God in the land. Here is the key to a healthy society: a knowledge of God among the people (Prov. 14:34; Ps. 9:17; 33:12). Where God is known and feared, society is generally safe and prosperous, and the people congenial. The absence of the knowledge of God on the part of Israel was evident in their sinful conduct, many particulars being named in the next verse.
 - 1) Psalms 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."
 - 2) Psalms 33:12: "Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance."
 - 3) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
3. Verse 2: "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."
 - a. They burst through the restraints God had imposed on them through the Mosaic law, violating it openly. Inward corruption of a nation, or the church, is of greater danger to it than a powerful alien nation. When a nation or a congregation (or an individual) corrupts itself by sin, God stands opposed to it, just as he stood against Israel.
 - b. Their everyday lives were tainted by swearing, lying (breaking faith, ASV), killing, stealing, and committing adultery. In the New Testament, many of the Jews were characterized by swearing. They thought they must use an oath to make their stories more believable.
 - c. They doubtless appealed to holy persons and things in pronouncing their oaths, and tried to confirm falsehoods by their oath-taking. They were not above stealing, killing, and immorality.
 - d. They broke out (burst through the God-given restraints) so often that Hosea could describe their killing as "blood touching blood." Before they got the blood off their hands for one killing, they took another life! The figure may more likely say that there was so much killing, that the blood thus spilled on the ground from one murder, spread to touch the blood shed from another nearby killing.
 - e. The specific crimes with which they were charged were violations of the third, sixth, seventh, eighth, and the ninth commands of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-17). Two of these violations carried the death penalty.

- 1) Exodus 21:12: "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death."
- 2) Leviticus 20:10-12: "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them."
- f. They had effectively broken the covenant into which they had entered at Sinai, and God was charging them with such in this indictment delivered through Hosea.
4. Verse 3: "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."
 - a. The corruption on the part of the general population of Israel would result in the drying up of the blessings God had been giving them. Sin will be discovered, and always has its penalty. When one leaves the path of righteousness for sin, fundamental changes are made in his heart, in his life, and in his standing with God. All of these must be changed before he can regain his earlier state of acceptability with God, which in turn leads to being blessed by him. Sin deceives; sin spreads; sin is punished.
 - b. The picture drawn by the prophet in the verse suggests a great drought, which would have a detrimental effect on the whole land, the water supplies, and the animals and birds of the land.
 - c. Whatever the precise penalties were, the desolation ensuing would be so terrible that the whole land and all its inhabitants, both man and beast, would be affected. Since the Assyrian army invaded the land about twenty years later, besieging Samaria, and three years later, conquering the city and the whole nation, this is undoubtedly the penalty the prophet is describing. The invasion would bring such horrible sufferings on the people that it could be aptly depicted as a terrible drought which dried up the water and slew the inhabitants.
 - d. 2 Kings 6:24-29: "And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria." "And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son" (6:25-29)."
5. Verse 4: "Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest."
 - a. The nation has plunged so deeply into their rebellion against God that it would be useless for any man to attempt to change them for the better. They had gone so far into sin that they were like the individual who, in former days, repudiated the rightful work of a godly priest.
 - b. The reference is to Deuteronomy 17:8-13, where the death penalty was to be carried out against one who presumptuously rebelled against a godly priest who was doing his duty. In the Northern Kingdom, neither the kings nor the priests who served the unauthorized altars at Dan and Bethel were recognized by the Lord. Cf. 1 Kings 12.
 - c. Individuals or an entire society can become so depraved that they are beyond hope of repentance (1 Tim. 4:1-4; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:16-31; Prov. 9:7-8; 23:9). These very people had reached that stage of hostility toward God and his word: "Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone" (Hosea 4:17).
 - 1) Proverbs 9:7-8: "He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."
 - 2) Proverbs 23:9: "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:1-4: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."
 - 4) Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;

seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."

- 5) Hebrews 10:22-31: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
6. Verse 5: "Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother."
 - a. A stern announcement is made here of the end this rebellious nation would meet. Their end would be so certain that, although they saw it coming, there was nothing they could do to prevent it. Their fall would be accomplished in a day, in broad daylight. Jeremiah likewise described Judah's fate.
 - 1) Jeremiah 6:4-5: "Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces."
 - 2) Jeremiah 15:8: "Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused *him* to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city."
 - b. The Assyrians came boldly and openly into the land, and lay siege to Samaria (2 Kings 17). The people were boxed up in the city, and suffered immeasurable hardships for the three years of the siege.
 - c. The false prophets with which the nation was cursed would not evade punishment. They could not hide in the dark, but would be found and slain.
 - 1) God sent many prophets to both Israel and Judah, warning them of their inescapable doom if they did not repent. But there were many hireling false prophets who denied the message of punishment God sent, and substituted one of their own choosing: "Peace, peace" (Jer. 6:14).
 - 2) False prophets then did what false teachers do today: give the people a pleasing message. "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10; cf. Jer. 6).
 - 3) The attitude of today's religious world is one that says, "You are ok, and I am ok; whatever you choose to believe and practice is fine with me; if you do not interfere with my beliefs and practices, I will agree to let you do what pleases you; for after all, there is no such thing as absolute truth." Does this not accurately describe modern religion in our country today?
 - d. God promised to destroy also their mother. These warnings were directed against the children of Israel, thus the mother here is the nation itself (2:2; 4:1). God did indeed bring their nation to an end; the people of the ten tribes never again were able to exalt themselves as a separate nation. Those of their tribes who returned from Assyrian captivity were few, and joined with Judah to form a weak nation that lasted until its final overthrow at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D. Compare: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD" (Amos 9:8).

B. Hosea 4:6-11: Israel Was To Be Destroyed Because of Their Lack of Knowledge.

1. Verse 6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."
 - a. This may be the best-known verse in Hosea. It points to a key reason for the destruction that Israel faced. God's will for man has always been of such a nature that it is impossible to please him without knowing what he wants. He has never had a system which left everything up to a man's subjective feelings and thoughts.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that

- walketh to direct his steps.”
- 3) John 6:44-45: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”
 - 4) Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
 - 5) Matthew 7:21-23: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”
- b. Why was Israel to be destroyed? Because they did not know God's will! One cannot accidentally obey God; obedience must be according to truth (God's word), and must be sincerely done.
- 1) Romans 6:17: “ But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”
 - 2) John 4:24: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
 - 3) John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - 4) John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: “And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (ASV).
- c. Knowing God's will was important to their continuation as a nation; it was essential to their remaining acceptable to God as individuals; this was necessary if they were to continue to receive God's blessings. Knowing the will of God during the Christian Age is equally important to the welfare of our souls:
- 1) Ephesians 5:17: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”
 - 2) Romans 10:1-3: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”
 - 3) Ephesians 5:11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”
 - 4) Hebrews 5:12-14: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”
 - 5) John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”
 - 6) See also 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:1-12.
- d. Because they had rejected knowledge, God rejected them: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: and their honourable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst" (Isa. 5:13). The rejection of knowledge was individual and personal; it was consciously rejected. God's rejection of them would be individual, personal, and intentional. The Assyrians did not decide to invade the land by coincidence; God stirred them up to do so.
- e. Their rejection included as a consequence that they should not be a priestly kingdom. The nation of Israel was set up to be a priestly nation. Only those men who were of the proper tribe could serve as priests, but the nation itself was described as priestly.
- f. Although they were never charged with the duty of actively seeking the conversion of the Gentiles to Judaism, they were to serve as a guiding light to the Gentiles, thus encouraging and influencing them to acknowledge the God of Israel.
- g. They failed miserably in this; instead, they became more and more like the nations around them. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:5-6;

- cf. 1 Sam. 8).
- h. The nation itself would not be a priestly nation; their pagan priesthood was wrong; their monarchy was wrong; their way of life was wrong; it was impossible for them to be what God intended for them to be, since they had gone astray, as a nation, following their break with Judah (1 Kings 11-13).
 - i. They had forgotten God's law; he would forget them. God can forget only what he chooses to forget. Can you imagine God letting some bit of information slip from his mind? Israel had deliberately forgotten God's word; God would deliberately forget their children. Their children would go into captivity with them; their descendants would be born in captivity and would live in that bondage. Only a remnant of their once-proud kingdom would return to Canaan.
2. Verse 7: "As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame."
 - a. As the nation of Israel increased in number, instead of multiplying their praise and service to their God, they rather increased their rebellion.
 - b. Therefore, instead of increasing or even maintaining their level of glory, God would turn their glory into shame. The current phase of their history was one of prosperity and plenty.
 - c. It would seem inconceivable to them that their fortunes could be reversed in the foreseeable future. As an individual or congregation or society can change from righteousness to sin in short order, so God could quickly change their prosperity into dust. In our present century, some might perceive the same thing in the offing for our generation.
 3. Verse 8-9: "They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings."
 - a. A distinction is made between the people and "they." The *they* is identified in verse nine as the priests. The priests benefitted from the sins of the people. As the sins of the people increased, the priests would have more of their bounty turned over to them (assuming that the false priests of the corrupt religion of the Northern Kingdom retained some measure of the worship system God had instituted in the Law).
 - b. The priests were given a portion of the offerings that were supplied by the individual worshippers. The more the people sinned, the more offerings that were brought; the more offering brought, the greater the "salary" of the priests! One can see how a corrupt priesthood would long to see more and more sin, to "set their heart on their iniquity."
 - c. The priests would, therefore, become more and more sinful themselves. Under the priestly system God set up in the Law, the priests were to be instructors of the people, guiding the masses along paths of righteousness. But both the people and the priests were corrupted; one was as bad as the other. If the blind lead the blind, both shall surely fall into the ditch.
 - d. God promised to punish both the people and the priests. The people could not avoid punishment by laying the blame on the priests; and the priests could not get by with claiming the people made them do wrong. God would award to everyone involved the penalty he had coming (Gal. 6:7-8; Rom. 14:10-12; Rev. 20:12-15).
 4. Verse 10: "For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD."
 - a. "...Insatiable desire is its own tormentor. What the greedy man eats does him no good. He has no enjoyment or benefit from what he has, from his ever craving for more (Mic. 6:14; Hag. 1:6, 'Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink'" (JFB, p.471).
 - b. Their worship of idols, which included immoral activities, would not result in an increase of blessings; Baal was powerless, being a non-entity, to supply any benefit. No one could provide what God had removed. Could any man bring rain when God has decreed a drought? Can any man extricate himself from Gehenna when God has cast him into that horrible place?
 - c. The reason for their coming predicament was their having left off to take heed to the Lord. One cannot obey God if he does not know what the will of God is. And one who does not obey, whether out of ignorance or rebellion, is still disobedient. Christ said that the punishment for those who disobeyed because they did not know, will be less severe than that of those who knew, but did not do (Luke 12:47-48). But even the "few stripes" will be far more than anyone will be willing to bear! How much better it is to obey the Lord fully, faithfully, and always (1 Sam. 15:22; Matt. 7:21-27).
 5. Verse 11: "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart."
 - a. Two of the fatal errors of these ancient Israelites were fornication and drunkenness. The inspired prophet declares, in connection with these two evils, that they take away the heart.
 - b. In the Bible, the heart is the seat of a man's intellect, emotions, will power, and conscience.

- 1) Intellect: The heart thinks (Ps. 23:7), understands (Mt. 13:15), reasons (Mark 2:8), and believes or disbelieves (Rom. 10:10).
 - 2) Emotions: The heart can love (Matt. 22:37), can despise and hate (2 Sam. 6:16), can rejoice (Ps. 33:12), and can suffer anguish (2 Cor. 2:4).
 - 3) Will-power: The heart can intend or purpose (Heb. 4:12; 2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 11:23); it can decide (1 Cor. 7:37).
 - 4) Conscience (Rom. 2:14-15; 1 Peter 3:21; Heb. 10:22).
 - c. The optic nerve of the soul is destroyed by sin (Heb. 5:11-12; Matt. 13:15; Acts 13:45-46). Alcohol's first impact on a person is the effect it has on the higher faculties of the mind: it removes inhibitions and destroys the ability to make good judgments. When sexual impulses are given free rein, one proceeds from one evil action to even greater indulgences, going deeper into sin and farther from God.
 - d. One cannot ever get enough alcohol to satisfy himself for long; and sexual desires cannot be fully gratified. The statement of the verse is exceedingly accurate.
- C. Hosea 4:12-14: Israel Had Replaced God With Man-made Idols.
1. Verse 12: "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God."
 - a. Stocks are wooden idols (Jer. 2:27; Hab. 2:19; Isa. 44:14-20). In many cases, the individual carved the "god" himself, and yet thinks it has some power to help him! One of the most foolish things a man could do is worship an idol. Carefully read Isaiah 44-9-20.
 - b. God's controversy with Israel included their worshipping these lifeless idols. They asked counsel from their wooden stocks, as if sound advice might be obtained from them.
 - c. They are convinced that their staffs (with perhaps an image carved on its head) could give them the information they sought. Before ridiculing them, consider the foolish practice of reading horoscopes followed by millions of our countrymen. Also, some have the idea that the Bible is some kind of magic book; that if they will read a certain passage, a bleeding wound will cease to bleed.
 - d. They had their hearts set on doing what is herein described, and could not be turned from it. They wanted to commit whoredom (spiritual or literal), and they followed their hearts. We speak of head-strong individuals, who will not heed instruction or warning. These were of that stripe; they "played the harlot, departing from their God" (ASV). They would not remain under the control of God, even though he meant them good.
 2. Verse 13: "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery."
 - a. God accuses them of immoral activities on the tops of mountains and hills, in the groves which they prepared there. These groves would furnish shade, and thus they could engage in their sinful "worship" in comfortable surroundings.
 - b. But God would exact a penalty for their misconduct. Their daughters would commit harlotry and their spouses (whether husband or wife) would commit adultery. One's conduct always has an influence on others who learn or see it. If a parent drinks, the children may follow suit; if the husband commits fornication, the wife is apt to seek an opportunity to be unfaithful. Sin spreads! God is bluntly telling them of the evil effects of sin; they would see its awful impact in their own families.
 - c. The worship of idols commonly included fornication. The temple of Aphrodite (called Venus by the Romans) in Corinth, is said to have had 1,000 "priestesses," who were nothing more than religious harlots. People are truly corrupt who make gratification of the carnal desires of the flesh a duty to their god!
 - d. The picture painted in the verse is that of a father and husband returning home from a wild session of profligate worship, and finding his wife and daughters to have been doing similar things during his absence. This is intended to make him see the error of his way, for no man in his right mind would want to have his wife and daughter do the evil he himself practices.
 3. Verse 14: "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall."
 - a. "I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, Nor your brides when they commit adultery; For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots, And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled" (NKJ).
 - b. God would punish the instigators of this evil, for had it not been for their personal involvement in these evils, their daughters and spouses would not have been corrupted. (The ASV has "brides" in

place of the KJV “spouses”).

- c. The leading statement of this verse seems to be elliptical: omitting the word *only*, which is understood, but unstated. Thus, "I will not punish your daughters only, when they commit whoredom...." He would punish the daughters, spouses (brides), and the husbands, too. Compare: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).
- d. There is no respect of persons with God; he will punish every sinner, regardless of his identity. He did not spare David from punishment when that great man erred.
- e. The ignorant are often easily led into sin and depravity. Had they known the will of God, they could have avoided the pitfalls set for them by sin. Sin deceives! It can delude even the intelligent, if they do not know the truth. This last statement of the verse seems to include the daughters and brides as well as the fathers and husbands, indicating that all who sin shall suffer the prescribed penalty.

D. Hosea 4:15-19: Judah Is Admonished Not To Follow The Evil Ways of Ephraim.

1. Verse 15: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth."
 - a. Israel had corrupted itself, but their evil conduct was no reason for Judah to do so. Hence, the remarks made here are directed toward Judah.
 - b. Gilgal was the site of the first encampment the Israelites made after crossing Jordan into Canaan proper (Josh. 4:19ff). The memorial stones erected there were a reminder to future generations of what the Lord had done in drying up Jordan. It was here that God removed the reproaches of Egypt from the nation (Josh. 5:9).
 - c. Later, this site became a pagan shrine (Amos 4:4; Hos. 4:15). Some scholars think that the Gilgal referred to in the text was located in another place. Whether this was the same Gilgal as that of Joshua 4:19-20, the point is the same: a warning to Judah to avoid the sins associated with idolatry practiced at Gilgal.
 - d. Bethel means "house of God." Bethaven means "house of vanity." The latter term is used here to emphasize the sinful behavior that went on at Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33). Judah was warned to stay away from Gilgal and Bethaven, and not to offer the oath, "The Lord liveth." If they participated in such activities as went on at Bethel and Gilgal, the use of the expression would be falsely used; the Lord had nothing to do with those places now. God had instructed Israel to use his name in this fashion (Dt. 6:13; 10:20; Jer. 4:2), but only the obedient could use it correctly.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 6:13: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 10:20: "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name."
 - 3) Jeremiah 4:2: "And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."
2. Verse 16: "For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place."
 - a. Israel is described as a backsliding heifer, one that cannot be kept in her own pasture. They had worshipped calves at Dan and Bethel. Their worship was itself a rebellion against God.
 - b. With good reason, and with an apt figure, God describes the condition of Israel; he does so in this present case as a warning to Judah.
 - c. He further describes the condition of Israel as being like a little lamb in a large place. The lamb is a small animal; it cannot defend itself; it cannot find its way back home if it becomes lost. The large place would be a wilderness, empty of humans and home of dangerous predators.
 - d. The lamb would be helpless in such a place. Israel is represented by the lamb; the wilderness is their lost and helpless situation. God said he would feed her in this desolate place, but not in a good sense. Whatever nourishment they would get would be under these harsh and dangerous circumstances.
 - 1) Isaiah 30:23: "Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures."
 - 2) Micah 7:14: "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old."
3. Verse 17: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."
 - a. Ephraim is a reference to Israel, whose principal tribe was Ephraim, named after the second son of Joseph (Gen. 41:52). The gender is changed from feminine to masculine between the previous verse

and this verse.

- b. Ephraim is joined to idols. He voluntarily assumed this connection: "And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel" (Num. 25:3). The verse seems to picture a bond that is so strong that it could be broken only with much difficulty.
- c. Let him alone; have nothing to do with him lest you be contaminated by his wickedness. Judah could not help Israel; rather, the evil of Israel would more likely affect Judah.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:16-17: "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
4. Verse 18: "Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye."
 - a. ASV: "Their drink is become sour; they play the harlot continually; her rulers dearly love shame."
 - b. The nation of Israel was corrupted from king to peasant. Their drink becomes sour in the stomach; its taste may be good, but its end result is evil. Sin deceives.
 - c. Judah might look with favor with an alliance with Israel, but they must stay away from their northern neighbors. They loved that which was shameful (Jer. 5:30-31). Their continual practice is harlotry, literal or spiritual.
5. Verse 19: "The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices."
 - a. The wind here is the whirlwind of God's wrath; it had already taken them in its grasp, and would soon dash them to pieces. This is a figure, illustrating the disastrous punishment to which their sins were inexorably leading them.
 - b. When the penalty is exacted, then they would be ashamed of their idolatry, but it would be too late!

HOSEA 5

A. Hosea 5:1-7: Indictments Against All the Classes of the People Are Given.

1. Verse 1: "Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor."
 - a. The charges that follow are laid against the whole nation of Israel, which is divided by the statement into three classes: the priests; the royal family; the people.
 - b. Neither of these classes bears exclusive responsibility for the debacle that was about to overtake the country; each had contributed to the problem which must soon be addressed. If the priests had been right, and if the rulers had insisted on God's word being followed, and if the people had been minded to demand that the truth be met—then things would have been different.
 - c. The priests of the Northern Kingdom were wrong from start to finish. They had been selected and appointed to the work by an illegal monarch (Jeroboam; 1 Ki. 12:25ff). They served idols instead of the Living God. Their worship and religious service were false, contradicting God's word (cf. Deut. 4:2; 1 Kings 13).
 - d. The house of the king was indicted; God never gave Jeroboam and his successors the right to divide the nation as they had done. He never intended for them to have an earthly monarch. The kings of Northern Israel were all of the same ilk: they lived in open rebellion to God! Time-after-time, the Bible describes their new kings in the following way:
 - 1) "For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities" (1 Kings 16:26).
 - 2) "And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 22:52).
 - e. But the average Israelite was willing to cooperate in this degeneration. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30-31). This was said of Judah, but the attitudes of both nations were similar, as our present text (Hos. 5:1-7) will indicate.
 - f. The reference to the "snare" is an allusion to the ancient method of capturing birds by the use of a snare net. Mizpah was a mountain east of Jordan (Judg. 10:17; 11:11,34); Tabor was west of Jordan, on the plain of Jezreel. Both of these places were military strongholds, and had been used in idolatry. The idol worship that transpired there is described as the site where the snare nets had been spread; the prey was the people; the means were the idolatrous practices; the method was one of deceit and seduction. False teachers have always found it an easy task to gull the ignorant and worldly-minded: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Gen. 3:1-6).
 - g. The point of verse one is to announce the judgment that God was to bring upon them; thus he calls on the priests, the royal house, and the people to give ear to the things he is delivering through Hosea.
2. Verse 2: "And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) "And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a rebuker of them all" (ASV).
 - 2) "The revolvers are deeply involved in slaughter, Though I rebuke them all" (NKJV).
 - b. Those who were in revolt against God (which included virtually the whole nation) are described as having had far-reaching success, operating by a profound plan. This verse is difficult to translate; the various translations give a variety of renditions.
 - c. Jeroboam would not have quickly and thoughtlessly instigated the plan of erecting two altars (at Dan and Bethel). His plan was shrewdly devised; it was instituted with ingenious craftiness; it was met with full acceptance on the part of the people. See 1 Kings 12:25-33. False teaching usually follows such an approach. On the surface, it appears to be sound and logical, but those who understand the Bible are able to see its deviation from the truth and the danger it poses for the soul.
 - d. The wicked operation of the false teachers who rebelled against the will of God had carried the whole nation into apostasy; virtually everyone was led astray. Their plan of action was profound in its content and in its effect. The end of this evil work would be the slaughter of the people: The wages of sin was death even back then! When the Assyrians came, it would be too late to pray for deliverance; their safety could only be obtained by preventing the onslaught, but that required repentance on a national level.
 - e. The people had plunged too deeply into rebellion for there to be any significant change for the better.

- Although it was God's word that the prophet delivered, and thus it was God who was rebuking them, they would not hear. Hosea was almost surely wasting his breath on them, but his great message is of tremendous importance to us today! They needed this powerful warning (cf. God's longsuffering).
3. Verse 3: "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled."
 - a. This is a case of Hebrew parallelism, which is a double statement of the same truth for the purpose of emphasis. Ephraim and Israel are used interchangeably.
 - b. God knows the true situation with these people; he knows they are defiled with spiritual adultery. They cannot hide their real condition from God, and they will not be able to conceal themselves when the judgment comes.
 - 1) Psalms 139:7-10: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - 3) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 4. Verse 4: "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) ASV: "Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah."
 - 2) NKJ: "They do not direct their deeds Toward turning to their God, For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, And they do not know the Lord."
 - b. They were so enmeshed in idolatry, with all its excesses, that they could not give it up, and return to the Living God. God's way was too restrictive for their liberal tendencies.
 - c. 2 Peter 2:14: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children." Their consciences were so seared that the truth could find no lodgment within their minds (1 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 6:4-6).
 - d. Sin seems so simple and innocent; it appears that one can participate in it without any serious consequences. So thought Eve; and David (2 Sam. 11). But sin can become the master of any person, and although the individual repents and is forgiven, the consequences of his evil actions remain. And if he does not repent, the time will come when he will have no desire, or even ability, to give up his wickedness.
 5. Verse 5: "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them."
 - a. Pride is here listed as the second cause of Israel's downfall. The first was lack of knowledge (4:6); the other five are found in 7:4,5; 9:9, 11:6, and 13:2.
 - b. Pride is certainly a fatal flaw to the soul (Lev. 26:19; Prov. 29:23).
 - 1) Psalms 10:2: "The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."
 - 2) Psalms 10:4: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God *is* not in all his thoughts."
 - 3) Proverbs 8:13: "The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."
 - 4) Proverbs 11:2: "*When* pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom."
 - 5) Proverbs 13:10: "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom."
 - 6) Proverbs 16:18: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
 - 7) Isaiah 28:1,3 "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet."
 - 8) Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
 - 9) 1 John 2:16: "For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

- c. The Catholic hierarchy supports the notion that there are seven mortal (deadly) sins, which they identify as: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. These are distinguished from venial (pardonable) sins. It was pride that led men to think they had the right to make these distinctions, and pride permeates the entire Catholic system, with its extravagance and pomp and showy titles.
 - d. Israel's pride was so plain and predominant that it would be a self-evident witness against them. Pride led them to exalt their own wisdom, religious systems, moral practices, and military might.
 - e. While God should have been their glory, and honoring him their goal, they exalted their own prowess and thinking. This attitude stood in direct opposition to God, who would have the final word. The nation of Israel would fall, along with its leading tribe (Ephraim), and Judah would fall with them. The Lord is not saying that Judah would fall at the same time; he is affirming that as Israel would be overthrown, so Judah would also be punished.
6. Verse 6: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them."
- a. This shows that they would be willing to come to God when it was too late. They had lingered too long in the evils of idolatry. When they left Egypt with their flocks and herds, they went with God; he led them through the Red Sea, fed them in the wilderness, gave them the law at Sinai, and ultimately led the second generation into Canaan.
 - b. He had aided them in conquering the promised land; he blessed them with protection and material prosperity until the nation rebelled. The Book of Judges gives a familiar pattern of rebellion, punishment, penitence, and rescue, followed by another rebellion, repentance, and rescue.
 - c. But now, Israel had gone too far to return; and when she sought his help during the Assyrian invasion and siege of Samaria, it was too late for deliverance.
 - d. "The northern Israel sank into the same oblivion that swallowed Nineveh and Tyre, Sodom and Gomorrah, Sidon and Babylon. There is a hidden boundary between God's mercy and God's wrath; and any nation that presumes to ignore this is doomed" (Coffman, Vol. 2, p.97). The same is true of individuals.
 - 1) Proverbs 1:24-28: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."
 - 2) Isaiah 1:11-15: "To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."
 - 3) John 7:34: "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come."
7. Verse 7: "They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions."
- a. Their actions toward God were treacherous (traitorous, unfaithful). They had not lived up to their commitments to God, but had forsaken him for idols.
 - b. Instead of doing what he commanded in bringing up their children in the ways of God (Deut. 6:1-12), they had produced offspring who knew not the Lord (cf. Judg. 2:10-15). These children were strangers to the Lord; they did not serve him.
 - c. Thus, God would bring swift punishment upon them. The Assyrians besieged Samaria for three years; when the fall came, it was over quickly (2 Kings 17).
 - d. No generation of God's people is further from apostasy than one generation. Allow just one generation of young people to grow up untaught, and apostasy will occur. This happened to Israel when they entered Canaan.

B. Hosea 5:8-15: The Punishment of Israel is Sure.

- 1. Verse 8: "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin."
 - a. The sounding of the instruments indicates warnings of the nearness of the enemy. The cornet was

- made of a curved ram's horn; the trumpet was made of brass or silver.
- b. Bethaven (house of vanity) is the name Hosea gives Bethel (house of God). Because of the idolatry that had been practiced there through the history of the Northern Kingdom, it was not God's house! Rather, it was the house of emptiness.
 - c. From the time Hosea prophesied to the coming of the invading army of the Assyrians, was only about twenty years. The prophet projects these words into the future to that time, and gives his auditors the opportunity of visualizing how things would then be. If he can get them to see the desperate condition of that moment, perhaps they will repent.
 - d. The warnings are sounded from Gibeah and Ramah, which were situated near the border between Judah and Israel, in Benjamin's territory (Isa. 10:29). The statement is addressed to Benjamin (the Southern Kingdom). They were in grave danger. If so, what terrible conditions must prevail in Israel! If Benjamin was to sound the alarm, how awful the fate of Ephraim! A picture of the desperate state of affairs at the time, just prior to the overthrow of Israel in 2 Kings 16:5-9: "Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin" (cf. Isaiah 7).
 - e. The fall of Samaria [and the rest of the Northern Kingdom] is tersely reported in 2 Kings 17:6: "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."
2. Verse 9: "Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be."
- a. When the time of the judgment came, called here a rebuke from God, the land of Israel (called Ephraim) would be made desolate.
 - b. God knows ahead of time what his actions will be in any given situation. And in many cases in the past, he revealed ahead of time to the people involved what his plans were to be. "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:7-8). He has even told us what will occur at the end of time:
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:8-13: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
 - 3) John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - c. His word is so sure that none can properly doubt it. God had spoken of this matter to their ancestors through Moses (Deut. 31:16-30); preceding Hosea were Joel and Amos, whose warnings also pointed to a judgment of Israel on account of their sins.

3. Verse 10: "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water."
 - a. ASV: "The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water."
 - b. The princes of Judah were likewise guilty of rebellion against God, just as guilty as the individuals who removed the ancient landmarks set up as land boundaries. Stern warnings were issued in the Law regarding the inviolate nature of landmarks.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 19:14: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 27:17: "Cursed *be* he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen."
 - 3) Job 24:2: "*Some* remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed *thereof*."
 - 4) Proverbs 22:28: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."
 - 5) Proverbs 23:10: "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless."
 - c. Removing the ancient landmarks aptly describes the changing of the ordinances and laws given by God. Only God has the right to change his law; he speaks with the hardest of warning to those who would be so presumptuous as to loose what God has bound, or to bind what God has loosed (Mt. 16:19; 18:18; Rev. 22:18-19; 2 John 9-11).
 - d. God is impartial. What he has threatened to do to Israel, he will also do to Judah if they become guilty of similar transgressions. God will punish the unfaithful Christian just as surely, and to perhaps a greater degree, as he will punish the rank unbeliever: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).
4. Verse 11: "Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment."
 - a. Israel had been led to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam (I Kings 12:25-33). The oppression brought to bear upon them by the Assyrian invasion, and the crushing they would receive, came because they obeyed Jeroboam's command.
 - b. The descendants of that first generation in Northern Israel continued the rebellion, perfecting it to a greater degree of presumption.
 - c. They were not forced to obey Jeroboam; they willingly entered into this rebellion with him. The reference here is to the commandment of a man; if they had obeyed the Lord, they would not have faced the harshness of the Assyrians.
5. Verse 12-14: "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him."
 - a. Because this attitude of rebellion persisted, God would do to Ephraim what a moth does to a fine garment; and he would be to Judah what rottenness is to the bones.
 - b. When Ephraim discovered his difficulty, he would run to king Jareb for help; he should have gone to God. Jareb is probably a reference to some earthly ruler, from whom he thought he could find assistance. The effort would be fruitless.
 - c. Again God shows that neither Israel nor Judah will escape the punishment they have earned. God's judgment is described as the damage a young, strong lion can inflict upon its prey.
6. Verse 15: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early."
 - a. God was giving up on Israel. He had provided them with every motive to repent, and had been patient. He will now return to his place (a figure of speech), and wait until they saw fit to seek him in contrition.
 - b. That attitude would not be long in coming! But it would then be too late to prevent the Assyrians from doing their worst.

HOSEA 6

A. Hosea 6:1-3: God's Wrath Will Bring Penitence.

1. Verse 1: "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."
 - a. God is here speaking through Hosea, uttering the words that would be in the minds of Israel after God's judgment was poured out upon his wayward people. When his wrath came, they would then see the need for seeking God's will.
 - b. Whether this passage is more closely connected with Hosea 5:15 or 6:4 determines the interpretation of the present paragraph. There is a connection with both passages. The former verse indicates that God will withdraw from Israel, leaving them to their own devices and trouble; the latter shows that the repentance of the text is short-lived and shallow, which is described in verse four.
 - c. The call of verse one encourages national repentance which grows out of the troubles God had sent upon them. They will at that time recognize the willingness of God to give healing to them, but their penitence is shallow.
2. Verse 2: "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."
 - a. Some scholars see in this passage an allusion to the resurrection of Christ, and apply the passage to those Jews who would repent during the gospel age. If this is so, then the shallowness of verse four does not apply to these people, but to the superficial change of ancient Ephraim.
 - b. If no allusion is made to Christ's resurrection, then the people are asserting that if they show a change toward God, he will quickly come and attend to their problems. Reversal of a nation's grave concerns in two or three days would be a fast recovery.
 - c. This latter interpretation gives a more realistic view of the passage, since the only connection here with the Lord's resurrection is the time element indicated (two or three days), which is a very flimsy connection.
3. Verse 3: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."
 - a. This continues the statement of verse two, and expresses their confidence that the Lord will shower them again with blessings such as they formerly received before their current troubles began.
 - b. To "follow on to know the Lord" indicates the need to serve God. However, one of their great failings was lack of knowledge (4:6). They did not have the background understanding so necessary to a faithful walk with God.
 - c. God's activities are pictured as the morning; his willingness to bless is just as dependable as the coming of morning. His blessings are depicted as the regular rainy seasons of Palestine: one in the fall; the other in the spring.

B. Hosea 6:4-11: The Sinfulness of Israel is Described.

1. Verse 4: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."
 - a. Here the third great sin of Israel is stated: Instability. Their goodness was only as long-lived as the morning cloud and dew. This seems to connect directly with the previous three verses, and thus indicates the insincerity and shallowness of their penitence.
 - b. They would repent, but it would not have enough conviction behind it to continue. Only godly sorrow can produce repentance (2 Cor. 7:10); if the sorrow is only a momentary sadness of a worldly sort, no true repentance has taken place. So it was with Israel; and so it is with many Christians.
 - 1) Genesis 49:3-4: "Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch."
 - 2) James 1:8: "A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways."
 - c. What is said about Israel, was also true of Judah. They were unstable. This is one of the most important verses in Hosea. It shows God's frustration with his rebellious people. Hosea could write with deep feeling, because of Gomer's past.
2. Verse 5: "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth."
 - a. Because of their unstable conduct, it would surely be necessary for God to punish them. He had sent prophets to "hew" them, and he had slain them by his word which was delivered through the prophets.

- b. He had cut and slashed them with strong words, showing God's anger toward them. He tried to cut them to the quick, not to hurt them or frighten them, but to bring them to genuine repentance.
 - c. God worked with them through the prophets, but these great men of God were rejected and harshly treated.
 - 1) Nehemiah 9:20, 30: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.... Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands."
 - 2) Acts 7:51-53: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers...."
 - d. Their judgments were so fleeting that they could be described as a flash of light: for a brief instant they appeared, they were intense, but they quickly disappeared. We would use the expression, "flash in the pan," to denote this idea.
3. Verse 6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
- a. The prophet gives the fourth great sin of Israel: Worldliness. Their religion had become a mere form; there was no concern in them for the welfare of others. God demanded that they be merciful to others, but they had tried to make up for the absence of this trait by offering sacrifices. God demanded that they know his will, but they had substituted burnt offerings for true knowledge.
 - b. Their faith was seriously flawed. In the first place, their whole religious system was idolatry (1 Kings 12:25-33). And what truth they held was perverted. By going through the religious exercises they followed, they thought that they could live as they pleased the rest of the week, and were excused from any other requirements.
 - c. Many in the religious world today make the same mistake. They have been deluded into thinking that if they participate in or support in some way the religious system of their choice, their excesses and omissions are excused.
 - d. Many in the Lord's church make the same mistake. They have deluded themselves into believing that if they eat the Lord's Supper on Sunday, they are excused from other responsibilities during the week; or that they can live as they please during the week if they will put in their one hour on Sunday morning, and thus *get their ticket punched*. Going through the right motions without the devotion required is futile.
 - e. God demands more than the participation in mere external acts, such as offering sacrifices (1 Sam. 15:22). God requires the external actions demanded in the Bible, but these must be done as he ordered, for the purposes he intended, and in the manner he gave. But the heart must be involved (Rom. 6:17).
 - 1) Genuine love for God must accompany the action (Mark 12:29-30); and real love for our fellowman must be expressed (Mark 12:31).
 - 2) The proper acts, without the inner sincerity, is worthless. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).
4. Verse 7: "But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."
- a. The ASV (and margin of KJV) has "Adam" instead of "men." The point is that the Israelites had violated the will of God just as Adam had done.
 - b. What is true of Adam and Israel, is also true of all other accountable humans: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). Transgressing the law of God is considered by men as a trivial matter, but God describes it as treachery!
 - c. Comedians joke, "So I lied! What difference does that make?" It makes the difference between a life in glory or an unending existence in the lake of fire! (Rev. 21:8). Sin is the most serious thing we can do on earth.
5. Verse 8: "Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood."
- a. Ramoth in Gilead was one of the cities of refuge (Josh. 20:7-8; Num. 35:9-15). Apparently, the prophet uses the name of the mountainous district of Gilead as the name for the city itself.
 - b. One of the prominent places where the Israelites could find safety from their enemies, had become the location of those who work iniquity and who are polluted with blood. Gilead was also the source of

- a certain balm (an aromatic, medicinal plant) used in treating afflictions (Gen. 37:25).
- c. Instead of safety, danger was now found in Gilead; instead of healing balm, injury and pain; instead of being a refuge for those who had accidentally slain another, it was the den of those who had violently taken life.
 - d. Compare: "But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room" (2 Kings 15:25).
6. Verse 9: "And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness."
- a. The ASV gives this rendering: "And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem; yea, they have committed lewdness."
 - b. Shechem was another city of refuge. Instead of finding refuge, it appears the Jew would find his own death at the hands of those who were entrusted with his welfare. The religious leaders in Israel had turned to criminal conduct. They stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the commission of murder; they were more like a band of mobsters than a band of spiritual guides. Their crimes were enormous.
7. Verses 10-11: "I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people."
- a. God describes what he considers to be horrible: the infidelity of Ephraim which has defiled them. What God says is horrible, man considers a harmless matter. Sin is grievous, far more so that any of us can fully perceive. Worldliness ruined them.
 - b. Judah's peril is in the Lord's mind. He will not overlook their evils any more than he will ignore those of Israel. Both nations will receive the full recompense for their rebellion. But Judah will return to the land of promise, accompanied by a remnant from the northern ten tribes.

HOSEA 7

A. Hosea 7:1-7: Criminals Collaborate With the King in Doing Evil.

1. Verse 1: "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without."
 - a. The Northern Kingdom is sometimes called Ephraim by Hosea, because it was the largest and most prominent tribe, and sometimes he calls them Samaria, which was the capital city of the nation.
 - b. The Lord states here that he would have healed Israel, but they continued in their sinful conduct; he continued to find wickedness, falsehood, and thievery among them. The healing is spiritual. Compare: "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).
 - c. Amid the many denunciations of the people, God offered pardon and restoration, but they would have none of it. The falsehood mentioned suggests their insincerity.
2. Verse 2: "And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face."
 - a. They fail to realize that God knew their wickedness. They could not see God any more than people of our time can see him, even though that was a time when God occasionally did supernatural works.
 - b. Looking around them, they could say, "I do not see God; his presence and power are not here; it does not matter what I do, God sees it not." Just because we cannot see God, does not mean that our actions and words, or even our thoughts and motives, are hidden from his omniscient eye.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 - c. God sees and remembers; their evil doings of the past are before his mind, and their present evil deeds are before his eyes. Implied in the observation of this verse, is a veiled warning of judgment.
3. Verse 3: "They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies."
 - a. Their evil king was well-pleased with their wicked ways; what they did probably enriched him, and coincided with his own iniquitous aims.
 - b. As the title of this section states, these thieves and robbers acted as collaborators with the king and the lesser rulers. If the leaders of a nation are corrupt, the common man has little hope.
4. Verse 4: "They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened."
 - a. God bluntly accuses them of being adulterers, describing their lust as the oven that has been heated to receive the dough. The ovens of the time were "bell-shaped adobe furnaces in which fires were built; when they were ready to be used, the fire was taken out and the hot interior was used for baking" (Coffman, Vol. 2, p.126).
 - b. The baker "ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough." "Their adulterous and idolatrous lust is inflamed as the oven of a baker, who has it at such a heat that he ceaseth from heating it only from the time that he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened; he only requires to omit feeding it during the short period of the fermentation of the bread" (JFB, p.482).
 - c. The picture painted by the verse is of a baker with his oven ready, waiting for the dough; the oven is ready; only the dough is kneaded. The people were ready to practice fornication; all they lacked was the opportunity. The roots of sin are in the heart of a man, in the lust he allows to simmer there; when an opportunity comes for him to fulfill his evil desires, he commits the sin. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15).
5. Verse 5: "In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorers."
 - a. The "day of the king" would be some noteworthy occasion, perhaps his birthday. The princes would keep the wine flowing to the king until he was sick (overcome by the effects of alcohol).
 - b. In that sorry state, he would stretch out his hand with scorers (scoffers). A drunken king makes a poor dispenser of justice and mercy. And a man who is supposed to be serving as ruler of God's people, if he succumbs to the evils of strong drink, is surely unfit for his high office. This king was consorting with those who meant him no good. "And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against

him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead" (2 Kings 15:10).

- c. Peter the Great of Russia died at the relatively early age of fifty-two, after a life of drunkenness and riotous living.
6. Verse 6: "For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire."
 - a. "The fires of their evil passions never went out. When not actually engaged in the commission of some crime, they were still like a smoldering oven, ready to flame into action at the slightest provocation" (Coffman, p.128).
 - b. As the oven is heated and burned all night, they continually were doing evil.
7. Verse 7: "They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me."
 - a. The evil people of the nation devoured the judges and caused their kings to fall. Many of the kings were slain. There were no long-lasting dynasties in the Northern Kingdom. Kings and judges were sometimes corrupted by the evil society in which they lived; and as is often the case, evil rulers are able to influence their subjects to evil life-styles.
 - b. "With these two exceptions, in the houses of Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either left no sons, or left them to be slain" (Quoted by Coffman, p.129). The nation was so afflicted with evil that there was none who called on the Lord.

B. Hosea 7:8-16: Ephraim is Classified as a Silly Dove.

1. Verse 8: "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned."
 - a. The figure changes from a baker to an unturned cake. Israel was given the divine mandate not to mingle with the heathen nations. The reason lying behind this prohibition was the prevention of their being contaminated by these idolaters. "But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions" (Psalm 106:35-39).
 - b. A cake not turned is a reference to a partially-cooked item of bakery, which is done on one side but completely uncooked on the other. As Hailey put it, "'A cake not turned,' burned on one side and uncooked on the other, was fit for nothing" (p.159).
 - c. This figure has made its way into other languages, including our own. We speak of some idea (or person) as "half-baked," meaning that it is seriously flawed.
 - d. The point of the figure as used here by Hosea is to show that Israel, having mixed and mingled with the heathen nations, and thus had become defiled by them, had not developed spiritually as they should have, and were unfit for God's table.
2. Verse 9: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."
 - a. Israel had mixed herself with strangers, and had her strength consumed by them. Their strength was their relationship with God; having corrupted themselves with idols, they lost that connection and the strength that went with it. Hosea could properly say that strangers had consumed their vitality.
 - b. Without realizing it, they had lost the strength and vigor of youth; they had become gray-headed, which symbolizes the dissipation of their former strength. Samson did not perceive his violation of the oath he had taken had robbed him of his strength, until it was too late: "And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him" (Judg. 16:19-20).
 - c. The relationship that one has with God is not felt through physical senses; it is a state which is developed and maintained by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17). One can not ascertain his standing with God based on his animal sensations, but that is the method that many, perhaps most, in the religious world practices. O, how important it is to study and learn God's word! (2 Tim. 2:15). In modern times, the pre-eminent item is emotion, not faith which works by love [Gal. 5:6], or inspired truth [John 8:32; Col. 1:5].
3. Verse 10: "And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this."
 - a. Israel's pride is a witness against them.
 - 1) Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall"

- 2) Hosea 5:5: "And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them."
- b. Their pride would not let them return to God. How foolish men are to insist on their own way when that way will lead them into perdition.
 - 1) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 - 2) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
4. Verse 11: "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria."
 - a. Ephraim is described as a silly dove, flitting first to Egypt, then to Assyria, for help. The dove is said to be "the proverbial creature of innocence and thoughtlessness. It can be easily snared into a trap by food...or it can lose itself, blissfully ignorant of the danger that surrounds it" (J.M. Myers, quoted by Coffman, p.132).
 - b. Israel is likened to the dove in these characteristics. They are naive and foolish. They are easily beguiled and misled. This reminds us of many brethren of our time; they are willing to be gulled by any false teaching that appears, not realizing or not caring that what they are forfeiting the truth to obtain it, is nothing more than old sectarian error that has been exposed and routed by gospel preachers of former generations. They have failed to learn and appreciate the truth, and are willing to be snared by religious falsehood.
 - c. Israel's only hope was God, but instead of returning to him, they fled to heathen, earthly powers for help, but these themselves were mere men.
5. Verse 12: "When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard."
 - a. Continuing the figure introduced in verse eleven, God states that when they go to these other nations for help, he will spread his net to ensnare them. Being nothing but silly doves, they will be easily caught.
 - b. God will bring them into his control as a man brings down the fowls of the air in his snares. He will chastise them, even as he has already reported to the people by the prophets, such as Amos and Hosea.
6. Verse 13: "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me."
 - a. God pronounces a woe upon them for their folly. His dismay over their awful condition is apparent in this statement. They had fled from God, thinking they were obtaining safety elsewhere, but what they would find was destruction.
 - b. Although God had redeemed them many times in the past, as in the days of the judges, and would do so again, yet they continued their rebellion. God had revealed to them his will, but they denied its importance, and spoke evil of it and him.
 - c. Modern religionists would deny that they "speak lies against" God, but that is what a man does who rejects God's word. He has to explain his disobedience to the plain words of the Bible, so he rationalizes them into nothingness.
7. Verse 14: "And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me."
 - a. God depicts them as lying on their beds and howling, but these cries were not sincere.
 - b. It appears that they worked themselves into a frenzy, as they struggled with their troubles, which probably included the loss of physical blessings. They cried for the grain and wine, but did not amend their ways.
8. Verse 15: "Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me."
 - a. God had bound up and strengthened their arms in the past, but they still devised mischief against him; they would not repent, though he blessed them.
 - b. It seems amazing to us that people who have been wonderfully blessed are often the most ungrateful.
9. Verse 16: "They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt."
 - a. They are not sincere in their penitence; they are like a flawed bow which cannot shoot true.
 - b. The result: their princes would fall by the sword because of their raging tongues, and the Egyptians (their ancient masters) would hold them in derision.

HOSEA 8

A. Hosea 8:1-7: Inescapable Judgment is Determined Against Israel.

1. Verse 1: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law."
 - a. The chapter begins by threatening some hostile, foreign invasion which God says was for the purpose of punishing Israel's violation of his law.
 - b. God had made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, the details of which are cataloged in the Law of Moses. A renewal of the covenant was made in Moab: "These *are* the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb" (Deut. 29:1). As the first generation of Israelites had violated the law in the wilderness, so succeeding generations had transgressed it.
 - c. Now, because of their current digression from God's will, they are told to sound the trumpet, for the foreign invaders were on the way to punish them. The Assyrian symbol is said to have been the eagle, hence the allusion here may be to their invasion; it was their hordes which later conquered Israel. Eagle is sometimes used in the Bible in reference to vultures (cf. Job 39:30).
2. Verse 2: "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee."
 - a. When the invaders were sighted, then they would cry unto God, claiming that they know him. But they had lived in open defiance to God's will, so when the judgment came, it was too late for deliverance, and certainly a superficial knowledge of God would not suffice under any circumstance.
 - b. The mere fact that God was in their name (Israel) was insufficient. Merely because multitudes today claim to be Christians, does not make it so. One is a Christian only if God says he is a Christian (Matthew 7:21-27).
 - 1) Acts 11:26: "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."
 - 2) Titus 1:16: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."
 - c. The only sense in which we can know God with profit is through obedience. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:3-5).
3. Verse 3: "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him."
 - a. Israel willfully had cast off that which was good. They had forsaken God, the giver of all good and perfect gifts (Jas. 1:17). But God gives his spiritual blessings only to those who reverence, love, and obey him. Since Israel had cast off his yoke, the enemy could have them!
 - b. Like a cat chasing a mouse in close quarters, so the enemy would pursue Israel, with God's approval, with full assurance of a successful hunt!
4. Verse 4: "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off."
 - a. The first thought in the statement leads us back to 1 Samuel 8:4-7, when the united nation demanded their first king. Since that time, they had set up many kings, often having the sorriest sort of man on the throne, especially in the Northern Kingdom.
 - b. Great evil came from having a king over them, just as God had forewarned by Moses centuries before the fact (Deut. 17:14ff). One hundred and twenty years after Saul became their first king, the nation was rent asunder by Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 12).
 - c. None of the men who served as kings over the Northern Kingdom were loyal to God. But, from Jeroboam onward, they promoted idolatry and all the evils that accompany that horrible institution. God did not choose any of their kings, and approved of none of them. The nation plunged deeper into sin with the passing of years, until they had reached the point of degradation indicated in Amos and Hosea.
 - d. They had made golden and silver idols, by which they cut themselves off from God. This was a direct violation of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:3-6,23; 34:17).
 - e. God would turn their blessings into curses: "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (Mal. 2:2). What about

today?

5. Verse 5: "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?"
 - a. A direct reference is made here to the calf-worship Jeroboam had instituted in Israel when he became its first king. This was such a serious error that it had caused them to be cast off by the Lord. It was a repudiation of the covenant they made with Jehovah.
 - b. Although God bore long with them, the time was rapidly approaching when his patience with them would be ended (cf. 2 Peter 3:9-10; Rev. 2:21). How long would it be before they regained a state of innocence? They used the time and opportunity God gave them to repent and straighten up their lives, only to go deeper into sin and rebellion.
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:9-10: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
 - 2) Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
6. Verse 6: "For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces."
 - a. The golden calves at Dan and Bethel originated with Israel; workmen constructed them; therefore, neither of them was god.
 - b. To prove that these "gods" were no gods, the True God would cause them to be broken in pieces. The verse only refers to one of these calves, but two were originally made. What is true of one, is true of the other.
 - c. The total inadequacy and foolishness of idolatry is demonstrated in the verse, and would be directly brought home to Israel when their nation was torn apart by the invasion which the Living God predicted and instigated.
 - 1) Isaiah 44:9-17: "They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*; and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god."
 - 2) Jeremiah 10:1-4: "Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."
7. Verse 7: "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up."
 - a. ASV: "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: he hath no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up."
 - b. This further describes their coming destruction. They had tried to sow the wind (an impossibility, for how can one sow the wind in the soil, or what kind of seed can take root in the wind?).
 - c. They would reap the whirlwind. The LXX has *katastrophe* (catastrophe) for whirl-wind, and refers to a devastating cyclone. They would be reaping what they sowed, and more than they sowed (Gal. 6:7-8). One reaps far more than he sows, whether in a good or a bad sense.

- 1) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
- 2) 2 Corinthians 9:6: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."
- d. The figurative plant that they tried to grow would have no stalk; its bud would yield nothing to eat; and even if a crop was produced by it, the strangers would eat it; Israel would not be able to reap the good benefits.

B. Hosea 8:8-10: Israel's Attempts to Win an Alliance With Other Nations Would be Fruitless.

1. Verse 8: "Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure."
 - a. No other nation would take interest in Israel's plight. The world generally will take interest in its own; but it has no love for God's people: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). The nation is being engulfed by the heathen powers, and would soon be captured.
 - b. When the church now, as Israel did then, seeks to imitate the world, it loses; we cannot compete with the world; we can only be overwhelmed if we try to emulate it.
 - c. When Israel tried to cozy-up to the world, they became objects of scorn. They were regarded by the pagans as worthless as an old, discarded wine bottle. "Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel" (Isa. 8:7-8).
2. Verse 9: "For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers."
 - a. The figure of a wild ass alone by himself is used to describe Israel's condition. Israel went to the Assyrians for help, but were to be engulfed by these heathens. Even a wild ass knew that to keep his independence, he must remain alone.
 - b. Israel did not see the importance of remaining separate and different from heathen nations. Her hired lovers would be unfaithful, and would turn against her. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation" (Isa. 10:5).
3. Verse 10: "Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes."
 - a. Israel had gone among the nations for help and protection, but God would gather them, and they would feel God's wrathful judgment. Their alliances would fail, and God would punish them.
 - b. The heavy burden of tribute which they had to pay to Assyria would seem small in comparison to the tremendous burden of captivity.
 - c. Isaiah 10:5-12: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but *it is* in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, *Are* not my princes altogether kings? *Is* not Calno as Carchemish? *is* not Hamath as Arpad? *is* not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria: Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

C. Hosea 8:11-14: Captivity Was Pledged to Israel Because They Had Multiplied Idols.

1. Verse 11: "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin."
 - a. They should have had only one altar, the one where God recorded his name (Deut. 12:5ff), but they had increased the number of altars, and served many idols. Their sins were likewise multiplied in the process. "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD" (Amos. 4:4-5).
 - b. "Having multiplied altars and having degraded them with the evil rites of paganism, the very purpose of the altars, in any holy sense, was lost to the nation of northern Israel" (Coffman, p.146).
 - c. Perhaps there is also an allusion in the latter part of the verse to the fact they would be forced to continue idolatry while in captivity.

2. Verse 12: "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing."
 - a. God had given to Israel a record of his great things (the Law of Moses), but they had considered it to be a strange thing, something that is weird and unappealing.
 - b. When the truth of the gospel is presented to many today, they scoff at it, thinking it is weird; there is little interest in it in the world, and increasingly, this same attitude is permeating the church! (2 Tim. 4:1-5).
 - c. The ASV has "ten thousand things of my law," in place of "the great things of my law" in the KJV.
3. Verse 13: "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt."
 - a. They offered plenty of sacrifices on their altars, but God would accept none of the offering, for they were not of his doing.
 - b. The only sacrifices God will accept are those which are done in sincere harmony with his revealed will.
 - 1) Matthew 15:7-9: "*Ye* hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men."
 - 2) John 4:24: "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
 - 3) Colossians 3:16-17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 4) Hebrews 13:15: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name."
 - c. God can be honored only through the means which he himself has ordained. Compare: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1-2).
 - d. Because they offered strange sacrifices, God would remember their sins; he would not overlook them. He would punish these sins, by returning them to Egypt. Egypt is a reference to the land of captivity to which they would be taken: Assyria.
4. Verse 14: "For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof."
 - a. Both Israel and Judah had forgotten their Maker. Israel had built unauthorized places of worship, and Judah put her trust in material defenses instead of God.
 - b. Both of these nations would be punished in good time, and in a way chosen by God's wisdom.

HOSEA 9

A. Hoses 9:1-9: Israel Prematurely Rejoiced Over Their Material Prosperity.

1. Verse 1: "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor."
 - a. They are told not to rejoice as other people rejoice, because they had departed from God, and had gone into spiritual adultery. There was nothing about their spiritual condition that gave them reason to rejoice. God gave them cause to mourn.
 - b. The other nations worshipped idols, entering into all sorts of vile acts in the same process; they rejoiced and seemed to have all the necessities for life and happiness. They were living a fool's life; God would attend to them in his own time and way (Psalm 73:1-20). Although the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous seem to languish, God will even the record in the Judgment. But much more was expected from Israel; they were God's chosen nation; they had the Law to guide them, and departures from that Law would be sorely punished.
 - c. Israel attributed their own material prosperity to the idols they worshipped. This was a terrible affront to God, for it is he who provides all the essentials of life, showering them upon the godly and the ungodly.
 - 1) Matthew 5:45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 2) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." [This salvation has reference to providing sustenance to mankind in general].
 - 4) James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 - d. It is possible that Assyria had momentarily lifted their threat against Israel, which Israel might take as reason to rejoice, thinking the danger was past. *"And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land"* (2 Kings 15:19-20). But their present prosperity was temporary.
2. Verse 2: "The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her."
 - a. They had enjoyed their earthly blessings of a full granary, but this prosperity was not to continue. As they had given credit to the false gods for these provisions, God would withhold these essentials, and Israel would see the utter impossibility of a non-entity (any idol) to give them these rewards. The forthcoming shortages would show them the foolishness of worshipping an idol.
 - b. As they had worshipped their false gods on the threshingfloors, so they would find no food thereon, and their wine vats would be likewise empty.
3. Verse 3: "They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria."
 - a. Instead of faring sumptuously on the bounties of the Lord's land (Canaan), they would be taken away (cf. 2 Kings 17). Canaan was God's to give them; he took it from the Canaanites and gave it to Israel. But he did not give them an unconditional, never-ending title to the land. They received it on the condition of faithful obedience.
 - b. Egypt and Assyria are used interchangeably in the passage, not meaning that they are identical nations, but the treatment their forebears endured in Egypt, they would encounter in Assyria. The return to Egypt is a reference to a return to captivity and slavery, which would be their sorry state when Assyria took them.
 - c. In the bondage that was approaching, they would be forced to eat "unclean" things in Assyria. Compare:
 - 1) Ezekiel 4:13: "And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them."
 - 2) Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

- 3) 1 Kings 14:15: "For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger."
- 4) Hosea 8:13: "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt."
4. Verse 4: "They shall not offer wine offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD."
 - a. In Assyrian captivity, it would be impossible for Israel to offer acceptable sacrifices unto God; in fact, even in their own land, they could not do so, for their worship was directed to idols. Under the Mosaic arrangement, proper sacrifices could only be offered at the temple in Jerusalem, by the duly appointed priests.
 - b. Worshipping God ought not to be a mournful experience; it should be a reverent act, and offered with sincere feelings and motives of devotion; the result is an attitude of contentment and accomplishment. Worship should not bear us down, but lift us up in love for God, dedication to his service, and happiness to be his child.
 - c. But the Israelites could not offer acceptable sacrifices in captivity; and instead of building them up, their offerings would be to them as bread of mourning. That is, knowing their present circumstance, and realizing they had been rejected by the Lord, their disposition in worship would be as morose as one who mourns his dead loved one, and as palatable to them as food is to one in deep sorrow.
 - d. Their taskmasters in Assyria would feed them only as they fed their other livestock; only what was necessary to keep them alive and strong enough to work. They would have no interest in giving them unpolluted (kosher) food. Their food would not be such that could be accepted in God's house. The "bread for their soul" refers to the food that sustains life. Soul is often used in the Old Testament in reference to life.
5. Verse 5: "What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?"
 - a. Again speaking of their inability to offer acceptable sacrifices, Israel is asked how shall they keep the proper activities prescribed for solemn days.
 - b. They would not be able to observe the Sabbath day, or keep the Passover, or any of the other special days or sacrifices God had ordained. Their sins would lead to a complete alienation from God.
6. Verse 6: "For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles."
 - a. "The beautiful and pleasant things in which they had rejoiced would become the possession of their captors, and in their stead there would be the constant pricking and misery of nettles and thorns in their habitation" (Hailey, p.165).
 - b. Egypt was a despised figure to the Israelites, representing their former state of slavery in that pagan land. They would be gathered up by their new captors, and buried by the same. Memphis was a prominent city in ancient Egypt.
 - c. They would learn to appreciate the blessings of God, but only too late to do them any good. God had bountifully blessed them in Palestine, but the continuation of those rewards was conditioned on their obedience. If they had lived according to the Law, they could have stayed there, enjoying the bounty of God.
 - d. But now, because of their rebellion against God, he sent them into captivity, where their living conditions were awful. Their ivory couches in Samaria would be replaced by beds of thorns and nettles.
7. Verse 7: "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred."
 - a. The "days of visitation" is a term denoting the time of punishment, when God will recompense them according to their deeds. The change in their circumstances would be so pronounced that they would surely know it! The Lord describes the judgment in the present tense, as if it were already present.
 - b. The reason for their punishment and the kind of punishment they would receive are spelled out in 2 Kings 17:7-18: "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them

high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

- c. They refused the warnings issued through the many prophets sent to them; now they must suffer the prescribed penalty. God has issued many warnings regarding the punishment awaiting the unprepared at the end of life, but the great majority of mankind still ignore the warnings.
 - d. The false prophets told them only what they wanted to hear. Pleasant lies are often more desirable to men than unpleasant truths (Ezek. 13:10; Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Isa. 30:10; Mic. 2:11). These prophets were liars and foolish. Those who thought themselves to be spiritual were mad. They created hope where there was no hope short of true repentance; they promised peace, when no peace was possible. Their evil work only led Israel deeper into iniquity and greater hatred for truth and righteousness.
 - e. Think of the parallel situation present in today's religious climate. Teachers of error proclaim what the people want to hear. Several years ago, surveys were conducted among the general population, trying to discover what the average man wanted to find in religion and what he did not like. Based on this data, men have produced a system of religion that is very attractive to many. It promises peace, prosperity, and happiness without obedience to God's word, or at least with only a facade of compliance. Just enough truth is included to make the system seem to be correct, but in fact, what they follow is the will of man (Mark 7:7-13; Matt. 15:1-9, 13-14).
8. Verse 8: "The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God."
- a. True prophets were reliable watchmen, pointing out dangers and promoting truth and righteousness. But false prophets were like a snare used by the fowler: they were deceitful and hurtful—to the victim.
 - b. The snare entrapped the naive bird, leading it to its death; so also with the false prophet. He has no genuine love for the people or truth; his work is one that expresses hatred for those who are deceived by his smooth words.
 - c. Smooth promoters of false doctrine today are very adept at their work. Some of them may be sincere in thinking their doctrine will promote the best interests of their followers, but many are simply manipulating the people for their own selfish purpose. The teachers will not examine their doctrine in the light of God's word, and their disciples will not do so. Multiplied millions are being led to their doom!
 - 1) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - 2) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God

shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

- 5) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
9. Verse 9: "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins."
 - a. This is the fifth cause of Israel's downfall: the corruption that permeated them as individuals and as a society. At Gibeah, one tribe was almost destroyed because of wickedness (Judges 19,20). That was during a dark time in Israel's ancient history, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own mind (see Judges 21:25; 17:6).
 - b. As that ancient generation had corrupted itself, so the present generation had done so. As punishment was brought to bear upon the ancients, so Hosea's generation would face a judgment too horrible to aptly describe. Therefore, remember!
 - c. Our present generation is rapidly corrupting itself; even many in the Lord's church are doing so. How shall we escape the destruction God has planned for the ungodly if we ignore God's word! We will have no greater hope of doing so than the evil people in the world around us.
 - d. Compare: "For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:17-19). [Examine the context of this passage].
- B. Hosea 9:10-17: Israel Had Once Been Pleasing to God, but They Had Corrupted Themselves.
 1. Verse 10: "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved."
 - a. The Lord uses a figure of speech to illustrate his good pleasure in Israel at the first. It was like a hungry man who found a grape vine in the wilderness, or as the husbandman finding the first ripe fig of the season: it was a very happy time and furnished a pleasant feast.
 - b. God looked upon them with favor and mercy; he delighted in their obedience. But they soon lost that original standing.
 - c. They "went to Baalpeor" and corrupted themselves. Baalpeor was a place of sin and shame (Num. 25:1-9). Twenty-four thousand people were put to death for the evil they did on that occasion. "That shame" was the sinful conduct of the episode. Every sinner, unless he repents, will finally be brought to be ashamed of his conduct, and ruined by it.
 - d. Their conduct on that sorry occasion was produced by their love, but their love was misguided and wrong. In their worship of idols, they committed fornication with the Moabites by whose land they were passing at the time. By slaying 24,000 of the Israelites, the spread of the idolatrous practice was stayed for a while, but idolatry was fully stamped out in Israel during the Babylonian captivity.
 2. Verse 11: "As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception."
 - a. The glory that God gave to Ephraim would flee as a bird that suddenly takes flight. Ephraim had been fruitful, but now would be barren.
 - b. They were greatly blessed in Egypt with a prolific birthrate. The Egyptians felt threatened by the Israelites' ability to produce offspring at an alarming rate. But now due to their contamination with sin, there would be no conceptions, no growth in the womb, and no births.
 - c. He does not mean that there would be no births at all, but that they would not be as blessed in this capacity as they were before. The glory that would depart from them would adversely affect the conceptions, the wombs, and the birthrate.
 3. Verse 12: "Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!"
 - a. They would not be able to boast of their numbers as before. Even though they were able to produce children, they would be taken from them.
 - b. When God gives up on a nation, a generation, a society, or a person, all hope is gone despite any apparent success. No man can thwart God's ultimate will. The statement of this verse brings to mind Amos 5:19, where the certainty of God's judgment is illustrated in the man who escapes from a lion, only to meet a bear; or enters his own house where he thinks he has found safety, only to lean against the wall and be bitten by a snake. Truly, woe is upon a man from whom the Lord has departed!

- c. Idols were worshipped in some cases in an attempt to improve the birthrate. But God would see to it that the opposite effect would occur.
4. Verse 13: "Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer."
 - a. Tyrus is Tyre, a city on the Mediterranean Sea; it was in a pleasant location. It seemed secure and safe, but was not. They were protected on the west by the sea, and by mountains to the east. Sinful Tyre was unable to avoid her enemies once she had incurred the wrath of God. Ezekiel 26-28.
 - b. Ephraim was likewise in a pleasant place, but their children would be made victims of murderers. This took place in a literal sense when the Assyrians assaulted their nation, and slew them by the thousands.
 - c. Again, woe to the people who have provoked the opposition of the Almighty. And the shame and horror is made greater when one considers the fact that the mercy of God is freely offered to all who will submit to his will. Neither military might nor a strong economic base can deliver a nation or an individual from God's wrath.
5. Verse 14: "Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts."
 - a. This is a merciful prayer of Hosea for Ephraim. The best thing he could ask God for in their behalf was for their inability to produce and sustain children. It would be better for them and for any children that no child be born, so great was the horror of their coming punishment.
 - b. In the past they boasted of great numbers, and put their trust in the same, but this they could not do henceforth. They would either be barren or else lose their children to the enemy. "Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up" (Hosea 13:16).
 - c. Their former fruitfulness would be turned into barrenness; their glory would become shame. And they had only themselves to blame for this terrible change!
6. Verse 15: "All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers."
 - a. God calls attention to their evil deeds at Gilgal, and for their wickedness in other places and times; this kind of conduct was the heart of their problems.
 - b. Gilgal lay to the northeast of Jerusalem, in the Jordan valley. There, God had conferred upon Israel many blessings (Josh. 4:19-20; 5:9; 1 Sam. 11:14-15; Mic. 6:15). But now, idolatry of the sorriest kind was taking place there. Gilgal had become synonymous with idolatrous fornication. They had now become *Lo-ruhamah* ["without mercy"] and *Lo-ammi* ["not God's people"].
 - c. God now says he hates the Israelites because of their corrupted condition. He means, of course, that he does not hold them in a special relationship as before. We are told that Jacob loved Rachel and hated Leah, but only in the sense of that he loved Rachel more (Gen. 29:30-31). God said he loved Jacob, and hated Esau, but only in a particular sense was that true: he had chosen Jacob to be the forerunner of the Israelite nation and forebear of the Messiah, while rejecting Esau for that role (Rom. 9:13). We are told to hate our parents and love the Lord, but only in the sense that we are committed to serving the Lord at the expense of our parents' wishes, if their desires oppose God's.
 - 1) Matthew 10:37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
 - 2) Luke 14:26: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."
 - d. God did not seek their destruction, and he did not literally hate them.
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:31-32 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 3) John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
 - e. But he will not stand for sin in any man.
 - 1) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."
 - 2) Psalms 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

- 3) Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
 - 4) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁸
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 - 6) 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
7. Verse 16: "Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb."
 - a. The condition God describes is so certain that he speaks of it as if it has already taken place. They are smitten; their root is dried up; and they shall have no fruit. Even if they produce fruit (offspring), God would slay their fruit.
 - b. Their population would decrease as a result of God's punishment, and they would no longer be able to survive as a separate kingdom. Only a relative handful would survive the Assyrian invasion—to be carried into captivity. Only a remnant would return to their homeland.
 8. Verse 17: "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations."
 - a. This term "wanderers" was used in Genesis 4:14 (cf. Deut. 28:62-65). This happened in a real sense when they were taken into bondage and scattered through pagan nations. But the prophecy given here has an even more far-reaching application. From the time their great city was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 A.D. to the present, they have not had a country of their own. A small percentage of the Jews have been able to take up residence in Palestine, by virtue of the mandate of the United Nations, but the great majority of them are still scattered through the nations of the world.
 - b. This punishment was not an arbitrary action on God's part; rather, it was the just penalty for their rejection of him. They had been well-blessed by Jehovah, and had been told that the continuation of these bounties depended on their faithful adherence to his law.
 - c. But they had cast off God's law, and he would cast them away from him, to receive whatever hardship the pagan invaders would desire to bring to bear upon them.
 - d. Being cast off from God has consequences which are beyond comparison with any of the ordinary problems of life. Everyone on earth has to face the daily difficulties of living in an imperfect environment, but when God withdraws his special providence for a person or nation, no one can know what ordeals and deprivations await!
 - e. Consider the awful fate which has befallen the Jews from the time of their rejection of Jesus to the present (Matthew 24). Just think of how different their history could have been if they had been more open-minded to the truth. Think, also, how different could be the fate of any person who believes and follows the will of God today!

HOSEA 10

A. Hosea 10:1-3: Israel is an Empty Vine.

1. Verse 1: "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images."
 - a. Israel had wasted the prosperity of the land on selfish indulgences. They had used up their goods on themselves; they had squandered the fruit of the land on altars to their idols, and the good things of the land on images.
 - b. Canaan is aptly described in the Bible as "flowing with milk and honey." It was a very fertile and prosperous land (Num. 13:23). God had blessed it richly. Man often misuses God's bounties; certainly, the Israelites had done so. "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs" (Num. 13:23).
 - c. Instead of giving praise to God for these treasures and advantages, they squandered them on themselves. Thus, they were empty—in two senses. They were very shallow in the way they lived; and they had wasted their wealth.
 - d. What we spend, we use; what we save, we lose; what we give, we keep. Laying up treasure on earth is wasted effort; laying up treasure in heaven, can never be a fruitless endeavor.
 - 1) Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
 - 2) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
 - 3) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - e. We are made to shudder when we consider the awful fate that awaits our prosperous nation! The great majority of our fellow-citizens are living only for the moment, and wasting their time, their wealth, and their opportunities on useless pleasures.
 - f. Prosperity often leads to spiritual corruption, on the part of either an individual or a nation. Israel became sinful in proportion to her prosperity; the more she prospered, the more she sinned.
2. Verse 2: "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images."
 - a. The Israelites were divided in their religious devotions; they manifested an outward claim to serving God, while they actually served idols. Many today do likewise, by maintaining a profession of faith, but living in a way which denies the claim.
 - b. It is impossible to serve God and mammon at the same time (Matt. 6:24). God will not accept the service of a heart that is divided in its devotions and loyalties. One who would be a friend of the world, becomes the enemy of God (Jas. 4:4). One who is double-minded is unstable and unacceptable to God: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:5-8).
 - c. The consequence of Israel's double-minded condition would be the loss of their idols and altars, and everything that went with them. God would "behead" the images, as is indicated by the marginal rendering.
 - 1) 2 Kings 17:9: "And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."
 - 2) Psalms 80:8-10: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the

land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars."

3. Verse 3: "For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?"
 - a. They would learn too late that imitation "gods" and man-made kings are unable to do them any good. They had turned their backs upon the Living God, and now were without his help. Since all good and perfect gifts descend from God, their rejection of him was in effect an act of suicide.
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:31-32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
 - 2) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - 3) James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 - 4) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - b. They had a king up until the end of their nation, but he could do nothing to deliver them from the Assyrians. They were zealous in their religious professions up until the end, but what good could a lifeless idol do them?
 - c. Their fatal error was their self-delusion in their spiritual affairs. Their faith in God was diluted and perverted; their loss of faith led them to lose their reverence for the Almighty; when they lost their reverence (fear and awe) for God, they ceased to serve him after his appointed order.
 - 1) 1 Chronicles 15:13: "For because ye *did it* not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 3) Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - 4) Matthew 4:10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
 - d. Therefore, being zealous about one's religion avails nothing if that religion is not after God's due order. The Object of our worship, the sincerity of our worship, and the method of our worship are all essentials.
 - 1) John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
 - 2) Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 3) 2 John 1:9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

B. Hosea 10:4-8: Their Sins Would Bring Terror and Destruction Upon the Nation.

1. Verse 4: "They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field."
 - a. They had deceitfully entered into agreements, never intending to live up to their commitments. The agreements may have been those they entered into with Assyria and Egypt (cf. 5:13; 7:11), or perhaps devious business deals are meant.
 - b. Because of their crookedness in these covenants, judgment would spring up against them as hemlock. Hemlock was a bitter, poisonous plant that apparently could come up quickly. It contained an oily substance which could cause paralysis, convulsions, and even death. It was used to execute Socrates.
 - c. They swore falsely in entering into covenants, thinking that nothing was wrong with doing so. God expressed his strong disapproval of such tactics.
2. Verse 5: "The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it."

- a. Because the glory of the calves of Bethaven was taken away in being destroyed, the people would mourn, as would the priests who had formerly gloried in them. The golden calves would be carried off by the Assyrians (vs. 6).
 - b. Bethaven is a disdainful reference to Bethel, where one of the original images had been set up by Jeroboam. God could not refer to it under the circumstances with the official name, which meant "house of God," for they worshipped idols, not the Living God, there. Bethaven mean "house of vanity."
 - c. Critics assault this passage over the plural "calves." Although only one calf image was originally installed at Bethel, others may have been placed there later; or the merchants could have made and sold small replicas of the original, as the Ephesian silversmiths had done with Diana (Acts 19:23).
3. Verse 6: "It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel."
- a. The Assyrians would carry these idols back to their land, to present them as a gift to the king. If the idols were so powerful and worthy of reverence, why is it that they are so helpless against this sacrilege of the Assyrians? Why could they not defend themselves? Of course, they were nothing more than lifeless objects.
 - b. "King Jareb" may be a general reference to the kings of Assyria, without any specific allusion to any one of them in particular. The word Jareb carries the idea of avenger or defender (JFB, Vol. II, p.403). Coffman suggested that the name may be that of one of their kings before he ascended the throne. Hailey uses the terms "combat, striver, warrior" in defining the name.
 - c. The people and their nation would be greatly ashamed because of the failure of their idols to save them from enslavement. If Assyria could do as they pleased with the "gods" of the people, how helpless must the people themselves be!
 - d. But things could and would have been much different if Israel had remained loyal to God. The Almighty had not lost his power, for during the same invasion, when Assyria came against Jerusalem, he dispatched an angel to counteract the invading force; as a result, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died with the passing over of one mighty angel (Isa. 36:36).
4. Verse 7: "As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water."
- a. The erstwhile king of Israel would be cast off as if he were nothing more than foam on the top of water. Foam will last only momentarily before it dissipates. Some scholars say that the word translated "foam" could mean "a twig or chip of wood." The meaning is the same; the chip would be gone in a moment, for it would float off down the stream. Isaiah 8:7-8 uses the figure of a mighty river to describe Assyria, a river which would be able to sweep away all resistance before it.
 - b. The king, who was viewed by the people as powerful and worthy of obeying, would fade away in his helplessness before the mighty Assyrians. He would be utterly unable to defend the sinful nation. When the king was taken, the kingdom was destroyed.
 - c. Several of their kings were assassinated in a very short time. No long dynasty ever was established in the northern kingdom. And none of their kings met with God's approval. See chart on page 13.
5. Verse 8: "The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us."
- a. The places of vanity (Aven) were the locations where they performed their idolatrous acts. These high places would be destroyed, and thorns and thistles would grow upon the altars. The completeness of destruction is emphasized.
 - b. Their idolatry lay at the heart of their sinful conduct. If they had given up all their idolatry, they could have turned back to the Lord, and served him acceptably.
 - c. When their beloved idols were taken away and the high places destroyed, the people would despair. They had placed their hope on these gods, which were shown to be lifeless and helpless, and could offer no hope. In their despair, the people would cry for the hills and mountains to fall on them, to take their lives and thus save them from the horrors of Assyrian slavery. Compare:
 - 1) Revelation 6:12-17: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

- 2) Isaiah 2:17: "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day."
- 3) Luke 23:30: "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."
- d. When the final Judgment of God is revealed, every sinful heart will be filled with utter terror, and any fate would appear to be desirable to falling "into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).
 - 1) Hebrews 12:29: "For our God is a consuming fire."
 - 2) Philippians 2:9-11: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
 - 3) Romans 14:10-12: "...We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

C. Hosea 10:9-11: Israel Had Lived in Rebellion to God From Early Times.

1. Verse 9: "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them."
 - a. They are charged with sinning from the days of Gibeah, or as the ASV margin has it, "more than in the days of Gibeah." The reference is to the incident with the wife of a Levite (Judges 19), when the perverts of Gibeah assaulted and slew the wife of a traveller.
 - b. The battle that followed this episode did not destroy all the sinners from the nation. The evil that prevailed in Israel in that ancient day resulted in the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin, but the real problem remained—the disposition to rebel against God's will. From the days of Gibeah, Israel had persisted in sin.
 - c. In the first two encounters at Gibeah between Israel and the Benjamites, Israel was sorely defeated, but following the final battle, only 600 men of Benjamin remained. The fighting developed when the "sons of Belial" at Gibeah abused the woman of the story, and the people of Benjamin would not turn them over to the nation for proper punishment.
2. Verse 10: "It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows."
 - a. God would send judgment upon the present generation of sinners in Israel. The ASV says, "When it is my desire, I will chastise them...." He would bring it to bear at the best time; and the chastisement was certain to come.
 - b. "The people will be gathered against them." The people here would be the heathen nations which God would use to effect the punishment.
 - c. But this punishment would be when Israel had bound herself in their two furrows ("transgressions"—ASV). That is, when God had given them every opportunity and warning to repent, and they persisted in their rebellion, then he would send upon them this dire chastisement.
 - d. But what are the two transgressions (furrows)? One is likely their rejection of God as their king (1 Sam. 8). The other might be the sinful conduct associated with their idolatry. Coffman suggests that the second transgression was the practice of homosexuality on the part of some and the countenancing of this horrible matter on the part of the others. See Judges 19.
 - e. Many in our nation are clamoring for full rights of homosexuals to practice their vile way of life, without any limitation on their ability to contaminate society with their sordid conduct. God did not permit Sodom and her neighbors to continue their wicked way. And everywhere in the Bible where God addresses this subject, he condemns it in strong terms: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10; cf. Gal. 5:19-21). Yet there are many "preachers" who think that people can participate in this sin, and maintain a holy fellowship with God!
3. Verse 11: "And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods."
 - a. Ephraim (Israel) had been taught to tread out the grain on the threshingfloor; this she did willingly because of the personal benefits she reaped. She loved to do what would profit her, but that

willingness did not carry over into the spiritual realm, for she did not desire to obey the will of God.

- b. NKJ: "You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men."
- c. The ASV has this rendering: "And Ephraim is a heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the grain; but I have passed over her fair neck; I will set a rider upon Ephraim; Judah shall plow, Judah shall break his clods."
- d. "Ephraim, standing for Israel, is like a young cow that is taught to thresh, and that loved to thresh the grain because of the advantage to herself. The animal threshing the grain should not be muzzled; therefore, she could eat while doing the work (Deut. 25:4). But this would all be changed: Jehovah would put a heavy yoke upon her fair or beautiful neck and a rider would drive her. This would be when Israel is carried into 'Egypt,' the bondage that lay ahead" (Hailey, p.171).
- e. The sinfulness of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) will also be punished. Judah will be made to work, plowing and breaking up the clods. This is hard work, and represents the stern measures that they would suffer in the judgment of God.

D. Hosea 10:12-15: It Is Time To Seek The Lord.

1. Verse 12: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."
 - a. The Lord tells Israel that if they would sow righteousness, they would reap mercy. In other words, if they would obey the will of God, God would graciously bless them. God's requirements are not impossible to meet.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."
 - 2) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - 3) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 - b. Before a crop can be reaped, it must be planted. It is folly to think we can enjoy God's spiritual blessings apart from obeying his conditions (Gal. 6:7-8).
 - c. Land that has been allowed to lie idle and unused is fallow ground. Before a crop can be planted on such ground, it must be broken up (plowed). Thus, God instructed them to prepare the ground (their hearts) for the sowing of righteousness (obeying his will), and the harvest will be according to God's mercy (kindness).
 - d. The time is present for seeking the Lord. Any time one is separated from God is due time to turn to him. The day was far-spent in their case, for the time of punishment was drawing near when repentance would come too late to avert the judgment. God will give man time to change (at least in many cases); however, he is not obligated to anyone to do so, for when one rebels against God, that sinner has earned the penalty of his sin. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9); he takes no pleasure at all in the destruction of any soul (Ezek. 18:31-32); but his patience is limited by his sense of justice.
 - e. In the case of Israel, he promises that if they will sow righteousness, then will he shower upon them the spiritual fruit of righteousness. They had been neglectful of their obligation before God, and had better be quick to obey.
2. Verse 13: "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men."
 - a. The Lord here shows them the reason for his instruction of verse twelve. They had plowed wickedness and had reaped iniquity. They had eaten the fruit of falsehoods because they put their trust in their own wisdom and that of their leaders.
 - b. It is true that they had been active, but their labor had been in evil; consequently, the fruit of their labors was more wickedness (iniquity). Sin leads to more sin.
 - c. It is true that they had exhibited trust, but they had trusted their own thinking, and had given heed to the counsel of others who were no better able as guides than themselves. The Bible is filled with warnings against such (1 Cor. 1:18-31; Ex. 23:2).
3. Verse 14: "Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children."
 - a. A great tumult would arise in the land with the arrival of the Assyrians; the fortress cities would be destroyed as Shallam destroyed Betharbel. Shallam may be the Assyrian ruler, Shalmanezer; the place is unknown.

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- b. The gory details of the case were known to the Israelites, as was the cruelty of Assyria. They took pity on neither infant nor mother.
 4. Verse 15: "So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off."
 - a. Bethel had ceased to be the "house of God" and had become the seat of great evil and idolatry. What they had made Bethel to become, would be the cause of their doom.
 - b. They had demanded a king several generations earlier, and following the division of the kingdom, Israel had appointed kings of the worst sort. God would utterly cut off their king, and would do so early (in the morning).
 - c. God would accomplish this by the Assyrians; they were unbelievably cruel; they were very efficient. The repentance of Israel had better be done soon and full.

HOSEA 11

A. Hosea 11:1-4: Israel Was Not Grateful for God's Love.

1. Verse 1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."
 - a. The chapter as a whole emphasizes the great love God had for Israel. Even in the first verse, God reminded them of his love which he expressed by calling them up from Egypt, delivering them from their harsh bondage there.
 - b. The greatest love that could have been shown to those Israelite slaves would be to free them from their slavery (in Egypt), lead them through the wilderness unto the land of Canaan, generously and graciously providing for their needs as they made their journey. But even during those times of gracious blessings, Israel rebelled time and again.
 - c. Israel sustained two relationships with God, being depicted as God's wife and son. Compare: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23). Hosea pictures God and Israel in both relationships, thus poignantly showing God's enduring concern for his people. Yet they were ungrateful.
 - d. Matthew 2:14-15 shows a connection between the return of young Jesus from his Egyptian sojourn and that of Israel's escape from that pagan land: "When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."
 - 1) On the surface of the text, there does not seem to be any reference to Christ, but with Matthew's inspired interpretation of the passage, we can know that God fully intended to include that truth in Hosea's statement.
 - 2) This is called a "historical type," in which a fact of history (the deliverance of Israel from Egypt) is used to prefigure the return of Christ from that same land.
 - 3) Keil pointed out that Israel was able to develop into a nation, free from the evil influences of the pagan Canaanites, while in Egyptian bondage, and Christ was able to live and grow into childhood in Egypt, free from the evil designs of Herod.
2. Verse 2: "As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images."
 - a. The ASV gives a clearer translation: "The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images."
 - b. God gave them a set of rules by which he expected them to operate after they left Egypt, but their stubbornness and unbelief led them into rebellion against God. He sent many prophets to them to expose their errors and to call them back into a life of obedience.
 - c. Although God, through his spokesmen, warned and cajoled, they plunged deeper into sin, rejecting the threats and holding the promises God offered in contempt. They turned from serving the Living God, who had demonstrated his power and goodness to them in countless ways, to bow before lifeless objects which they knew had been man-made, and therefore without any being and power, either to bless or curse.
3. Verse 3: "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them."
 - a. God taught Ephraim the elemental matters of living, taking him by the hand to guide and support him. The picture is of a loving father holding his little son's arm, as he teaches him to walk, and guides him in a safe way.
 - b. God, as a loving Father, had taught Ephraim to walk, but Ephraim had used this skill to put distance between himself and God. This is like a mother teaching her daughter to cook, only to have the daughter try to poison the mother by using this cooking skill wrongly. Or, like a father who teaches his son to build a house, only to have the son use the hammer to try to injure the father.
 - c. Despite all the many cases in which God fed, clothed, guided, protected, and otherwise blessed Israel, they did not appreciate what he had done, and with ingratitude, quickly turned from God to idols.
4. Verse 4: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them."
 - a. The "cords of a man" and "bands of love" are parallel, and refer to the leading lines used to guide an animal in the right way. God had put lines on his people, not to press them into slavery to him, but to lovingly guide and direct them.
 - b. Israel sometimes thought that God meant them evil. They accused him of having led them from Egypt

into the wilderness to bring about their deaths, and the death of their little ones.

- 1) Deuteronomy 1:27: "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us."
- 2) Deuteronomy 9:28: "Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness."
- c. God proved to any fair-minded investigator that his intention was only for the best for Israel. He states here that he had lovingly guided them, that he had taken off the yoke of their Egyptian bondage, and had set food before them.
- d. The picture of the removal of the yoke from their jaws, depicts God removing the harsh restraints of their slavery, enabling them to take proper nourishment (the blessings which he would provide).

B. Hosea 11:5-7: The "Egypt" of Their Coming Bondage Would Be Assyria.

1. Verse 5: "He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return."
 - a. Ephraim has no reason to fear returning to Egyptian bondage; God will not send them back down there. However, he will cause them to be subject to the Assyrian king, to serve him.
 - b. As history reveals, the Assyrian army invaded Palestine, captured the Kingdom of the North (Israel), killed thousands, and carried a goodly number of the survivors into foreign lands as slaves.
 - c. The reason for this harsh treatment is their refusal to return to God. He gave them the law with all its rites, rights, and light; they rebelled. God sent prophets to instruct them back into the way of righteousness; they refused to return. Now they will have to face the harsh realities of Assyrian bondage—or death. They would be returned to bondage because they had rejected a return to the Lord.
2. Verse 6: "And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels."
 - a. The sword, with all that word entails, would descend upon Ephraim's cities. It would consume their branches; the ASV translates branches as "bars."
 - b. The "bars" were those devices which locked and secured the gates of the cities. The sword of the invading Assyrians would devour the bars, the cities, and the people. No kind or amount of human defenses could protect them once the shield of God's hand was withdrawn.
 - c. Foolish men think that they have provided their wealth, well-being, and station in life by their own power, and consider not that the hand of God has blessed them, and without it, they would have nothing, be nothing, and have hope for nothing!
 - d. Again, the reason is said to be due to the actions of the people themselves. They had accepted the wrong counsel. They had been taught the truth of God's will, and warned to turn back to the Lord, but they had chosen to heed the word of the false prophets among them. A pleasant lie is usually more desirable to the majority than an unpleasant truth.
3. Verse 7: "And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him."
 - a. This is the sixth cause of Israel's demise: They were bent on backsliding. They were determined to backslide. Despite God's goodness, exhibited for centuries and in countless ways, they had in their hearts a studied purpose of mind to resist God.
 - b. To backslide is "to turn back, or turn away" (see Young, p.67). Of course, Hosea is describing Israel's turning back to the old ways of sin and away from God.
 - c. Although the prophets God sent had called on Israel to return to the Most High, yet none would exalt God (by obeying his will). Their only hope of continued blessing and protection was to follow the will of God, but that was the one thing they were unwilling to do! This sounds like the great majority of our citizens today.

C. Hosea 11:8-11: God Found it Most Difficult to Give Up Israel.

1. Verse 8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."
 - a. This is the key verse in the book of Hosea. It aptly expresses the lovingkindness of Jehovah, and the great rending of his holy heart at the prospect of finally casting Israel to the wolves of Assyria.
 - b. Despite the cruelty and wickedness of Israel, the great love God had for them remained, undiminished in its fervency. How could God stand to give up Ephraim and deliver him to the vicious hand of the

- Assyrians! God pulls back the veil, as it were, to reveal the inner turmoil of his decision to punish Israel.
- c. Earthly parents have undergone the same kind of inner battle, knowing that the obstinate child must be punished, but scarcely having the heart to deliver the penalty.
 - d. How could God make Israel to be like Admah or Zeboim? These were two of the cities of the plain which were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23).
 - e. God says that his "repentings" ("compassions"—ASV) were kindled together within him. His merciful heart wanted to yet show compassion toward them, but his infinite justice demanded that they be punished. He shows that the decision was not one easily reached.
 - f. What a wonderful, loving God we serve! His heart is truly touched at our grief and trouble. He has no desire for anyone to be lost (2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 18:31-32). How can finite beings comprehend the infinite love of the Almighty God? How weak and imperfect is our perception of his great love!
 - 1) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - 2) Romans 8:32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"
 - 3) Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
2. Verse 9: "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."
 - a. The statement here seems to be made to the remnant who would survive the calamity. God would not carry his anger to its logical and full end; he would not destroy all of the Israelites.
 - b. "Jehovah's heart is represented as being heavy within Him; His compassions were deeply kindled. He will not completely exterminate Israel. Though they be brought to the brink of destruction as Benjamin had been (Judg. 19-20), or as the people in the wilderness had been (Exod. 32:10), Jehovah would not execute the fulness of His wrath by annihilating them as their deeds deserved. After the execution of the judgment now at hand in which they would not be completely destroyed, Jehovah would not destroy them again" (Hailey, p.174).
 - c. If a man had occupied God's place in reference to Israel, he might have utterly destroyed the people. But God is not man; he will spare a remnant to carry on the line. (Judah would continue, also). If God had entered "into the city," they most likely would have been thoroughly eradicated, both the nation and individuals. God did destroy the northern kingdom, but he preserved a remnant of the people.
 - d. God describes himself as the "Holy One" who resides in the midst of Israel. By this he indicates to them that his actions, although harsh, are necessary because of his infinite holiness. God's nature includes perfect justice, mercy, and holiness; his mercy tempers his justice, and his justice protects his holiness.
 3. Verse 10: "They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west."
 - a. The remnant are given reason for hope. God would raise his mighty voice, and the people would tremble. To tremble at God's voice is a unique way of saying they would obey his word.
 - b. "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word....Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isa. 66:2, 5). Although God is the one who created all things, yet he will show respect to those lowly humans who will humbly believe and obey his word.
 - c. The statement that God's people tremble "from the west" may be in reference to all those of the Christian Age who would obey the will of God. Israel lived in what we call "the east" and the majority of Christians live in the "west."
 - d. Another potential meaning might be that the remnant would one day return from captivity to the land of Canaan, journeying toward the west. The next verse may lend some credence to this view since those depicted are said to come out of Egypt and Assyria.
 4. Verse 11: "They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD."
 - a. The more likely meaning here is that those of the Christian Age would come to God from their slavery to sin, which is pictured as "Egypt" and "Assyria." The New Testament describes sin as a bondage.

- 1) John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - 2) 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
- b. However, another view could be that he is describing the Israelites who would be alive when the Jews were released from bondage by the decree of Cyrus: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:1-4; cf. 2 Chron. 36).
- c. God would make the returning people to reside once again in their former houses, and would enjoy the blessings of God. This would be true whether the reference is to those who obey the gospel of Christ, as well as of those Israelites who were able to return to Canaan following the decree of Cyrus; one is figurative, the other literal.
- d. Some commentators try to make this verse describe a literal return of the Jews to Palestine during a millennial, earthly reign of Christ upon earth. But the millennial theory is a false system, having no scriptural support; indeed, every major feature of millennialism is denied by plain teachings of the Bible. [See author's book on *Premillennialism*].
- D. Hosea 11:12: Israel's Despicable Deceit.
1. Verse 12: "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints."
 2. Hailey thinks this verse ought to be joined with the first six verses of chapter twelve, because of the nature of its statement. The next six verses depict the sinful conduct of Ephraim, which this verse also does.
 3. Ephraim surrounded God with lies. "Repeatedly this had been Jehovah's charge against them (4:2; 6:7; 7:1,3,13; 10:4,13)" (Hailey, p.175). One must truly be self-deceived if he thinks that he can deceive the Almighty! There is nothing that can be hidden from the all-seeing eye of Jehovah. Certainly, no human is able to "pull the wool" over the eyes of God.
 - a. Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - b. Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
 4. Although Israel was presently trying to deceive God, Judah was still acceptable to the Lord. But the ASV (margin) indicates that Judah "is unstedfast with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful." The ASV text reads the same as the KJV.
 5. Judah generally had kings which were approved of God, thus the rule there was acceptable to him, however the seeds of sin had been sown in Judah, and they too would be punished.

HOSEA 12

A. Hosea 12:1-6: Ephraim's Weak Devotion to God is Contrasted With Jacob's Strength.

1. Verse 1: "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt."
 - a. There is no possible nourishment to be gained by trying to eat the wind; this is especially so with the east wind. In Palestine, an east wind was extremely destructive since it came off the hot dry desert country to the east, and parched and wasted the crops of Canaan. The east wind could bring starvation to the population—there would be little or nothing to eat.
 - b. What Ephraim was trying to do was feed themselves on the east wind when they made alliances with Assyria and Egypt instead of trusting in God. As no one would be so foolish as to try to subsist on the wind, or to try to "top out" his livestock on the air, Ephraim was just as foolish for betting his future on heathen nations, and turning his back on the only one who could help him.
 - c. Palestine was a land that was noted for its olive oil. Much of this produce was sent to Egypt in a feeble attempt to curry favor with that pagan nation. Hosea equates this folly with feeding on the wind. The figure in regards to the east wind is rendered "followeth after the east wind" in the ASV. The idea may be to picture Ephraim as trying to "ride herd on the east wind."
2. Verse 2: "The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him."
 - a. God said he also had a controversy (a lawsuit) to pursue with Judah. All of his attention had not been directed toward the Northern Kingdom; he has seen the folly developing within the Southern Kingdom.
 - b. Judah would be punished with justice that would issue from God's perfect Judgment Bar. This truth is presented many times in the Bible. What man does in this life is noted by Jehovah, and will be judged in the last day.
 - c. Similar thoughts about the controversy God has with his people are expressed also in Hosea 4:1 and Micah 6:2.
 - 1) Hosea 4:1: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."
 - 2) Micah 6:2: "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."
3. Verse 3: "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God."
 - a. There seems to be an interplay in the chapter in which God switches from the real Jacob to his descendants. The descendants of Jacob are identified in verse two as Jacob, but in this verse the real person Jacob is clearly meant.
 - b. In the delivery of the twins, Esau was born first, but then Jacob took hold of Esau's heel (Gen. 25:24-26). This became a symbol of his superior standing with God, for the Lord had selected Jacob over Esau to be the one through whom to develop the Israelite nation, through which he would send the Messiah into the world (Romans 9).
 - c. Jacob had power with God. This was so despite his early character, for which he was well-named. Jacob means to supplant, to trip up. He had "tripped up" or "supplanted" Esau; he and his mother used trickery to get Isaac to confer the blessing on this younger son. But his life was filled with many disappointments and tragedies, which worked together to bring about a change in Jacob, and thus put him in good standing before God.
 - d. The strongest nation or most powerful man on earth cannot sway the will of God, but the prayer of a contrite individual can cause God to alter his intention. When Israel sinned, God told Moses of his will to destroy the whole group, and to establish a nation on the lineage of Moses (Ex. 32). Moses' plea for Israel was answered. David numbered the nation, contrary to God's will, which caused the Lord to tell the king of his intention to punish the people. David interceded in their behalf, and the hand of the avenging angel was stayed (1 Chron. 21).
4. Verse 4: "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us."
 - a. This is a reference to the occasion when Jacob, on his return from Padan-Aram, wrestled all night with an angel (Gen. 32:22ff). Prevailing over the angel, Jacob's name was significantly changed to Israel ("Prince of God"). Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, his descendants are referred to as "the

- children of Israel."
- b. Hosea, an inspired prophet, reported a detail not given in Moses' original account, namely that Jacob wept as he made supplication during his encounter with the angel. Later inspired men were often given information not previously related in the ancient text.
 - 1) Hebrews 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."
 - 2) Jude 1:14: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints."
 - c. Jacob pleaded with tears that the angel bless him and that he reveal his name to Jacob. Hosea's allusion to this experience of Jacob was intended to encourage the Israelites of his generation, who had gone astray from God, to sincerely supplicate God for his help. This was their only hope.
 - d. It was at Bethel that God had earlier given Jacob a vision, and made promises to him regarding his posterity (Gen. 28:13-15) and where he was instructed to build an altar (Gen. 35:1ff). Hosea describes the communication God had with Jacob at Bethel was with "us." He spoke to "us" (the Israelites) in the sense that he spoke with their progenitor. What God promised to Jacob affected his descendants.
 - e. No mere man, even if he were the strongest man ever to live, could have prevailed over an angel who used his full power. Angels blinded the evil men of Sodom (Gen. 19); one angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isa. 36:36). This angel showed his superior power by throwing Jacob's thigh out of joint by a simple touch. More was involved than what is shown on the surface in this story.
5. Verse 5: "Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial."
- a. Jacob's relationship with God was what it ought to be, and what Israel's should and could be. "The power was in the name of Jehovah, the God of hosts, and was to be laid hold on by weeping and making supplication before Him, as in the case of Jacob" (Hailey, p.176).
 - b. The Eternal One is self-sustaining; his name is everlasting; his being is unchangeable; he is his own memorial.
 - c. "His unchangeable faithfulness to His promises flows from His unchangeable being or self-existence, which is the root-meaning of Jehovah. As He was unchangeable in His favour to Jacob, so will He be to His believing posterity. Whenever Lord in the English version is printed in capitals, it stands for Jehovah in the Hebrew. Whenever it is printed in small type, Lord, it stands for the Hebrew Adonai, Master or Lord. The exact vowels of the word JHVH are uncertain, and therefore the pronunciation uncertain. Christ has sanctioned the substitution of Lord for JEHOVAH in Matt. 4:7, compared with Deut. 6:16; and Matt. 22:44, compared with Ps. 110:1...." (JFB, II, p.500).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 6:16: "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah."
 - 2) Psalms 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."
 - 3) Matthew 4:7: "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
 - 4) Matthew 22:44: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"
 - d. "The sacred Hebrew Tetragrammaton, the mystic four-letter word used of the Deity, is composed of the four Hebrew consonants YHWH, usually translated Jehovah in the ASV (Exodus 17:15). The true and original pronunciation of it has been totally and completely lost. That loss came about because the Jews took a very strict and almost fanatical view of the third commandment (Exodus 20:7), and decided not to pronounce the name at all. That way they could keep from taking God's name in vain! This occurred about 300 B.C. When they came to that word in reading, they pronounced the word 'Adonai,' meaning Lord; and thus when the LXX was translated, they rendered it 'Lord,' which is the rendition found in the AV. The ASV renders it Jehovah. The Tetragrammaton is derived from a root word, meaning 'To be,' and is related to 'I am that I am' of Exodus 3:14. The word means that God is the Absolute, the Uncaused One, holy and eternal" (Coffman, V.2, pp.196f).
6. Verse 6: "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."
- a. God calls on Israel to come back to him, and obtain the blessings that he had always intended that they receive, blessings which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had obtained by walking in harmony with God's will.
 - b. The Israel of Hosea's day did not know God. Their conduct had alienated them from God. Only by returning to the "Old Paths" of righteousness could they obtain what Jacob had enjoyed. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16).

- c. He calls on them to keep mercy and judgment, or as the ASV renders it, "Keep kindness and justice." Their dealings with their fellow man were wrong; they must show mercy and do justice.
- d. He also calls on them to wait on God continually. To wait on God continually means to serve him without interruption.
- e. This verse is very much like Micah 6:8, which contained in a brief statement, all of Israel's duty to God: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The same in principle is all that God requires of us. When we see our obligations to God reduced to their bare essentials, our duty does not seem so imposing.

B. Hosea 12:7-14: Ephraim Had Corrupted Himself, Despite His Claims to the Contrary.

1. Verses 7-8: "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin."
 - a. Although "he" is not identified by name in the text, Ephraim is the culprit. He as engaged in merchandising with false scales; one he uses when he purchases something (it weighs light); the other he uses in selling (it weighs heavy).
 - b. One can oppress another in more ways than by afflicting him physically. It can be done by overcharging, or depriving a poor man of his buying power by fraud, thus despoiling him and his family of necessities.
 - c. The word "merchant" was the word used to denote those Canaanites who commonly did what Hosea charges Israel with doing. The term had special application to the merchants of Phoenicia. Homer (Odyssey, XIV, 290,291) describes the Phoenicians as being versed in vile arts and of an insidious mind (Coffman, p.198).
 - d. Ephraim boasted of having become rich by his shrewd business dealings, but no one could point out any sin on his part. He erred in his self-righteousness, in his crooked business operations, and in the covetousness which lay behind his labors. He also violated the provision of the Law that forbade his corrupted activities.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:36: "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 25:13: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 25:15: "*But* thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."
 - 4) Proverbs 16:11: "A just weight and balance *are* the Lord's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work."
 - e. Pulpit Commentary offers this:
 - 1) "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin. And I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast." Here we have -
 - 2) Fortunes Badly Used. "And Ephraim said, I am become rich, I have found me out substance." Here is a fortune held and no doubt employed in the spirit of haughty egotism. It is all "I have become rich, I have found me out substance."
 - 3) Here there is no recognition of human co-operation. No man comes in possession of wealth without the efforts of some men either living or dead. Wealth, whoever holds it, is the result - in most, perhaps in all cases - of the efforts of a large number of human workers. But the possessor oftentimes takes no note of this. He thinks only of himself. He does not think of the toil, the sweat, the exhaustion of those who have helped to put it into his hand.
 - 4) Here there is no recognition of Divine agency. All fortunes roam of God - out of his materials, out of his seasons, out of the activity of his creatures. But there is no recognition of him here. "I have become rich, I have found me out substance." How many fortunes are thus held and employed in England this day - held and employed in a haughty egotism!
 - 5) Here is fraud. "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand." The hand of fraud has ever been, and still is, alas! the most active of all agencies in the erection of fortunes. There is deceit everywhere. In all fabrics, groceries, trade commodities. Deceit in making, deceit both in the buying and the selling. Were all the fortunes in England that have been built up by deceit to be destroyed this day, the whole human world would be startled with the terrible crash. The event

- would be as the hurling of the Himalaya into the sea, causing the billows to roar on every shore.
- 6) Here is oppression. "He loveth to oppress." Indeed, fraud is oppression in some form or other. What unrighteous exactions there are in the building of many fortunes! Go to the pits of mine-owners, to the factories of manufacturers, to the warehouses of merchants, to the vessels of ship-owners, and everywhere you will meet men and women groaning under the oppression of those for whom they are building up fortunes.
 - 7) Here is cunning. "In all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin." Ephraim - this typical fortune-maker - took such care to conceal all that was unfair and nefarious in his operations that he was certain no wrong could be found in his doings. Wrong there was, he knew, but he was careful that none should discover it. By plausible and well-guarded statements, by legal formulae, by "board" resolutions, he tools that he can say, "In all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me." Who has not seen many men of this type? - many who have made a fortune by a swindle, but have so guarded the transaction that they have clapped their hands and said, "None will ever find it out."
2. Verse 9: "And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast."
 - a. The Lord reminds them that he is the God who brought them forth from the bondage of Egypt. Even a quick reference to Egypt would automatically bring to their minds the plagues, the signs, and the other miraculous works involved in bringing about their release.
 - b. God implies that they would still be in slavery to the Egyptians if he had not taken the direct action he took. They should have felt a deep and abiding sense of gratitude toward their Heavenly Benefactor.
 - c. The material prosperity they now enjoyed was not of their own doing; God had provided blessings to them just as he had delivered their ancestors from Egypt.
 - d. They were ungrateful and unfaithful. God would make them dwell in tabernacles as they once did when observing the Feasts of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-41). For seven days, they were to live in booths made from boughs of trees, as part of the rites of that feast; this was to remind them of their lowly beginnings, and to cause them to be grateful for what God had given them.
 - e. Since the Northern Kingdom had rebelled against God, he would cause them to again dwell in tabernacles (temporary abodes)—in the land of Assyria, where they would be enslaved.
 3. Verse 10: "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets."
 - a. God had tried to bring them back to the way of righteousness by sending to them prophets, who delivered many visions and used similitudes, and who otherwise taught and guided the people.
 - b. God spoke through the prophets, and was the source of the visions. The similitudes were parables and allegories, such as the figurative use of Gomer in Hosea's case.
 4. Verse 11: "Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields."
 - a. ASV: "Is Gilead iniquity? they are altogether false; in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field."
 - b. He asks them to say whether there was any iniquity in Gilead. One of the cities of refuge was located in that area (Josh. 20:8); it was known for a healing balm produced there (Gen. 37:25; Jer. 8:22).
 - c. Instead of that place being known as a place of safety, it harbored those who served idols in every abominable fashion. Rather than producing a healing balm, it was now productive of much evil, and thus condemnation.
 - d. In Gilgal had been erected the memorial stones after Israel crossed into Canaan (Josh. 4:19-24). But instead of it being remembered as a place where the reproach of Egypt was finally removed, it was now the home of idolatry, where God was ignored and the reproach of sin was brought upon Israel.
 - e. Is there any sin at Gilead and Gilgal? No one could correctly say there was not. God affirmed that there were so many altars devoted to idolatry there that they were as plentiful as clods in the furrows of a fresh-plowed field.
 5. Verse 12: "And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep."
 - a. Reference is here made to Jacob (the man); he had fled from the wrath of Esau, going into Syria, where he served fourteen years for Rachel.
 - b. He served the first seven with the promise he would be given Rachel as his wife, but her father deceived him, giving him Leah instead. Jacob agreed to serve an additional seven years for Rachel,

and that agreement was consummated. Jacob was faithful to his commitment to Laban; and God was faithful to his commitment to Jacob.

- c. Hosea's point here is to remind the Israelites that their esteemed forebear was once a lowly servant, working for Laban, an idol worshipper. God protected, guided, and blessed Jacob, but part of that time he operated as a servant. This seems to be a reminder to Hosea's contemporaries of the lowly nature of their forebear, for the purpose of engendering humility and gratitude in them.
6. Verse 13: "And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved."
 - a. God had blessed them by sending prophets to guide them out of their evil ways; he had blessed Jacob, their ancestor; and he had send a prophet (Moses) to bring their ancestors out of Egyptian slavery.
 - b. God had preserved their predecessors. God had been good to the people of Israel, from their humble beginnings until the present.
7. Verse 14: "Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him."
 - a. NKJ: "Ephraim provoked Him to anger most bitterly; Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, And return his reproach upon him."
 - b. Despite the longsuffering provisions of God for Ephraim, they had provoked him to anger by their continual rebellion. Instead of being grateful and faithful to God, Israel had turned their backs upon him. They thought that God's provisions were unconditional; that they could do as they pleased, and God would still bless them.
 - c. Their attitude sounds very much like that of those who think God is all love and no justice, and of those who follow the so-called new hermeneutics which supposes that God's word is not to be taken seriously. A brief look at ancient Ephraim shows the fallacy of both of these evil doctrines.
 - d. Their rejection of God was a bitter pill. It was unpleasant to God to turn them over to the oppressors, and it was certainly unpleasant to them to feel the wrath of God as visited upon them at the hand of the Assyrians. They would be required to pay the penalty for their forsaking God.
 - e. God plainly stated here that their blood would be upon their own head. They had transgressed, and God would not overlook their guilt. A later generation of the Israelites asserted their willingness for the blood of Christ to be upon them; they said they were ready to bear whatever consequences might come for their complicity in the condemnation and death of the Savior. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:24-25).

HOSEA 13

A. Hosea 13:1-3: The Cause For Israel's Plunge into Sin.

1. Verse 1: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."
 - a. The KJV indicates the humility of Ephraim when he was in good standing with God. The ASV renders it so that Ephraim's powerful influence was expressed when he spoke: "When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."
 - b. With the KJV rendition, the statement says that Ephraim exalted himself before God when he spoke with trembling; that is, when he expressed humility. When Saul was to be appointed king, he hid himself from the people (1 Sam. 10:22). Later, when he violated God's will, his error is shown to be of pride (1 Sam. 15:17). The same was true with the nation of Israel. When they trembled at the word of Jehovah, God was well-pleased with them; but when they lost their reverence for the Almighty and turned to their own devices, they committed sin and died.
 - c. Taking the ASV rendition, the statement teaches that when Ephraim, in their God-given strength, spoke, they caused trembling on the part of others; and when they maintained their strength, they (the tribe of Ephraim) were exalted among the rest of the nation. But when they turned to idols, they committed spiritual suicide.
 - d. The KJV is preferred by this writer. The ASV calls for an unwarranted switch from the nation of Israel (called Ephraim by Hosea) to the tribe. It was not only the tribe of Ephraim that turned to idolatry, but the entire northern nation. However, the Northern Kingdom was never on an acceptable footing with God, not from the time their first king led them into idolatry. If Ephraim was ever in good standing with God, it was before the division of the kingdom.
2. Verse 2: "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves."
 - a. Ephraim had accelerated in his deep plunge into sin. When one steps into sin, that transgression calls for another and another, until the sinner is so contaminated by living in sin that he can scarcely make a change for the better. This is the usual pattern. Only those who will obey the gospel can make the change from sin to holiness.
 - b. The Northern Kingdom started out with only two idols, but before long, the number had multiplied. When they first started worshipping the golden calves Jeroboam had made, their worship was likely uncontaminated with the fornication that later developed. But one step in the wrong direction leads to a second, and a third, etc.
 - c. They not only participated in the vilest forms of idol worship, but they even became adept and ready to bring others into the same practice. To kiss the calves was a term indicating the worship of the calves. They called on others who wanted to offer some kind of sacrifice, to kiss the calves.
3. Verse 3: "Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney."
 - a. Because of their unchanging and unchangeable lifestyles, God would punish them as he saw fit. Their punishment would be swift in coming, and would be quick and complete in its effect.
 - b. As a morning cloud and the early dew passes away quickly, so would their nation; as the chaff that is driven from the threshingfloor by the whirlwind, and as the smoke arises through the chimney and is dissipated, so Israel would be taken away, to be seen no more.

B. Hosea 13:4-8: The Punishment Was Due Because It Was God Who Was Offended.

1. Verse 4: "Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me."
 - a. The Lord identifies himself again as the one who had brought them from Egypt. When one thinks of the Exodus, he immediately conjures up pictures of the supernatural wonders God performed in gaining their release. Without the miracles, there would have been no Exodus.
 - b. God reminds them of his proscription against idols. Jehovah is to have the fullness of their devotion; he will not share it with anyone or anything. This does not mean God is guilty of petty jealousy; it means that he demands full allegiance from those who serve him. He knows that no one can be prepared for heaven who does not develop this spirit of devoted obedience.
 - c. It is to man's benefit to serve God wholeheartedly. There is no deliverance without him. If anyone desires providential help here and heaven after a while, it is only through obedience to the God of

heaven that such may be obtained.

2. Verses 5-6: "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."
 - a. God had been with Israel in the wilderness, to provide for their needs; he was with them in the land of drought, to provide them with water.
 - b. According to their need, so was his provision. He gave them bread from heaven, water from a rock, guidance, clothing, shelter, protection, and instruction. While they walked in obedience, there was no enemy who could harm them, they had no need that was left unfilled.
 - c. But in the face of God's bountiful provision, Israel was lifted up in pride, and forgot the Lord. When a present danger passes, one can quickly forget the one who aided him. This is what Israel did.
 3. Verses 7-8: "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them."
 - a. God brings up the threat of punishment again. He did not punish them directly by a display of his personal power, but used an ungodly nation which had been allowed to develop for such a purpose. Israel fulfilled Deuteronomy 32:15: "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."
 - b. The Lord describes the judgment that he will bring upon them as their being attacked by a lion; the enemy would stalk them as a leopard stalks its prey. The punishment will be as vicious and unrelenting as to be set upon by a bear who has lost her cubs.
 - c. So severe would be the punishment, it would affect the caul of their heart (the fatty tissue that surrounds the heart)—the penalty would be deeply felt.
 - d. They would be devoured as a lion devours its prey; they would be torn as by a wild beast.
- C. Hosea 13:9-14: Their Rebellion Led to Destruction, but God Offers to Ransom Them.
1. Verse 9: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."
 - a. The people of Israel could blame only themselves for the disaster they were about to face. They had, in a real sense, destroyed themselves.
 - 1) Hosea 8:7: "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up."
 - 2) Hosea 10:13: "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men."
 - b. When a man or a nation severs his ties with God, he casts himself adrift on a sea that can only bring disaster—individually and nationally. Compare: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant" (Prov. 9:17).
 2. Verses 10-11: "I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."
 - a. This is an important verse. The entire period of Israel's monarchy was a time of apostasy. God allowed them to have a king (1 Sam. 8) only when they demanded one; and their demand indicated an unwillingness on their part to have God as their King. They wanted to be like the nations around them, which was a direct violation of God's plan for them to be different.
 - b. While there were individuals who were well-pleasing to God during that period, the nation itself was out of step with the will of God. During this dark age, God overlooked certain things (Acts 17:30), but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Many think they can find approval for instrumental music in worship by appealing to the fact that David used them (Ps. 150; Amos 6:5). But this was one of the things which God "winked at" in that long-ago age; today, we must have the authority of Christ, whose will is expressed in the New Testament, for everything we teach and practice in religion (Col. 3:17).
 - c. God gave them a king in his anger, and when the time was ripe, he removed the king in his wrath. Saul was the first king; he was appointed contrary to God's wishes. God warned in the days of Moses that the time would come when they would demand a king; he sternly forewarned them that their demand would lead to great trouble (Deut. 17).
 - d. None of the kings of Northern Israel had the approval of God; all of them were wicked, and none of them was able to establish a genuine dynasty.
 - e. When the Israelites returned from Babylonian captivity, the Northern Kingdom would never exist again as a separate nation. And the nation would never again have an earthly king to reign over them,

as in the days of David.

- f. Despite all of the inner trouble in the kingdom, there were still some who remained faithful, during the time of Elijah: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 18:18).
3. Verse 12: "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid."
 - a. Ephraim had claimed to be guilty of no sin. God knew all their wicked actions. They might be able to conceal their iniquity from other men, but God knew the truth.
 - b. The Lord had bound up the record of their sinful conduct, as in a cloth, to preserve it for future punishment. Do you remember the time when kids, and some adults, bound up their coins in a handkerchief to keep from their being lost? If your pocket had a hole in it, this would keep the coins from falling through.
4. Verse 13: "The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children."
 - a. A pregnant woman knows of the travail that is to come upon her in the near future. She knows the fact, but she may not know the exact time.
 - b. God is informing Ephraim that they have a day of reckoning awaiting them, in which a painful penalty will be imposed on them; they may not know the exact time, but he tells them that the time is coming.
 - c. "The figure of a travailing woman is common to the Scriptures. The sorrows and pains as of childbirth are upon the nation; however, the picture is that of a woman unable to perform the act. When the birth is retarded, the life of both mother and child is endangered. The prophet then shifts from the woman in pain to the child in the mouth of the womb about to be born. He should not tarry long at the opening of the womb because of this danger" (Hailey, p.181).
5. Verse 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."
 - a. God promises to ransom them from the power of death. This is an assurance that there will be a remnant of them to be delivered from the coming captivity, so as to preserve their seed. It would be like a resurrection from the grave (Ezek. 37).
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Paul used similar words to those of our text to teach a great lesson on the resurrection. As the promise of the resurrection sustains us in hope, so the promise God gave the Israelites would be a source of hope to the faithful later on.
 - c. God does not promise them that captivity would not come; but he holds out hope for the future. He would not renege on his promises to Abraham and others.
 - d. God would be a plague to the death (their captivity); he would be the means to its destruction. He would not change from this commitment (i.e., he would not repent). The result of this would be the freedom to return to their land, but this fulfillment was yet many years in the future, just as the calamity itself was still in the future.

D. Hosea 13:15-16: A Further Promise of Punishment For The Corrupted Nation.

1. Verse 15: "Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels."
 - a. Despite being fruitful and well-blessed with material goods, God would send upon Ephraim an east wind which would dry up the springs and other sources of water. His bountiful plenty would cease; his land would become desolate; he would lose all of his treasures and goods.
 - b. The east wind in Palestine came from the desert country lying to the east; coming from a hot and dry land, the wind would likewise be hot and dry; it would quickly dry up streams and so-torture the crops that they would die. An east wind spelled disaster to the inhabitants. All the things that they held dear would be lost.
 - c. In the fulfillment, the Assyrians would despoil the land of its bounties; they would rob the people, and destroy many of them in the fighting.
2. Verse 16: "Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up."
 - a. Their capital city, Samaria, where the king resided, would be made desolate. This city was the social and economic center of the nation. The high society types and tycoons would have mansions there.
 - b. Because they, as individuals and as a nation, had rebelled against God, he must send punishment upon them. They had had sufficient time and occasion to repent, but had refused to do so. What followed was of their own doing.

- c. The Lord describes some of the most horrendous actions of a cruel invader. Many people would be slain by the sword; their infants would be dashed to pieces; women with child would be ripped open.
- d. Perhaps an even more severe fate awaited those who survived these atrocities. They would be captured and carried off into captivity to serve as slaves to the Assyrians. Ancient records depict the Assyrians carrying off their captives, with hooks in their lips and noses.



In this picture, the prisoners lips are hooked and held by a rope and the king stabs the eyes out of the captives.

Examples of Assyrian Brutality Towards Conquered People



Impaled prisoners

HOSEA 14

A. Hosea 14:1-3: Israel Is Instructed To Turn Back To The Lord.

1. Verse 1: "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."
 - a. The theme of this last chapter of Hosea is a plea for Israel to return to the Lord. To do so, they must repent. They must understand their true conditions, and commit themselves to make the proper change; and they must follow through with the intention.
 - b. The very plea shows that they had the opportunity and privilege of returning to God. He would not hold out to them a hope if there were no hope. The passage also indicates that a child of God can so sin that he will be lost unless he repents.
 - c. Their iniquities had caused them to fall. Fall from what? Fall into what? They fell into condemnation, a condition they did not have before the fall. When they went into a life of sin, they fell. Now, they were on the verge of falling into abject destruction as a nation.
 - d. It was God's will that they change, for he had no desire to punish them and took no pleasure in seeing them suffer. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:31-32). Ezekiel's statement was made to those Jews who were now in captivity at Babylon; though in exile, they were still in rebellion against God.
2. Verse 2: "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."
 - a. He wanted them to confess their guilt, affirm their repentance, and then praise God with their lips. Forgiveness, healing, and blessings are promised. Here is one of the many cases in Hosea which expresses God's merciful kindness.
 - b. God instructs them to prepare the proper words in their minds, and turn to the Lord to speak these words of penitence. They are told to ask him to take away their iniquity and receive them back graciously.
 - c. A play on words is used in the latter part of the verse. They had sacrificed to the golden calves; they had "kissed" the calves. "...Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips" (ASV). The calves of our lips is roughly equivalent to "the fruit of the lips" (Heb. 13:15).
3. Verse 3: "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."
 - a. Asshur is Assyria. Ephraim had tried to make an alliance with Assyria, to avoid becoming their victim. They had tried the same with Egypt, since they were threatened from that direction, also. But no alliance could save them.
 - b. In the setting of the present text, they are able to see the futility of preserving their nation by working out a treaty with the enemy. They perceived that military strength could not deliver them. By affirming that they would not "ride upon horses," they were saying they would not rely on military power to be saved.
 - c. In this setting, they had also learned that the idols they worshiped could not save them. These gods were nothing more than the work of their own hands.
 - d. At this stage of things, they had learned that only God could show mercy and offer help. However, by the time the nation came to this realization, it was too late.

B. Hosea 14:4-8: Jehovah Promises To Pardon and Restore Them.

1. Verse 4: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him."
 - a. In the scene depicted, God promises to pardon them and to love them freely. His anger had cooled toward them; they had been sufficiently punished; now he would help.
 - b. The application may be made to Israel in the land of captivity; they had tasted the wrath of God, which was brought on by their rebellion. The survivors would see the error of their ways, and turn back to the Lord. He would give them the promise of a return to the land, where they would not serve idols, but God. The initial meaning is to old Israel, but the primary application is more likely to the church.
 - c. The application may be made to spiritual Israel, the church of Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16). In Christ, pardon for sin is offered; spiritual healing is made available to all.
 - 1) Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which

is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God."

- 2) Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."
 - d. These two possible interpretations apply also to the remaining verses of the chapter. What is definitely not in view here, is the false doctrine that the Messiah would one day establish an earthly kingdom.
2. Verses 5-6: "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."
 - a. God's blessings are portrayed as the pleasant things of nature. The dew of the morning gives life-sustaining and refreshing moisture to the earth; God would be like dew to the people described.
 - b. Israel would grow (blossom) as the lily, and set his roots in Lebanon. This Israel is more likely the church or spiritual kingdom of Christ. The beauty of those in Christ is depicted as the lily (cf. Matt. 6:28-29); the stability and durability of Christians are as the cedars of Lebanon.
 - c. This new Israel would spread his branches, and his beauty will be as that of the olive tree, and his smell as that of Lebanon. The olive tree was a valuable tree, its beauty being seen in its produce. The smell of cedars is very pleasant; almost everyone concurs. Israel would be as pleasantly appointed spiritually as these literal things are to our earthly senses.
3. Verse 7: "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."
 - a. The descriptions of the restoration of Israel form a beautiful picture of the gospel age; the restoration of Israel is the type; the gospel system is the antetype.
 - b. Those who would dwell under the shadow of God's protection and influence will return. They will return to God, and rely on him to bless and help. The initial application can be made to Israel's return to their land under the decree of Cyrus, but the real meaning has to do with the return of alien sinners to the Lord. All accountable people fall short of God's glory by committing sin (Rom. 3:23), but salvation is offered to all who will return to him.
 - c. Those who return are to be blessed. These blessings are depicted as the reviving of corn, the growing of the vine, and as the pleasant smell that flows from Lebanon.
 - d. Only in a limited way could this depiction be applicable to the restoration of old Israel to Canaan. In reading the history of the return as related by Ezra and Nehemiah, we learn that they met with much trouble. But God was with them, and saw to it that their missions were accomplished. Christians, especially those of the first century, met with many troubles; but God had blessed them richly in spiritual blessings, and even though they gave their lives for the gospel, there awaited for them in heaven an enduring reward, far surpassing the troubles of this life: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).
4. Verse 8: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found."
 - a. When Israel returned from captivity, they were never again plagued by idolatry. The lesson was severe, but effective. They gave up their propensities toward such things. Christians are warned against all kinds of idolatry. The New Testament even equates covetousness with idolatry, and both are prohibited.
 - 1) Ephesians 5:5: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
 - 2) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"
 - b. The words spoken here are put in Ephraim's mouth; what is expressed would be the attitude he would have after the captivity and restoration. What is said is also true of those who obey Christ; they will not worship idols.
 - c. God then states that he has heard and seen Ephraim; and he will now be to Ephraim like a green fir tree; he will provide for them.

C. Hosea 14:9: Who is Wise?

1. Verse 9: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."
2. Keil observed that this verse is the epilogue of the entire book. It is a fitting conclusion to the great prophet's writings.
3. Who is wise, so that he shall understand the things included in the book? "The fear of the LORD is the

beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9:10).

- a. One is wise if he can see the need to obey the will of God, holding him in reverence and love. The greatest dread of a wise man is the prospect of doing something that might be displeasing to God. He loves him so much that he cannot stand the idea of dishonoring him.
 - b. A wise man will seek to learn and strive to do what God wants. His greatest aim is to know what the Lord desires.
4. Who is prudent, so that he shall know the things written in the book? A prudent man and a wise man are the same man. True wisdom is demonstrated in obedience.
 5. No one will go wrong by following the ways of God. His way is always right, and those who walk therein are the justified. The transgressors would stumble at God's way.
 6. "This ninth verse is the proof that Hosea very well knew that something lay in this chapter which was totally beyond the reach of his earthly vision; yet he faithfully declared it, uttering the warning in this verse, to the effect that there was a lot more in it than met the eye. Hosea was profoundly correct. Most of the commentators we have read regarding this chapter do not even now have any adequate understanding of it, applying it to all kinds of millennial theories, restorations of secular Israel in Palestine and otherwise missing totally the glimpse of the Church of Christ which shines in every line of it. How wonderful are the words of the Lord" (Coffman, p.234).
 7. In Hosea's day when the fullness of the gospel had not been revealed, there was much about his own writing that he could not understand. But now, with the glorious light of the gospel illuminating our minds, we can see the entire picture. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26; cf. Eph. 3:1-11).

INTRODUCTION TO JOEL

A. The Prophet Joel.

1. His name means "Jehovah is God."
 - a. About a dozen men in the Bible wore this name. There is a prophetic significance in his name, suggesting thereby that God wanted Israel to know their Sovereign.
 - b. The only thing we know about the man Joel is that he was the son of Pethuel, but that tells us little. The contents of his book show that he prophesied to Judah.
2. Even the time of his work is shrouded in doubt.
 - a. Some scholars have placed his time as early as 900 B.C. and others as late as 400 B.C.
 - b. In this study, we shall consider the time to have been about 830 B.C., although that date is far from certain. The nature of the material Joel presents does not require that we establish some definite date for its writing.

B. The Book of Joel.

1. The book may be divided into two sections, with the first including 37 verses (1:1—2:17), and the second having 36 verses (2:18—3:21).
 - a. The first section of his prophecy points to a future invasion of Judah by locusts which would wreak havoc on the land.
 - b. The second section announces a declaration of doom on these invaders, and gives a picture of great blessings which Judah will receive in the future.
2. In the first section, Joel graphically describes the plague of locusts as an invasion of record-setting portions. The incursion may be by literal locusts, or the prophet could possibly be describing an invasion of Canaan by heathen armies. The former is the more likely case.
 - a. It would be unparalleled in dimension; preceding generations would not have seen its like, and those who came later would remember its terrible consequences.
 - b. The plague could be evaluated from its economic impact as well as from its religious significance.
 - 1) Wine would be cut off from the drunkards (1:10).
 - 2) The priests would wail because there would not be enough supplies for them to conduct their offerings.
 - 3) Farmers would wail because of their tremendous losses.
 - c. The plague is described as:
 - 1) Laying waste to the foliage (1:7).
 - 2) Destroying the crops in the field, and wiping out the oil and wine (1:10).
 - 3) Being intensified by an ensuing drought, causing the seed to shrivel under the clods (1:17).
 - 4) Making the pastures to appear that they had been burned with fire, and causing the brooks to dry up (1:18-20).
 - 5) Complete: What the old locusts left, the hopper (cankerworm) would eat; what the hopper left, the pupa (crawler; caterpillar) would eat; what the pupa left, the flier (palmerworm; mature locust) would eat. Nothing would be left.
 - d. The purpose of this part of the book is to call for the sinful to repent.
3. The second part of Joel depicts blessings promised to Israel (2:18-32), judgment on the nations (3:1-16a), and glorification of the people of God (3:16b-21).
4. The first part opens with gloom and closes with light; the second begins with judgment and closes with victory.
5. Robinson (pp.33-35) cites a report from the *National Geographic Magazine* (December, 1915) on a locust invasion of Palestine that began that year. The devastation extended over all of Palestine and Syria, from the edge of Egypt to the Taurus mountains. "A loud noise was heard before the locusts were seen, produced by the flapping of myriads of locust wings and resembling the distant rumbling of waves (cf. Rev. 9:9). The sun was suddenly darkened. Showers of their excrements fell thick and fast, resembling those of mice...Tons were captured and buried alive; many were thrown into cisterns, or into the Mediterranean Sea, and, when washed ashore, were collected and dried and used for fuel in Turkish baths. The government issued a proclamation in April, 1915, requiring every man from sixteen to sixty years of age to gather eleven pounds of locusts eggs, daily, and deliver them to the officials....In less than two months after their first appearance, not only was every green leaf devoured, but the very bark was peeled from the trees, which stood out white and lifeless, like skeletons. The fields...were stripped to the ground.

Even Arab babies left by their mothers in the shade of some tree, had their faces devoured before their screams were heard. The natives accepted of the plague as a just judgment upon them because of their wickedness."

6. Compare: "And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field" (Ex. 10:3-5).
 - a. These locusts will cover the face of the earth so that the ground where they are cannot be seen. Eye-witness reports of locust invasions state that this is literally true. "There are historical instances of areas of 1,600 to 1,800 square miles being covered with locusts to a depth of four or five inches" (Coffman, pp.121f). The Lord promises that these insects will eat what remained from the preceding plague of the great hail storm.
 - b. The "Readers' Digest" reported [1980s] on a locust invasion in Mauritania, a country in West Africa on the Atlantic. This plague covered an area six miles wide by sixty miles long. Such a swarm can eat thousands of tons of vegetation each day. The article also stated that if vegetation and crops run out, they may eat the wool from a sheep's back, the thatched roofs of huts, even wooden handles of farm tools which contain the salts and oils from human hands; if there is nothing else to eat, they will turn on each other.
 - c. They are amazingly tough and resourceful. If they grow too tired to fly when over water, they will rest on "rafts" made up of millions of their own drowned kind. Swarms in high mountains have stayed snow-covered for days and taken off again. They can digest a meal in as little as 30 minutes or take as long as four days if food is scarce. Pilots have reported swarms of locusts at altitudes of 8,000 feet. West African swarms reached the Caribbean, an unprecedented 3500-mile flight, in just five days, in one instance.
 - d. The desert locust is one of eight species of locust in various parts of the world; this is thought to be the locust of Exodus 10. Its carved image can be seen on tombs dating back some 4400 years, at Sakkara, Egypt. Murals dating back to the 8th century depict skewers of insects being served to Sennacherib, the famous Assyrian king.
 - e. Between plagues, the desert locust lives as a harmless Jiminy Cricket grasshopper. But periodically, for reasons not fully known, it undergoes a physical change and enters a swarming phase. Its color changes from brown to yellow; its wings lengthen; its hind legs shorten; its metabolic rate and oxygen intake increase. Its face, with large, red-and-black striped compound eyes and hard, black, serrated jaws, become more menacing. (These descriptions were taken from the *Readers' Digest* article.)
- C. Joel refers to the "day of the Lord" five times (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14).
 1. Passages:
 - a. Joel 1:15: "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."
 - b. Joel 2:1: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;"
 - c. Joel 2:11: "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"
 - d. Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."
 - e. Joel 3:14: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision."
 2. In the Old Testament, this phrase did not signify the final Judgment, but some day on which events took place that could only be attributed to the Lord. The context must be consulted to identify what is signified.
 3. Some of Joel's references to the day of the Lord pertained to the awful destruction depicted by the locust invasion.
 4. The day of the Lord was sometimes a blessing for Israel and a terror to their enemy.
- D. Joel's Message.
 1. It is a message of doom for the sinful nations, and ultimate glory of God's Cause.
 2. The centerpiece of his message is a hint of what God did on the Pentecost Day of Acts chapter two and

the time which followed.

3. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:16-21). For this reason, Joel is sometimes called "The Prophet of Pentecost."

JOEL 1

A. Joel 1:1-4: The Locust Invasion Described.

1. Verse 1: "The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel."
 - a. Joel, the son of Pethuel, received a message from the Lord which follows. This is one of the thousands of claims of inspiration made by the Old Testament.
 - b. The prophet is not guided to reveal any personal information, except what is here related. Any inspired prophet was content to present the will of God fully and accurately, giving guidance to men and praise to God.
 - c. "Joel, like Hosea, mentions the name of his father only, and then is silent about his extraction, his tribe, his family. He leaves even the time when he lived, to be guessed at. He would be known only, as the instrument of God. 'The word of the Lord came to' him (see the note at Hos 1:1), and he willed simply to be the voice which uttered it. He was 'content to live under the eyes of God, and, as to people, to be known only in what concerned their salvation.'
 - 1) "But this he declares absolutely, that the Word of God came to him; in order that we may give faith to his prophecy, being well assured that what he predicted, would come to pass. So the Saviour Himself says, 'My words shall not pass away' (Matt 24:35). For truth admits of nothing false, and what God saith, will certainly be. For 'He confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers' (Isa 44:26).
 - 2) "The prophet claimeth belief then, as speaking not out of his own heart, but out of the mouth of the Lord speaking in the Spirit. Joel signifies, 'The Lord is God.' It owns that God who had revealed Himself, is alone the God. The prophet's name itself, embodied the truth, which, after the miraculous answer to Elijah's prayer, all the people confessed, 'The Lord He is the God, The Lord He is the God.' Pethuel signifies, 'persuaded of God.'
 - 3) "The addition of his father's name distinguished the prophet from others of that name, as the son of Samuel, of king Uzziah, and others" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 2: "Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?"
 - a. The prophet asks the old men, who had experienced many hardships and tragedies, to reflect on the past to see whether they or their fathers had ever seen anything such as what he is about to describe. The magnitude of the destruction he depicts had never been seen before.
 - b. The locust invasion is taken as a literal judgment scheduled for the future, and is revealed ahead of time for the purpose of causing Israel to repent.
3. Verse 3: "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."
 - a. They were to relate the awful story to their children, who in turn were to tell it to their children. The message of judgment was to be kept alive to prevent future apostasy.
 - b. It has been wisely observed, that those who fail to learn the lessons of the past, are doomed to repeat those previous blunders.
4. Verse 4: "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."
 - a. The extent of the locust damage is pictured. It is not clear whether four stages of locust development is indicated here, or whether there would be successive waves of locusts in the general invasion. It appears that the reference is to the various stages of development of the locusts, with each contributing directly to the overall destruction.
 - b. "First, there are the locusts that destroy much of the vegetation. The females lay their eggs in the hard soil, an estimated sixty-five to seventy-five thousand per square meter, hatching an estimated sixty thousand of these. Soon appear the larvae which continue the devastation. From the larva stage the locust passes through the pupa stage, in which small wings appear. These develop into full-fledged flying insects, which change into full-fledged locusts. In all, they pass through five molts" (Hailey, p.44, who cites as authority a report from *National Geographic Magazine*, August, 1969, p.211).
 - c. God used locusts to induce Pharaoh to release Israel: "And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I *am* the LORD" (Ex. 10:2).

B. Joel 1:5-7: The Effect of the Locust Invasion on the Drunkards.

1. Verse 5: "Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth."
 - a. The destruction of the grapes from which wine was made would soon cut off their supply of intoxicating beverages. The plague was sent to arouse the drunkards to see their evil, and repent. These drunkards would weep and howl over their loss of wine.
 - b. "All sin stupefies the sinner. All intoxicate the mind, bribe and pervert the judgment, dull the conscience, blind the soul and make it insensible to its own ills. All the passions, anger, vain glory, ambition, avarice and the rest are a spiritual drunkenness, inebriating the soul, as strong drink doth the body....God arouse those who will be aroused, by withdrawing from them the pleasures wherein they offended Him. Awake, the prophet cries, from the sottish slumber of your drunkenness; awake to weep and howl, at least when your feverish enjoyments are dashed from your lips. Weeping for things temporal may awaken to the fear of losing things eternal" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
 2. Verse 6: "For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion."
 - a. The locusts are represented as a strong nation, whose army is strong and without number, and whose teeth are as strong and destructive as the teeth of a lion.
 - b. The front teeth of the lion are used to kill and tear; the back teeth can break bones. A mature locust is said to be about 2½ inches long, with a head that resembles a horse's head.
 3. Verse 7: "He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white."
 - a. These locusts would utterly waste the vine, and eat the bark from the fig trees. The trees would be left white, without protection from the weather and other insects.
 - b. In the 1915 infestation, Arab babies left for a few moments had their faces eaten away before their screams were heard.
- C. Joel 1:8-15: The Priests and the Farmers Would be Affected.
1. Verses 8-9: "Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn."
 - a. There would be mourning over this plight such as is heard when a virgin has the husband of her youth torn from her. As this bereft virgin laments in sackcloth, so the priests would mourn because there would be no ingredients for the meat and drink offerings for the temple services.
 - b. *Bethuel* (virgin) is used here, its only occurrence in connection with marriage. Another Hebrew term; *alma*, appears seven times, and is used to describe one who has never been married. Perhaps the most prominent verse using *alma* is Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." *Bethuel* has reference to a young woman (married or unmarried); *alma* has reference to a young woman who is a virgin in the ideal sense of the word.
 2. Verses 10-12: "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men."
 - a. The farmers, husbandmen, and vinedressers would be filled with shame; the crops of their fields are destroyed. There will be no new wine; the wheat and barley are gone; the vine is dried up; the fig tree pines away; the others trees and crops fall to this same infestation.
 - b. "The prophet dwells on and expands the description of the troubles which he had foretold, setting before their eyes the picture of one universal desolation. For the details of sorrow most touch the heart, and he wished to move them to repentance. He pictures them to themselves; some standing aghast and ashamed of the fruitlessness of their toil others giving way to bursts of sorrow, and all things around waste and dried. Nothing was exempt. Wheat and barley, widespread as they were...perished utterly. The rich juice of the vine, the luscious sweetness of the fig, the succulence of the evergreen pomegranate, the majesty of the palm tree, the fragrance of the eastern apple, exempted them not. All, fruitbearing or barren, were dried up, for joy itself, and every source of joy was dried up from the sons of men....The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men....Having thus pictured the coming woe, he calls all to repentance and mourning, and those first, who were to call others" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].

3. Verses 13-14: "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD."
 - a. The priests are directed to dress in appropriate mourning apparel, to declare a fast, and to gather the elders and citizens of the land together to cry unto him.
 - b. The time was one of mourning, not of joy. Although sinners make mock at sin, and often boast of the extent of their evil activities, every act of sin plunges the individual into condemnation, and ought to be mourned.
4. Verses 15-20: "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness."
 - a. This appears to be the cry the priests, elders, and inhabitants were to pour out before the Lord. This judgment was in their immediate future. Compare:
 - 1) Zephaniah 1:18: "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."
 - 2) Zephaniah 2:2-3: "Before the decree bring forth, *before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."
 - b. The devastation they were viewing was from the Almighty; the occasion is called "the day of the Lord." The only way it could be explained was to attribute the horrible destruction to the hand of God's judgment.
 - c. Their food was destroyed and the temple sacrifices could not be conducted due to the want of proper supplies. The seed planted in the earth had decayed; the storage bins and buildings were left desolate; the grain had withered; their animals were also suffering from want.
 - d. Their attitude now was one of tender appeal unto God; they now saw their need for his help and blessings. Men are prone to ignore God and his bounty when they are filled with plenty; only when they see their utter helplessness do many turn back to him. The Bible properly states that all good blessings come from God (Jas. 1:17). In the face of this appalling desolation, they would turn their hearts back to God.
 - 1) James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 - 2) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

JOEL 2

A. Joel 2:1-11: Sound the Alarm, for the Day of the Lord has Arrived!

1. Verse 1: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand."
 - a. The trumpet was sounded to warn of immediate danger, hence now was the time for the sound to be loudly blown.
 - b. "The *shophar*, or far-sounding horn, and probably the *chatsoterah*, the *hazar* or silver trumpet, were called into requisition. The priests are urged with great vehemence, as *tiqû shophar* and *hariu* imply, to apprise the people that the day of Jehovah's terrible judgment was near at hand, and to prepare for it" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - c. The day of the Lord had come; there was reason for them to be filled with terror.
2. Verse 2: "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."
 - a. The light would be dimmed by the approach of the great swarm. The locusts would be so thick that the atmosphere would become gloomy and dark. Nothing in the past or future would compare to this. Compare:
 - 1) Isaiah 13:9-13: "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."
 - 2) Jeremiah 4:23: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light."
 - 3) Ezekiel 30:3: "For the day *is* near, even the day of the LORD *is* near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen."
 - 4) Amos 8:9: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."
 - b. The prophet is not overstating the case.
3. Verse 3: "A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them."
 - a. The land being approached by the swarm was pleasant and lush, similar to the garden of Eden; but once they pass, it would be as a desolate wilderness. Again, the destruction would be complete. In effect, the locusts would be as a fire that consumes everything in its path.
 - b. "The desolation caused by the locust is even more inconceivable to us, than their numbers. We have seen fields blighted; we have known of crops, of most moment to man's support, devoured; and in one year we heard of terrific famine, as its result. We do not readily set before our eyes a whole tract, embracing in extent several of our counties, in which not the one or other crop was smitten, but every green thing was gone. Yet such was the scourge of locusts, the image of other and worse scourges in the treasure-house of God's displeasure. A Syrian writer relates (NOTE: Barhebr. Chr. Syr. p. 214), '1004 A.D., a large swarm of locusts appeared in the land of Mosul and Bagdad, and it was very grievous in Shiraz. It left no herb nor even leaf on the trees, and even gnawed the pieces of linen which the fullers were bleaching...' [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
4. Verses 4-5: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array."
 - a. In appearance, the locusts would resemble horses; and their passage would be as swift as a cavalry charge. The noise of their coming would be like chariots on nearby hills. They would leap over the land like a great fire that consumes the stubble.
 - b. The unity of the force would be like a great army set in battle array and moving swiftly.
5. Verse 6: "Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness."

- a. The effect on the victims would be marked; their faces would reflect much pain, on seeing the ensuing destruction; their faces would grow pale (ASV) with the shock.
 - b. They would realize that there was absolutely nothing that they could do to stop the devastating onslaught.
6. Verses 7-8: "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded."
- a. This invading army shall cover the ground like mighty men; walls could not stop them, for they would climb them just as men of war. There would be no breaks in their ranks, but they would keep their formations intact as they overspread the land. Among their ranks there would be no jostling or getting in each other's way. Those who try to defend against this army can inflict no damage on the intruders.
 - b. A report was given about vain efforts to stem the tide of a locust invasion in Lebanon in 1845: "We dug trenches, and kindled fires, and beat and burned to death heaps upon heaps, but the effort was utterly useless. Wave after wave rolled up the mountain-side, and poured over rocks, walls, ditches, and hedges, those behind covering up and bridging over the masses already killed" (Clifford Rumley notes, quoting from *Beacon Bible Commentary*).
7. Verses 9-10: "They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."
- a. They would overrun the city; they would climb upon the walls and houses; they would enter the houses through the windows, like a thief. They would find some crack and enlarge it to admit great hordes of the insect invasion.
 - b. The earth would shake under their attack; the sun and moon would be darkened and the stars would not be seen.
8. Verse 11: "And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"
- a. This great army is described as belonging to the Lord. It is he who controls and guides them; they are acting at his behest; it is he who issues their orders.
 - b. The Book of Revelation has a figurative description of a war based on the imagery of an invasion of locusts: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter" (Rev. 9:1-12).
- B. Joel 2:12-17: The Lord Calls on Israel to Repent.
1. Verse 12: "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning."
 - a. Having shown that this was not a natural disaster, but was brought about by the power of God, the Lord now calls on Judah to repent. Evidently, they had been given ample warning before; but now that the plague had come, perhaps now they would be willing to submit to the will of God.
 - b. They are admonished to turn back to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning. God is acting in behalf their spiritual welfare.
 2. Verse 13: "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."
 - a. God calls on them to rend their hearts; merely tearing their garments was insufficient (it was only an outward sign); he wanted their hearts to be directed toward him. "O that there were such an heart in

them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:29).

- b. God is gracious and full of mercy, is slow to anger, and possesses great kindness, and he does not desire to bring this punishment upon them. The evil was the punishment he was compelled to pour upon them because of their sinfulness.
 3. Verse 14: "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?"
 - a. If they repent, who knows but that God will turn aside the great judgment under which they were presently suffering. He brought it to bear; he could remove it. If they will repent, it may be that God will leave enough for them to use in sacrificing to him.
 - b. Implied, but unstated, is an offer to provide them with food for themselves and their cattle, which were used in temple services. Before God would turn aside this judgment, they must meet the condition of repentance.
 4. Verse 15: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly."
 - a. This is different from the trumpet call of verse one. There, the trumpet announced the coming of the judgment; here, it was to call forth a solemn assembly for the purpose of returning unto God.
 - b. They were to announce a fast and call an assembly wherein repentance on the part of the whole nation could be effected and shown. The rebellion had been national, therefore the repentance was to be national in extent.
 - c. Compare: "So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, *who* therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his* face from you, if ye return unto him" (2 Chron. 30:6-9).
 5. Verse 16: "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet."
 - a. Every member of their nation was to be gathered, from the infant to the bridegroom and his bride, from the elders to the children.
 - b. As important as the infants are, whose needs are constant; and as important as the bride and groom are to each other; the need for spiritual renewal was far more important. No excuse was acceptable; no present need was as important. For the good of the nation and the welfare of the soul, repentance was necessary.
 6. Verse 17: "Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"
 - a. Let the Lord's ministers, the priests, shed sincere tears before the altar and in the sight of the people; let these men cry out in behalf of the people, for the Lord to spare them lest they become a reproach before the eyes of the nations, and fall under the control of the heathen.
 - b. If the judgment was not lifted, the people would be overcome by their pagan neighbors who would deride them for having been deserted by their God.
- C. Joel 2:18-27: A Promise of Blessings is Given to Judah.
1. Verse 18: "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people."
 - a. If the people would genuinely repent, God would show mercy to them and would be jealous for them (i.e., would take up their cause).
 - b. When he punished the wickedness of his people, the heathen would gloat; when the judgment produced penitence in Israel, he would receive them back, and direct his judgment against the gloaters.
 2. Verses 19-20: "Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things."

- a. Specifically, God promised through Joel that he would give his people the crops necessary for their normal affairs. He would remove the reproach from them. He would turn the "northern army" away from their land, and drive it into a barren and desolate place, where its face would be toward the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and its hind parts toward the western sea (the Mediterranean).
 - b. Nothing would be left of it but its stench. The foul aroma would be a lingering reminder of the awesome judgment God had brought on account of their sins.
3. Verses 21-22: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength."
- a. With their repentance amply demonstrated, there would be no longer any need for them to be fearful; they are told to be glad and rejoice because their God was to do things for them that would restore their material needs. The beasts of the field would be provided for; the pastures would spring forth with grass; the trees would produce as before; the vineyards would give forth their bounty once more.
 - b. Compare: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:19-23).
 - c. "The most reasonable explanation seems to be this. Paul, in these passages, has *personified* the creation. He figuratively represents it as longing for deliverance as a prelude to that time when its purpose shall have been completed. When God's redemptive plan is brought to fruition, earthly affairs are ended. The righteous will obtain their reward in 'the new heavens and the new earth' (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1), which is heaven itself.
 - 1) "Just as there is a link between man's physical body and his new, resurrected spiritual body, even so *figuratively* there is a connection between the present creation and a new creation wherein eternal righteousness abides. This type of argument is not without precedent in the Scriptures. In Psalm 114, the inspired writer describes the deliverance of Jehovah's people from Egyptian bondage. In conjunction with that glorious event, various elements of the creation are depicted as cooperating with, and rejoicing at, Israel's freedom.
 - 2) "The sea saw it and fled, the mountains skipped as rams, the hills frolicked like little lambs, and the earth trembled. The Old Testament is replete with this type of symbolism (cf. Psa. 96:12; 98:8; Isa. 35:1; 55:12).
 - 3) "No one contends that the language in these passages is literal. In view of other clear biblical indications, why should such an assumption be made with reference to Romans 8? There is simply no need for that" (*Christian Courier*, "When The Creation Is Delivered, A Study of Romans 8:18-23," Vol. XXVI, No. 7, November, 1990).
 - d. When a society plunges itself into sin and degradation, even the land and the lower creations suffer in some sense.
4. Verses 23-24: "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil."
- a. Palestine has a unique weather pattern; the former rains fell in the autumn to give the necessary moisture for the newly planted crops to sprout; the latter rains fell in the spring to complete the growing of the crops. Compare: "Then shall we know, *if we follow on to know the LORD*: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth" (Hosea 6:3).
 - b. By removing the locusts and restoring the rains, God would cause their threshing floors to be covered with grain again, and their vats would overflow with wine and oil.
5. Verse 25: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."
- a. This verse seems to make it definite that the invading army was a literal locust infestation, for God states here that what the insects had devoured would be replaced by bountiful future harvests.
 - b. Although they lost the produce of their crops, vineyards, and trees for the time the locusts afflicted the land, yet God would make up for their loss. The great seven-years' famine of Joseph's time was met only by the preceding seven years of great prosperity (and the wise use of the over-abundance).

6. Verse 26: "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed."
 - a. As a result of their repenting, God would bless them with all the bounty the land was capable of producing; this blessing in turn would cause Israel to praise the name of their God. If they remained loyal to God, there would never be any reason for them to suffer shame again.
 - b. This condition of faithfulness is not stated here, but in view of the punishment which God had just sent upon them because of their sins, it is certain that their continued blessings from heaven depended on their faithfulness.
7. Verse 27: "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed."
 - a. The prophet, speaking for God, states that when they saw the rich bounties they would receive, they could be sure that God was in their midst, providing these favors.
 - b. This rests upon a universal principle, that when God's people put his will first, they have nothing to worry them: God will provide for their needs.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 9:6-8: "But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
 - 4) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

D. Joel 2:28-32: Predictions of Even Greater Glories.

1. In keeping with a common practice in the Old Testament prophetic writings, after addressing a local situation in Judah (2:1-27), the prophet suddenly and without warning jumps hundreds of years into the future, predicting events which would be fulfilled in the New Testament era.
 - a. We do not have to be in doubt as to the meaning of this passage for Peter clearly stated that Joel's prophecy had its fulfillment in the miraculous events that began on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2:14-21:
 - b. "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
2. Verse 28: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."
 - a. Joel said the things about to be mentioned would occur "afterward." Peter stated that they began to occur in Acts two. God would pour out his spirit (i.e., he would give the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit) upon all flesh.
 - b. "All flesh" does not include animals; it refers to representatives of all humanity: both Jew and Gentile. When these spiritual gifts were given to Jewish people and to Gentile people, the prophecy was fulfilled. The passage does not say or mean that every human being would receive the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. Certain limits are placed on the prophecy by the New Testament.
 - c. That the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit was the gift of miraculous powers can be seen by considering Acts 2. The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit then (Acts 1:1-8, 26; 2:1-4). This power enabled them to speak inspired messages in languages they had never studied; by this power they healed the sick, raised the dead, and accomplished many other supernatural feats; by this power they laid hands on certain converts and conferred to them one or more miraculous gifts. The Spirit's miraculous gifts were given to Gentiles when Cornelius was converted (Acts 10-11).

- 1) Acts 1:1-8: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
- 2) Acts 1:26: "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."
- 3) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
- d. The specific miraculous gifts identified by Joel in this verse included the power to prophesy, to receive revelations by dreams, and to see visions—all coming as gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- e. That the out-pouring of the spirit is the reception of miraculous powers by the Holy Spirit is evident from Acts 2. The apostles' power is plainly said to have come from the Holy Spirit.
3. Verse 29: "And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."
 - a. The supernatural gifts of the previous verse were said to be meant for the sons and daughters (descendants) of the then-present generation; but old and young men would also be recipients of these gifts. In this verse, the promise is extended to include even the servants and handmaidens.
 - b. In the New Testament fulfillment, one's social or economic background was not a qualification to receive the gift (1 Cor. 12:1-11).
4. Verses 30-31: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come."
 - a. In connection with the fulfillment of this prophecy, great wonders would be evident in the earth. None of the things he names occurred in Acts 2 in any literal way. The reference may be figurative, describing the shaking of arrangements as they had been, and the instituting of a new order.
 - b. Such language is used in the Bible to depict the overturning of nations (Isa. 13:10). This could be a figurative description of the overthrow of Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 24:29). Or it might be a more literal reference to the end of time.
 - 1) Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."
 - 2) Matthew 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."
5. Verse 32: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."
 - a. Peter cited this verse in Acts 2:21, and gave the inspired interpretation of it in Acts 2:38. To call on the name of the Lord is to obey the gospel! Only a remnant of the Jews would obtain the salvation mentioned; the majority rejected Christ and the gospel.
 - b. *Mt. Zion* and *Jerusalem* are used to represent the place this salvation is found:
 - 1) In Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).
 - 2) In the kingdom (Col. 1:13-14).
 - 3) In the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23,25-26).

JOEL 3

A. Joel 3:1-8: God Will Bless His People and Curse Their Enemies.

1. Verse 1: "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem."
 - a. This chapter has been the source of much controversy because of the difficulty in knowing whether the subject is fleshly Israel or spiritual Israel, or whether both are somehow in the prophet's view. It seems more likely that spiritual Israel (the church) is the primary subject of this chapter, and that it is the enemies of the church who are to be judged.
 - b. This appears to be the case because the word "for" with which this chapter begins connects with the closing section of the previous chapter. Chapter two closed with a very clear reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
 - c. Further, this verse specifies that the things of this chapter would occur *in those days*—in the days during which the events of the preceding context are fulfilled.
 - d. However, we must keep in mind that peculiar feature of Old Testament prophecy: the prophet can be speaking of events then current and suddenly reach forward in time to relate things that would occur in that far-distant era.
 - e. Amos 9:14: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them." God would bring about the release of Judah from captivity. Their captivity would be repealed. In the literal sense, God did this in 536 B.C. But he also provided for their full release from their sins beginning in Acts 2 (see 2:36-47). The similar statement in Amos (9:11-15) is shown by James in Acts 15:13-19 to have reference to the Christian Age. Joel 2:32 promised *deliverance* to those who would call on the name of the Lord; Peter shows that this meant that those who obey the gospel would be saved (Acts 2:16-21, 38, 47). Isaiah 11:1-11 also gives a picture of this release from spiritual captivity.
 - 1) Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."
 - 2) Romans 11:5: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."
 - 3) Romans 15:12: "And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."
2. Verses 2-3: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink."
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) "I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgment upon them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations: and they have parted my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink" (ASV).
 - 2) "I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy *as payment* for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink" (NKJ).
 - b. God promised to gather all nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat for the purpose of passing judgment upon them for the evil they had done to his people. This seems to be a very broad and sweeping event, and on the very face of it, should not be applied to a literal gathering of all nations.
 - c. The location of the valley of Jehoshaphat is uncertain; some think it was near Jerusalem (the Kedron valley; or near Tekoa). All nations would not fit in any literal valley in Palestine. The name *Jehoshaphat* means *Jehovah judges*; thus, the emphasis of the phrase is not on some valley, but what God would do: judge the nations. They would be examined in "the valley of God's judgment."
 - d. As the heathen nations of the Old Testament period abused God's people (Israel) and were subsequently punished in various ways, so those who oppose the Lord's church will also be judged and punished. "Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

- e. As ancient Israel was scattered among the nations following their captivities, so God's people in the church would be from among the nations of earth.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-3: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - 2) Acts 2:5-12: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"
 - 3) Acts 8:1,4: "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles....Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - f. Probably the accusations of verse three happened literally to ancient Israel; in a figure, those things have happened to Christians in various times and situations.
3. Verse 4: "Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head."
 - a. This judgment is directed against the Phoenicians, located on the coast toward the north of Palestine, but the fulfillment at least includes (perhaps primarily) those people who would oppose God's system under Christ.
 - b. "In all history, those nations which have undertaken to destroy Christianity have themselves been speedily destroyed. Secular Israel, pagan Rome, Assyria and Babylon are ancient examples, especially Jerusalem and Rome; but there are modern examples also. Hitler burned the Bibles at Nuremberg, but the fire did not go out till Berlin was totally ruined" (Coffman, p.57).
 4. Verses 5-8: "Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head: And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it."
 - a. Ancient tyrants stripped the temple of its treasures and the nation of its wealth at various times. They also sold some of the Israelites into slavery. They would be repaid severely in kind.
 - b. Compare: "And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath required me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died" (Judg. 1:4-7).
 - c. The enemies of the Lord's church are also forced to reap what they have sown against it.
- B. Joel 3:9-17: God's People Will be Safe When the Lord Punishes His Enemies.
1. Verse 9: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up."
 - a. Joel takes up again the thought introduced in verse 2, that the heathen nations would be judged by the Lord. The punishment to be meted out is described as a warfare of destruction, so the nations are called on to assemble their army.

- b. The proclamation is a call for them to come out and meet God's army on the battlefield. There would be no doubt as to the outcome of the battle.
2. Verse 10: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong."
 - a. This is a reverse idea from that of Isaiah 2:4. Here, war is to be waged against the enemies of God; the Lord calls on those who are to fight against him to convert the useful implements of farming into instruments of war. Military terms are used to emphasize the serious nature of the penalty God was about to exact.
 - b. Again, God punished those old enemies of Israel; he often used other heathen armies to accomplish it. And those who oppose him in this dispensation ought to take note: they will not escape.
3. Verse 11: "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD."
 - a. It appears here that God is calling on his enemies to get ready to meet the punishment he is about to pour forth upon them.
 - b. Notice that all the nations are to put their forces in the field, suggesting that they are to come out to fight against the Lord, not against the Lord's enemies. The prophet calls for the mighty ones who are to fight for the Lord to be sent forth to the field. The Lord's mighty ones would be angels.
4. Verses 12-13: "Let the heathen be awakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great."
 - a. God is about to judge the heathen in the "valley of Jehoshaphat." The judgment is pictured as being sent in the form of war.
 - b. That a literal war may not be intended is seen by the change in the figure. Here he describes the judgment as a farmer wielding the sickle on the ripened grain.
 - c. Also, the figure of pressing the grape juice from the grapes is used. This is a common figure used to depict harsh judgment: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs" (Rev. 14:14-20).
5. Verse 14: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision."
 - a. This valley of decision is the same as the valley of Jehoshaphat. It is the place where the judgment of God is about to be passed. Multitudes are to be involved in the process, as recipients of God's judgment. This is beautiful and impressive; it depicts an awesome scene. The fate of immense multitudes is about to be announced.
 - b. What precisely is the fulfillment is hard to pinpoint; the description fits the punishment given to Israel's ancient enemies; it fits the enemies of the Lord in this Age; it also fits the final Judgment, although this great event may not be in the prophet's view. While the gospel is being presented to the world in the Christian Age, men and women make choices which will affect their eternal destiny; hence, each day multitudes make decisions of far-reaching consequences.
6. Verses 15-16: "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."
 - a. The day of the Lord is at hand. The earthshaking events about to be done are pictured in great figures; these figures were used to describe the fall of Babylon. Compare: "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible" (Isa. 13:9-11).

- b. The punishment is further pictured as the Lord issuing a great roar from his stronghold (Jerusalem); so tremendous would be his voice that the earth would shake. But God assures his faithful people that they have nothing to fear: he will be their hope and strength.
 - c. The description fits those cases in the Old Testament when God punished the enemies of Israel; it fits those situations in this dispensation when he penalizes the enemies of the church. Although he inflicts suffering upon his foes, his people are safe.
7. Verse 17: "So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more."
- a. The perceptive children of God can see the hand of God in this life, whether it is busy blessing the obedient or is punishing the wicked. We can know that he is still in charge of his universe. He will not allow strangers to trod the streets of Jerusalem (the church).
 - b. "Spiritual Zion is impregnable; strangers will not pass through her as they did through physical Jerusalem. The kingdom over which Jehovah reigns from Zion is one that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28); it will stand forever (v.17; cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14)..." (Hailey, p.60).
- C. Joel 3:18-21: A Picture of Peace and Permanence and Plenty.
1. Verse 18: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim."
- a. The setting remains that of spiritual Israel. In her will be found the most pleasant of provisions, depicted under the figures of wine, milk, and water.
 - b. This is a beautiful picture of the spiritual blessings issued to the children of God (John 4:10ff).
 - 1) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
 - 2) Ephesians 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 2:10: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."
2. Verse 19: "Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land."
- a. By way of contrast, Egypt and Edom (ardent enemies of ancient Israel who stand as representatives of the enemies of the Lord's church today) will be as a desolate wilderness; there will be none of the spiritual blessings of God within them; this is so because of their opposition to the people of God.
 - b. "The curse of barrenness and utter desolation falls on the enemies of Judah...because of that very enmity and the violence which was its outcome. The Edomite enemies in the south revolted from Judah in the days of Jehoram; the Edomites compassed him in, and, by thus surrounding him, placed him in extreme peril; and though it is said he smote them, yet his expedition proved unsuccessful, for it is added by the chronicler that 'the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day.' The Egyptian enemies in the more distant south made a still more formidable attack on the capital city, Jerusalem, under the famous Shishak, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, plundering the palace and temple. What acts of violence were perpetrated in these or other wars unrecorded we know not. A more specific charge follows: Because they have shed innocent blood in their land. This is understood by some to refer to the blood of captive or fugitive Jews in the lands of their Edomite and Egyptian enemies. It seems preferable to understand the suffix answering to 'their' of the land of Judah, on the occasion of some hostile inroad into Jewish territory" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
3. Verse 20: "But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation."
- a. Judah and Jerusalem are symbolic of spiritual Israel. Their history will be without end, since they will dwell from generation to generation.
 - b. This is one of many passages which teach that the Christian Age is the last earthly age God intends.
4. Verse 21: "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion."
- a. God will cleanse his people of their guilty stains, and will dwell among them.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not

- the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
- 2) 1 John 1:6-10: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - b. "Clearly, the message is that in the days of the Spirit God would establish His spiritual people and dwell among them. At the same time He would judge the world of the ungodly, bringing to a desolate end all who fight against Him" (Hailey, p.61).

INTRODUCTION TO AMOS

A. Amos, the Prophet.

1. His name means "Burden" or "Burden Bearer."
2. He lived in the village of Tekoa, located about twelve miles south of Jerusalem.
3. Amos was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees before becoming a prophet (7:14-15). Sycamore: "Luke 19:4. Often planted by the wayside for shade. Tristram (Land of Israel) found an old sycamore at the broken aqueduct of Herod's Jericho. The fig mulberry or sycamore fig (Amos 7:14). (See SYCAMINE). The size of a walnut tree; the leaves heart shaped, downy underneath and fragrant; the fruit growing in clusters on little sprigs from the trunk. Amos was a gatherer employed about sycamore fruit (Hebrew); but Septuagint makes him a 'puncturer (knizon) of sycamore fruit.' Pliny says they made an incision in the fruit when of a certain size, and on the fourth day it ripened. The KJV is compatible with the Hebrew. If not gathered, it spoils by gnats. It is inferior to the fig. The tree is always green, and bears fruit often throughout the year, so that it is of much value to the poor. The wood, though porous, is durable, and suffers neither from moisture nor heat; Egyptian mummy coffins of it are sound after entombment for thousands of years. The destruction of sycamore trees by hailstones was among Egypt's heavy losses (margin Ps 78:47). David had an overseer over his sycamore trees (1 Chron 26:28; compare also 1 Kings 10:27)" [Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft].
4. He had those inherent qualities which were required to become a man of God. He was one of the most forceful preachers of repentance and judgment of the Old Testament.
5. Amos labored in the Northern Kingdom during their golden era.

B. The Time of Amos.

1. His book is dated at 755 B.C., a time of wealth and prosperity in Israel.
2. Amos worked during the reign of Uzziah (in Judah) and when Jeroboam II ruled in Israel [he ruled from 790—748 B.C].

C. The Mission of Amos Focused on the Northern Kingdom.

1. Jeroboam II was a strong king, and ruled over a great territory. There was great wealth in the land, but very little wisdom and spirituality.
2. Feasting and banqueting had replaced true religion; a spirit of greed was enthroned in society; corruption of justice was a common sin.
3. It was a time when might was exercised to the hurt of the little man; the seizure of a poor man's land was a routine crime; the rich became richer and the poor became poorer.
4. Five basic sins of Israel were these:
 - a. Materialism:
 - 1) Amos 3:14-15: "That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD."
 - 2) Amos 4:1-3: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every *cow* at that which is before her; and ye shall cast *them* into the palace, saith the LORD."
 - 3) Amos 6:1-6: "Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: *be they* better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, *and* invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."
 - b. Oppression of their brethren: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6).
 - c. Corruption of justice:

- 1) Amos 2:6-8: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid, to profane my holy name: And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god."
 - 2) Amos 8:4-6: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; *yea*, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"
- d. Formalism in religion:
- 1) Amos 5:21-27: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts."
 - 2) Amos 8:4-5: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"
- e. Refusal to listen to the word of God:
- 1) Amos 3:1-3, 13: "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?....Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts."
 - 2) Amos 8:11: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:"

D. The Message of Amos.

1. The essence of his message is summed up under these three headings.
 - a. Samaria must be destroyed.
 - b. The day of Jehovah's doom had come.
 - c. The causes of judgment were their frivolity, corruption, opulence and oppression.
2. His message is of value to men today.
 - a. It shows God's moral personality is one of absolute righteousness:
 - 1) Amos 4:13: "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, *is* his name."
 - 2) Amos 5:8: "*Seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD *is* his name."
 - 3) Amos 9:5: "And the Lord GOD of hosts *is* he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt."
 - b. The most elaborate worship, if insincere, is an insult to God: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.... Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:21,23).
 - c. Justice must be exercised in our dealings with each other: "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24).
 - d. Privilege carries with it personal responsibility: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).
 - e. It shows the meaning and purpose of calamity: "So two *or* three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD" (Amos 4:8).

- f. Warnings are never obsolete.
 - g. The necessity of personal conviction is shown; it cannot be inherited: "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I *was* no prophet, neither *was* I a prophet's son; but I *was* an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7:14-15).
3. Passages of special interest include:
- a. Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 - b. Amos 5:19: "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."
 - c. Amos 6:1: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountains of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came."
 - d. Amos 9:8-12: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this."
- E. An Outline of the Book of Amos.
1. Chapters 1-2 deliver eight formal judgments on Israel and her wicked neighbors.
 - a. On Damascus because of the cruelty they shown (they had "threshed" Gilead).
 - b. On Gaza because of her slave trade; this was a Philistine city.
 - c. On Tyre because they served as agents in the slave trade.
 - d. Against Edom because of their stubborn unforgiveness.
 - e. Against Ammon because of cruelty.
 - f. On Moab because of their violent and vindictive hatred.
 - g. Against Judah because they had despised Jehovah's law.
 - h. Against Israel because they had corrupted a delivered people.
 2. Chapters 3-6 contain threatening arguments, or oracles of doom, for Israel.
 - a. Only a remnant of Israel will remain after their punishment: Amos 3.
 - b. They are warned to prepare to meet God: Amos 4.
 - c. God despised their corrupted feast days: Amos 5.
 - d. Jehovah pronounces a woe to them that are at ease in Zion: Amos 6.
 3. Chapters 7-9 give oracles of hope which are delivered in a series of five visions.
 - a. The vision of locusts: "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, *it was* the latter growth after the king's mowings. And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small. The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD" (Amos 7:1-3).
 - b. The vision of a devouring fire: "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD" (Amos 7:4-6).
 - c. The vision of the plumbline (Amos 8:1-14).
 - d. The vision of the smitten sanctuary: "I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And the Lord GOD of hosts *is* he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt. *It is* he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his

troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD *is* his name" (Amos 9:1-6).

AMOS 1

A. Amos 1:1-2: Amos' Introductory Remarks.

1. Verse 1: "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake."
 - a. Amos introduces himself in a very humble way, describing himself merely as one of the herdmen of Tekoa. No inspired person would be guided into self-exaltation. God, in his infinite wisdom, saw fit to send a "country preacher" to address the problems of an affluent and exalted people. If Israel had been selecting a preacher, we may be sure that Amos would not have remained long on their selection list!
 - b. The information he is about to record is said to have been something which he saw during the reign of Uzziah (in Judah) and that of Jeroboam II (in Israel). Coffman gives the time of Uzziah's reign as 792-740 B.C., and Jeroboam's (II) as 790-749 B.C.
 - c. What is presented is what the prophet **saw**, suggesting that the revelation was given to him in the form of a vision. The revelation concerned Israel, although severe denunciations of the sins of other nations are also given.
 - d. The date is cited as being two years before the earthquake, an event which would be remembered by those who lived through that incident. Those who lived later would have oral history (and perhaps written records) to use in recalling the earthquake.
 - 1) Zechariah 14:5 speaks of this earthquake: "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."
 - 2) "No mention is made of this event in the historical books. It was remembered in after years (see Zech 14:5), and Amos alludes to it as a token of the judgment which he foretold, such catastrophes being regarded as signs of the majesty of God and his vengeance on sinners (comp. Ex 19:18: Ps 68:8; Mic 1:4; Hab 3:6,10), Josephus ('Ant.' 9:10. 4) attributes this earthquake to God's displeasure at Uzziah's usurpation of the priest's office (2 Chron 26:16)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 2: "And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither."
 - a. At the roar of the lion, the animals of his prey flee in terror; so God would emit such a *roar* from Zion that men would greatly fear. Jerusalem was built on Mt. Zion, hence Zion is used interchangeably for the great city. Jerusalem was the site of the temple, where God's presence was manifested.
 - b. Amos' message was intended for the sinful in Israel, especially. However, there were warnings issued by the prophet which were addressed to Judah and to certain Gentile cities and nations.
 - c. The effect of this *roar* would be mourning within the houses of the shepherds and upon the top of Carmel. The shepherds are the leaders in Israel; they had acted as the enemies of the flock. Mt. Carmel was the site of Elijah's contest with the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). Both the shepherds and those who foster idolatry in Israel would have reason to fear when the Lord issued his roar from Zion! Carmel was known for its verdant growth, even during droughts. God's roar would wither its lush growth.
 - d. Carmel: A mountain promontory in Asher, 12 miles long, jutting out into the Mediterranean, a few miles S. of Ptolemais or Acre; toward its eastern extremity 1,600 feet above the level of the sea, at the W. end 600. Now Mar Elyas (Elijah), rarely Kurmul. The only bold headland of Palestine. It separates the plain of Sharon on the S. from the more inland plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel on the N., by which the river Kishon flows into the sea in a direction parallel to the mountain range...Carmel's characteristic shrubbery's are still to be seen, with rocky dells amidst jungles of copse oaks, evergreens, and numerous caves. The forests have disappeared. Flowering and fragrant herbs abound, hollyhocks, jasmine, and various vegetable creepers, "the excellency (i.e. the beauty) of Carmel" (Isa 35:2.) Hence it is the image of the bride's head with luxuriant tresses (Song 7:5)..." [Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft].

B. Amos 1:3-5: Judgment Against Damascus.

1. Verse 3: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron."
 - a. In each of the judgments of this and the succeeding cases, the prophet uses the same expression: "For

three transgressions of _____, and for four..." In this section, Damascus is warned. Notice the psychology employed by the inspired prophet: he begins his critical judgments against Israel's enemies. The people would be glad to hear what Amos said about Damascus and all of the others. But their attitude would undergo a drastic change when he finally addressed **them**.

- b. Damascus is thought by some to be the world's oldest, continuing city; it was the capital city of Syria, and was a long-time foe to Israel. They had shown terrible cruelty toward God's people, and must be punished.
 - 1) 2 Kings 8:7-15: "And Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath showed me that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what, *is* thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath showed me that thou *shalt be* king over Syria. So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me *that* thou shouldest surely recover. And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead."
 - 2) 2 Kings 10:32: "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel."
 - 3) 2 Kings 13:3: "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all *their* days."
 - 4) 2 Kings 13:7: "Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing."
- c. God would not turn away the punishment he was directing toward the Syrians, for they had "threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron."
 - 1) Compare: "And he brought forth the people that *were* therein, and put *them* under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 12:31).
 - 2) 2 Kings 10:32-33: "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan."
 - 3) 2 Kings 13:7: "Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing."
2. Verse 4: "But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad."
 - a. Hazael and Ben-hadad were cruel men who ruled Syria. God's judgment would be directed against these men.
 - b. "Hazael was the founder of the dynasty that included two or three kings named Ben-Hadad; so this is the equivalent of saying that the royal family would be destroyed" (Coffman, p.86).
3. Verse 5: "I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD."
 - a. A *bar* was used as a means of locking the gates of a city, thus to break the bar of Damascus represents a destruction of its protective walls and gates. The bar would not be strong enough to keep the Lord from breaking down the door and spoiling the city with violence.
 - b. The references to the plain of Aven and the house of Eden are obscure; possibly the allusions are to a place of idolatry and a pleasure resort of the king (Hailey).
 - c. *Kir* is thought to be the place the Syrians had originated, near the Caspian Sea. This is uncertain. The

point, however, is clear: they would be punished (by captivity or otherwise) for their crimes against God's people.

4. The prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians, under King Tiglath-pileser, invaded the land at the behest of Ahaz. Damascus was captured, the royal family destroyed, and its people carried into captivity. This happened about fifty years after Amos' prophecy. "And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of it* captive to Kir, and slew Rezin" (2 Kings 16:9).

C. Amos 1:5-8: The Judgment Against Gaza.

1. Verse 6: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom."
 - a. Gaza was one of the chief cities of the Philistines, a war-like and idolatrous people who were a thorn in Israel's side for generations. But their sins were not unknown to the Lord.
 - b. Gaza probably stands here as representative of the entire Philistine nation. Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron are named in verse eight, so the prophecy was directed against all of this heathen nation.
 - c. Amos does not give the details, but at some time the Philistines had captured a group of Israelites and sold them into slavery to the Edomites. 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 describes one such incursion into Judah by Philistia in which captives were taken: "Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that *were* near the Ethiopians: And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons."
2. Verse 7: "But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof."
 - a. Gaza and its palaces would be destroyed by fire at the hand of the Lord.
 - b. This does not necessarily mean that God would send fire miraculously from heaven, for in many cases he wrought judgment through human instrumentality.
3. Verse 8: "And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. Showing that more than the inhabitants of Gaza were under the divine judgment, the Lord stated that he would turn his hand against Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron.
 - b. Gath, another prominent Philistine city, is not named. Uzziah had broken down its walls (2 Chron. 26:6), so punishment had already been wreaked upon it. There was no need for Amos to mention all the cities of Philistia; it was unnecessary for him to name all the cities of Syria (1:3-5)—he made his point by simply naming Damascus.
 - c. Critics assert that the omission of Gath from the verse is evidence for a much later date for Amos than the one established, supposing that Gath is not mentioned since it had been destroyed already by the Assyrians about the time that Israel fell to their invasion (721 B.C.). Its omission carries no special significance. Perhaps Gath's punishment was to be delayed until the later date.
4. This prophecy was fulfilled when Sennacherib, another Assyrian king, invaded Philistia. His exploits against these very cities are related in Assyrian records. Sennacherib became king in 702 B.C. The prophecy of Amos antedated Sennacherib's reign by a good many years. (See Coffman, pp.89f).

D. Amos 1:9-10: The Judgment Against Tyrus.

1. Verse 9: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant."
 - a. Tyre was one of the chief cities of Phoenicia, and was located on the sea coast in northern Palestine. Later, Ezekiel delivered a lengthy discourse against Tyre, in Ezekiel 26-28. Isaiah and Jeremiah likewise directed judgments against Tyre, attesting to the great wickedness of these people.
 - b. Tyre was the center of a far-reaching naval power. Theories have been advanced, asserting that the Phoenicians ranged as far as the Americas. They had developed trade sources which they jealously guarded. Our alphabet was developed by the Phoenicians.
 - c. God was determined on their punishment due to their involvement in the slave trade. The prophet does not identify any of the captives; they may have been from their own nation or from some other country, or Israel, with the last being the most likely. God had noted their sin in this connection, and their fate was sealed.
 - d. Another cause of the judgment was their having forgotten "the brotherly covenant." This is a dark saying, but one which the original readers would understand.

- e. There was some covenant (an agreement or treaty) which Tyre had violated.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 5:11: "And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house."
 - 2) 1 Kings 5:1: "And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David."
 - 3) 1 Kings 9:11: "(Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee."
 - 4) 1 Kings 9:14: "And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold."
 - 5) No mention is made in these passages of a formal treaty, but there was a friendly relationship between Israel and Tyre, during the time of Solomon.
 - f. Another possibility lies in the "brotherhood of man." As Cain bore a responsibility toward his brother Abel, so each bears a measure of accountability toward others, a culpability that is violated when one forces another into slavery. Compare: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).
2. Verse 10: "But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof."
 - a. God would send a fire to consume the wall of the city and the palaces therein. God had issued his edict, and the "hammer would fall!"
 - b. Ezekiel 26:4: "And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock." The city was destroyed, but a new one was built on an island a short distance off shore. In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great scraped up the debris of the previous city, used that material to build a causeway to the new site, attacked and destroyed the new city. It was utterly demolished, and 30,000 of its citizens were themselves sold into slavery.
 - c. Joel 3:4-8: "Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly *and* speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head: And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken *it*."
- E. Amos 1:11-12: The Judgment Against Edom.
1. The first three people against whom judgments were directed were not related to Israel. The next three were connected to Israel. The Edomites descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob; Ammon and Moab were the sons of Lot, Abraham's nephew; these two were conceived by an incestuous scheme Lot's daughters developed (Gen. 19:30-38). Good cannot be expected to come from evil; the evil these two girls did (and Lot's evil of being drunken) resulted in an untold amount of suffering on the part of many people!
 2. Verse 11: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever."
 - a. The Edomites were charged with pursuing their brother (Israel) with a sword. Ezekiel 35:2-15 also gives a judgment against Edom. Obadiah has the Edomites as the subject of his judgment.
 - b. Edom had no compassion for Israel during their travail. At a time when God's people were sorely tested by some oppressor, Edom did not come to their aid. It is clear that Amos prophesied years before the fall of either Samaria or Jerusalem. Unless the prophet is describing in the past tense some evil the Edomites would do in the future, the reference is to some lesser known attack against the Israelites by an outsider.
 - c. The real problem that Edom had was their hatred for Israel. The hatred dated back to the occasion when Esau sold the birthright to Jacob, which gave to the younger brother the rights and privileges that pertained to the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12), and gave to Jacob the lion's share of the property of their father Isaac. Because of hatred, Edom attacked Israel when possible and refused to come to their help when they were facing a common enemy.
 3. Verse 12: "But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."
 - a. Teman was a chief city of Edom; God would raze it with fire.
 - b. The important city of Bozrah would have its palaces destroyed. See the notes on Obadiah for some details about the overthrow of the Edomites. "Bozrah: — enclosure; fortress. (1.) The city of Jobab,

one of the early Edomite kings (Gen 36:33). This place is mentioned by the prophets in later times (Isa 34:6; Jer 49:13; Amos 1:12; Mic 2:12). Its modern representative is el-Busseireh. It lies in the mountain district of Petra, 20 miles to the south-east of the Dead Sea" (Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 BibleSoft).

- c. "Historically, Edom's destruction began with the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar but was not completed by that nation. Between the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries, Edom was invaded by Arabs known as the Nabataeans, a highly gifted people who drove the Edomites out of their land into a region south of Judea. The Maccabees brought them under subjection in the second century when Judas Maccabeus slew some twenty thousand of them. John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) subjugated the remnant of the nation, forcing them to accept circumcision and nominally to accept the Jewish religion. Under the Romans some time during the first century after Christ the remaining Edomites were absorbed by the Arabs and their identity was lost completely. The Herods, descendants of the Edomites, were Edom's chief contribution to history; certainly, this is nothing of which to boast!" (Hailey, pp.37f).

F. Amos 1:13-15: The Judgment Against Ammon.

1. Verse 13: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border."
 - a. The sin of Ammon is specified as ripping up the women with child in Gilead in order to enlarge their own territory. One of the cruelest of atrocities committed in war is to cut open pregnant women. But many other evils were done in the heat of battle.
 - b. The point being made was this: they had attacked Gilead, a city belonging to Israel; in the process they had inflicted grievous casualties, by killing and maiming.
 - c. The purpose the Ammonites sought to fulfill was selfish: to increase their sphere of influence—to gain additional territory. Most wars are started for similar goals. **Selfishness** lies at the heart of most wars, crimes, and many other sinful acts.
2. Verse 14: "But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind."
 - a. God would build a fire on the wall of Rabbah, a principal city of Ammon; the conflagration that would ensue would consume their palaces. What would their selfish exploits have accomplished? How often and for how long do the rewards of sin avail?
 - b. Evil produces evil; a sinner will reap what he has sown! Their punishment would bring with it the noise of battle and the violence of a whirlwind. In biblical parlance, a whirlwind is more than a *dust-devil*; it is more akin to a tornado.
3. Verse 15: "And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD."
 - a. The Ammonite royal family would face captivity, a very cruel end for a deposed ruler. "The occasion on which the Ammonites were guilty of such cruelty towards the Israelites as is here condemned, is not recorded in the historical books of the Old Testament; possibly during the wars of Hazael with Israel, when they availed themselves of the opportunity to widen their territory by conquering back the land which had been wrested from them by Sihon king of the Amorites, and was then taken possession of by the Israelites, when he was overcome by them—a thing which they had attempted once before in the time of Jephthah the judge (Judg 11:12 ff.). We may see from Jer 49:1 ff. that they had taken possession of the territory of the tribe of Gad, which lay nearest to them, though probably not till after the carrying away of the tribes beyond Jordan by the Assyrians (2 Kings 15:29)" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 - b. One who is used to extravagance and plush living all his life is ill-equipped to face the rigors of slavery and imprisonment. How poorly many Americans today would fare if they were enslaved by a cruel conqueror!
4. The god the Ammonites served was Molech, unto whom children were sacrificed.
 - a. Passages:
 - 1) Leviticus 18:21: "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD."
 - 2) Leviticus 20:2-5: "Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever *he be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth *any* of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land

- do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people."
- 3) 1 Kings 11:7: "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon."
 - 4) 2 Kings 23:10: "And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech."
 - 5) Jeremiah 32:35: "And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."
- b. It is no little thing when a man, or a society, gives himself over to serve some false god. Since we become more and more like the object of our worship, if we serve some idol who is perceived to be bloodthirsty, or full of hatred, or who seeks the death of people, what can be the outcome for the worshipper but to become the same in disposition! Such a person will have no concern for the welfare of others, but will seek to exploit as many as possible for his own selfish ends.
 - c. The God of heaven, the only true and living God, is characterized by love, justice, mercy, and truth. How happy ought a Christian to be to serve Almighty God!
5. The records of Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian monarch, relate that the king of Ammon was forced to pay tribute; and forty years later, the Ammonite king was made to pay tribute to Sennacherib and to kiss his feet.
 - a. The uninspired record of 1 Maccabees 5:6 describes what some think to be the last stand of the Ammonites, at the hand of Judas Maccabeus. "And he passed over to the children of Ammon, and found a mighty band, and much people, with Timotheus for their leader. And he fought many battles with them and they were discomfited before his face; and he smote them, and gat possession of Jazer, and the villages thereof, and returned again into Judaea" (1 Macc. 5:6-8).
 - b. W.J. Deane relates the following, which is quoted by Coffman, p.94: "The massive walls [of Rabbah—bw], some of which remain in ruins, rise from the precipitous sides of the cliff...I bent over them and looked sheer down about three hundred feet into one wady, and four hundred feet into the other. I did not wonder at its having occurred to King David that the leader of a charge against these ramparts would have met with certain death, consequently assigning the position to Uriah!" [cf. 2 Sam. 11].
 6. McGarvey, in his marvelous *Lands of the Bible*, offers this information about this ancient location:
 - a. The next point usually visited by the traveler after leaving Es Salt is Ammon, the ancient Rabbath-Ammon. It was called Philadelphia during the period of Roman dominion. The distance to it from Es Salt by the road is about 20 miles, and the direction is nearly southeast. The country between the two places is a high, undulating table-land, very rich, and containing many extensive grain-fields cultivated by the Bed'awin. The ruins of towns and cities are seen on every hand.
 - b. The ruins of Ammon are scarcely less massive and extensive than those of Jerash'. They are situated chiefly on the western bank of the river Jabbok, which here runs due north. There was an upper and a lower city, the latter lying on the low ground adjacent to the riverbank, and the former on the summit of an isolated hill 300 feet high, with sides almost perpendicular. A strong wall around the brow of the hill made it almost impregnable. The greater part of the wall is still standing, and the space within is covered thick with a confused mass of ruined buildings and the stones of prostrate walls. Immense rock-cut cisterns and one circular reservoir 58 feet in diameter and of unknown depth show the care that was exercised to supply the place with water. The almost perpendicular sides of the mountain toward the lower city are full of sepulchres.
 - c. In the lower city the principal street ran parallel with the river, between it and the foot of the hill, and it was lined on both sides by blocks of small houses for shops, alternating with public buildings of various kinds. The various phases of the city's history are suggested by the ruins of a heathen temple, a Christian church, and a Mohammedan mosque, all massive and grand, standing on this street but a few steps apart. While the lower city was chiefly built on the western bank of the stream, there were some public buildings of importance on the eastern bank. Among these was an amphitheatre, whose space was cut into the side of the hill which rises to the east, and whose stone seats could accommodate 6000 spectators. Most of these seats are yet there and ready...." (pp,389ff).
 - d. To those who knew the virtually impregnable defenses of Rabbah, the prophecy of Amos might have seemed the delusions of a madman. But God would do what he said!

AMOS 2

A. Amos 2:1-3: The Judgment Against Moab.

1. Verse 1: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime."
 - a. The usual introduction is given to this judgment, along with the standard promise that the punishment was certain. The reason assigned is: Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.
 - b. Ammon had viciously destroyed unborn babies; Moab brutally burned the bones of the king of Edom. Even though Edom was comprised of great sinners, yet no one had the right to subject another person to such an ignoble fate. God used the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires to punish Israel and Judah, yet he also brought about a just penalty upon those oppressors for their crimes.
 - c. Not content to bring about the death of the king, they violated his corpse. A Jewish tradition says that the Moabites, acting in vengeance, dug up the bones of the king and defiled them. This brings to mind the sad action of the Catholic hierarchy in England, who many years after the death of Wycliffe, dug up his bones and burned them. What was Wycliffe's great crime? He translated the Bible into English so that the common people might have access to God's word!
2. Verse 2: "But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet."
 - a. God would send a fire upon Moab, as he had promised for each of the foregoing nations of sinners, and for Judah. He threatened to bring fire upon Israel (Amos 5:6).
 - b. The city of Keriath is made representative of the entire nation. God would burn its palaces with fire, and Moab would die with tumult, accompanied by shouts and the sound of the trumpet. The picture is one of warfare.
 - c. The Assyrians under Shalmanezar and Sargon conquered Moab, and were followed in turn by other world powers in mastering and annihilating Moab as a nation. 2 Kings 3 gives a preview of Moab's coming demise, when Israel, Judah, and Edom united, and with Elisha's help, wreaked havoc on the Moabites.
3. Verse 3: "And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord."
 - a. God promised to cut off the judge and kill all the princes of Moab. Chaos would naturally reign in the absence of law and order. Isaiah (15:5; 16:11) and Jeremiah (48:36) were moved to mourning when they contemplated the destruction that this evil nation faced.
 - 1) Isaiah 15:5: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives *shall flee* unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction."
 - 2) Isaiah 16:11: "Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kirharesh."
 - 3) Jeremiah 48:36: "Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kirheres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished."
 - b. No one who has imbibed the spirit of Christ will rejoice over the hardships or destruction that sinners meet.

B. Amos 2:4-5: The Judgment Against Judah.

1. Verse 4: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked."
 - a. The same introduction is given here as we have seen in the earlier cases. Amos is using superb wisdom in his approach. In the first three cases (Damascus, Gaza and Tyre), pagan enemies of Israel were censured. In each of these, the Israelites would rejoice that a long-time foe was denounced. Each succeeding case would elicit the happy approval of Israel, even when their brethren in Judah were exposed as sinners, and threatened with punishment.
 - b. Judah's crime was their despite for the law of God. No doubt, if they had been asked whether they loved or despised God's word, they would have affirmed the former and vehemently denied the latter. Many today would do the same. One who will not hear and heed what God's word says, or who will only accept and follow the parts of it that meet with his approval, in reality despises the whole.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 12:9-10: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife,

and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

- 2) Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - 3) Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - 4) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - 5) Luke 14:26-27: "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."
 - 6) Luke 14:33: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
 - 7) Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."
 - 8) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
- c. One will accept some other principle of life if he rejects God's word; whatever it is that he takes in place of truth, will be a lie. The ancient Jews believed lies, which caused them to err even more.
 - d. They made the same mistakes that their forebears had made. The influence of parents and society is great; children are gradually conditioned to accept and adopt the way of life of their parents and friends. Most never question the rightness of the course they are taking. Although the temple was located within Judah, and the priests were there, that did not insulate them from falling into rebellion against God.
2. Verse 5: "But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem."
 - a. God would send a fire even upon Judah. God is impartial; those who sin must face the penalty. A sinful Jew was no better in God's sight than a sinful Gentile. Their palaces would be razed—on account of their sins.
 - b. While there may have been several cases of punishment earlier, the full measure of God's wrath was poured upon Judah when the Babylonian army came upon them in 606 B.C., ultimately reducing Jerusalem and the great temple to rubble, killing many of the people, and carrying many others off into exile.

C. Amos 2:6-8: The Judgment Against Israel.

1. Verse 6: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes."
 - a. Once more, Amos gives the ominous introductory statement: For three transgressions of **Israel** and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof. Now the prophet brings the charge of sin to their door. Everything was alright while he was denouncing the others; but now he was "getting personal!" He had approached the heart of his message with such skill and swiftness that they had had no time to get set.
 - b. The first charge laid against them was one of injustice. They sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They were unconcerned about treating their fellowman with fairness. For mere trifles, they were willing to pervert justice, so as to get a financial advantage. Their apostasy had taken them to the point that they were hard of heart, and had lost sight of spiritual values, and were most concerned about material wealth and possessions. They were quite willing to oppress the righteous and the poor in order to make a profit.
 - c. "A Hebrew who 'waxed poor' could sell himself to another of his people, but he was not to be considered as a slave. He was to be treated as a hired servant (Lev. 25:39-46). This law was being violated. There is no indication in the law that one could be sold in payment for a debt" (Hailey, p.97).
2. Verse 7: "That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name."
 - a. NKJ: "They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, To defile My holy name."
 - b. They panted after the dust on the head of a poor man. Their craving for property was so intense that they were ill-content to allow a poor man with a dirty head get away from them! Another possible

meaning is that they coveted what little a poor man had so much that they earnestly sought to take what he had by whatever means available, and thus bring the poor man to a state of mourning—of putting dust on his head because of his pitiful state.

- c. “Not content with having rent from him the little hereditary property which belonged to each Israelite, these creditors grudged him even the ‘dust,’ which, as a mourner, he strewed on his head (Job 2:12), since it too was ‘earth.’ Covetousness, when it has nothing to feed it, craves for what is absurd or impossible. What was Naboth's vineyard to a king of Israel with his ‘ivory palace?’ What was Mordecai's refusal to bow to one in honor like Haman? What a trivial gain to a millionaire? The sarcasm of the prophet was the more piercing, because it was so true. People covet things in proportion, not to their worth, but to their worthlessness. No one covets what he much needs. Covetousness is the sin, mostly not of those who have not, but of those who have. It grows with its gains, is the less satisfied, the more it has to satisfy it, and attests its own unreasonableness, by the uselessness of the things it craves for” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - d. Those who sought to follow the will of God were shunted aside as though they were worthless. Or perhaps the meaning of this second clause is that they oppressed the meek so much that their efforts to follow God's word would be greatly hindered.
 - e. In their drunken, idolatrous feasts, a father and his son might lie with the same prostitute on the same evening. Their fornication would be made even worse by both being with the same woman. What kind of father this is that would encourage this gross defilement of the spirit and body on the part of his son!
 - 1) Exodus 20:14: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."
 - 2) Leviticus 18:7: "The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she *is* thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness."
 - 3) Leviticus 18:15: "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she *is* thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness."
 - 4) Leviticus 20:11: "And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them."
 - 5) Deuteronomy 23:17: "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel."
 - f. These sinful actions would have the effect of profaning God's holy name. They claimed to be serving Jehovah, but they made him to be no more than the heathen idols that abounded in the land.
3. Verse 8: "And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god."
- a. They violated that part of God's law that forbade them from retaining a garment which had been taken as a pledge for a debt. The garment was to be returned to the man before sundown, for that might be the only covering he would have for the night (Deut. 24:12-13). These wicked men not only kept the garment, but they slept on it themselves—and that before one of the many altars they had erected in the land. The only altar God recognized was at the temple; the altars meant here were those devoted to heathen deities.
 - b. The ASV has, "And in the house of their God, they drink the wine of such as have been fined," in place of the KJV rendering, "They drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god."
 - 1) The *god* meant is doubtless an idol, for the Northern Kingdom did not worship God, which could be done only at the temple in Jerusalem. Their worship was directed toward some idol (at Dan or Bethel, or in some other locality).
 - 2) Their actions were wrong in several particulars: they kept the pledged garment; they used the garment for their own selfish ends; they drank wine in the house of an idol; they perverted proper worship.
 - c. For good reason, Amos denounced Israel for their transgressions.
- D. Amos 2:9-16: Amos Reminds Israel of God's Goodness Shown Them in the Past.
1. Verse: 9: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath."
 - a. God had destroyed the Amorites, the most powerful of the nations occupying Canaan when Israel arrived. Amos only mentions the Amorites, but there were other nations who also had to be displaced.
 - 1) Genesis 15:19-21: "The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

- 2) Deuteronomy 7:1: "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou."
 - b. Among the Amorites were giants (Num. 13:31-33; Deut. 1:20; 3:2-11; Num. 21:21-31; Deut. 1:4). But even giants could not stand when God had decreed their fall. They had decided their own fate by corrupting themselves with idolatry and other sinful activities; their iniquity had reached its zenith, and they must be destroyed. God delayed his punishment until the time was ripe, for even these ungodly men must be given time to repent (Gen. 15:16; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 2:21).
 - c. Amos depicts the stature of these giants as being tall as cedars and as strong as oaks. The cedars of Lebanon were renowned for their great size, corresponding to the Sequoias on our west coast. God utterly destroyed the Amorites, despite the great size and strength of some of the warriors; he decimated their "fruit" above and their "root" below.
2. Verse 10: "Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite."
 - a. God had also protected and provided for Israel during their 40 years in the wilderness. They were made to endure such a trial in the wilderness on account of their faithless rebellion, but even then, God cared for their needs.
 - b. Without his benevolence they could not have survived, and apart from his power, they could not have conquered Canaan. Without God's help, Israel could not have even left Egypt, and could not have lived through the wilderness, nor could they have entered or taken possession of Canaan.
3. Verses 11-12: "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not."
 - a. But God had also richly blessed Israel in raising up great men among them, the prophets who taught them the way of God more perfectly, and the Nazarites, who offered leadership and set good examples of dedicated service for the people to imitate.
 - b. But the people had caused the Nazarites to violate their vows and had demanded that the prophets hold their tongues. God had intended to bless Israel by means of these two groups of servants, but the people had opposed his plan.
 - c. The Nazarites were of two classes: those who were so for a limited period of time, and those who were such for life. This latter class included Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.
4. Verse 13: "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."
 - a. The action of the verse is uncertain, according to Hebrew scholars. The KJV has "I will press your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth" as the marginal rendering. The ASV lists the same two renderings, but in reverse order: the KJV alternative translation is in the text of the ASV. Each view expresses a significant point, and each fits the context.
 - b. As the KJV reads, God is pressed down by the sinful condition of Israel. Godly parents feel the heavy weight of their children's sins and problems; God has a heavy heart when his children fall into sin.
 - c. As the ASV reads, God will punish Israel for their sins. He uses the figure of being run over by a heavily-laden cart to illustrate the judgment he will bring upon them. They would be crushed beneath the wheel of God's justice.
 - d. "The translation of Keil, which is that of Gesenius, is most suitable, meaning, 'I will press you with the full force of war, as a loaded wain presses the earth over which it passes.' The sense of the English Version is that God is burdened and wearied with their sins, as Isa 43:24; Mal 2:17" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
5. Verses 14-16: "Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD."
 - a. Because of their rebellion against him, God will surely punish them. Try as they may, there will be no escape from the judgment God will bring.
 - b. The swift will not be fast enough to flee; the strong will not have the strength to withstand the onslaught; and the mighty man will be unable to deliver himself.
 - c. The archer, whose deadly skill could slay many enemies, would not be able to deliver himself; the swift of foot will not escape; and the horseman would not be able to avoid the punishment.
 - d. Even the courageous of heart among the mighty would flee naked, but that would not mean he would

escape. This pictures the man who is normally full of courage, fleeing before the onslaught, even leaving his clothing behind.

AMOS 3

A. Amos 3:1-8: The Prophet Defends His Right to Speak the Message of Judgment.

1. Verse 1: "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying."
 - a. Israel sustained a special relationship with God, that of being God's family on earth. Because they had sinned, God must announce a warning, and punishment must be tendered, if the warning is ignored.
 - b. If he did not love them, he would not punish them. He reminds them of the love he showed in delivering their forebears from Egyptian bondage.
2. Verse 2: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."
 - a. Of all the families on earth, God had chosen Israel for his special people. They needed to be aware of their unique standing with the Lord. God did not choose them for his family because of their number or worth. He first chose Abraham, a great man in many ways. "For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:6-8).
 - b. Psalms 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chose for his own inheritance." The greater the blessings, the heavier the responsibilities. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1).
3. Verse 3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
 - a. But what good could be accomplished if Israel did not walk with God? They could not walk together unless there was a unanimity of mind. God was holy and Israel was unholy; therefore they could not walk together. Two people cannot walk together if they are going in different directions.
 - b. Before two can walk together, there must be agreement in the destination, the road to take, the speed with which to travel, etc. In the case of God and man, what God wills determines these factors.
 - c. Amos plainly implies that Israel was not in agreement with God, and therefore was not walking with him now. God must punish Israel in order to bring them back into step with him. Neither Israel nor sinful men today considered themselves to be evil. Walking with God is for our benefit, for what can finite man do that would enhance God's nature?
 - d. With this verse, the prophet begins a series of questions, all of which must be answered in the negative, and which shows that his message is from God.
4. Verse 4: "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?"
 - a. The two statements of this verse are identical in meaning: the lion will not roar when there is no prey. The point of the passage is obvious: God will not punish his people without first giving them a warning (vv. 7-8).
 - b. God's warning, which he issued through Amos, was the threat of punishment for their sins.
5. Verse 5: "Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?"
 - a. "The two previous similes were from the standpoint of the predator; in these two (v.5) the standpoint is that of the prey" (Coffman, p.113). A gin was a snare; it is an abbreviation of the word *engine*, and refers to the mechanical parts of the trap.
 - b. As a bird could not be snared by a trap if the trap was not present, so Israel could not be punished for her sins unless she had committed sins.
 - c. God's intention to bring punishment to bear upon Israel was not the result of some caprice or whim on his part; it was to come because God had seen the need for such.
6. Verse 6: "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"
 - a. See Numbers 10:1-10 for the purpose of the trumpet. When the alarm was sounded in a city, some impending danger was thereby announced; it would naturally create fear and worry on the part of the citizens. The voice of Amos was represented by the sounding of a trumpet.
 - b. When God's prophet announced the punishment, it would surely occur. Men inevitably think

punishment is evil, but it has a good intent: to bring people back into righteous conduct; the pain it inflicts punishes past crimes, and motivates men to live better.

7. Verses 7-8: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"
 - a. Here, the point of the passage is plainly stated. God will not destroy a people without first giving a warning. His warning is in the words he gave to Amos. The words given are pictured as the roar of a lion, a bellow that produces terror in the hearts of the offenders. He warns men today through the inspired message of the Bible.
 - b. Amos is further moved to state that the prophet who receives the word of God has no option but to speak that word. He thereby defends his right, and affirms his duty, to speak the word he has been given.
 - c. There was no animosity on the part of Amos toward his auditors, and there was none on the part of God who gave the message; both were interested in the improvement of the nation by their being moved to repent on hearing the warning of the impending judgment. This is the attitude that gospel teachers and preachers have toward men today.

B. Amos 3:9-15: Those Who Are First Denounced Are the Prominent and Wealthy People.

1. Verses 9: "Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof."
 - a. God called for the people of Philistia and Egypt to gather around and witness the judgment the Lord was to bring upon his people at Samaria.
 - b. Samaria was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. From Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim they would be able to see Samaria. They would behold great tumults within the city; these disorders and riots would foment oppression. When law and order breaks down, those in authority will often resort to harsh retribution.
 - c. By inviting the people of Ashdod (a principle city of Philistia) and Egypt to watch what was about to happen to Israel, two implications are seen. (1) The Israelites were worse than these two pagan nations, for the judgment was upon Israel; and (2) what they were to see would serve as a strong warning for these idolaters to "put their houses in order."
 - d. The description given is not to be taken literally, that Egypt and Ashdod were expected to assemble themselves on the mountains around Samaria. It is simply a very graphic way of calling attention to the plight that was soon to befall Samaria.
2. Verse 10: "For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces."
 - a. The inhabitants are accused of acting in ignorance; they did not know to do right. Of course, they were not so ignorant that they did not know of the need to do what God said. But they did not see an immediate need for obeying God.
 - b. As already noted, the average person does not see himself as God sees him. Each one views himself as knowing what he ought to know, and thinks he is doing what he ought to do, and that he is not in grave danger. While many Americans will admit that they are morally imperfect, few see themselves as headed for Torment.
 - c. God accused the Israelites of storing up violence and robbery (spoils) in their great palaces. They richly lived off the things which they had acquired from others by unjust means. Amos 2:6 charged them with selling the righteous and the poor for their own profit: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes"
 - d. Their palaces were being used as depositories for the loot they had accumulated by violence and crooked dealings.
3. Verse 11: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled."
 - a. Feeling comfortable and secure in their palaces, they had no conception of how perilous their state really was. There was to be an adversary to enclose them within the confines of their palaces. Their great houses would be spoiled.
 - b. The enemy was God, although he would use some heathen force to effect his punishment. But God could not be blamed for the evil they were to meet; their own sins brought this unholy fate upon their own heads. They had been given plenty of warnings, and not only by the message of Amos. Joel had earlier issued strong warnings.

- c. In 721 B.C., the Assyrian army captured Samaria, slew many people, inflicted terrible destruction on the cities and countryside, and carried the remnant into captivity. The Northern Kingdom of Israel lost its identity as a separate nation forever.
4. Verse 12: "Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch."
 - a. The ones who would be rescued from the destruction being described, would be insignificant. A Jewish shepherd was expected to salvage as much of a lamb that had been taken by a lion as possible; the fragments would prove to the owner that the animal was not sold by the shepherd.
 - b. But the pieces left would not be worth much beyond being evidence of the shepherd's honesty. All that would be left of the people of Samaria would be a remnant, good primarily as evidence of their sinfulness and God's judgment.
 - c. The ASV renders the latter part of the verse thusly: "...So shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed." In excavating the ancient city of Samaria, broken pieces of furniture and other fragments of Ahab's ivory house have been found. "Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:39).
5. Verses 13-14: "Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground."
 - a. The last three verses of the chapter direct warnings against the inhabitants of Bethel. Following the division of the kingdom when Solomon died, Jeroboam became king of the ten tribes of the north.
 - b. To retain his authority, he wisely [but wickedly] saw the need to keep his subjects from going up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. He placed a golden calf at Dan and Bethel where the people were expected to worship. "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Peniel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense"(1 Kings 12:25-33).
 - c. God's judgment would be directed against the place of worship at Bethel. He had sent the "young prophet" to cry against the altar years earlier (1 Kings 13). But now he would make an end to the idolatry that Jeroboam had introduced there.
6. Verse 15: "And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD."
 - a. The judgment would also be directed against the summer and winter houses of the rich; not merely because they possessed wealth, but on account of the sinful way by which they had accumulated it and were using it. The houses of ivory, and the other great houses, would perish.
 - b. The rich farmer of Luke 12 thought that his wealth and possessions would be sufficient to give him a long life of ease, but God called him a fool. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).
 - c. Their extravagance, their crimes, and their other sinful excesses would bring upon them the wrath of God. "While some lived in this extravagant splendor, others of the nation were living in poverty and want. These palaces of luxury would be smitten, cast down and brought to an end" (Hailey, p.102).
 - d. Nothing material will survive the coming of Christ, and nothing of this earth will we be able to take with us into eternity.
 - 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

- 2) 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."
- 3) 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

AMOS 4

A. Amos 4:1-3: The Fat Cows of Bashan are Denounced.

1. Amos severely rebukes the women of Bashan with one of the most critical reproofs against sinful women found in the Bible. Isaiah 3:16-26 gives another stern criticism: "Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground."
2. Verse 1: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink."
 - a. Bashan ("fat, fruitful") lay on the east side of Jordan, between the mountains of Hermon on the north and those of Gilead and Ammon toward the south. It was known for its pastures and cattle (Num. 32; Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 39:18).
 - b. The "kine" of Bashan mentioned by Amos is feminine gender, indicating that he was addressing the sinful women of that district. He probably has all the wicked women of the Northern Kingdom in mind.
 - c. Often, evil women promote and demand wickedness on the part of their husbands. These are accused of oppressing the poor and crushing the needy. This they could do by insisting that their men provide them with luxuries and pleasures which required them to obtain wealth at the expense of the helpless.
 - d. They compel their *masters* to "Bring us drink." We may be sure that the drink they wanted was not water! This demand summed up their interest in life: having a good time. It reminds one of the many calls to "party" in our time.
 - e. If the "great ladies" of the land were of such character, what could be expected of the men and others!
3. Verse 2: "The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks."
 - a. These wicked women would not escape the judgment of God. "These lovers of luxury would be among the first taken away captive, helplessly torn away from their luxurious, profligate life, as fishes are haplessly taken by the hooks of fishermen" (Hailey, p.103).
 - b. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria, a heathen nation known for their many cruelties. Assyrian artifacts depict captives being lead away with hooks which were placed in their lips or noses. Amos probably has this barbaric procedure in mind. A reference is made to this in 2 Chronicles 33:11 (ASV footnote).
 - c. "And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen. 11 Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon. Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God" (2 Chron. 33:10-13, NKJV).
 - d. See the graphics on page 75.
 - e. A report of Israel's capture by Assyria is given:
 - 1) 2 Kings 17:5-18: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For *so* it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the

fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

- 2) 2 Kings 18:9-12: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which *was* the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, *that is* the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*."

4. Verse 3: "And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD."
- Looking ahead to the time when their cities would be captured, Amos describes their unsuccessful attempts to escape through the breaks in the walls of the city, or perhaps they would be led captive from their cities through the breaches in the walls.
 - They would be cast into the palace (KJV; the ASV has "Harmon"). The place to which the captives would be carried is unclear in this passage. 2 Kings 17 and 18 identify those places to which they would be taken. The Hebrew is said to be unclear in this latter part of the verse. The exact wording is difficult, but the meaning is clear!
 - In captivity, they would quickly lose their interest in the "finer things of life" to which they paid great attention when they lived in luxury. The essentials would be important in captivity.

B. Amos 4:4-5: Using Strong Irony, Amos Condemned Their Sinful Conduct.

- Verse 4: "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years."
 - "False religion is the root of all social ills, and here the prophet poured out God's wrath upon the polluted, innovative, and unauthorized worship that marked the religious culture of Israel" (Coffman, p.130). Humanism has become the prominent religion of modern societies.
 - Hosea 4:15: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth." Unlawful altars were erected at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29), where polluted worship was offered by the people.
 - But idolatry degenerates into immorality. Before long, Israel was engaging in pagan religious practices which involved immoral conduct.
 - In this verse, Amos uses irony to call on them to see how deeply into sinful practice they could plunge themselves—These sins included the pursuit of corrupt religious activities. Bethel and Gilgal were centers of idolatrous worship.
 - "The bringing of sacrifices every morning and of tithes every three days indicates the extravagant emphasis placed on their religious cult. There was an abundance of 'religion' in the land, but no true piety and devotion to God" (Hailey, p.104). This kind of *worship* exalts the wishes of men, not of God (Matt. 23:23; 15:8-9,13).
- Verse 5: "And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."
 - The prophet calls on them to offer leaven as a burnt offering, a practice which was forbidden by the Law (Lev. 2:11; Ex. 23:8). [The Law did not contain any rules regulating free-will offerings].

- b. Sarcastically, Amos urges them to violate these prohibitions, since they had already gone beyond God's word. He calls on them to publish and proclaim free-will offerings, that is, to exhort the people to give them. But these gifts were to be spontaneous, not given as a result of promotions or fund-raising schemes.
 - c. What they offered was not what God had ordained, but what pleased them. So Amos urged them to go ahead, and throw themselves into complete disobedience to God's will. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10).
- C. Amos 4:6-13: Five Judgments Which Had Been Intended to Turn Israel Back to God.
1. Verses 6-11: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."
 - a. Amos names five different judgments which Israel had suffered, but neither of these had the desired effect which God intended. Their minds were too blinded to see the lessons being taught, and their hearts were too hard to repent. The specific cases and times of these disasters are not identified, but would be recalled by many.
 - b. Verse 6. God had caused a famine to come upon them. Their teeth were clean because they had no food to eat. But they did not return to the Lord.
 - c. Verses 7-8. The Lord had sent a drought upon some of their cities. The timing of the drought was designed to bring the greatest effect: three months before the harvest, when rain was sorely needed to complete the growth of the crops. Some places had ample rain, but others had none. They were able to survive by obtaining water from the localities which had water, but that was insufficient for their full needs. Yet they still remained impenitent.
 - d. Verse 9. God had smitten them with blasting and mildew. The *blasting* was from a hot, dry east wind from the desert; it would cause the crops to wither, and the people to suffer. *Mildew* was a blight that attacked the grain crops. The palmerworm (a stage of locusts) attacked their gardens, vineyards, and fig and olive trees. But there was no repentance on the part of the people.
 - e. Verse 10. The fourth disaster was in the form of a pestilence, such as those God had brought upon Egypt when he was bringing about Israel's release from bondage. These plagues accompanied attacks waged against Israel by their enemies. They had lost many young men and horses; the stench arising from the decomposing bodies was awful. But still they did not repent.
 - f. Verse 11. God said that he had overthrown some of them as when he destroyed the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - 1) Possibly, some sudden and direct action was used to punish some of them (cf. Gen. 19; 38). Or perhaps some natural disaster, such as an earthquake, caused the destruction described, or an invasion (2 Kings 8:12; 13:3,7; Lev. 26:25; Isa. 10:24,26).
 - 2) He depicted the survival of the rest as the rescue of a burning stick from a fire. That is, if God had not taken some action to deliver some of them, all of them would have been consumed in the fire. But they remained impenitent.
 2. Verse 12: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."
 - a. In view of the failure of the foregoing judgments, Amos warned them to prepare to meet the Almighty. He indicates that they have nothing but troubles to anticipate in the future; as he had done in the past, so he would continue to do. He would leave the door open for their repentance, but otherwise some heavy judgment is promised.
 - b. They did not repent, and the final blow fell when Assyria invaded their land, captured and destroyed their cities, slew many of the people, and carried the remnant into slavery.
 - c. Jamieson: "God is about to inflict the last and worst judgment on thee, the extinction of thy nationality: consider then what preparation thou canst make for encountering Him as thy foe (Jer 46:14; Luke 14:31-32). Since it would be madness to think of meeting in battle the King of kings (Isa

27:4; Ezek 22:14; Heb 10:31), see what can be done toward mitigating the severity of the coming judgment by penitence (Isa 27:5; 1 Cor 11:31). This latter exhortation is followed up in Amos 5:4,6,8,14-15.”

3. Verse 13: "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."
 - a. The omnipotence and omniscience, and perhaps also the omnipresence, of God are emphasized in this profound passage. Joining as it does with verse twelve, the certainty of the judgment is seen.
 - b. Since God formed the mountains, created the wind, revealed to man what he intends to do, and made the darkness of the morning, and treads upon the high places of the earth, he will surely be able to bring upon sinful Israel whatever judgment he chooses.
 - c. The tallest mountains are visited only by a handful of people, but God can walk upon them whenever he wills. He is not limited by time or space, and his power and knowledge are infinite. The statement that God "declareth unto man what is his thought" could have reference to God's knowledge of man's thoughts, or to his ability to tell man what he (God) intends (as in verse twelve).
 - d. The name God uses to identify himself here is, "The God of hosts." *Hosts* means *armies*. The eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God has at his disposal every conceivable power and ability to use as he pleases. How truly great is he!
 - e. Romans 8:34-39: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

AMOS 5

A. Amos 5:1-9: Amos Laments Over the Fate of Israel.

1. Verse 1: "Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel."
 - a. This chapter has been aptly called "The Funeral Song of Israel." Although the certainty of the coming judgment against Israel is forcefully presented, yet there is an offer of mercy indicated in verses four and six.
 - b. By prefacing these remarks with "Hear ye this word," Amos introduces a new discourse. This new dissertation he calls "a lamentation."
2. Verse 2: "The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up."
 - a. One whose heart is filled with concern for Israel could only feel remorse for the people upon whom this punishment is coming. Israel [the Northern Kingdom] would fall, never to rise again. Israel fell, and never again regained her status as a separate nation; all its past glory and might was gone.
 - b. The virgin of Israel is fallen, Amos declares. She had fallen into degradation and shame; she had soiled her bridal garments; she was no longer acceptable by the bridegroom; she had degraded herself and must be rejected.
 - c. The prophet, speaking in prophetic style, describes the fall of Israel as an already-accomplished fact. It would be more than thirty years before they were conquered by the Assyrians, but their fate was so sealed that he speaks of it as already done. The prophecy was spoken at a time when the nation was basking in prosperity, but God was pulling back the curtain of the future, revealing to them what lay ahead. Their sins had been uncovered by the Lord, and punishment was demanded.
3. Verse 3: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel."
 - a. Only a remnant would remain of their proud nation! Perhaps the percentages indicated are more literal than one might suspect. Amos says that only ten percent of the people would survive the impending ordeal: one hundred out of a thousand; ten out of one hundred.
 - b. All of their cities would suffer the same fate. This is the result when the ungodly meet God: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). What percentage of Christians today will go to heaven?
4. Verses 4-5: "For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought."
 - a. Despite the ominous warnings just given, the Lord holds out an offer of hope. "Seek ye me and ye shall live." But seeking the Lord required their forsaking the evils of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. Bethel was the focal point of idolatry for Israel, and the other cities were also centers of idolatry and sin.
 - b. Bethel was the place where Jacob had the great vision of angels on the ladder which extended into heaven (Gen. 28:10-22). But Jeroboam had erected an idol there, and caused Israel to begin a life of national idolatry.
 - c. Beersheba figured prominently in the activities of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This city was in the south, in the territory of Judah. Jeroboam had told Israel that he was establishing a place of worship in Bethel because it was too far for them to go to Jerusalem to worship at the temple; but Beersheba was in the southern part of the land, much farther than Bethel; they were perfectly content to make the longer trip in order to worship idols at Beersheba.
 - d. Gilgal was the place where the reproach of Egypt was removed (Josh. 4:19; 5:9), when God again showed his might in drying up the Jordan, and allowed the people to cross into the land of promise. But sin had tainted this city.
 - 1) Joshua 4:19: "And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho."
 - 2) Joshua 5:9: "And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day."
 - e. Pulpit Commentary offers these remarks:
 - 1) The more formal proof that Israel has merited her punishment here begins. In calling her to repentance the prophet contrasts God's requirements with her actual conduct. Seek ye me, and ye shall live. Two imperatives: "Seek me, and (so) live;" duty and its reward. "Seek me in the

- appointed way, and ye shall be saved from destruction" (comp. Gen 42:18).
- 2) Bethel... Gilgal. The scenes of idolatrous worship, where was no true seeking of God.... Beersheba. A spot about fifty miles southsouthwest of Jerusalem, the site of which has never been lost, and is marked to this day by seven much-frequented wells. As being one of the holy places celebrated in the history of the patriarchs (Gen 21:31,33; 26:23, etc.; 46:1), it had become a shrine of idolatrous worship, to which the Israelites resorted, though it lay far out of their territory (comp. Amos 8:14).
 - 3) Gilgal shall surely go into captivity. There is in the Hebrew a play on the words here and in the following clause (Hag-gilgal galoh yigleh), which commentators have paralleled with such expressions as, Capua capietur, Cremona cremabitur, Paris perira, "London is undone." Or, taking Joshua's explanation of the name, we may say, "Roll-town shall be rolled away."
 - 4) Bethel shall come to nought. As Bethel, "House of God," had become Bethaven, "House of vanity" (see Hos 4:15), as being the temple of an idol (comp. 1 Cor 8:4), so the prophet, with allusion to this, says that "Bethel shall become aven"—vanity, nothingness, itself.
 - 5) No mention is made of the fate of Beersheba, because Amos has in view only the ten tribes, and the destiny of places beyond their territory is not here the object of his prediction; and indeed, when Israel was ruined, Beersheba escaped unharmed.
- f. They could not find safety in any of these cities. Strong walls would not be able to keep the judgment from exacting its full measure.
5. Verse 6: "Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel."
 - a. In this call for Israel to seek the Lord, a warning is also given: seek the Lord and live, or he will break out like a fire in the house of Joseph.
 - b. The leading tribe of Israel was Ephraim (Hos. 4:17), which bore the name of the son of Joseph. One of the places of illicit worship in the Northern Kingdom was Bethel.
 6. Verse 7: "Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth."
 - a. Amos directs these threats especially against those who pervert justice, turning it into wormwood. Wormwood was extremely bitter, hence their perversion of justice was distressing and harsh in God's estimation.
 - b. "And leave off righteousness in the earth; rather, cast down righteousness to the earth (as Isa 28:2), despise it and trample it underfoot (comp. Dan 8:12). This is Israel's practice; and yet God, as the next verse shows, is almighty, and has power to punish. Righteousness includes all transactions between man and man" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 7. Verse 8: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name."
 - a. The God who threatens to bring severe penalties upon Israel is the same God who made the seven stars and Orion, who turns the shadow of death into morning, who makes the day turn into night, who calls forth the waters of the sea and causes them to be poured upon the land.
 - b. God's omnipotence is emphasized by the prophet. The Lord can deliver men from death, can even raise the dead; he made Pleiades and Orion, and all the other constellations of the universe; he can send darkness at high noon. He is to be feared and loved and obeyed.
 - c. ORION: "(The strong one)—the name of a constellation, consisting of thousands of stars which is mentioned in the Old Testament (Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8). The constellation is near Gemini and Taurus, and contains the giant red star Betelgeuse and Rigel, a blue-white star of first magnitude. Most of the stars of Orion cannot be seen without the aid of a telescope" (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).
 - d. PLEIADES: "A brilliant cluster of stars seen in the shoulder of Taurus (the Bull). The name Pleiades comes from the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione in Greek mythology. This constellation consists of several hundred stars, although the naked eye can usually see only six or seven. Job declared that God made the Pleiades (Job 9:9) and bound them in a cluster (Job 38:31)" (ibid).
 8. Verse 9: "That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress."
 - a. "However strong a nation may think itself to be, Jehovah rules and by His mighty power makes the strength of man appear exceedingly small....The Creator and Ruler of the universe yet controls the destiny of all nature and nations" (Hailey, p.108).
 - b. "That strengtheneth the spoiled—literally, spoil, or devastation: hence, the person spoiled. Winer,

Maurer, and the best modern critics, translate, 'maketh devastation (or destruction) suddenly to arise—literally, maketh it to gleam forth like the dawn....Ancient versions support the English version. The Hebrew is elsewhere used, to make to shine, to make glad; and as the English version here (Ps. 39:13-14, Hebrew Bible). Pusey translates, 'that maketh devastation to smile on the strong.' The smile of derision and wrath marking the ease wherewith those fancying themselves strong are given to devastation, 'recover strength.' So that the spoiled shall come—'devastation,' or destruction shall come upon' (Maurer). The English version expresses that, strong as Israel fancies herself after the successes of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25), even the weakest can be made by God to prevail. Against the fortress—i.e., against the strongest. The Hebrew for fortress...expresses that "the strong" fancied it cut off all approach" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].

c. Keil and Delitzsch provides these comments:

- 1) "He darkens the bright day of prosperity into the dark night of adversity, and calls to the waters of the sea to pour themselves over the earth like the flood, and to destroy the ungodly. The idea that by the waters of the sea, which pour themselves out at the call of God over the surface of the earth, we are to understand the moisture which rises from the sea and then falls upon the earth as rain, no more answers to the words themselves, than the idea expressed by Hitzig, that they refer to the water of the rivers and brooks, which flow out of the sea as well as into it (Eccl 1:7). The words suggest the thought of terrible inundations of the earth by the swelling of the sea, and the allusion to the judgment of the flood can hardly be overlooked.
- 2) "This judicial act of the Almighty, no strong man and no fortress can defy. With the swiftness of lightning He causes desolation to smite the strong man. *Bâlag*, lit., *micare*, used in the Arabic to denote the lighting up of the rays of the dawn, *hiphil* to cause to light up, is applied here to motion with the swiftness of lightning; it is also employed in a purely metaphorical sense for the lighting up of the countenance (Ps 39:14; Job 9:27; 10:20). In v. 9 b the address is continued in a descriptive form; *yaabow* has not a causative meaning. The two clauses of this verse point to the fate which awaits the Israelites who trust in their strength and their fortifications (Amos 6:13). And yet they persist in unrighteousness" [Keil and Delitzsch Commentary].

B. Amos 5:10-15: It is an Evil Time When Justice is Perverted to the Hurt of the Poor.

1. Verse 10: "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly."
 - a. Amos turns from denouncing their idolatry to severely rebuking them for their perversions of justice. The judicial system in ancient Israel was operated at the gates of the various cities and villages.
 - b. In the generation of Amos, truth and justice were not held in high esteem by many of the rich and powerful. These were not above perverting justice for their own material gain, a point that appears very clearly in verses eleven and twelve.
 - c. Those who rebuked the briber and the crooked judges, and who called for truthful and godly conduct, were hated by the ones who hoped to profit from such crimes. Greedy rulers would appoint only corrupted judges; the grasping rich men sought to have such judges appointed—the Law required honesty in this office:
 - 1) Deuteronomy 16:18-20: "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."
 - 2) Exodus 23:6-9: "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous. Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."
2. Verse 11: "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them."
 - a. The rulers exacted heavy taxes and fines from those who were under their heel; they had dishonestly taken from the common people what was not theirs to take.
 - b. By means of these fraudulent operations, they had built fine houses, but God's justice would not permit their enjoyment of them. They had planted splendid vineyards, but would not be able to enjoy the fruit thereof.

- c. They had oppressed the helpless with reckless abandon, thinking themselves immune to justice; but the all-seeing eye of the Almighty had taken note, and would repay these oppressors in proper measure.
3. Verse 12: "For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right."
- a. God announces through the message he gave Amos, that he knew their many transgressions and mighty sins; they could not hide them from his view.
- b. The crooked dealings of avaricious businessmen are often regarded as a *shrewd business sense*. But forcing an economic hardship upon a just man and his family, or perverting justice by bribery, or denying justice to the poor—these are viewed by the Lord as **mighty sins**.
4. Verse 13: "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time."
- a. The futility of speaking out against their sinful conduct is obvious to the prophet. When men devote their hearts to doing evil, the wise man is wasting his time and effort to try to correct them.
- b. Nevertheless, the man of God will be sure to issue warnings! "Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land" (Isa. 6:11-12; cf Ezek. 3:17-19; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).
- c. There can be no more evil time than when men will refuse to hear God's word. Noah knew all about that; so did Amos and many of the other ancient prophets. Those of the Lord's generation were mostly of that nature. And our time is a time of general rebellion against God, and a refusal to hear his word—in and out of the church!
5. Verse 14: "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken."
- a. Despite their stubborn rebellion, Amos issues God's invitation: "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live." In the midst of strong rebukes and threats of certain punishment, God pleaded with them to change. They claimed the Lord was with them, but he was not!
- 1) Ezekiel 18:31-32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions...and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."
- 2) Matthew 23:37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."
- b. It is the desire of God to be with all of his offspring, but the vast majority will not have it so. Why? That is the question of the ages!
6. Verse 15: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."
- a. If they would hate evil and love good, and return justice to its rightful place, then perhaps the Lord of hosts would be merciful to the remnant of Joseph. But there must be genuine repentance on their part.
- b. Since evil is the opposite of good, and they had been devoted to the former, they must make a fundamental change, a complete reversal of their present conduct. Their cup of iniquity was full to overflowing.
- c. The remnant of Joseph is a reference to those who would be spared from the upcoming onslaught by the Assyrians. It will be remembered that the tribe of Ephraim, named after one of Joseph's sons, was the leading tribe in the Northern Kingdom (Israel).
- d. The Lord expresses a measure of doubt as to the outcome of the judgment. The great majority seems to be headed for destruction; and the aftermath of this judgment may not leave any future for the remnant.
- e. Therefore, they are urged to hate evil, love good, and restore justice to the land. The Lord might be persuaded to show mercy to the remnant thereby. If mercy is to be shown, only a remnant will receive it. Repentance is the key to any hope for them.
- C. Amos 5:16-20: God's Judgment is Certain to Come.
1. Verses 16-17: "Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD."
- a. A time of great lamentation was coming as a result of the judgment God was about to send. Because

of their digressions, God must punish them.

- b. As a result of punishment, wailing would be heard in all the streets and highways of the nation; even the husbandmen and professional mourners would wail. The wailing would be in the vineyards, a source of so much rejoicing on the part of the revelers in times past.
 - c. What is the cause of this wailing? God will have passed through! Compare: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD" (Ex. 12:12). It is truly a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God (Heb. 10:31; 12:29). With good reason the prophet had warned them to prepare to meet their God (Amos 4:12).
2. Verse 18: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light."
- a. Some had yearned for the coming of the day of the Lord, but Amos pronounces a woe upon such foolish desires; they would be getting more than they bargained for!
 - b. Their pride would not allow them to seriously contemplate the possibility that the God of Israel could punish them. The day of the Lord would not be an occasion for the destruction of Israel's enemies and of blessing to Israel. The day indicated would be one of severe judgment against Israel!
 - c. Israel would experience a time of hardship which the Lord described as "darkness, and not light." It was not a day which should be sought. Even the oppressed would have to suffer the consequences, for even though the rich had taken advantage of them, they themselves were not without fault—idolatry was practiced by all.
3. Verse 19: "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."
- a. There would be no escape for the wicked. Amos described this certainty as a man fleeing successfully from a lion, but only to be met by a bear; and if he evaded the bear, and thought he was safe when he got into his house, as he leaned his hand against the wall, panting for breath from these close calls, a serpent would bite him on the hand.
 - b. So it would be with sinful Israel.
4. Verse 20: "Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"
- a. Fears are most prominent during the darkness of the night; with the coming of daylight, our terrors usually dissipate. But the day of the Lord would bring frightful darkness upon them; there would be no light in it.
 - b. Everything that happened would be to their discouragement and hurt; there would be no good news to give hope.
 - c. Moses had predicted the dire nature of a punishment God would later send upon the people of Israel, a prophecy which doubtless included the Assyrian siege of Samaria (2 Kings 17:5-18).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 28:53: "And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 28:55: "So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 28:57: "And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."

D. Amos 5:21-27: Israel's Worship was Defiled.

1. Verse 21: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies."
 - a. The feast days they observed were those which God had ordained, but he stated his hatred of **their feast days**. When they offered insincere and corrupted forms of the worship God had ordained, those feast days and acts of worship became theirs, and ceased to be what God had ordered.
 - b. What was intended to be a means of expressing their devotion to God, had become a source of divine displeasure toward them. No one can pervert God's ordained system, and still expect to have his approval. Compare: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men....But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:8-9,13).
 - c. We can expect no better result if we live as we please during the week, and try to worship God on

- Sunday; or if we offer a perverted worship to him. Our devotions will be accepted by the God of heaven only if they are offered sincerely and in accordance with his word (John 4:24; 17:17).
- d. If our life is not in harmony with God's word, or if part of our worship is corrupt, none of our devotions will be acceptable.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
 2. Verses 22-23: "Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."
 - a. Even if they offered the prescribed sacrifices, God would not accept them. Their lives were not right; they were living in sin; they were hypocrites. We remember that the sacrifices they offered at Dan and Bethel were offered to idols.
 - b. How could they expect God to be pleased with their worship if they perverted justice and did all those other things God condemned? Thus, God orders them to remove from him their songs and instruments of music.
 3. Verse 24: "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."
 - a. If they wanted God's approval, then let justice and righteousness be plentiful, and spread out as a stream. They must change their treatment of others and clean up their lives in other ways.
 - b. "Let the execution of justice be everywhere like the showers that fall upon the land to render it fertile; and let righteousness in heart and life be like a mighty river, or the Jordan, that shall wind its course through the whole nation, and carry every abomination into the Dead Sea. Let justice and righteousness prevail everywhere, and sweep their contraries out of the land" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft].
 4. Verses 25-26: "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves."
 - a. The question of verse 25 suggests that they had been idolaters even in the wilderness wanderings. About three months after leaving Egypt, while Moses was on the Mount receiving the Law, they were worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 19:1; 32). They had served idols for many years.
 - b. "Ye have always been idolaters, corrupters of pure worship. Your service in the wilderness, when you were little exposed to external influence, was no more true and faithful than that which you offer now; that was as unacceptable as this. Have ye offered unto me? Did ye offer unto me? The answer expected is 'No;' i.e. you did not so really, because your worship was mixed with falsehood, and was not offered simply and genuinely to me. It is certain, too, that during the sojourn in the wilderness sacrificial worship fell greatly into desuetude, as we know that the rite of circumcision was suspended (Josh 5:5-7), the Passover was not duly celebrated, and Joshua urged the people to put away the strange gods from among them (Josh 24:23). Moses, too, doubtless with a view to existing practices, warns them against worshipping the heavenly bodies (Deut 4:19), and offering sacrifice unto devils (seirim), 'after whom they had gone a-whoring' (Lev 17:7). The prophets, too, allude to the idolatry practised in the desert (see Ezek 20:7-26; Hos 9:10)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 5. Verse 27: "Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts."
 - a. Because of their idolatry, and other sins, God would punish them with captivity beyond Damascus in Assyria.
 - b. "Therefore. The consequence of their continued alienation from God should be deportation to a foreign land, beyond Damascus, far away from the confines of the country once their own possession (2 Sam 8:6), thus dimly denoting Assyria, at that time not hostile, but known in the time of Tiglath-Pileser I. (see the accomplishment, 2 Kings 15:29; 17:6)" [ibid.].

AMOS 6

A. Amos 6:1-6: Another Woe is Pronounced upon Israel.

1. Verse 1: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!"
 - a. This is the second woe, the first being given in 5:18, where it is pronounced against those who foolishly looked forward to the "day of the Lord," thinking it would be a day of blessing, whereas it was a day of harsh judgment. Here, a woe is affirmed against those who are at ease.
 - b. They trusted in materialism to sustain them; this is the key to their downfall. In those cases where men trust their material possessions to deliver them and provide for their needs, sooner or later they will take up profligate living. If there is little or no trust in the Almighty, men naturally adopt a lifestyle that leads into moral debasement, in their religious and daily routines. When one turns from God, he will turn from morality also, and turn to materialism or false religion.
 - c. Zion was the mountain upon which Jerusalem was built; Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom. Although Amos was dispatched to the Northern Kingdom to call them to repentance, he did not ignore the problems in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The people of the south were at ease in Zion; they trusted in their advantages: the fact that the temple was constructed there and they were prosperous in this world's goods. They likely figured that since God's house was in Jerusalem, there was no earthly power that could threaten them; that they could live as they pleased, with impunity. Their trust was not in their God. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." This has become a proverb, carrying the meaning of complacency, indifference to spiritual matters, and over-confidence in worldly powers.
 - d. Meanwhile, the northern folks relied on the fortress city of Samaria to be their best protection, and trusted in their prosperity to see them through any difficulty. But God's word was: Woe to them that trust in the mountain of Samaria!
 - e. The chief men indicated are the leaders of the nations, in Samaria and Jerusalem. These should have been leading the people along spiritual paths of obedience to God. When a nation's leaders are corrupt, the population will not likely rise above their example.
2. Verse 2: "Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?"
 - a. The prophet calls on the people of Israel and Judah to consider Calneh, Hamath, and Gath. These were strong Gentile cities. Gath belonged to the Philistines, and the other two cities were located far to the north. They were still standing at the time Amos prophesied.
 - b. He asked whether these three pagan cities were more greatly blessed than Judah and Israel. The answer would be in the negative. As the leaders of Israel and Judah had boasted, so did the leaders of these Gentiles cities boast of their strength and greatness. Yet none of the Hebrews would admit that these pagans would stand despite their apparent strength.
 - c. What then of the cities of Israel and Judah? Amos did not directly predict the overthrow of these pagan cities, but he predicted the fate of the Hebrew nations. The cities of Israel were overrun by the Assyrians and those of Judah by the Babylonians; Calneh, Hamath, and Gath likewise fell.
3. Verse 3: "Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near."
 - a. Amos begins here a list of crimes of which the Hebrews were guilty. First, he accuses them of regarding the judgment of God to be far in the future, that there was nothing for them to fear for the present. They tolerated violence, but could expect to be the victims of violence.
 - b. But by this and other sins, they brought the punishment upon themselves. A common tactic of the leaders in their rebellion was to preach "peace, peace," when there was no peace (Jer. 8:11). Compare: "So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it* peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again....And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it* peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts *are so many?*" (2 Kings 9:18,22).
 - c. In our present society, there are many religious folks who preach "peace, peace." In their view, there is nothing for anyone to fear; God is a God only of love; he will not punish; it does not matter how one lives, he will not be lost. What a tragedy to see their false doctrine fall on many receptive ears!
4. Verse 4: "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall."
 - a. The idle rich lay upon beds of ivory, feasting on the best food available. There would be nothing

- wrong with having beds made of ivory or of eating the best food; but what they were doing was wrong; hence, a misuse of these things is what is being condemned.
- b. Their practice would be wrong if either of these were true: (1) they enjoyed these benefits at the expense of the poor and helpless; or, (2) if they did so at the expense of obedience to God, or (3) if they were idle, and useless to themselves or others, thus violating the principles of industry.
5. Verse 5: "That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David."
- a. What is described was a sinful action; Amos condemns them for doing what he relates here. Different sins are stated in each of the verses (3-6).
 - b. The invention of mechanical instruments of music is not condemned as sinful. If it were, then everyone who ever invented one did so to the condemnation of his own soul. But the Lord made use of trumpets (e.g., Josh. 6). It is not the invention of these instruments that is sinful, but the use to which these people put them.
 - c. Their invention of these instrument is likened to David's invention of instruments. Whatever the sinful action was, it appears that David was just as guilty of it as these people were.
 - 1) These people invented the instruments **to** (KJV) or **for** (ASV) themselves; that is, they obtained them for their own uses; this both they and David did. David appropriated instruments for use in the worship of God.
 - 2) Some say that the point of comparison between these people and David is merely in the use of musical instruments, with nothing sinful being implied with David's actions; that Amos condemns his auditors for their sinful use of instruments, such instruments as David had used.
 - d. Some argue that David introduced instrumental music into the Old Testament worship by the authority of God.
 - 1) 2 Chronicles 29:25: "And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets."
 - 2) 1 Chronicles 23:5: "Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith."
 - 3) Psalms 150:1-6: "Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."
 - e. Amos 5:23 shows God's attitude toward their *mechanical worship*: "I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Compare: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts" (Amos 5:21-22). There were many things that were tolerated during the Old Testament eras which God did not want: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).
 - 1) God intended for marriage to be limited to one man and one woman (Gen. 2:18-24; Matt. 19:3-9). God overlooked polygamy, for Jacob, David, and others had more than one wife.
 - 2) God never intended for them to be ruled by an earthly king, but when they demanded a king, he allowed them to go ahead with their wishes. However, he issued some strong words of warning and denunciation (Deut. 8:14-20; 1 Sam. 8; Hosea 13:9-11).
 - f. There is a great deal of difference between the trumpet of Moses and the instruments of David. It appears that God tolerated the introduction of instrumental music into worship at the hand of David, but that he did not intend for this so to be.
 - 1) Adam Clarke, a Methodist preacher and scholar, said: "I believe that David was not authorized by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the Divine worship of which we read; and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet; and I further believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian Church is without the sanction and against the will of God" (*Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. IV, p.684).
 - 2) Martin Luther said about instrumental music: "The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal."
 - 3) John Wesley said: "I have no objection to the organ in our chapels provided it is neither heard nor seen."
 - 4) John Calvin said: "It is no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of tapers or

- revival of the other shadows of the law. Catholics foolishly borrowed it from the Jews."
- 5) Adam Clarke said: "I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of that Infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - 6) Charles H. Spurgeon, Baptist preacher, said: "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also....I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."
 - 7) Alexander Campbell: "To all whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I should think instrumental music would not only be a desideratum but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But to all spiritually minded Christians such...would be as a cowbell in a concert."
 - 8) J.W. McGarvey: "We cannot adopt the practice without abandoning the only ground upon which a restoration of New Testament Christianity can be accomplished."
- g. Whatever this passage teaches with reference to the use of instrumental music in the worship of God, it is to the New Testament we must go for final authority in all our beliefs and practices. We are under divine mandate to hear the words of Christ in all our religious and spiritual activities:
- 1) Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 - 2) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - 3) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - 4) Colossians 3:16-17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 5) 1 Timothy 2:5: "For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
 - 6) Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"
- h. "The orthodox Hebrew church, who understand the Hebrew text of the OT better than any Gentile commentator could ever expect to know it, have never allowed instruments of music in their worship of God, their conviction of the sinfulness of it being due to the teaching of these very passages in Amos; and the Jews, at least a very considerable percentage of them, have consistently maintained this conviction for *some twenty seven centuries!*" (Coffman, p.182).
- i. A survey was taken among the *baby-boomers* in the churches of Christ about 1991. The results indicated that 81% of them believed that there was nothing wrong with using mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God. A woman visited the services one Sunday, when the preacher was away. On entering the auditorium and looking around, she demanded with a loud and course voice, "Where's the music?" Her interest was in the mechanical instrument, not in worshipping God!
6. The use of IM in worship is a violation of God's law.
- a. God requires us to teach and admonish each other and praise him. The instrument is dumb: it cannot do any of these things, and does not enhance these things. It is an unauthorized addition to God's revealed plan for worship.
 - b. Instrumental Music turns the heart of the worshipper from God to his own satisfaction. Instead of producing and encouraging devout worship, it becomes a musical entertainment. It encourages an emphasis on the sound, rather than on the quality of the heart of the would-be worshipper.
 - c. Acceptance of the instrument in worship is a rejection of the authority of the Scriptures. It is a more than a violence to the silence of the Scriptures. Once a person has accepted one unauthorized activity, the door is wide open for the introduction of more and more unscriptural beliefs and practices.
 - d. The Disciples of Christ group turned into a very liberal, modernistic denomination in the deepest

sense. Their first steps were to accept instrumental music into their worship and adopt the Missionary Society as a means of spreading their message. The floodgates were thrown open when the instrument was introduced and they have gone onward to become a very liberal denomination.

7. Consequences of rejecting the authority of the Scriptures.
 - a. The acceptance of instrumental music in worship goes far deeper than merely adopting an aid: in reality it shows one's attitude toward God and his word.
 - b. To reject the authority of the Bible is to reject God.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 12:9-10: "Wherefore hast thou **despised the commandment of the LORD**, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast **despised me**, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."
 - 2) Malachi 1:6-7: "A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible."
 - 3) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - 4) Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."
 - 5) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
 - c. If we reject the Scriptures as final authority in spiritual affairs, we repudiate the authority of God, who speaks to the human family today through Christ (Heb. 1:1-4).
 - 1) Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 - 2) Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - 3) John 14:15: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
 - 4) Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 16:22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."
 - 6) Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 7) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
8. Verse 6: "That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."
 - a. The ordinary means of drinking was from a glass, but these people used bowls. On the surface, it appears to be a reference to their excessive use of wine, but Coffman cites a reference which points out that the Hebrew word for "bowl" appearing here is used in the Old Testament only with reference to religious activities.
 - b. If brother Coffman is correct, then the practice which is here condemned by Amos was in improper religious exercise. Daniel 5 details how the Babylonians profaned the holy vessels from the temple, which they used in their drunken feast.
 - c. Others think that the bowls were expensive and ornate vessels, with no special religious connotations involved in their use, and that the sins being exposed included extravagance and drunkenness.
 - d. The anointing with the best oils might indicate a religious activity, but not necessarily so.
 - e. The disposition being exhibited by the sinners Amos denounced, is likened to the attitude the ten brothers of Joseph had toward their young brother. Genesis 37:18-25 tells of their casting Joseph into the pit, and sitting down to eat, despite the pitiful pleas for mercy which he no doubt vocalized. As those ten brothers were indifferent to the fate of Joseph, so these people were unconcerned over the suffering state of the unfortunate poor of their own time. Also, they ignored the threatened punishment appointed to their nation.

B. Amos 6:7-14: The Lord Vows to Punish these Offenders.

1. Verse 7: "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) "Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away" (ASV).
 - 2) "Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, And those who recline at banquets shall be removed" (NKJV).
 - b. The Lord severely denounces the luxurious excesses of the depraved *nobility* of that generation. They banqueted on their couches, but they would be among the first to be taken away captive by the Assyrians, and their luxurious feasts would cease.
 - c. "They had sought eminence; they should have it. Jerome: 'Ye who are first in riches, shall, the first, endure the yoke of captivity, as it is in Ezekiel, 'begin from My sanctuary' (Ezek 9:6), that is, from the destruction of the Temple which is holy. For 'mighty men shall be mightily tormented' (Wisdom 6:6); and, 'to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more' (Luke 12:48).'[And the banquet] Probably, 'the screech.' The root, mizrach (OT:4797) whose consonants contain most of those of our screech, signifies the loud sharp cry, which the mind cannot control, either in revelry or distress. Here it is probably, the drunken scream, or reckless cry of revelry, whose senseless shrillness is more piercing, in its way, than the scream of distress....Amos seems to have purposely joined together similar harsh sibilants or guttural sounds in order the more to express the harshness of that scream of luxurious self-indulgence" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 8: "The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein."
 - a. The Lord confirmed his word with an oath, affirming his abhorrence for the excesses of these sinful people. Of course, God does not need to take an oath that he is telling the truth, but since man is not always ready to accept another's word, the Lord accommodates himself to man's practice. But we must remember that God's vow is no more dependable and certain than anything else he speaks. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee" (Heb. 6:13-14).
 - b. By referring to Jacob, Amos includes both Judah and Israel in his denunciations; both nations were descendants of Jacob. Even with the God of heaven taking the time and making the effort to call his people to repentance, they were not about to give up their luxury.
 - c. God said he hated their ornate palaces, which they had built by depriving some helpless people of their property. God's personality is emphasized by the use of such words as *hate* and *abhor*. He does not hate any sinner, but the sinner's ways.
3. Verses 9-10: "And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD."
 - a. It does not matter how full the house may be, death and destruction shall be brought to bear upon it and those within. Apparently referring to the fact that only about ten percent of a household remained from the initial onslaught by the invading enemy, that small remainder would not escape punishment. God would see to it that all of these offenders would meet a proper end.
 - b. An uncle (or kinsman) would come to burn the bones of those who have fallen. There would be so many bodies that the normal practice of burial could not be followed. If the picture is of the siege of the city, then the bodies would have to be burned, since the cemetery would be in the hands of the invaders. Burning a body was reserved for the extremely wicked under the law of Moses.
 - c. When the uncle came, one might be thinking that God's name might be mentioned which would call the Lord's attention to himself, and the Lord would kill him. The judgment would be so overwhelming that they would fear to mention God's name, lest he take note of the survivors. This shows that they recognized that the judgment they faced was from God. That realization was a long time in coming, and then it was too late to spare their national existence.
4. Verse 11: "For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts."
 - a. Regardless of the size of the house, whether large or small, all would suffer from the judgment. It is Jehovah who commands the destruction that is being wrought. He used the Assyrians to bring about this punishment, and mercy was not one of their common traits!

- b. "The great palace requires a breach to bring it to the ground; the little but is ruined by a small rent or cleft. All houses, great and small, shall be smitten. Possibly Israel and Judah are signified respectively by 'the great house' and 'the little house' (comp. Amos 9:11); and their treatment by the Assyrians may be thus symbolized" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
5. Verse 12: "Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock."
- a. The picture is of a rocky field on the mountainside where many sharp rocks were evident. Horses could not run there, neither could oxen plow there.
- b. This verse is connected with the thought of verse eleven. They could not expect deliverance on the basis of their righteousness. Though they might consider themselves to be righteous, yet their righteousness had been turned into hemlock and their judgment into gall. In other words, their senses of justice and right-doing were bitter as gall and as poisonous as hemlock.
- c. This is the same kind of situation as related in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They did not base their lives on obedience to God in other matters. Evil trees cannot produce good fruit. If we do a good deed, but lead others into error so as to doom their souls to hell, the end result is certainly evil.
- d. Coffman offers the following quote from Arnold C. Schultz: "There is a spiritual and moral order in the universe that is just as impossible to ignore as the natural order. It is as senseless to pervert justice as it is to expect horses to run on the rocks, or for oxen to plow on rock" (p.187).
6. Verse 13: "Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?"
- a. They had acted foolishly. They had gloried in things of little worth. The people of the Northern Kingdom relied on their own military strength. They thought they could boast, saying: "Look what we have done; we have taken to us horns by our own strength!"
- b. *Horns* is a common term used in the scriptures to denote strength or authority. Great and powerful military forces have often been defeated in battle by smaller armies. Gideon and his three hundred dedicated soldiers routed a mighty heathen army, using the stratagem God ordained (Judges 7-8).
- c. When one arrays himself against the will of God, when his foolish predicament is described to him, he must either rebel or repent; if he rebels, he must try to find some justification for his decision.
- d. These people looked to their military might, and perhaps to their idols, for deliverance. But there can be no defense strong enough to stand against the judgment of Almighty God!
7. Verse 14: "But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness."
- a. God announces here that whatever defense they offer, it will be pointless. He would raise up a mighty nation against Israel which would afflict them from Hemath down to the river of the wilderness. The expression describes the northern and southern boundaries of the nation, hence they would be afflicted from one end of the country to the other; there would be no escape.
- b. Historical records for the ancient times show that Israel was destroyed about 721 B.C. during the first month of the reign of Sargon, monarch of Assyria. Samaria had lain under a siege which was begun three years earlier by Shalmanezar IV.
- c. Excavations made in the 1840s uncovered the palace of Sargon II and an inscription which described the overthrow of Samaria in the words of the Assyrian king: "I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein. 50 chariots I gathered from among them. I caused others to take their portion (of the deported inhabitants). I set my officers over them and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king" (Quoted by Coffman, p.189).
- d. 2 Kings 17:5-8,18: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made....Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

AMOS 7

A. Amos 7:1-3: The Vision of the Grasshopper (Locust) Plague.

1. Verse 1: "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings."
 - a. ASV : "Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings."
 - b. Again the prophet affirms that what is said is from the Lord. The vision that is revealed here depicts some ominous disaster which the Lord was preparing for Israel; it was designed to punish them for their rebellion.
 - c. The locust plague depicted by Joel was evidently literal, but this vision more likely uses the swarm of locusts as a symbol of impending destruction.
 - d. In the vision, Amos sees the locusts being readied for their destructive work, their coming would be when the latter growth of the crop was springing up. This would be the last growing season of the year; nothing else could be raised until the following season.
 - e. "After the king's mowings" probably refers to the part of the harvest which followed the initial harvests from which taxes or tribute were taken. If the government got the first cutting, and the locusts got the last, there would be terrible suffering on the part of the people.
2. Verse 2: "And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."
 - a. In the vision, after the locusts had done their terrible work, Amos says he cried to the Lord that he forgive Israel. He based his plea on the fact that there was no one else to whom the seed of Jacob could look for deliverance. Jacob was small and without the strength to deliver themselves.
 - b. Israel was living in the lap of sinful luxury, heedless of their spiritual depravity. Their ease and apparent prosperity of the moment seem to be destined to endure, but their state was extremely precarious.
 - c. The vision did not depict an actual locust invasion that literally occurred; it only took place in the vision. Amos revealed its details for the purpose of leading them to repentance.
 - d. "Here is what will happen to you unless you straighten up you lives. God will send a horrible punishment upon you; there will be great loss and suffering; you will then repent, and ask me to entreat the Lord in your behalf. This I will do, but it will be too late to avert the punishment."
 - e. In the vision, the prophet entreated the Lord that they be spared.
3. Verse 3: "The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD."
 - a. The vision showed that God repented (changed his mind) with reference to the locust plague, and did not send it.
 - b. Although no statement is made with regards to repentance on the part of the people, and no possibility is stated that God would even consider changing his design to punish them, yet such a condition is implied.
 - c. The vision gave Israel a picture of what would happen to them; it was intended to be a means of changing them for the better.
 - d. It may be that all of them would have been destroyed without the intervention of Amos. As history unfolded, some thirty years later the majority suffered and died, and only a remnant was preserved.

B. Amos 7:4-6: The Vision of Fire.

1. Verse 4: "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part."
 - a. ASV: "Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land."
 - b. Another vision of destruction, depicted as consuming Israel, is revealed to Amos by the Lord. In the heavenly vision, fire is seen to devour the deep, and eat up a part.
 - c. The "great deep" may refer to the underground reservoirs of water, the aquifers from which the people obtained their water. The fire appears to be symbolic of a great drought which would use up the water supplies, and destroy a part of the inhabitants of the land.
2. Verse 5: "Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."
 - a. But once more the prophet interceded in behalf of the sinful people, that God would stay his hand, that

the people be spared. Amos used the same terminology in making his appeal for Israel that he used previously.

- b. "As our Lord repeated the same words in the Garden, so Amos interceded with God with words, all but one, the same, and with the same plea, that, if God did not help, Israel was indeed helpless. Yet a second time God spared Israel. To human sight, what so strange and unexpected, as that the Assyrian and his army, having utterly destroyed the kingdom of Damascus, and carried away its people, and having devoured, like fire, more than half of Israel, rolled back like an ebb-tide, swept away to ravage other countries, and spared the capital. And who, looking at the mere outside of things, would have thought that that tide of fire was rolled back, not by anything in that day, but by the prophet's prayer some 47 years before? Man would look doubtless for motives of human policy, which led Tiglath-pileser to accept tribute from Pekah, while he killed Rezin; and while he carried off all the Syrians of Damascus, to leave half of Israel to be removed by his successor" (Barnes, PC Study Bible).
3. Verse 6: "The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. And again the Lord changed his mind, saying, "This also shall not be." Their immediate doom was forestalled by the prophet's intervention.
 - b. How many societies and individuals have been preserved by the prayers of the righteous? Perhaps you and I have been spared some misfortune or disaster by the prayers of our faithful brethren.

C. Amos 7:7-9: The Vision of the Plumbline.

1. Verse 7: "Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand."
 - a. The plumbline is a measuring device; a plumbbob is attached to the end of a line, and lowered over the side of a wall; the line will be perfectly vertical, and thus the wall's vertical perfection can be measured. The device is especially used in building a wall correctly.
 - b. In this vision, the Lord is seen; he is standing on a wall, and has a plumbline in his hand; he is about to measure Israel's straightness.
2. Verse 8: "And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more."
 - a. The Lord tells Amos that he is about to use the plumbline on Israel, and that this will be the last time that he does so. The implication is that they will not be found straight, and failing the test, will be taken out of the way.
 - b. God would not pass by them again because they would no longer be there. A plumbline was used to determine whether a wall was to be torn down, as well as in the constructing of walls—a wall out of plumb is unsightly and possibly dangerous.
3. Verse 9: "And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."
 - a. Knowing already the spiritual crookedness of Israel, God states that he will find them to be unworthy of continuing as a nation, and that he would destroy the high places and sanctuaries which Israel had constructed for their idolatry. God would, therefore, rise against Israel with a sword, suggesting that their overthrow would result from war.
 - b. Israel was first ruled by Jeroboam, who led them into idolatry. *Jeroboam* may be used in reference to the dynasty founded by Jeroboam, to the line of kings from his time to the present.
 - 1) 2 Kings 10:30: "And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing *that which is right* in mine eyes, *and* hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that *was* in mine heart, thy children of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel."
 - 2) 2 Kings 15:8-10: "In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead."

D. Amos 7:10-13: Amaziah the Priest of Bethel Informs Against Amos.

1. Verse 10: "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words."
 - a. Amaziah was a false priest who served the idol at Bethel. "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even*

unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense" (1 Kings 12:25-33).

- b. It appears that Amaziah spoke up to interrupt Amos' speech (verse 12). He had sent word to Jeroboam to inform the king against Amos.
 - c. Jeroboam I was long since dead, having taken over the northern ten tribes as king at the death of Solomon in 975 B.C. According to some, Jeroboam II ruled until 749 B.C. (Amos did his work about 755 B.C.).
 - d. The charge which Amaziah leveled against Amos was that he had conspired against the king, publicly in the sight of the nation. He affirmed that the words of Amos were so heavy that the land could not bear up under their load! Something had to be done about this troublemaker!
 - e. When the truth is boldly preached, which will oppose and expose error, those who do not love the truth but are devoted to error, will rise up against the truth. There is a continuing conflict between truth and error; one cannot prosper where the other is enthroned. Even in the Lord's church there are those who oppose truth because they adore error
 - 1) Luke 6:26: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
2. Verse 11: "For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land."
- a. Amaziah hated the truth and loved his position so much that he knew it was imperative that he take some action against the prophet. He sent word to Jeroboam in which he lodged some complaints.
 - b. Thus he claimed that Amos had said the king would die by the sword and Israel would certainly be carried away captive.
3. Verse 12: "Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there."
- a. Amaziah could not stand the truth any longer; he had to speak out against Amos. If Amos was successful, Amaziah would lose his beloved idols and his prominent, and no doubt profitable, post at Bethel. "Amaziah" is defined as "Jehovah is strong." His name said one thing, but his own actions declared something entirely contrary.
 - b. "The squeaky wheel needs the grease." "The kicked dog hollers." When a strong point of truth is made in a sermon or Bible class, one who hates that truth the most will raise an objection!
 - c. Amaziah commanded Amos to flee southward to Judah, where he came from, and there he could eat bread and prophesy safely. He could reside in an unmolested state, and prophesy profitably down there. This corrupted priest was not concerned about the safety of Amos; he wanted to protect his own interests. He asserts that Amos would be well-paid back home, but that they did not want his kind of preaching in Israel.
 - d. "Raccoon" John Smith was once warned by his Baptist brethren, that he would have to quit preaching "Campbellism" or face the loss of his farm. His reply was, "Conscience is an article that I have never yet brought into market; but, should I offer it for sale, Montgomery County, with all its lands and houses, would not be enough to buy it, much less that farm of one hundred acres" (*Life of Elder John Smith*, John A. Williams, p.198).
4. Verse 13: "But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court."
- a. Amos is strictly warned not to prophesy against Bethel any more; it was the king's chapel (sanctuary—ASV), and was a royal house. The presentation of truth was not wanted; it was dangerous to show the liberals that they were wrong!

- b. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). When Amos denounced idolatry, he denounced the king's religion, and that would never do!

E. Amos 7:14-17: The Prophet Replies to Amaziah.

1. Verses 14-15: "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."
 - a. Amos declares that he did not come from a prophetic line; he was not a *regular* prophet; and his father was not a prophet.
 - b. "This was levelled squarely at Amaziah's unjust charge, by implication, that Amos was a cheap 'seer' picking up a little money where he might for prophesying against Israel, there being also some implications in Amos' reply, namely, that the regular line of prophets, especially those identified as 'the sons of the prophets,' i.e., those attending the prophetic schools and following the traditions that many of them followed, were indeed the same type of 'seer' with whom Amaziah sneeringly sought to identify Amos" (Coffman, p.203).
 - c. To be a prophet of God did not require that one go to school! If one was empowered by God to prophesy, he could speak unerringly the message God gave him to deliver. Neither the reception of the message nor its presentation was dependent upon the prophet's education or background.
 - d. Amos unashamedly admitted that he was a herdman and gatherer of sycamore fruit until God sent him northward into Israel to prophesy. The sycamore tree here is a mulberry fig (Ps. 78:47; Isa. 9:10; 1 Kings 10:27; 2 Chron. 1:15; 9:27; Luke 19:4).
 - e. Amos could make a good living herding cattle and gathering this fruit; he did not have to prophesy for a living. Amaziah's charge is thus exposed for the lie that it was—Amos did not prophesy in order to make a living.
2. Verse 16: "Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac."
 - a. Amaziah, and the Israelites in general, did not want to hear what Amos had to say; they did not want their sinful ways exposed.
 - 1) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
 - b. Amaziah did not want Amos to "drop" any word against the house of Israel. But Amos had not chosen the message; it was given to him by the Lord.
 - c. Acts 4:19-20: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
3. Verse 17: "Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land."
 - a. By the authority of God, Amos pronounced a curse against Amaziah: his wife would be a harlot; his children would fall by the sword; his land would be divided; and Israel would go into captivity. Amaziah would himself die in a polluted land (Assyria).
 - b. "Behold in this terrible fate of Amaziah the utter worthlessness of a false religion. The trouble in Israel was not merely their 'insincerity' in their worship, and not even their 'oppression of the poor,' which is made out by most modern commentators to be the sum and substance of all that was wrong; but it was their total departure from the word of God..." (Coffman, p.207).
 - c. Knowing God's will, believing God means what he says, and sincerely following the dictates of the word of God are extremely important matters. Our happiness here and our future destiny depend on our faithful obedience.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his

- commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
- 2) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - 3) John 13:17: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."
 - 4) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

AMOS 8

A. Amos 8:1-3: The Vision of the Basket of Summer Fruit.

1. Verse 1: "Thus hath the Lord GOD showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit."
 - a. This is the fourth vision the prophet has seen in the sequence that began in the preceding chapter.
 - b. The summer fruit was the last of the season; it was ripe then, and ready for harvesting. It was necessary that it be harvested immediately.
2. Verse 2: "And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."
 - a. Having asked the prophet to identify what he saw, and receiving Amos' reply, the Lord declared that his people (the Northern Kingdom) were facing their end.
 - b. In keeping with his earlier pronouncements, and in anticipation of what he is about to say, God means that he will bring about a terrible judgment upon them because of their rebellion. The time was ripe for God to harvest Israel by means of the great penalty he describes.
 - c. He would not pass by them any more. They would be taken away from his sight as a nation. After his punishment, there would be no need for him to punish them again, for they would be gone. God could not condone their rebellion any longer; he would not overlook, he would not pass by, their offenses. The time of God's mercy was over; the time for his wrath had come (cf. Genesis 6:1-13; 2 Peter 3:1-14).
3. Verse 3: "And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence."
 - a. The songs that were sung at the temple would be turned into howlings; their songs of rejoicing would become howls of horror at what the Lord would bring upon them.
 - b. The cause of this horror is shown to be the death of many people, their demise being caused (as the fulfillment shows) by the invasion of the heartless Assyrians.
 - c. The "temple" is possibly the "palace" (see ASV, footnote). If the Jerusalem temple is meant, then the Lord is expanding his warning of judgment to include Judah, for the temple was in their territory, at Jerusalem. But the reference is likely to the songs of revelry in the palace of the king in Israel.
 - d. The dead bodies would be so numerous, and the prospect for deliverance so bleak, that there would be no strength for mourning, and no hope for the living. This brief sketch fits the stark picture of the downfall of Samaria (2 Kings 17:5-18).

B. Amos 8:4-10: The Lord Describes the Judgment.

1. Verse 4: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail."
 - a. There were several great crimes for which Israel was to be punished; the one emphasized here was their mistreatment of the poor. The rich and powerful had oppressed the poor so terribly that the poor were about to become extinct.
 - b. The helpless poor had what little they possessed taken from them to finance the luxurious palaces and sinful revellings of the mighty: "Forasmuch therefore as your treading *is* upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*" (Amos 5:11-12).
2. Verses 5-6: "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"
 - a. The Lord described the disposition of these idolatrous revelers by putting the words of this passage in their mouths (or by quoting what they had actually said).
 - b. When will the new moon be gone so that we may sell corn and make a profit? Numbers 28:11 provided for certain religious services to be conducted in conjunction with the beginning of the months.
 - 1) Such activities are mentioned in connection with David, in 1 Chronicles 23:31: "And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD." Whatever God had intended to be done with respect to the new moons, these Israelites had perverted it.
 - 2) Even if they were offering the sacrifices which God had prescribed, and directed these offerings

- to God, yet their attitude was not right; it was mere formality. They could hardly wait until the occasion was over so they could be about their beloved mercenary activities. They had the same attitude toward the sabbath day exercises.
- 3) What religious service they gave was offered only out of necessity; it was insincere. They were unwilling to devote even one day of the week to the Lord. But what about the lukewarm Christians of our day? Are they not guilty of the same evil disposition?
 - c. Their merchandising practices were based on crooked measurements. The proverbial butcher of more modern times, who was adept at weighing his thumb, had nothing on these ancient crooks. They gave short measure when selling, and large measure when buying; they falsified the scales by deceitful means.
 - 1) They thought they were immune to justice, that they could not be found out, or if so, nothing would be done about it. But God puts them on notice that their evil practices were exposed, and they could expect divine retribution! Jesus revealed the attitude of God toward such people when he violently drove the money-changers from the temple.
 - 2) The righteous poor who have been defrauded by the powerful, can take heart; there is a Righteous Judge who will render perfect justice. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10).
 - d. They were happy to sell the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. The exact reference is probably to selling someone into slavery, by unjust means, due to their inability to pay a debt, which was likely inflated by fraud. The exact meaning may be a little unclear, but the language used is in sharp focus: they took sinful advantage of the helpless for their own profit.
 - e. Showing his intimate knowledge of their criminal commercial conduct, God accuses them of selling the refuse of the harvest for wheat. By mixing in a considerable amount of chaff, which had no food value, they could enhance their profit. But such dealings were deceitful and wrong.
3. Verse 7: "The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works."
 - a. The Lord swore by himself; he is the "Excellency of Jacob." God's word is more than sufficient to stand alone, but adopting the methods of men, God is said to have taken an oath on his own majestic Being, since there was nothing greater by which he could make such an affirmation (cf. Heb. 6:13-18).
 - b. God vows that he will not overlook a single one of their wicked works! What a sobering and fear-producing thought!
 4. Verse 8: "Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt."
 - a. God's rhetorical question asserts that the land will be made to tremble, and every inhabitant of the land to mourn, on account of the judgment he would bring upon them for their crimes.
 - b. This overwhelming punishment is then depicted as a great river overflowing its banks, and spreading out upon the land, wreaking havoc everywhere. Many would be "drowned" in this outpouring of divine wrath, just as the flooding of the Nile covers the land.
 - c. The Nile is said to have risen about 20 feet, and its spreading flood was awesome. As the Nile at flood stage overwhelmed the land of Egypt, so God's "flood" would overspread and inundate all: Compare: "The LORD spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel" (Isa. 8:5-8).
 5. Verse 9: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."
 - a. The sun would go down (set) at noon, and the earth would be dark on a clear day. This is a figure of speech. The people would be carried away into captivity just when they were in prosperous circumstances and their prospects for the future appeared great.
 - b. At the very time when they thought they were enjoying their "golden age," their judgment would come. This kind of language is frequently employed in the prophets in reference to the overthrown of nations (Isa. 13:1,6-11,13-22; 34:4-5; Ezek. 32:2,7-8,11,15).
 - c. There may be more to the meaning of this verse than is first seen. One of the significant features of the Old Testament prophets is to discuss a matter that concerned the time then present, then without

warning to jump to some event of the distant future:

- 1) 2 Samuel 7:12-14: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men." Peter showed in Acts 2 that this prophecy primarily described the establishment of Christ's kingdom.
- 2) 1 Peter 1:10: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you."
- d. Many scholars believe that in this passage is found an allusion to the darkening of the sky at the crucifixion of Christ. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matt. 27:45). That would be from noon until three in the afternoon, in our system of dividing the day.
6. Verse 10: "And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day."
 - a. Here the Lord describes the effects on the people that the tragic judgment would have. The description fits the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom; it also fits the demise of the Jewish economy at the hands of Rome, in 70 A.D.
 - b. They grieved and mourned when the Assyrians came upon them; their great sorrow is likened to losing an only son, with no hope of having another to carry on the family name. This was a tremendous loss to a Jewish father. The loss of their nation would be a tragedy of the greatest degree. Think how terrible a blow it would be to us if some foreign army landed on our shores, destroyed our cities, took control of all our valuables, and deported us to their land to live out the rest of our lives in the most abject kind of slavery.
 - c. But if the primary reference of verse nine is to the crucifixion of Christ, then the chief application of this verse is to the New Testament age, also. In the present context, Amos discussed the new moon and the sabbath days. In Colossians 2:14-17, Paul makes mention of the same, in a context which clearly describes the end of the Old Testament Law: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ."
 - d. While Christ suffered on the cross, God miraculously darkened the earth. At the moment of his death, the earth shook, the rocks were split, and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. These events symbolized the taking away of the Mosaic System, and the institution of the New Order (the New Covenant).
 - e. The will of Christ had its official beginning at his death. His death brought the Law of Moses to its official end, and inaugurated the Law of Christ.
 - 1) Hebrews 9:15-17: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."
 - 2) Galatians 3:15-16: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."
 - 3) Colossians 2:14-17: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."
 - 4) Ephesians 2:14-16: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

- f. It was at this point that the holydays of the Old Covenant, including the observance of the sabbath, were removed. The Old Law was merely a shadow of the better things of the New Covenant: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 10:1).

C. Amos 8:11-14: A Famine of the Word of God is Predicted.

1. Verse 11: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."
 - a. God plainly promised that the time was coming when a famine would ravage the land; it would not be a literal famine in which there would be a lack of food. But rather this famine would entail a scarcity of God's word.
 - b. The people affected would be starving for the word of God, but it would not be accessible as before. God had sent Amos and a host of other prophets to deliver to his people his word. They had rejected the messages and persecuted the prophets (cf. Acts 7:51-53; Matt. 23:37-38; 13:1-17).
 - c. God would bear with them only so long; he would give them sufficient warnings through the prophets, and ample opportunity, to return to the way of holiness, but when they persisted in their rebellion, he would send punishment. They would long for the time when they could hear God's will, but the prophets would no longer be present to reveal it to them. "We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long" (Ps. 74:9). For four hundred years, from Malachi to John the Baptizer, there was no new revelation from heaven.
2. Verses 12-13: "And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst."
 - a. They would seek to hear from God, but would be disappointed. Even the young people would faint for thirst.
 - b. In a literal famine, it is usually the young grownups who fair best, but those who are best prepared to cope with this famine of God's word would falter.
3. Verse 14: "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again."
 - a. Idolatry was the sin of Samaria. It encompassed the whole land, and because it led people from God's Law, they turned to oppressing the poor, materialism, immorality and profligacy. Before a nation decays morally, socially and politically, it will first decay in religion. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).
 - b. Survey the present state of America, and weep for the tragic future that awaits us—unless there is true repentance on the part of the many!
 - c. In his 1798 letter to the officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of Massachusetts' Militia, America's second president, John Adams, made a famous observation about the U.S. Constitution: "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

AMOS 9

A. Amos 9:1-4: The Vision of the Lord Standing upon the Altar.

1. Verse 1: "I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered."
 - a. This is the fifth and final vision Amos describes. The picture given here is that of Israel being buried under the rubble of the spiritual house they had erected, which had a foundation of error and sin, and which crashed down upon them.
 - b. Commentators argue over the location of the altar beside (ASV) which the Lord stood. Was it the one at Bethel or the proper one at Jerusalem? Some think it unlikely that the Lord would associate himself with the pagan altar at Bethel, but others say that since the work of Amos is primarily directed toward the Northern Kingdom, that the altar at Jerusalem does not fit the case. The point of contention seems minor, for the punishments threatened against Israel were also fulfilled against Judah. Each was overcome by invaders from a foreign nation, and carried into exile. Their religious and moral foundations were corrupt, thus they and their kingdom were to be destroyed.
 - c. The lintel of a door opening was the piece that connected the two walls beside the door, and supported the weight of the section of wall above it. The posts were the sills forming the sides of the door opening. To smite the lintel would put pressure on the posts, and cause the whole wall to crumble.
 - d. The Lord figuratively describes the destruction of Israel's spiritual house. The lintels and door posts represent the civil and religious leaders of the nation. They would be brought down, thus insuring the demolition of the entire country. There would be no escape, although strong efforts would be made to avoid the catastrophe. The whole nation would be buried beneath the rubble of their ruined house.
2. Verse 2: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down."
 - a. ASV: "Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down."
 - b. The futility of escape is graphically portrayed here. If they tried to dig themselves from under the rubble by digging even into Sheol, God would still take them! If they should succeed in climbing upon the rubble heap unto heaven itself, God would pull them down again. There could be no escape! Compare: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:7-10).
 - c. *Sheol* is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament word *Hades*. When the King James Translation was made in 1611, the word *Hell* was the only English word available, doing double duty of identifying both *Hades* [*Sheol*] and *Gehenna* [*Hell*].
3. Verse 3: "And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them."
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) "And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them" (ASV).
 - 2) "And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, From there I will search and take them; Though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, From there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them" (NKJV).
 - b. If they should seek to hide themselves from the wrath of God by concealing themselves on top of Mt. Carmel, they would be taken. Carmel is said to have more than two thousand caves, and that the labyrinth they form is so complex that a fugitive could easily escape discovery.
 - c. But they could not hide from God, even if they sought concealment in the depths of the sea; God could command the most fearsome sea creature to execute his judgment, if necessary.
4. Verse 4: "And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."
 - a. Turning to more literal language, the Lord states that they would be conquered and captivated by their enemies, and that even in slavery, they would not escape the sword.

- b. In times past, when they lived in obedience to God, he showered them with his blessings; but now he would set his eyes upon them for evil. One of the simplest truths of the Bible is that God is a God of goodness and severity: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

B. Amos 9:5-10: The Lord Further Describes the Punishment He Will Bring Upon Israel.

1. Verse 5: "And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt."
 - a. The awesome power of God is described here. God is able to touch the land with his finger, and it will melt. All nature must respond to him; it has no other choice. Neither has man.
 - 1) Amos 4:13: "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."
 - 2) Amos 5:8-9: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name: That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress."
 - b. In the fulfillment of God's warnings, Assyria was moved by God's power to invade Palestine, and wreak havoc upon the populations.
 - c. He further depicts his punishment as a flood, such as the flood which inundated Egypt. "Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt" (Amos 8:8).
 - d. In Amos 4:13, God is shown to be the Creator of the universe; in 8:8, his control of the universe is suggested; in Amos 9:5-6, God's ability to use his creation to effect punishment is shown.
2. Verse 6: "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name."
 - a. "It is he that buildeth his chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is his name" (ASV).
 - b. God is able to store up the waters in the heavens, and cause them to fall upon the earth. In his infinite power and wisdom, God was able to develop the evaporation cycle, in which water is stored in vapor form in the atmosphere; this water can be condensed, in keeping with the natural laws God established, so that it falls as precipitation upon the earth.
 - c. There is a theory which asserts that Genesis 1:6-8 describes a great deposit of water above the earth, and that this water was a prime source of the flood of Genesis 6. But the division of "waters" may simply mean the waters above the earth was in a gaseous state, while that upon the earth was in liquid form.
3. Verse 7: "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"
 - a. God speaks here of his power over the nations of the earth. God had given Israel many special benefits (cf. Deut. 7:7-11), but their singular standing with God carried definite conditions.
 - b. Because Israel had not lived up to their obligations, God was no longer obligated to give them special treatment; they were now to be dealt with on the same basis as were the Ethiopians, who were also idolaters. Israel had been a special people, but God could not forever condone their rebellion, so after ample warnings, he would send severe punishment upon them. Of course, because of their place in his eternal plan, he would not utterly destroy them.
 - 1) Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
 - 2) Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."
 - 3) Jeremiah 30:11: "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee

- in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”
- c. God had brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, but he states that he had also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir. Caphtor is the island of Crete; the location of Kir is unknown. In his wisdom and providence, God had seen fit to bring these nations into the land they now occupied. While giving unique blessings to the Israelites, God did not forsake the Gentile nations.
 - 1) Matthew 5:45: “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
 - 2) Acts 14:16-17: "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."
 4. Verse 8: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD."
 - a. God had not overlooked their sinful kingdom; his eyes were upon it. He is not here promising to destroy all the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, but that their sinful kingdom will be dismantled.
 - b. It will be remembered that Israel had demanded a king during the time of Samuel (see 1 Sam. 8), so that they could be like the nations about them. This was contrary to the will of God, but he permitted them this folly, warning them of the tragedy they were inviting by this rebellion (cf. Deut. 17:14-20). He was now on the verge of removing the kingdom. Compare: “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos. 13:11).
 - c. A remnant from Israel and Judah was spared, and came back from captivity. But both of their kingdoms were utterly and forever destroyed! God would not make a full end of the Israelites.
 - 1) Jeremiah 30:11: “For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”
 - 2) Jeremiah 46:28: “Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.”
 5. Verses 9-10: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us."
 - a. God would sift Israel by means of the punishment he is about to bring to bear upon them. Sifting with a sieve is for the purpose of straining out (separating) what is wanted from what is not wanted.
 - b. None of the sinful members of their society would escape punishment, but the righteous citizens would be protected. While the godly in their nation would have to endure some awful hardships, yet they would be preserved. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., uninspired records indicate that no faithful Christians lost their lives in the holocaust that befell the rebellious Jews.
 - c. God would not allow a good kernel of grain to fall to the earth in this sifting operation, meaning that the faithful would be preserved. On the other hand, all of the sinners among the nation would perish, even though they blatantly denied that any evil would come their way.
 - d. Evil men, in order to maintain their sinful ways of life, usually deny that they are wicked and that they face a dire end. To admit the truth, would create a painful condition that would demand a change; but to deny the truth, is to ease their conscience, although that hardens them in their rebellion.
 - 1) When a man does evil to an innocent person, and will not repent, he has to ease his conscience in some way. It often is the case that he develops hatred for the victim, turning that innocent man into the villain; this he does so that he can live with his conscience.
 - 2) When a man becomes guilty of evil-doing, and remains impenitent, he must take steps to justify himself, or else suffer the pangs of a wounded conscience. Some of the common steps that are taken are these:
 - a) Some will deny that they have committed an offense; they may do this by denying the standard or by insisting they have done no wrong.
 - b) Some will try to shift the blame to another party.
 - c) Some will use sarcasm, snide remarks, or otherwise show their despise for one who would

correct them.

- e. The Israelites could have prevented the tragedy that befell them by repenting and obeying the will of God. Sinners today can avoid their fate by doing likewise.

C. Amos 9:11-15: The Prophet Predicts the Establishment of God's Spiritual Kingdom.

1. Verse 11: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."
 - a. "To this point the prophet has painted an exceedingly dark picture, as of a world enshrouded in a cloud of blackness and of hopelessness, with scarcely a ray of light breaking through. But as is characteristic of the prophets who prophesied of Israel and Judah to give hope in the midst of disaster, so also the Book of Amos contains a ray of hope as it closes with an optimistic promise of future glory. These verses are like a beam of sunlight streaming through an opening in the dark clouds of a storm, as Amos looks beyond his time to a brighter day under a descendant of the house of David" (Hailey, p.125).
 - b. "In that day" is a clear reference to some future time. In studying out the meaning of the statements which follow, we learn that he is describing the events of the New Testament era, when Christ would establish the kingdom:
 - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 2) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
 - c. Acts 15:13-21 gives the inspired interpretation of the passage: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."
 - 1) Verse 13: This is not the James, the brother of John; that James had been slain earlier by Herod (Acts 12:1-2). This James was a half-brother of Jesus, the author of the book bearing his name, and was a prominent man in the Jerusalem church of Christ. He was a prophet (an inspired spokesman for God) and likely an elder of the church. Galatians 2:9 speaks of him as a pillar of the church, along with Peter and John.
 - 2) Verse 14: James reminded the brethren of what Peter (Simeon) had done: God had initiated Peter's work with the Gentiles (Acts 10). The purpose of that important event was that God might "take out of them a people for his name" (i.e., that the Gentiles might be part of God's spiritual nation).
 - 3) Verses 15-17: "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." James stated that this point (verse 15) was in harmony with Old Testament Scriptures. He cited Amos 9:11-12. Although he did not give a precise quotation, he gave the full sense of the prophet's statement. The statement by Amos is the basis of his statement, but he joins to it statements that were made by other Old Testament prophets. Notice that James said that "to this agree the words of the prophets" (plural).
 - a) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they

- shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”
- b) Isaiah 49:6: “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”
 - c) Micah 4:1-4: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”
 - d) 2 Samuel 7:12: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.”
- d. What was to be rebuilt was not the Jewish system, but the "tabernacle" of David. The Jewish system never sustained such a relationship to David that it could be called the "tabernacle of David." This could have been said about Moses. But David had been given a promise that his throne would be established forever:
- 1) 2 Samuel 7:16: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”
 - 2) Psalm 89:3-4: “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.”
 - 3) 1 Kings 2:4: “That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.”
 - 4) Jeremiah 22:30: “Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.”
- e. The tabernacle of David is his tent or house (his family; his royal line). It had fallen into ruin. His fleshly descendants had continued, uninterrupted, down to that time, but his royal line had ceased to occupy his throne. Coniah (Jechoniah) was removed from his throne and carried to Babylon with the Jewish nation. Jeremiah 22:30 predicted that Coniah (a descendant of David) would never have a descendant sitting on the throne of Judah: "...For no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."
- f. Jesus is of the lineage of Coniah (Matt. 1:11-12), but no descendant of Coniah would ever sit on an earthly throne, ruling in Judah. It follows that since Jesus is King, his throne is not (and can never be) upon the earth.
- g. During the time in which the tabernacle of David was in ruins, "in that day," God would "build it as in the days of old." Premillennialism asserts that this will be done in the *millennium*, but James showed that it was fulfilled already, in the church of Christ (15:13-17).
- h. "In this speech James shows that God, who knows from eternity what his own works would be, had foretold, through the prophet, the work which he was then performing through the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul. He had said that he would rebuild the tabernacle of David, in order that the residue of men, who had not known the Lord before, 'even all the Gentiles, upon whom his name is called,' should seek after the Lord; and now, he had, through these apostles, selected from among the Gentiles 'a people for his name'" (J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts*, p.185).
- i. God had promised to King David, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. 7:16; cf. Ps. 89:34).
- 1) Based on outward appearances, this promise had failed, for there had been no king on David's throne since the reign of Coniah (586 B.C.). Amos was active about 750 B.C., hence he predicted not only the restoration of David's "tabernacle," he also indirectly predicted its fall into ruin.
 - 2) But God had not forgotten his promises. The angel told Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"

- (Luke 1:32-33).
- 3) "Thus, the promise, when properly understood, is seen to refer neither to a continuous line of Jewish kings, descended from David, nor to a reconstruction of the Jewish Church, but to the perpetual reign of Jesus, the 'seed of David according to the flesh' [Rom. 1:3]. When, therefore, Jesus sat down upon his throne in heaven, the tabernacle of David was rebuilt, and now, by the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, the remainder of the prophecy of Amos was being fulfilled, by the extension of his kingdom among the Gentiles" (McGarvey, *ibid.* p.186). Amos' prophecy was being fulfilled as the Gentiles learned the gospel and became citizens in Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13-14; John. 3:5).
 - 4) "If the tabernacle of David mentioned here has not been established, the Gentiles cannot seek after God" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *God's Prophetic Word*, p.528). James declared that Amos' prophecy was fulfilled in the church, so the millennial view is a base twisting of God's Word. The purpose for which David's tabernacle was to be rebuilt was to enable all men, Jews and Gentiles, to seek after the Lord, and for God to be able to apply his name to all of those who sought him. Since Gentiles can seek after God today, the tabernacle of David has been rebuilt.
- j. Acts 15:18: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." God's future actions are not unknown to him. He knows all that he chooses to know, from the beginning of time to its very end. He did not act impulsively in any of his dealings with man. Therefore, he knew beforehand that he intended to include the Gentiles in his ultimate plan which he purposed from before time began: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26; cf. Eph. 3:1-11).
2. Verse 12: "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this."
 - a. "Edom had been brought under subjection to the kingdom by David (II Sam. 8:14; I Chron. 18:13), but later Edom had revolted under the reign of Jehoram (II Chron. 21:8-10). Although the people of Edom were related to Israel, they were Israel's bitterest enemies. These were to have the name of Jehovah called on them and thereby become the possession of the new David. This declaration of the prophet is clearly Messianic, to be fulfilled under the Christ" (Hailey, pp.125f).
 - b. James used this passage to prove to the people at the Jerusalem conference that the spreading of the gospel among the Gentiles was the point intended by this prophecy. When the Gentiles heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel of Christ, this prophecy was fulfilled; by the same time, the tabernacle of David had been rebuilt.
 - 1) Luke 1:67-79: "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
 - 2) Acts 3:18-26: "But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled....Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began....Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."
 - c. There is nothing in any part of the Bible that predicted or taught any earthly reign of Christ.
 3. Verse 13: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

- a. This figurative language amply describes the spiritual blessings under the Messiah. The plowman and reaper would do their work at the same time—indicating a continuous supply of spiritual produce.
- b. The treader of the grapes and the sower of seed would work concurrently. Sweet wine would drop from the mountains. The hills would melt into milk and honey:
 - 1) Joel 3:18-21: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.”
 - 2) John 4:34-37: “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.”
4. Verses 14-15: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."
 - a. The fulfillment is to be found in the kingdom of Christ. The captivity of Israel is a type of the bondage of sin (2 Pet. 2:19; John 8:34; Rom. 6:1-18). It is not likely that Amos would have used language that is so clearly figurative in verses twelve and thirteen, and then revert to literal language in this passage.
 - b. As the remnant of the Israelites (from both Northern and Southern Kingdoms) returned to the land of Canaan, inhabiting their former cities and enjoying the produce of the land, so those who are in bondage to sin, and weighed down with the guilt thereof, are given the privilege of entering the kingdom of Christ, throwing off the weight of sin (cf. Heb. 12:1-2), and to imbibe the rich bounties of the Savior:
 - 1) Matthew 11:28-30: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
 - 2) Revelation 22:17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
 - 3) Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”
 - c. As long as the citizens in the Lord's spiritual kingdom (the church) continue to hear the voice of the King and follow his will (John 10:27-28), their former master (Satan) can never place them under his cruel bondage again. Satan has control over us only to the extent (if any) that we give him. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).
 - d. The citizenship of God's people today is not in Palestine, but in heaven.
 - 1) Zechariah 9:10: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth."
 - 2) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

INTRODUCTION TO OBADIAH

A. The Prophet Obadiah.

1. Obadiah means "servant of the Lord," and was a common name among the Semitic people. About 13 people in the Bible wore this name. It is not known which, if any of these, is the Obadiah of this book. Virtually nothing is known about this author. We know that he was a prophet of God, and that his prophecy concerned Edom.
2. The following is a list of four of the prominent people named Obadiah in the Bible.
 - a. Ahab's steward was named Obadiah. He showed kindness and courage by hiding fifty of the Lord's prophets in a cave (1 Kings 18:3-16).
 - b. Another who wore this name was sent out by Jehoshaphat into the cities of Judah to teach the law (2 Chron. 17:7).
 - c. The Obadiah of Amaziah's time advised the king not to allow the army of the Northern Kingdom to accompany him against the Edomites (2 Chron. 25:7).
 - d. Obadiah was one of the overseers involved in repairing the temple during Josiah's time (2 Chron. 34:12).
3. Various dates have been affirmed with reference to the Obadiah of this book, with the earliest being about 845 B.C. We have adopted this date in our study.
 - a. "The fourth of the 'minor' prophets, Obadiah's message was directed against Edom. Some scholars believe Obadiah was a contemporary of Jehoram, during whose reign (about 844 B.C.) Jerusalem was invaded by Philistines and Arabians (2 Chron 21:16-17).
 - 1) "Other scholars suggest a date following 587/86, the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Still others suggest an earlier Babylonian assault on Jerusalem, in 605 B.C. Whatever date is assigned to Obadiah, he lived during a time of trouble for Jerusalem.
 - 2) "His prophecy against Edom condemned the Edomites for taking sides against Jerusalem in its distress (Obad 15). The strongest mountain fortresses would be no defense for the Edomites against the DAY OF THE LORD—the time when God would bring His final judgment upon the world" [Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers].
 - b. 2 Chronicles 21:16-17: "Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians: And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons."

B. The Book of Obadiah.

1. The book naturally divides into two parts.
 - a. Verses 1-14 show that Edom will be invaded and punished for its sins against God's people.
 - b. Verses 15-21 contain predictions of the day of the Lord.
2. It is the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible, having only 21 verses in its only chapter.
3. It is one of seven Old Testament books which are not directly quoted in the New Testament. The seven are: Nahum, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Obadiah. Some think that Revelation 11:15 alludes to Obadiah 21, however.
 - a. Obadiah 21: "And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."
 - b. Revelation 11:15: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."
4. Obadiah teaches good lessons.
 - a. Indifference to the problems of others is wrong: "In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them" (Obad. 11).
 - b. Those who are joyful over the misfortunes of others are rebuked: "But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress" (Obad. 12).
 - c. Pride is shown to be full of danger: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to

the ground? Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD" (Obad. 3-4).

d. Obadiah teaches the great lesson of Divine Retribution:

1) Obadiah 10: "For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever."

2) Obadiah 15: "For the day of the LORD *is* near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head."

C. Background of Edom.

1. Since the book directs a tirade of rebukes against Edom, it is important that we know something about that ancient nation.
2. **Edom** is another name for Esau, and means "red." Esau was red at birth, thus was named *Esau* (Gen. 25:25). The place where he settled and where his descendants dwelt was called *Edom*, which means "red" or "red region." The Edomites were, of course, Esau's descendants.
3. As the twin brothers Jacob and Esau could not get along with each other, so their offspring had continual troubles.
 - a. The Edomites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their country when the latter was enroute from Egypt to Canaan (Num. 20:14-21).
 - b. King Saul conducted wars against Edom (1 Sam. 14:47).
 - c. Edom joined forces with Moab and Ammon against Judah (2 Chron. 20:22).
 - d. Edom revolted against Judah during the reign of Jehoram, and set up their own king (2 Chron. 21:8-10).
4. Esau's primary attributes leave much to be desired.
 - a. He was a profane man and a fornicator: "Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:16-17)
 - b. He sold his birthright for a bowl of pottage: "And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright" (Gen. 25:29-34).
 - c. His descendants showed evidences of similar traits. God rejected both Esau and his offspring: "And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness" (Mal. 1:3).
5. The land of Edom was situated in the rough country at the south end of the Dead Sea. It was a narrow strip of territory lying in mountains that reach up to 5,700 feet, and is about 20 miles wide by 100 miles in length. It included Petra, which has been described as a "rose red city." A narrow canyon leads to this city, a passage that is only about 30 feet wide at some places, and about a mile long.
6. The Edomites were overcome by the Nabataeans (Arabs), who carved their temples out of the rocks lining the walls of the passage leading to Petra. The Edomites were later conquered by John Hyrcanus of the Maccabees, who forced many of them to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. They were absorbed by the Arabs over a period of time until they lost their identity as a separate people by 100 A.D.



Petra, From the Internet

OBADIAH

A. Obadiah 1-14: Edom Will Be Punished Because of Their Cruelty Toward God's People.

1. Verses 1-2: "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised."
 - a. Obadiah introduces his little book by describing it as *the vision* which he was given. The prophecy contained in it concerned Edom, a cousin to Israel, but which was far removed from God's people in manner of life. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he *is* thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land" (Deut 23:7).
 - b. In his vision, Obadiah saw a scene in which a rumor is said to have been announced in heathen lands by an ambassador, which called on all the lands to rise up in battle against Edom.
 - c. Inasmuch as God had made Edom to be only a small country, they were greatly despised by their larger neighbors, and they had little strength against their enemies.
2. Verses 3-4: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD."
 - a. Dwelling in the fortress territory now known as Petra, they thought they were invulnerable to attack. In many cases, this would be so, but God was against them now.
 - b. Their pride had invoked God's anger. Pride deceives the heart; it will not allow its possessor to depend on the Lord. Because she lived among the rocks, Edom thought she was self-sufficient. Their pride became their downfall. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
 - c. Clarke:
 - 1) "The Edomites thought their land was unconquerable because of the defence system that they had built throughout their rocky mountains. Obadiah warns them that no matter how high up the mountains they go or how strong they make their defences, nothing will save them from the coming destruction. Already the enemy armies are preparing to attack Edom (1-4).
 - 2) "A house burglar steals only what he wants, and leaves the remainder of the goods in the house; a vineyard worker picks the grapes that are ripe and leaves the rest; but when the enemy soldiers plunder Edom they will take everything. They will seize even the treasures that the Edomites have hidden in caves in the mountains (5-6).
 - 3) "Edom prided itself in its political skill and military strategy. Its leaders thought they were cleverer than the leaders of neighbouring nations, and often used their cunning to cheat their allies. Their shame in defeat will therefore be the greater when they discover that some of these neighbouring nations, who they thought were trusted allies, have betrayed them and helped bring about their downfall (7-9).
 - 4) "Obadiah now gives the reason why God will punish Edom so severely. When the Babylonian armies attacked and plundered Jerusalem, Edom did nothing to help its brother nation. Rather the opposite; it gladly helped the attackers (10-11). The Edomites were glad to see Jerusalem plundered, and even joined in the plundering. Worse than that, they helped the Babylonians capture the Jerusalemites by cutting off the escape route of those who tried to flee (12-14)."
3. Verses 5-6: "If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!"
 - a. If thieves had come, they could not have taken everything, but God could and would! Those who gather the grapes do not take every single grape, but God would leave nothing.
 - b. "The spoliation which thou shalt suffer shall not be such as that which thieves cause, bad as that is, for these, when they have seized enough, or all they can get in a hurry, leave the rest—nor such as grape-gatherers cause in a vineyard, for they, when they have gathered most of the grapes, leave gleanings behind—but it shall be utter, so as to leave thee nothing. The exclamation, 'how art thou cut off!' bursting in amidst the words of the image, marks strongly excited feeling. The contrast between Edom, where no gleanings shall be left, and Israel, where at the worst a gleaning is left, is striking (Isa 17:6; 24:13)...How are the things of Esau searched out!—by hostile soldiers seeking booty...How are his hidden things sought up!—'hidden things,' or places. Edom abounded in such hiding-places as caves, clefts in the rock, etc. None of these should be left unexplored by the foe"

- [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
- c. Similar terminology is used in Jeremiah 49:9-10: "If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he *is* not."
 4. Verse 7: "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him."
 - a. Edom had formed a confederacy for wealth and safety, but even these confederates would turn against them. Lying along a prominent trade route, Edom had great wealth by means of the caravans that passed through her borders. These allies would prove to be unfaithful.
 - b. They were allied with Moab and Ammon, who were involved in slave trade. "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom.... Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant" (Amos 1:6,9).
 - c. The caravan route shifted away from Edom, contributing to its demise. Until then, it had been a very wealthy and corrupt society. Duran gives the following about Petra:
 - 1) "The main commercial route running north from Mariaba went through the northwest corner of the peninsula, known to the ancients as Arabia Petraea from its capital at Petra, some forty miles south of Jerusalem. The city had been named from the circle of steep crags within which it was strategically placed. There, in the second century B.C., the Nabatean Arabs established a kingdom that slowly grew rich on passing caravans, until its rule extended from Leuce Come on the Red Sea along the eastern border of Palestine through Gerasa and Bostra to Damascus. Under King Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40) the country reached its zenith; Petra became a Hellenistic city, Aramaic in speech, Greek in art, Alexandrian in the splendor of its streets. To this time belong the finest of the giant tombs that were carved into the rocks outside the city—crude but powerful facades of double-tiered Greek colonnades, sometimes a hundred feet in height.
 - 2) "After Trajan annexed Arabia Petraea into the Empire (106), Bostra became the capital of the province of Arabia, and raised in its turn the architectural symbols of wealth and power. Petra decayed as Bostra and Palmyra became the crossroads of the desert caravans, and the great tombs lapsed into 'the night stalls of nomad flocks.' The most striking feature of the great Empire was its numerous and populous cities. Never again till our own century has urbanization been so pronounced" [Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, p.435].
 5. Verses 8-9: "Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter."
 - a. God was able to bring about a great destruction upon Edom. No allies, no material wealth, and no wise men would be left to them—a picture of great loss!
 - b. Verse nine avows a total destruction of the nation. Where are the Edomites today? Did not God fulfill his warning?
 - c. Teman was a prominent city in Edom. "'Edom was known for its wise men; Elephaz, one of the friends of Job, was a Temanite, Teman being one of the most important towns in Edom.' Celebrated as were the wise men of Edom, their counsel will be thwarted and rendered useless when the judgment falls" (From the Internet).
 6. Verses 10-14: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress."
 - a. Here the Lord gives some reasons for his terrible punishment of Edom. What God did in bringing his wrath upon people was done only because of necessity, not out of caprice or hatred. They earned the

punishment because of their ill-treatment of Israel. Some of their evil toward Israel perhaps lay in the distant past, thus showing that God gave them time to repent.

- 1) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 3) Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
- b. Verse 11 seems to depict the overthrow of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians, but there are other views available. This is a prophecy, and may deal with future events; thus, God may be showing the actions of Edom when Jerusalem was later taken. "Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof" (Ps. 137:7). There were other calamities which befell Judah—the reference might be to one of these.
- 1) The Edomites smote Judah and carried away captives (2 Chron. 28:17). This took place about 40 years before Obadiah's prophecy (845 B.C.), and is likely to be the event these verses depict. It may be that several cases are in the prophet's view. "For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives" (2 Chron. 28:17).
 - 2) Pekah, king of Israel, slew 120,000 of Judah and took 200,000 captives: "For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, *which were* all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers" (2 Chron. 28:6).
 - 3) The Philistines wreaked havoc on the Jews: "The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there" (2 Chron. 28:18).
 - 4) Judah was humbled by the Assyrians, and were forced to strip the temple of some of its treasures to pay tribute: "And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria" (2 Kings 16:8).
- c. Obadiah rebuked the Edomites for having rejoiced when the Israelites were demeaned and afflicted by the heathen. Edom stood by when enemies ravaged Israel, and had themselves taken part in assailing God's people. Many people are of such a nature that they will gladly kick someone who is down; there is no compassion in them, and thus their standing before the Lord in Judgment will be sad to behold!
- 1) James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
 - 2) In our advanced society, the National Guard must often be called out to protect the property and persons of those caught up in some disaster. "Time changes little, and human nature not at all."
- d. They were guilty of three crimes in this connection: (1) in not coming to the aid of their cousins; (2) in assaulting them on their own part; and (3) in cutting off the escape of those Jews who fled from the main enemy: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom.... Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant" (Amos 1:6, 9).

B. Obadiah 15-21: Warnings About the Day of the Lord.

1. Verse 15: "For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head."
 - a. The oft-stated principle of Divine Law is repeated here: one will inevitably reap what he has sown.
 - 1) Galatians 6:7-10: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - 2) This precept applies to individuals, nations and societies.
 - b. In time or in eternity or in both time and eternity, this truth will be fulfilled. Whether the thing done is good or evil, a proper return will be effected.
 - c. Edom and the other heathen nations would be punished for their assaults against God's people (See Ezek. 35).

2. Verse 16: "For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been."
 - a. Edom had profaned God's holy mount (Zion). This they had done (1) by holding literal drunken feasts there, or (2) figuratively by the hatred and violence directed against God's people. Because of this, they would drink deeply of God's wrath, so that they would be as though they had never been. As shown earlier, God wiped Edom out as a nation.
 - b. No one can demonstrate today that he is a descendant of Esau. No Jew today can prove he is a descendent of the tribe of Levi, Judah, etc. Their extensive genealogical records were destroyed when the Romans destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
3. Verse 17: "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."
 - a. In contrast to the destruction to come upon Edom, great blessings would descend upon Mount Zion. Reference here could be to the restoration of Israel from captivity, or to the church. The language of this verse is similar to Micah 4:2 and Isaiah 2:2.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."
 - 2) Micah 4:2: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - b. It was prophesied that Christ would "reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33).
 - c. When the people of ancient Israel were brought low by their enemies, it would appear that they would have no future; however, their fate and the fruition of God's plans would be determined by the power of heaven. Evil men might gain the upper hand for the moment, but God would have the final word.
4. Verse 18: "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it."
 - a. In a pointed and graphic statement, the prophet predicted that the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph would be as a flame, and the house of Esau would be as stubble—the former would consume the latter. The house of Jacob is a reference to the Southern Tribes; the house of Joseph is the Northern Tribes.
 - b. These two segments of the divided kingdom would be united again, in the scene the prophet depicts. This indicates that the prophecy deals with spiritual Israel, the church. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).
 - c. Often, the Northern Kingdom was called *Ephraim*, the name of one of Joseph's sons, the sire of a powerful tribe in Israel.
 - d. Because God had spoken this warning, it would be done! "Historically, Edom's destruction began with the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar but was not completed by that nation. Between the sixth and the end of the fourth centuries, Edom was invaded by Arabs known as the Nabataeans, a highly gifted people who drove the Edomites out of their land into a region south of Judea. The Maccabees brought them under subjection in the second century when Judas Maccabeus slew some twenty thousand of them. John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) subjugated the remnant of the nation, forcing them to accept circumcision and nominally to accept the Jewish religion. Under the Romans some time during the first century after Christ the remaining Edomites were absorbed by the Arabs and their identity was lost completely. The Herods, descendants of the Edomites, were Edom's chief contribution to history; certainly, this is nothing of which to boast!" (Hailey, pp.37f).
5. Verse 19: "And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead."

- a. "They of the south" is a reference to Judah, whose southernmost section was the Negeb. Judah would possess the mount of Esau (Edom's counterpart of Mount Zion); she would also possess the land of the Philistines, the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria; and Benjamin would possess Gilead, a prominent area in the Northern Kingdom on the east side of Jordan.
- b. The restoration of Israel to the land of promise perhaps lies in the foreground of this prophecy, but Edom's destruction and the ascendancy of Israel over the land is not the complete story.
- c. That the Messiah's reign is in view is indicated by the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:15-24 (cf. Amos 9:11; Acts 15:15-18). This prophecy has been fulfilled in the spread of the gospel beginning in the first century.
 - 1) Numbers 24:15-24: "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, *which* saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek *was* the first of the nations; but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever. And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! And ships *shall come* from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever."
 - 2) Amos 9:11: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."
 - 3) Acts 15:15-18: "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."
6. Verses 20-21: "And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."
 - a. As is common with Old Testament prophecies, the prophet begins with something in the near future and extends his point to events lying in the distant future. He begins with Israel's return to the land following their captivity, but quickly ranges forward to the Messiah's reign.
 - b. If the reference is applied to the restoration, the deliverers (judges; saviors) would go forth from Israel. The *saviors* would be men such as Nehemiah, Ezra, and the prophets. "Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies" (Neh. 9:27).
 - c. But there seems to be a fuller application to the Christian Age when the kingdom would be established by the Lord, and its rule extended to incorporate people in the territories indicated. Christ rules from heaven by the word of his mouth. The *saviors* would be the apostles, prophets, and evangelists of Christ.
 - d. Isaiah 11: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And

in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

A. The Prophet Jonah.

1. His name means "Dove."
2. He operated in the Northern Kingdom in the days of Jeroboam II: "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, *and reigned* forty and one years. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which *was* of Gathhepher. For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, *that it was* very bitter: for *there was* not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, *which belonged* to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (2 Kings 14:23-28).
3. It was a time of prosperity and ease for the nation. His work spanned the years 800-760 B.C., with the date of the book placed at 773 B.C.
4. According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah was from Gath-hepher, a village located about four miles from Nazareth, making him a prophet from Galilee.
5. That Jonah was a real, historical figure was not questioned until modern times, when men began to cast doubt on Bible miracles.
 - a. Evolution, humanism, modernism, etc., developed only after men rejected the miracles and inspiration of the Bible.
 - b. The historical reality of Jonah and his experiences are fully verified by the fact that Christ referred to both as facts of history.
6. Jonah was typically Jewish in his attitude toward the heathen: he had no compassion toward them.

B. The Book of Jonah.

1. The book is different from the books of the other Minor Prophets.
 - a. It gives details of the experiences of the prophet, rather than a transcription of the oracles he delivered.
 - b. He is the only one of the Minor Prophets who is named by Christ.
 - 1) Matthew 12:38-41: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here."
 - 2) Matthew 16:4: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."
 - 3) Luke 11:29-32: "And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here."
 - c. He is the only Minor Prophet whose work was done on foreign soil. Obadiah's message was directed against Edom, but we are not told that he personally presented it to those people. The directions given to Jonah required that he go to Nineveh and preach the message God gave him.
 - d. He is the only Minor Prophet in whose work miracles became a prominent feature. The very revelations the others received were supernatural acts, but miracles such as are seen in Jonah's career are unique.
2. The miracles related in the book include:
 - a. The great storm (its timing and strength suggest the supernatural).

- b. The great fish (its swallowing the prophet and disgorging him in the right place).
- c. The calm that occurred when Jonah was thrown overboard.
- d. The gourd: its growth and its demise.
- e. The timing of the strong east wind may be supernatural (it was at least providential).

C. The Great Fish.

1. Bible critics, in a vain attempt to discredit the Bible, deny that there is a fish large enough to swallow a full-grown man. To argue such is to close one's eyes to the facts.
 - a. In the summer of 1910, off the Florida Keys in the Gulf of Mexico, Captain Charles Thompson harpooned a large fish, later identified as a whale shark. Four and one-half days were spent in landing this 30,000 pound monster. It measured 45 feet in length and was 27 feet in circumference. In its stomach the following were found: a 450-pound octopus; a black fish weighing 1,500 pounds; and about 10 bushels of coral. Its throat was 3 feet in diameter; its liver weighed 1,700 pounds. Its mouth was big enough for two chairs to be placed in it. The fish was taken on a road trip, and people paid 25 cents each to sit on the chairs. (The above facts were taken for an article by Tom Haynes, in "The Orlando Sentinel," January 10, 1988, page B-11. A picture accompanied the article).
 - b. In 1758, a sailor who fell overboard into the Mediterranean Sea, was picked up by a shark. It disgorged the sailor unharmed after it was hit by a cannon ball fired by the man's shipmates. (Keil, Vol. 1, p.398).
 - c. An Indian was swallowed by a shark, but was found alive after the animal was captured and opened.
2. Matthew 12:40 referred to the great fish as a whale (KJV). The Greek word (*ketos*) means "huge fish, a sea-monster" (Vine, V.4, p.209).
3. The text does not say when God prepared the great fish; its ancestors were undoubtedly created in the Beginning. But its picking up Jonah and carrying him safely back to land is clearly miraculous.
 - a. The presence of the fish near the ship; his taking up Jonah; and then three days later planting the prophet on land—only a miracle can explain these events.
 - b. It was God who sent the fish; it was God who preserved Jonah's life for those three days he spent in inside the fish.
4. The following article was written by Roy J. Hearn:

JONAH AND THE WHALE

With respect to certain parts of the Bible the attitude of modernists is that of the atheist and infidel. When he begins a study of certain subjects, his mind is blinded and prejudiced, thus he seeks merely to disprove the Bible account, regardless of method used, instead of considering facts in the case to determine if the account is true.

Jonah was an ordinary man as the rest of us. God sent him to Nineveh, mortal enemy of the Jews, to warn that city that unless they repented it would be destroyed. Being enemy to Nineveh, Jonah would have been pleased to see the city destroyed, therefore, instead of going to do God's bidding, he sought to escape in the opposite direction. Through a series of providential acts of God caused Jonah to be swallowed up by a great fish.

Many weird and fancy tales have been told by opposers of the Bible to discredit the genuineness of the account of Jonah. The record says that *"God prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."* Was it possible for God to prepare a fish that could swallow a man in which he could live three days? God created the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, thus to say that God could not make such a fish is to say man is smarter than God. Men have built iron fish—submarines—in which man can live for many days under the water. If man can perform such great works, why not the omnipotent God?

But the unbeliever asks, *"Is it scientifically possible that the account of Jonah could be true?"* The infidel objects by saying that there is no whale with throat large enough to swallow a man. In the King James version of the Bible the word whale is given as the translation of the Greek word *ketos* which means a great fish, a sea monster. At the time of the King James translation, in the English language there was not another word to describe this great fish, since the world knew of none, thus the word whale was used here. But in the original languages,

Hebrew and Greek, they agree that the creature that swallowed Jonah was a monster of the deep. There are different species of whales. The Denticete, called "bottle-nosed" or "beaked" whale, is a small one not more than thirty feet long, and has a throat large enough to swallow a man. There are other types so constructed as to do likewise. The largest type of whale is the *Balaenoptera Musculus* and they have been found that measured up to ninety-five feet in length, and were spacious enough to accommodate a man. The whale has six compartments to his stomach, any one of which could hold several men. The whale does not have gills like a fish, but has in its head an air chamber seven feet wide, seven feet high and fourteen feet long. When the whale gets anything into its mouth too large to swallow it pushes it up into this air space, swims to swallow water, and ejects it upon shore.

Many years ago an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer by Dr. Ransome Harvey said a dog was lost overboard from a whaling vessel, and was found unharmed in the head of a whale six days later. Thus a man could have no difficulty keeping alive for three days and nights in the air chamber of a whale, though I would not care to try. This air space contains 686 cubic feet, large enough to hold several men.

White sharks of the Mediterranean have been known to swallow a horse, one deer, while another swallowed a sea cow about the size of an ox. So we can see that there are numbers of sea animals that are capable of swallowing a man, or more than one.

The *Rhinodon Typicus*, known as the "bone shark", "Indo-Pacific shark" and "whale shark" is similar to a whale and some have been captured which were seventy feet in length. The skeleton of a soldier missing thirty days from Schofield Barracks, Oahu, Hawaii, was found in the stomach of one of these fish. Though the flesh had been consumed the skeleton remained intact, unharmed. There is therefore plenty of evidence to prove there are fish capable of swallowing man. Other examples could be given, but these suffice to prove the possibility and probability of Jonah's being swallowed and living to tell the tale.

Some years ago, about 1915, an English magazine gave an account of an English sailor who was swallowed by a great *Rhinodon Shark*. In an attempt to harpoon this sea monster the sailor fell overboard, and was immediately swallowed by the fish. The entire trawler fleet set out to find the fish, and sighted it forty eight hours after this incident occurred. They slew it with a one pound deck gun. It was too heavy to load onto the ship, thus was towed to the shore. They expected to give their friend a Christian burial, but when they opened

the shark, they found the sailor alive but unconscious. He was rushed to the hospital where he was found to be suffering from shock, nothing more, and a few hours later discharged as being in good physical condition. Later this man was on exhibit at the London Museum—admission, one shilling. He was referred to as the "Jonah of the Twentieth Century". So, here was a man who without special providential care as in the case of Jonah, lived in a fish's belly for over two days. Does it seem impossible and improbable, therefore, for Jonah under the special care of God to live a little less than a day longer?

Conclusion: There are fish that can swallow a man. Apart from the Bible account, there are fish that did. Men who have been swallowed and lived to tell the story corroborate the account of Jonah, and the Bible is upheld again. No effort that ever has been made to reflect upon the accuracy of the Bible accounts has ever been successful.

D. The Great City of Nineveh.

1. Nineveh was an old city.
 - a. Archaeologists date its beginning to 4000-5000 B.C. See Genesis 10:10-12.
 - b. The city reached its greatest moment during the reign of Sennacherib (705-682 B.C.).
2. It is described as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey" (Jonah 3:3).
 - a. One doubtful view of this picture says that it describes the time it would take the prophet to complete his work of preaching to the population.
 - b. More probable is the view that the smaller towns outside the walls were included, which would form an area in the shape of a triangle having a 60-mile perimeter. To walk around such an area would require about three days.
3. Nineveh was a terribly wicked city that was later destroyed.
 - a. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.
 - b. All that remained of Nineveh through the centuries were some mounds of earth. Armies could pass by the remains and never suspect a great city had once stood there.
 - 1) Nahum 3:7: "And it shall come to pass, *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"
 - 2) Zephaniah 2:13: "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, *and* dry like a wilderness."

E. Lessons from the Book of Jonah.

1. The gourd experience taught a great lesson.
 - a. Jonah would have been happy if God had destroyed Nineveh. He agreed to preach what God told him, but he feared that God would be merciful to them. Without his preaching the Ninevites would not have repented, and God would have destroyed them.
 - b. But after preaching to Nineveh, Jonah went out of the city to see what would become of it. God caused a gourd plant to grow up overnight to give Jonah shade. The plant pleased the prophet, but he became bitter when it was smitten by the worm. Jonah was more concerned about the plant than he was over the precious souls in Nineveh.
 - c. God taught the prophet that he should be concerned over these Gentiles. To be like God, Jonah and all others must have compassion for their fellowman.
2. God's universal presence is taught in Jonah.
 - a. 1 Kings 20:23: "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods *are* gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."
 - b. 1 Kings 20:28: "And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD *is* God of the hills, but he *is* not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - c. Psalms 139:7-10: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
 - d. Amos 9:2-4: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will

search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."

- e. Jonah 1:3: "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
 3. God's concern for men of all nations is taught in Jonah (cf. Acts 10:34-35; John 3:16). These people were extremely wicked; but God did not want to destroy them; hence, he executed a complicated plan by which they could be spared.
 4. The conditional nature of the warnings God issues is shown in Jonah. Compare:
 - a. Jeremiah 18:7-8: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."
 - b. Ezekiel 18:32: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."
 - c. Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - d. 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 5. Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days, but the condition of repentance is implied: when they repented, God did not destroy them.
 6. The necessity of obedience to God's will is taught (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Thess. 1:6-10). Jonah was punished because he ran from his God-given duty; the people of Nineveh were going to be destroyed unless they repented of their disobedience and turned to a life more in tune with God's will.
 7. The pattern is given in Jonah of how to successfully preach and teach God's word (cf. Jonah 3:1-5; 2 Tim. 4:2). The only way God brings men to repentance is through preaching, teaching, and learning the Word of God.
 8. The unlimited power of God is depicted in Jonah. Only omnipotence could have wrought the miraculous feats the book reports.
 9. The horrible effects of sin are shown by the book. The sins of the Ninevites brought them to the very brink of destruction; only by repenting of their sinfulness could they be delivered.
 10. That there is a cost to serving God is taught in the book, but it is far more costly to disobey than to obey.
 - a. Passages:
 - 1) Proverbs 13:13-15: "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard."
 - 2) Luke 9:23: "And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - b. Jonah would have to travel a great distance to preach to Nineveh; but he went to a great deal of effort and expense, and faced the danger of death, in forsaking his duty.
 - c. The people of Nineveh would have to forsake their evil ways if they wanted to be spared; if they refused to repent, they would be destroyed.
- F. An Outline of the Book of Jonah.
1. Chapter 1: Jonah's disobedience is detailed; he flees from God.
 2. Chapter 2: Jonah prays to God; he runs to God.
 3. Chapter 3: Jonah preached God's word; he runs with God.
 4. Chapter 4: Jonah complains to God; he runs ahead of God.

JONAH 1

A. Jonah 1:1-3: Jonah Rejects his God-given Commission.

1. Verse 1: "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying."
 - a. God directed a message to Jonah, the means of the deliverance of which is not specified by the text. He is identified merely as the son of Amittai. As noted under the introduction, Jonah operated during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-28).
 - b. His sphere of work was centered in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but the work God had in mind for him here was to be done in Nineveh.
2. Verse 2: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."
 - a. His mission was to go to the great city of Nineveh, and there he was to cry out against the city because of the wickedness of the people. Their wickedness is said to have "come up before me," indicating that God was fully aware of their evil doings. The prayers and alms of Cornelius had "come up for a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4), showing that God was appraised of the good deeds and petitions of that good man.
 - b. A lesson is taught in this verse regarding the interest God has in the affairs of his offspring. He knew the dread condition they were in, and determined to do something to give them an opportunity to change.
 - 1) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 3) Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
 - c. Nineveh was located on the Tigris River, about 250 miles north of Babylon. The walls of the city were about 8 miles long. The powers of Nineveh were lower at this time than earlier, thus God's message was more likely to be received at this time.
 - d. Their wickedness included idolatry and cruelty. Artifacts reveal some of the cruel treatment they inflicted on their captives. The scenes depicted reveal soldiers putting out the eyes of captives with spears, and others being led by means of hooks being placed through their lips.
 - 1) 2 Kings 19:28: "Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."
 - 2) 2 Kings 25:7: "And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon." [This was the work of the Babylonians, whose cruelty was also without compassion].
 - 3) Isaiah 37:29: "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."
 - e. The inspired text properly calls Nineveh a *great* city. "It was the greatest city of antiquity with a population of 600,000, some 80 miles in circumference. Upon its walls 100' high, flanked with 1,500 towers, each 200' high, four chariots could drive abreast. It filled, together with the adjoining suburbs, the whole space between the rivers Tigris, Khosr, the Upper, or Great Zab, the Gasr Su, and the mountainous boundary of the Tigris Valley on the east" (Coffman, p.280).
 - f. "About 612 B.C., the city was destroyed by a coalition of armies from Babylon and Medo-Persia. It happened exactly as the prophet Nahum predicted it. Its destruction was so complete that its size was forgotten. When Zenophon and his 10,000 passed by 200 years later, he thought the mounds were the ruins of some Parthian city; and when Alexander the Great fought the famous battle of Arbela near the site of Nineveh in 331 B.C., he did not know there had ever been a city there" (Coffman, pp.381f).
 - g. "Nineveh, during the centuries of her existence, must have seen many stirring historical events; but the most noteworthy were probably Sennacherib's triumphal entries, including that following the capture of Lachish, the murder of that great conqueror by his sons...and the ceremonial triumphs of Assur-bani-apli—the great and noble Osnappar (Ezra 4:10). After the reign of Assur-bani-apli came his son Assur-etil-ilani, who was succeeded by Sin-sarra-iskun (Saracos), but the history of the country, and also of the city, is practically non-existent during these last two reigns.

- 1) "The Assyrian and Babylonian records are silent with regard to the fall of the city, but Alexander Polyhistor, Abydenus and Syncellus all speak of it. The best account, however, is that of Diodorus Siculus, who refers to a legend that the city could not be taken until the river became its enemy. Arbaces, the Scythian, besieged it, but could not make any impression on it for 2 years. In the 3rd year, however, the river (according to Commander Jones, not the Tigris, but the Khosr), being swollen by rains, and very rapid in its current, carried away a portion of the wall, and by this opening the besiegers gained an entrance.
 - 2) "The king...gathered together his concubines and eunuchs, and, mounting a funeral pyre which he had caused to be constructed, perished in the flames. This catastrophe is supposed to be referred to in Nah 1:8: 'With an over-running flood he (the Lord) will make a full end of her place (i.e. of Nineveh),' and 2:6: 'The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved.' The destruction of the city by fire is probably referred to in 3:13,15.
 - 3) "The picture of the scenes in her streets—the noise of the whip, the rattling wheels, the prancing horses, the bounding chariots (3:2 ff), followed by a vivid description of the carnage of the battlefield—is exceedingly striking, and true to their records and their sculptures" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Biblesoft, Inc.].
3. Verse 3: "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."
- a. Jonah should have known that he could not escape from the presence of the Lord. Men today, understanding that God is omnipresent, nevertheless commit sin, and try to hide it from his view.
 - b. Where he was when the instructions came to him, we are not told. Some have supposed that he was at Jerusalem, since he went forth "from the presence of the Lord." God's presence was symbolized by the Most Holy Place in the temple.
 - c. He went to Joppa, on the coast of the Mediterranean, where he found a ship, paid his fare, and sailed toward Tarshish. It appears that Satan had provided all things for Jonah's disobedience: a ship going to the most distant destination possible, the fare, and the necessary space on board. If one seeks to disobey the Lord, the means will be readily at hand! But if we wish to obey, the means are likewise provided.
 - d. Tarshish was located as far west from Nineveh as one could then go. Scholarship has located it as a seaport on the southern coast of Spain, and west of Gibraltar. There is some doubt about the certainty of this location. Joppa was Israel's only seaport for many years.
 - e. Boarding the ship, Jonah went "down into it" (below deck). It appears that he was trying to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. When one gets involved in sin, if he has a conscience, he feels shame. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God following their fall into sin (Gen. 3:6ff).

B. Jonah 1:4-10: The Dreadful Storm.

1. Verse 4: "But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."
 - a. God was not fooled by Jonah's feeble attempts to evade his responsibility. With his supernatural powers, the Lord caused a great tempest to arise. The little ship was near to being broken up by the force of this great storm.
 - b. "God sends a pursuer after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, v. 4. God has the winds in his treasure (Ps 135:7), and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth (so the word is), with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gathers the winds in his fist (Prov 30:4), where he holds them, and whence he squeezes them when he pleases; for though, as to us, the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effect of this wind as a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise....
 - 1) "The tempest prevailed to such a degree that the ship was likely to be broken; the mariners expected no other; that ship (so some read it), that and no other. Other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet, it should seem, that ship in which Jonah was was tossed more than any other and was more in danger.
 - 2) "This wind was sent after Jonah, to fetch him back again to God and to his duty; and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
2. Verse 5: "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship;

and he lay, and was fast asleep."

- a. The sailors were idolaters, and being filled with terror, each of them cried to his god for deliverance. Their efforts were, of course, fruitless.
 - b. They took the best steps they could to save the ship: having prayed to their gods, they lightened the ship by casting its "wares" (cargo) overboard. Up to this point, Jonah slept, oblivious to the grave danger.
 - c. The sailors on Paul's ship to Rome did such things to save their vessel: "But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts 27:14-20).
3. Verse 6: "So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."
 - a. The captain of the ship came to Jonah, and rebuked him sharply because he was not praying to his God for their safety. It is a shameful thing to have a pagan reproach a child of God to prod him to pray! Jonah had likely made a hasty trip to Joppa, and was probably exhausted from the ordeal of travel and the strain of knowing he was disobeying God.
 - b. The distance from his home (Gath-hepher) to Joppa is placed at about 60 miles; it was about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem.
 4. Verse 7: "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."
 - a. The sailors figured that it was because of one of those on board that the evil storm had come upon them. They decided to cast lots as a means of identifying the man responsible. The lot singled out Jonah.
 - b. The hand of God controlled the outcome of this procedure, whether by miraculous or providential means; the latter seems to be the more likely view. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD" (Prov. 16:33).
 - c. Canaan was divided among Israel by the use of lots (Joshua 15-19; cf. 1 Chron. 14). The brethren, to fill the place of Judas, used lots to make the proper choice: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:21-26). It is clear that Heaven was behind the choice that was thus reached.
 5. Verse 8: "Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou?"
 - a. Immediately the sailors demanded to know certain things about Jonah. They were especially wanting to know why the evil had come upon them; they wanted to know his line of work (perhaps this would give them an insight into the problem); they asked where he was from and to what nation did he belong.
 - b. These men earnestly believed their casting of lots had correctly identified the culprit.
 6. Verse 9: "And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*."
 - a. To his credit, Jonah gave them his name and identified the God of heaven as his Lord.
 - b. Admitting that he was a Hebrew might not have won any friends, but his assertion that his God was the one who had made the sea and dry land arrested their attention.
 7. Verse 10: "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them."
 - a. This verse indicates that Jonah's reply included all the particulars of his case, even the fact that he was fleeing from God.

- b. His statement terrified the sailors, who demanded to know why he had done such a foolish thing as to try to run from God. It appears that they now placed much faith in the power of God.
- C. Jonah 1:11-17: Jonah is Cast Overboard After Attempts Were Made To Save Him.
1. Verse 11: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous."
 - a. The sailors were in a quandary: "What shall we do with this man?" That he was the source of their troubles they could not deny. But what might happen if they killed this man? Would God afflict them even more severely?
 - b. This situation illustrates the fact that one man's sins often have an adverse affect on innocent people.
 2. Verses 12-13: "And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them."
 - a. Jonah knew he was the cause of their problem, and suggested what seemed to be the only solution: "Throw me overboard." He would be drowned, and since God would then have no reason to assault the ship with the storm any longer, he was confident that the storm would cease.
 - b. To their credit, these pagans did not want to throw him to the sea, but put forth a diligent effort to row the ship to land. Their efforts were futile: "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?" (Rom. 8:31).
 - c. They risked death to save Jonah; we endanger our destiny today by risking our souls and the welfare of the church by refusing to discipline an unfaithful member.
 3. Verse 14: "Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee."
 - a. Seeing that their struggles were accomplishing nothing, these men now cried out to the God of heaven. They pleaded with him, with obvious sincerity, that their lives be spared, for they were innocent of any wrong-doing in Jonah's case.
 - b. They had made up their minds to cast him overboard, and were asking God to see their innocence.
 4. Verses 15-16: "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows."
 - a. They picked up Jonah, and threw him into the sea. What a horrible fate! They were sure that Jonah would be quickly drowned. Immediately the sea was calm, a fact that demands God's supernatural intervention.
 - b. Having been witness to these phenomenal events, they were fully persuaded that the God of Jonah was the Supreme One. They had great fear toward God, and offered a sacrifice to him, worship that was attended by the making of vows.
 - c. What later became of these men we will not learn until we enter eternity. We should not be amazed to find them among the ranks of the righteous! It may be the case that they became converts to the Law of Moses.
 5. Verse 17: "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."
 - a. The author takes up the story with what was happening to Jonah while the men on ship were worshipping. God had prepared (not in the sense of creating, but appointing) a great fish to save Jonah. The fish, true to his master's command, swallowed the runaway prophet, and kept him safe for three days and nights.
 - b. The word used by Matthew to identify this creature is a word meaning *great fish* or *sea-monster*. Whale sharks are able to swallow a full-grown man, hence no denial of the facts given here is needed.
 - c. Matthew 12:41: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here."
 - 1) The fact that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah was a condemnation of the impenitent and unbelieving Jews who had the great honor of being in the presence of the Son of God! The Ninevites repented even though they had a lesser personage issuing a message which was inferior to the message of the Master Teacher who was now among them. Jonah's message had a greater effect on the Ninevites than the message of Christ had on these Jews; this was so because of the differences in the hearts of the audiences.
 - 2) In debate, false teachers often appealed to this statement to counter the truth as stated in Acts 2:38 regarding the purpose of baptism. The Bible teaches that baptism is for (unto; into; in order to; Greek *eis*) the remission of sins. Baptist doctrine denies this truth, and asserts that "for" (*eis*)

means "because of." Thus, they argue that "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 means "because you have received the remission of sins." It forces an impossible interpretation on the verse by having Peter command them to repent because they had already been forgiven! But to try to justify their contention, they appeal to Matthew 12:41 where *eis* is translated "at." They argue here that the Ninevites repented "because of" the preaching of Jonah, thus (they assert) *eis* in Acts 2:38 means "because of."

- 3) "The preposition here rendered 'at' is 'eis', which usually means 'into.' Some writers have contended that it here means 'because of,' or 'in consequence of,' a meaning quite foreign to the word. It is true, as a matter of fact, that the Ninevites repented in consequence of the preaching of Jonah; but if it had been the purpose of the writer to express this thought, he would have used the preposition 'dia' instead of 'eis.'
- 4) "The thought of the passage is quite distinct from this. They repented 'into' the preaching of Jonah. This is not idiomatic English, but it conveys the exact thought which a Greek would derive from the original. The term 'preaching' is put for the course of life required by the preaching, and it is asserted that they repented 'into' this. Their repentance, in other words, brought them into the course of life which the preaching required.
- 5) "If Jesus had merely said that they repented 'in consequence of' Jonah's preaching, he would have stopped short with the internal change which they underwent; but he chooses to go further, and indicate the terminus of their repentance, that it brought them into the condition which the preaching demanded. The rendering, 'at the preaching,' does not bring out the idea in full, but it would be difficult to translate the passage any more accurately without adopting an awkward circumlocution' (McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, p.113).

JONAH 2

A. Jonah 2:1-9: Jonah Prays to God From Inside the Fish for Deliverance.

1. Verse 1: "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly."
 - a. Prayers are sometimes heard emanating from strange places. In this unique situation, Jonah prayed to God from the innards of the great fish. Comparisons have been noted between some of the statements uttered by Jonah in his prayer and certain thoughts expressed in the Psalms.
 - b. From this connection, critics have argued against Jonah. But instead of this being a reflection on Jonah, it rather shows a common authorship: the same Spirit that inspired the Psalmist, also guided Jonah; furthermore, it shows Jonah's familiarity with the Psalms.
2. Verse 2: "And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice."
 - a. ASV: "And he said, I called by reason of mine affliction unto Jehovah, And he answered me; Out of the belly of Sheol cried I, And thou heardest my voice."
 - b. Jonah had tried to run from God in chapter one; now he is running to God in his prayer. *Cried* is in the past tense. His cry was raised on account of the affliction he was facing: he had been cast overboard and was in imminent danger of drowning; the fish had swallowed him, but there was the dilemma of getting back to dry land. His cry began with a cry for help, and ended with an expression of thanksgiving.
 - c. He had brought the affliction upon himself, and was being punished for his unwillingness to obey God. But God had not forsaken him: he heard the prophet's prayer, and delivered him. Jonah does not here spell out the method by which he was delivered; that fact he reveals in verse ten.
 - d. *Hell* is from the Hebrew word *Sheol*, which is equivalent to the New Testament word, *Hades*. The reference is to the place of the dead, the holding place of departed spirits (cf. Luke 16:19-31; 2 Pet. 2:4; Luke 23:43).
 - e. From this statement, some have concluded that Jonah had actually died and that his spirit was now in the Hadean realm. But if so, he is the only one who came back from the dead, and was permitted to tell of his experiences (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-12). "The belly of Sheol" is more likely to be understood to describe the nearness to death to which the prophet had come. We speak of being "snatched from the jaws of death."
 - f. Compare: "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).
3. Verses 3: "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me."
 - a. Jonah realized that it was God's doing that he had been cast into the sea, even though the hands of the sailors had thrown him overboard. Verse three graphically describes his condition in the sea. The waters compassed him about; the billows and waves passed over him. But despite this forlorn predicament, he would consider God's holy temple; he would turn in love toward the Lord.
 - b. "Both repentance and hope are expressed here. He was cast out from before Jehovah's eyes. This the prophet could not endure; this brought him to repentance. But the next word is one of hope: 'Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple'" (Hailey, pp.72f).
 - c. Whether Jonah was at this time already in the belly of the great fish is unclear. At the time of his prayer, he was inside the fish. But the condition he describes in his prayer appears to portray his state while still in the sea. The last clause of verse six indicates his deliverance.
4. Verses 5-6: "The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God."
 - a. The waters had covered him utterly; there appeared to be no hope of rescue; even his soul was entrapped, and he was on the verge of dying. He sank down into the depths of the sea; the weeds wrapped about his head.
 - b. While it is possible that the great fish had swallowed sea weeds, and thus Jonah could have encountered them inside the fish's belly, it seems more probable that he was still in the sea when he became entrapped in the weeds.
 - c. His going down to the bottoms of the mountains depicts his sinking into the depths. Some think that he was in the fish at the time, and it carried him there.
 - d. The earth and its blessings had been barred to Jonah; he was shut off from it, and apparently had no

hope of ever returning.

- e. "For ever" is used in the Scriptures in the sense of enduring for the fullness of the time intended. Sometimes that time is eternal in scope; in other cases, such as this one, only for a relatively short period of time. If Jonah was in the sea (or in the fish) for eternity, he would still be there. It no doubt seemed like an eternity to the prophet.
 - f. There appeared to be no hope of deliverance for him, but God took action! This last clause, using poetic language, describes his salvation from the sea and from the fish's belly. God did not allow him to see corruption; he pulled him from the "jaws of death." The fish rescued him from the ravages of the sea; and God, who sent the fish, also delivered Jonah from the great fish.
5. Verse 7: "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple."
- a. When his soul fainted and all hope was slipping away, Jonah remembered the Lord, and prayed for help. His prayer came before the Lord in his holy temple.
 - 1) Psalms 72:2: "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment."
 - 2) Psalms 72:17: "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."
 - b. Jonah's prayer is represented as a messenger who went up into God's temple, presenting itself unto the Almighty.
6. Verses 8-9: "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD."
- a. Those who worship idols (observe lying vanities) are those who reject the mercy that is theirs for the asking. One cannot obtain God's favor while he serves some idol.
 - b. While many others served false gods, Jonah was determined to offer his devotions only to the true God. To him would his voice of thanksgiving be directed; to him would he pay his vow. It seems that the prophet had made some vow to God, very likely in the prayer he uttered to God while in the sea and in the fish. He knew beyond any doubt that God is the source of salvation!
- B. Jonah 2:10: God Answers Jonah's Prayer.
1. "And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*."
 2. God had prepared the great fish with which to rescue to runaway prophet. God now gave instruction to the fish to deposit Jonah on the land. The great creature obeyed the voice of the Master. We are not told where the prophet was released.
 3. Jonah was now ready to pay his vow; he was prepared to carry out his commission, if he were given another opportunity. That opportunity came, as related in the next chapter.

JONAH 3

A. Jonah 3:1-4: Jonah's Second Opportunity.

1. Verse 1: "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying."
 - a. The word of the Lord came the second time to the prophet. Again, we are not told the method by which the message came.
 - b. The statement clearly indicates that the message was an inspired revelation to the prophet.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 23:1-2: "Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue."
 - 2) Acts 1:16: "Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
2. Verse 2: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."
 - a. The instruction was the same as in the first instance: go preach my message to the people of Nineveh. This is the only kind of preaching that is worth anything to the souls of men.
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 3) Romans 10:13-18: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 4:1-4: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."
 - 5) James 1:18,21,25: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth....Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls....But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
 - b. In chapter one, the prophet was told to "cry against" the great city of Nineveh. Here he is told to "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." What he preached was what God originally intended for him to present; his message was a negative lesson which was intended to expose the sins of the people of Nineveh, and so to bring them to repentance.
 - c. "One of the tragedies of today—and of all time since the beginning of preaching—is that men are prone to substitute what their own wisdom dictates instead of preaching what God bids. Man can make no improvement on God's message" (Hailey, p.75).
3. Verse 3: "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey."
 - a. The report does not relate any mention of the first commission. There was no need, for God was aware of what had happened, and so was Jonah! The prophet had learned the lesson; he arose without any hesitation and went to Nineveh.
 - b. We are not told where Jonah was when this commission was given. Perhaps he was still on the beach; or perhaps he had returned home.

- c. Nineveh is again described as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey." As noted earlier, this probably describes the outer reaches of the city, which included several outlying villages. Scholars have depicted the extent of its boundary as a triangle whose outer dimensions would be about 60 miles in length, requiring about three days to traverse. Hailey supposes that three days of preaching would be required in order to cover the entire city with the message (p.75).
4. Verse 4: "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."
 - a. Jonah entered the city, and for the first day preached the message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." His message was the embodiment of simplicity; it was undoubtedly presented with grave conviction.
 - b. Having the attitude he had toward the Ninevites, he probably preached the impending doom of this pagan city with a degree of pleasure.
 - c. The forty days would give them time to think and consider their ways. God, being full of mercy, gave them ample warning.
 - 1) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 3) Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
- B. Jonah 3:5-10: The Penitence of the Ninevites Keeps Them From Destruction.
 1. Verse 5: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."
 - a. The timing of this preaching was probably excellent. The nation possibly had suffered some setback; an eclipse of the sun occurred on June 15, 763. which *might* have had some influence on the king. [See Wikipedia].
 - b. The reason assigned by Jonah accounting for their repentance is this: "The people of Nineveh believed God." It was Jonah who did the preaching, but since he was simply telling the people what God said, their response was caused by their believing God.
 - c. The warning given in the message was conditional even though no condition was stated; if they repented, God would relent from his intention of destroying their city. Compare: "*At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it*; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:7-10).
 2. Verse 6: "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes."
 - a. Word came to the king of Nineveh; he arose from his throne, laid his royal robe aside, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. The text does not directly say what word is meant, but it must have been the word that was spoken by Jonah (vs. 4)—if the king did not hear Jonah directly, he would have soon learned about the message the prophet delivered.
 - b. But Coffman thinks the word (*tidings*) was a report about Jonah's miraculous experiences at sea. Jesus said in Luke 11:30 that Jonah was a "sign unto the Ninevites." It is unlikely that the whole city, including the king, would have repented merely because some strange Hebrew prophet came through, asserting that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days. It is possible, therefore, that information about Jonah's experiences had a part to play in the outcome of his work in Nineveh.
 - c. The influence of the king would have a good effect on his subjects.
 3. Verses 7-8: "And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands."
 - a. The king, who is not identified by name, broadcast a message calling on all the people to be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God in penitence.
 - b. "The reigning monarch was probably either Shalmaneser III. or one of the two who succeeded him, Asshur-danil and Asshur-nirari, whose three reigns extended from B.C. 781 to 750" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

- c. He ordered that everyone, among man and beast, was to refrain from drinking water and eating. They were to turn from their evil ways and cease to do violence to others.
4. Verse 9: "Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"
 - a. The king's orders concluded with the remark, that perhaps God would turn from the plan to bring punishment upon them, and they could thus be spared.
 - b. Obviously, this pagan king comprehended the seriousness of the predicament he and his kingdom faced, and though he was a king, he realized the impending penalty far exceeded the humility he must exhibit to forestall the disaster.
5. Verse 10: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not."
 - a. God saw that the people truly turned from their evil ways; he saw their works which demonstrated their repentance; he turned from bringing the punishment upon them which he had intended.
 - 1) Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."
 - 2) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
 - 4) Matthew 12:41: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." The Greek word translated at is *eis*, which usually means "unto, into, in order to." They repented so as to bring their lives into agreement with the demands of Jonah's message.
 - b. The repentance they wrought brought them into conformance to the preaching Jonah did. "Preaching" (as used by the Lord in Matthew 12:41) is put for the manner of life required by Jonah's preaching. Their repentance brought them into the course of life which Jonah's preaching demanded.

JONAH 4

A. Jonah 4:1-3: Jonah's Displeasure Over God Showing Mercy to Nineveh.

1. Verse 1: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry."
 - a. Jonah's hardness of heart shows through in the attitude he now manifests. He was sorely displeased and angry. Why? Because God showed mercy to the Ninevites.
 - b. We must remember that the Assyrian nation threatened Israel, and later invaded Canaan, laying waste to their cities and leading the Northern Kingdom into bondage (721 B.C.). Their aggressive nature had already manifested itself, giving Israel reason to be fearful of them and to regard them as a powerful enemy.
 - c. Jonah's attitude toward these idol-worshippers was not uncommon among the Israelites. Jonah could not grasp the importance of showing mercy to the penitent. Although he was a prophet of God, and as such received inspired messages from heaven which he was to communicate to men, yet this power did not insure his own spirituality. Peter (Gal. 2:11-14) and the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-9; 1:7) illustrate this point, also.
 - d. Here is a man of God who is very inconsistent with the religion of Jehovah. Think of it! He was terribly disappointed because a great city was not destroyed—man, woman and child! The population is said to have been more than 120,000 (4:11). Others have estimated that the population might have reached 600,000 (see Coffman, p.280).
 - e. "According to G. Smith, the circuit of the inner wall is about 8 miles, and Captain Jones, who made a trigonometrical survey in 1854, estimated that, allotting to each inhabitant 50 square yards, the city may have contained 174,000 inhabitants. If the statement in Jonah 4:11, that the city contained 120,000 persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left, be intended to give the number of the city's children only, then the population must have numbered about 600,000, and more than three cities of the same extent would have been needed to contain them" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 2: "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."
 - a. Another inconsistency on the part of Jonah is indicated here. He actually tries to reproach God! He says that God did just what he expected him to do; he was much too soft; he could not bring himself to punish the evildoers of Nineveh! "That's why I fled from God to go to Tarshish."
 - b. If God had not been so gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and full of great kindness, how would Jonah ever have survived the sea? Or in the fish? The prophet should have been grateful for the mercy of God—he had directly received its benefits.
 - c. Sometimes, those who have greatest reason to be thankful, are the ones most lacking in that trait. How thankful are you?
3. Verse 3: "Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live."
 - a. He makes a horrible request of God: take my life from me; it is better that I should die and not live. Because God did not mercilessly slay the Ninevites, Jonah could not face life. He had rather die than see the Ninevites live.
 - b. "Jonah throughout represents himself as petty, hasty, and self-willed, prone to exaggerate matters, and easily reduced to despair. Here, because his word is not fulfilled, he wishes to die, though he will not take his own life. In a different spirit Moses (Ex 32:32) is ready to die for his people's sake, and Elijah asked for death because his zeal for God had apparently wrought no effect (1 Kings 19:4)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

B. Jonah 4:4-8: Jonah's Experience With the Gourd.

1. Verse 4: "Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?"
 - a. God reprimanded the prophet on account of his anger. Jonah did wrong when he became angry over God's graciousness. God taught the prophet this by means of a rhetorical question.
 - b. We know to grieve over a sinner who is lost in sin; we would never be grieved over a display of God's grace upon someone. Jonah's disposition is also seen in the actions of the Pharisees who brought the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11).
2. Verse 5: "So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city."

- a. The pouting prophet still entertained some thought that God might still wreak havoc upon Nineveh. He went to the east side of the city, built a booth so he could sit in the shade, while he waited to see what might befall Nineveh.
- b. He may have stayed in that place for the full forty days.
3. Verse 6: "And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."
 - a. God prepared a gourd plant, that Jonah might have shade, thus to relieve some of his distress.
 - b. The weather must have been very hot, for Jonah was very glad to have the gourd. But God had something more in mind than the prophet's comfort.
4. Verse 7: "But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered."
 - a. God now prepared a worm; the worm attacked the gourd, so that it withered and died, depriving Jonah of his shade.
 - b. Through the simplest of means, God is able to put our faith and love to the test! Oftentimes, we are tested without even being aware of it at the moment. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).
5. Verse 8: "And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live.*"
 - a. God took another step to show Jonah the error of his attitude. He caused a very strong east wind to increase the prophet's discomfort; and the sun was especially hot. Jonah fainted, and longed for death.
 - b. He could not stand the unpleasant situation any longer. God had disappointed him in sparing Nineveh; the gourd had been given, and then taken away; and now the weather had turned against him; nothing was going right for Jonah!
 - c. Some folks in the depths of despair have painfully cried out, "Ever'thing is agin' me!" We may not have expressed these same words, but maybe the thought has forced itself into our grieving heart.

C. Jonah 4:8-11: God Rebukes Jonah.

1. Verse 9: "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death."
 - a. God first asked the prophet whether he thought he was doing right by being angry about the gourd. Jonah replied, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."
 - b. Anger is a part of a human's makeup, and can serve useful purposes. However, it can also be dangerous! "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27).
2. Verse 10: "Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night."
 - a. God drives home to Jonah the very point he needed to learn. "You had interest in the gourd which you did not work to produce; you did not make it grow; it came up in a night and perished in a night."
 - b. In other words, this gourd was a gift to Jonah; it had only a temporary life; it was intended to live only for a short time. Yet Jonah had a great interest in its welfare, especially because of the benefits it afforded him.
3. Verse 11: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?"
 - a. If Jonah, a mere man, was interested in a mere plant, should not God, the great Creator and Sustainer, not have interest in Nineveh, a city in which more than one hundred and twenty thousand people lived? Those people did not have the advantages that Jonah had; he knew the will of God; they did not know the difference between their right hand and their left hand—that is, they lived in ignorance.
 - b. On this note, the book of Jonah closed. Hopefully, with this reprimand from God, the prophet changed his attitude toward the Gentiles.
4. "'The gourd thou hadst pity on was but one; but the inhabitants of Nineveh, whom I have pity on, are numerous.' It is a great city and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under; there are 120,000 such in Nineveh, that have not come to so much use of understanding as to know their right hand from their left, for they are yet but babes. These are taken notice of because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocence. So many there were in Nineveh that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and consequently had not themselves contributed to the common guilt, and yet, if Nineveh had been overthrown, they would all have been

involved in the common calamity; 'and shall not I spare Nineveh then, with an eye to them?' God has a tender regard to little children, and is ready to pity and succour them, nay, here a whole city is spared for their sakes.... The great Saviour discovered a particular kindness for the children that were brought to him, when he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of cattle too that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and to spare the gourd, inasmuch as the animal life is more excellent than the vegetable...." [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH

A. Micah, the Prophet.

1. The name *Micah* is a shortened form of *Micaiah* which means "Who is like the Lord."
 - a. He is not the same Micaiah who worked in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 22:8).
 - b. The prophet of this book prophesied among the people of Judah.
2. This prophet possessed strong conviction and great courage.
 - a. The secret of his power is stated in Micah 3:8: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."
 - b. Micah fearlessly exposed the sins of the Israelites, and foretold great judgment that was to come upon both Israel and Judah.
3. Micah was a prophet who supported the poor and downtrodden.
 - a. He was sympathetic toward the plight of the oppressed, and spoke out in their defense.
 - b. Robinson described Micah as having the passion of Amos for justice and Hosea's heart of love.
4. The prophet was from Moresheth-Gath (1:1,14), located at the border of Judah and Philistia, about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem.
5. Nothing is known of the occupation that Micah had followed.

B. The Date and Times of Micah.

1. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah.
 - a. Under Jotham, luxury was the way of life in Judah, which usually means that sin and religious error are prominent, and righteousness, mercy, and justice are largely ignored.
 - b. Under Ahaz, Judah paid tribute to Assyria. This was a time of hardship, especially on the poor.
 - c. During Hezekiah's time, conditions became worse.
2. This places the work of Micah from about 735 to 700 B.C.
 - a. Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1); Micah worked during the times of the latter three.
 - b. Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries, with Isaiah doing his great work in Jerusalem and Micah working among the people of the rural areas.
 - c. The work of these two great men of God complemented each other; Isaiah dealt with national problems while Micah addressed the problems of the common people. While Isaiah dealt with kings, Micah was among the people of the land.
3. "During the days of Hezekiah, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), successor to the throne of Tiglath-pileser III and a ruler of unusual cruelty, invaded Judah 712/711 B.C. Following the death of Sargon II, Sennacherib became ruler of the Assyrian Empire. To secure his western provinces he invaded Judah 702/701 B.C., besieging Jerusalem and shutting Hezekiah up in Jerusalem 'like a bird in a cage.' According to the claims of Sennacherib's movements, he captured and claimed as booty forty-six Judean cities, which would no doubt include those spoken of by Micah (ch. 1). Among those captured was Lachish, considered by him to be of such significance that a bas-relief of the capture was made on one of the walls of his palace" (Hailey, p.188).
4. The conditions within the nation of Judah were severe on the common people. "Rulers sold the rights of men and vested interests gained control of the lands, taking away the privileges of the people" (ibid.).
 - a. The rich and powerful sought to gain control of the lands of the people (2:1-2); the widows were cast off their property (2:9), and the poor were robbed of their personal property (2:8).
 - b. Merchants followed crooked practices to obtain wealth (6:11).
 - c. False prophets were rampant in the land, doing their work for hire (3:6,11).
 - d. The priests taught for money, giving the people what they wanted (3:11).
 - e. The rulers operated as "cannibals" (3:1-3,9) and judges took bribes (7:3).
 - 1) Micah 3:1-3: "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."
 - 2) Micah 3:9: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity."

- 3) Micah 7:3: "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward; and the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up."
5. Hezekiah inaugurated a program of religious reform (2 Chron. 29-31) which improved the religious climate.
 - a. Heathen altars were destroyed in Jerusalem and proper worship of God was revived.
 - b. But it appears that the religious activities were more formal than sincere; Micah was not tolerant of the worship being offered.

C. The Book of Micah.

1. An analysis of the book shows these three major divisions.
 - a. Chapters 1-3 contain a message of judgment.
 - b. Chapters 4-5 offer a message of comfort.
 - c. Chapters 6-7 present the way of salvation.
2. The book contains three outstanding verses.
 - a. Micah 3:12: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."
 - b. Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
 - c. Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
3. The book of Micah addresses moral and ethical problems.
 - a. The prophet expresses grief over the lack of righteousness in the land.
 - b. He deals with four kinds of evil-doers.
 - 1) **The greedy land-grabbers:** "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (Micah 2:1-2).
 - 2) **The rulers who hated good and loved evil:** "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings" (Micah 3:1-4).
 - 3) **The false prophets who worked for money:** "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is not* the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us" (Micah 3:11).
 - 4) **The priests who taught for hire:** "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is not* the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us" (Micah 3:11).
4. The threats given in the book include the following.
 - a. Samaria is to be overthrown: "Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, *and* as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot" (Micah 1:6-7)..
 - b. God would not hear their cries for mercy: "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings" (Micah 3:1-4).
 - c. The giving of prophecy would cease because they would not listen to the true prophets: "Therefore *night shall be* unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them" (Micah 3:6).

- d. Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest" (Micah 3:12).
- e. Their punishment would fit their crimes:
 - 1) Micah 1:16: "Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee."
 - 2) Micah 2:10: "Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction."
 - 3) Micah 4:10: "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go *even* to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies."
5. The message of Micah could be summarized in these words: "Those who live selfish and luxurious lives, even though they offer costly sacrifices, are vampires in the sight of God, sucking the life-blood of the poor" (Charles Pledge).

D. Micah and the Future (see Lewis, p.37).

1. Despite the severity of his threats, Micah offers hope to the remnant. What Micah covered in brief, Isaiah discussed at length.
 - a. Micah 2:12: "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of men*."
 - b. Micah 5:7-8: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver."
2. Micah envisioned a return from captivity that would resemble the original exodus from Egypt.
 - a. Exodus 13:21: "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."
 - b. Micah 2:12: "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of men*."
 - c. Micah 7:14-17: "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous *things*. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee."
3. Micah predicted the going forth of the new law from Zion. This foresaw the establishment of the Lord's church.
 - a. Micah 4:1-2: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - b. Isaiah 2:2-3 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
4. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2; cf. Matt. 2).
5. Mercy would follow judgment. God would punish his people for wrongdoing, but there would be ample mercy for the righteous. "Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt

cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:18-20).

E. Micah and the New Testament (see Lewis, *ibid.*).

1. Christ the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem:
 - a. Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting."
 - b. Matthew 2:6: "And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."
 - c. John 7:42: "Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"
2. A man's enemies would be those of his own house:
 - a. Micah 7:6: "For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies *are* the men of his own house."
 - b. Matthew 10:36: "And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household."
 - c. Luke 12:53: "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."
3. The universal nature of Micah's vision of peace:
 - a. Micah 4:1-3: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - b. Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

ISRAEL				JUDAH			
KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND	KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND
Jeroboam	22 years	933-911	Bad	Rehoboam	17 years	933-916	Not Good
Nadab	2 years	911-910	Bad	Abijah	3 years	915-913	Not Good
Baasha	24 years	910-887	Bad	Asa	41 years	912-872	Good
Elah	2 years	887-886	Bad	Jehoshaphat	25 years	874-850	Good
Zimri	7 days	886	Bad	Jehoram	8 years	850-843	Bad
Omri	12 years	886-875	Very Bad	Ahaziah	1 year	843	Bad
Ahab	22 years	875-854	Very Bad	Athaliah	6 years	843-837	Wicked
Ahaziah	2 years	855-854	Bad	Joash	40 years	843-803	Not Bad
Joram	12 years	854-843	Bad	Amaziah	19 years	803-775	Not Bad
Jehu	28 years	843-816	Not Good	Uzziah	52 years	787-735	Good
Jehoahaz	17 years	820-804	Bad	Jotham	16 years	749-734	Good
Joash	16 years	806-790	Bad	Ahaz	16 years	741-726	Bad
Jeroboam	41 years	790-748	Bad	Hezekiah	29 years	726-697	Good
Zechariah	6 months	748	Bad	Manasseh	55 years	697-642	Bad
Shallum	1 month	748	Bad	Amon	2 years	641-640	Bad
Menahem	10 years	748-738	Bad	Josiah	31 years	639-608	Good
Pekahiah	2 years	738-736	Bad	Jehoahaz	3 months	608	Bad
Pekah	20 years	748-730	Bad	Jehoiakim	11 years	608-597	Bad
Hoshea	9 years	730-721	Bad	Jehoiachin	3 months	597	Bad
				Zedekiah	11 years	597-586	Bad

* The names, dates, and years in the table were taken from *Halley's Bible Handbook*, pp.194-195

MICAH 1

A. Micah 1:1-9: The Beginning of Micah's Announcement of Judgment.

1. Verse 1: "The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."
 - a. In one concise statement, Micah identifies himself, the time of his prophetic work, and the subjects of his prophecies. His name is Micah; he is from the village of Moresheth-Gath (vs 14), which makes him, as he said, a Morasthite.
 - b. He prophesied during the days when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah reigned in Jerusalem. Likely, his work commenced toward the end of Jotham's rule.
 - c. Those who were the objects of his prophecies were the people of Samaria and Jerusalem. Although his messages were directed toward these, apparently he confined his operations to the rural areas of Judah. The people of both sections of the divided descendants of Jacob were in rebellion to God, but God was still concerned about them, enough so that he sent prophets to guide them back to him.
 - d. The word he received was the Lord's; it was not of his own production. As Peter said, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
2. Verse 2: "Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple."
 - a. It is time for the Israelites to listen to God, hence their attention is directed to what the prophet is about to report. God (through Micah) calls on the whole earth with its inhabitants to witness what he is about to say "concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" (1:1). There may be a subtle warning to the other nations that if God is about to do what he announces against his own chosen people, the fate of the rest must be equally severe.
 - b. It is God who issues these warnings of "threatening and slaughter." They flow forth from his holy temple, which in this case is heaven, not at Jerusalem. God's judgments originate in heaven.
 - c. God's concern is for all mankind, and what he is about to do to Israel would have some kind of effect on the other nations around them, and should have a warning for all who are opposed to the Living God.
3. Verses 3-4: "For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place."
 - a. Infidel critics of the Bible ridicule Micah on this point, alleging the prophet was surely ignorant to suppose "that heaven was some kind of headquarters on the other side of some convenient cloud!" (see Coffman, p.283). But what Micah here described is a beautifully graphic picture of God's figurative descent to earth for the purpose of bringing judgment on a deserving people.
 - b. God being the all-knowing and all-powerful One, there would be no need for his personal presence upon the earth in order to effect the punishment he envisions. He is depicted as descending to earth for that purpose in order that men might be the more impressed with the seriousness of the matter.
 - c. Coming down from heaven, God would tread down the high places of the earth, causing the mountains to melt; the molten mountains would flow into the valleys, creating a greater cleft in them. This melting process is likened to wax liquefying before a hot fire, or like water that is poured down a steep place.
 - d. The picture is clearly figurative, and its graphic nature is intended to strike fear in the hearts of the sinful. He is telling them ahead of time of his plan to punish, so that when it comes, there will be no doubt as to its source; afterward, there would be the record of his judgment to live on in the memory of men.
4. Verse 5: "For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?"
 - a. Making use of emphatic questions, God asks about the sins of Jacob and the high places of Judah. He answers his own questions with two rhetorical questions.
 - b. First, he states that the judgment of verses three and four are to be given because of the transgressions of Jacob and Israel.
 - c. Next, he asks, "What is the transgression of Jacob?" He answers with a rhetorical question: "Is it not Samaria?" In other words, the rebellion which characterized Samaria had overspread the whole nation. The sins of the Northern Kingdom [*Samaria*] are well-documented in the books of Amos and Hosea.

Also, the spiritual ailments of the ten tribes are now present in the land of the two tribes.

- d. Third, he asks, "What are the high places of Judah?" He answers, "Are they not Jerusalem?" *High places* are the locations where heathen altars were erected and idols were worshipped. Micah links the high places and Jerusalem. At the time of this writing, Hezekiah's limited reformation had not occurred, hence idolatry was prominent even in Jerusalem, and the temple worship had been contaminated.
 - e. As the evils in Samaria had spread to the whole Northern Kingdom, so the sins of idol worshippers in Jerusalem had polluted the entire Southern Kingdom.
 - f. Whatever affects the social center of a nation will soon affect the whole nation. This is also true of punishment that is directed against the heart of a nation. The pattern of our own country has been for new ideas and fads to arise in California, and spread eastward. Drug use, crime, immorality, etc., were once more or less limited to the large cities; but now even rural sections are afflicted.
5. Verses 6-7: "Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot."
- a. Samaria was built in a mountainous region; they boasted of their strong fortifications, trusting in their geography and military might for protection: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!" (Amos 6:1). Speaking in more literal language now, God shows that his judgment will not be hindered in the least by their stone walls.
 - b. The Lord will make Samaria as a pile of trash and rocks in a field and as the plantings of a vineyard; that is, when one prepares to plant a vineyard, all the undergrowth and stones must be cleared away. Before God could plant a good vineyard, he must first clear away the undesired elements (Samaria); so he would clear it away, and pile the residue out of the way, just as a farmer clears away the underbrush and stones, and piles them off to the side of the field.
 - c. God will tumble the stones of their city down into the valley, and uncover the very foundations upon which Samaria was built. The picture is one of total destruction.
 - d. All the graven images will be destroyed, and the wealth they had accumulated while serving idols would be taken away. They attributed their prosperity to the benevolence of their idols, but since the idols could not even protect themselves, there was no way the Israelites could expect to be preserved by these idols. What a foolish disposition they had, in crediting mere man-made objects (idols) with providing wealth and protection, while ignoring the real Benefactor—Almighty God!
 - e. The graven images they worshipped and the wealth they had amassed which they had attributed to the images, would be taken to a heathen nation, where all of these would be used in more idolatry. Israel had become guilty of spiritual harlotry when they turned from God to idols; and they practiced actual harlotry as they paid homage to the idols.
6. Verses 8-9: "Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem."
- a. Micah would mourn over the fate of his beloved nation. "Because of the terrible judgment to come on Samaria the prophet would lament and wail in a dirge-like utterance characteristic of oriental peoples in times of great grief. He would strive to impress on the sinners about him the terribleness of this judgment and to warn them of its imminence by going barefoot and wearing the garb of a captive" (Hailey, p.194).
 - b. He describes his sorrow as the wailing of dragons (jackals; wild dogs of Africa and Asia) and as the mourning of owls (ostriches—ASV). Both of these are said to make doleful sounds.
 - c. The prophet says the wound of Israel is incurable and that Judah's case is similar. The statement is reminiscent of Isaiah 1:5-6 where Judah is said to be a sick man: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Israel at this point has gone too far into apostasy; the captivity is inevitable.
 - d. They had reached the point where God gave up on them; the cup of their iniquity was full (cf. Gen. 15:16). The judgment was even now "come unto the gate of my people" (Jerusalem), but it was even closer to Israel.

B. Micah 1:10-16: The Seriousness of the Judgment is Shown.

1. Verse 10: "Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust."

“Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all: at Beth-le-aphrah have I rolled myself in the dust” (ASV).

- a. "In a unique and mournful dirge, the prophet pictures the desolation that is to sweep the country. Making a play on the names of villages and towns in the section of country about him, he expresses his grief in a series of paronomasias" (Hailey, p.195). [*Paronomasias* is a play on words].
 - b. The judgment would be so awful that God did not want it announced. Do not give a public display of lamentation.
 - c. Micah makes a play on the names of these towns and villages to paint a lucid picture of the coming desolation. A paronomasia is an act or practice of using a pun. Thus, in Gath, "Tell-Town," tell it not; in Bethleaphra (ASV), "Dust-Town," do not put dust on the head in making a lament (cf. Josh. 7:6); or do not grovel in the dust in mourning.
2. Verses 11-15: "Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethazel; he shall receive of you his standing. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel."
- a. These verses are difficult, but are evidently to be understood in the same light as the previous verse, in regards to the desolation approaching God's people. It appears that the places cited are the villages where Micah did much of his work.
 - b. Verse 11. Pass away, O inhabitant of Saphir ("Fair-Town). The idea is that they are to be "Fair Stripped," pass away naked, as captives. The inhabitant of Zaanan did not come forth (i.e., Stir-Town did not Stir); the wail of Bethazel takes your place from you (i.e., The Neighbor-Town replaces you).
 - c. Verse 12. The inhabitant of Maroth (Bitter-Town) waits for good to come, but it was evil that came from the Lord upon Jerusalem.
 - d. Verse 13. The inhabitant of Lachish (Horse-Town) is to hitch up the chariot with the swiftest horse; the idea is to flee from the destruction that is coming. Lachish is personified as the female who taught Judah and Israel to sin. Located in the frontier territory with pagan neighbors, the inhabitant may have taken up the sinful ways of the heathen first.
 - e. Verse 14. The people are to give presents to Moresheth-gath (located near Gath, the Philistine city). The idea may be that the nation would lose this city to the Assyrians, thus would make a present to them of Moresheth-gath. Achzip (False-Town) would be taken by Israel, but would be a false possession; they would not really have it.
 - f. Verse 15. Mareshah (Heir-Town) would receive an heir—the Assyrian king and his army. The glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam (The Wild Beasts' Cave); in other words, the glory of Israel will be conquered and led away into captivity.
3. Verse 16: "Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee."
- a. The prophet calls on the people to make themselves bald, by cutting off their hair. Cut off your hair so as to be like the eagle (vulture).
 - b. Shaving one's head was an act of extreme mourning (Lev. 19:27; Dt. 14:1). He tells them to do this on account of the fate of their beloved children who had been taken captive.
 - 1) Leviticus 19:27: "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 14:1: "Ye *are* the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead."

MICAH 2

A. Micah 2:1-3: A Woe is Promised to Those Who Lie A-bed Scheming to Grab Another's Land.

1. Verse 1: "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand."
 - a. Chapter one contained general references and descriptions of the approaching judgment; the prophet here turns to address some of the sins commonly practiced in the nation, specifically the land-grabbing schemes of the powerful.
 - b. The picture is graphic; here is an evil person who lies in bed devising evil plans by which he can defraud his neighbor. A two-year-old was overheard several times at night, just prior to falling to sleep, making audible plans to bite certain playmates the next day. "Tomorrow, I gonna bite Sally, I gonna bite Jamie...."
 - c. They spend much time during the night working out the plot and arise in the morning to put the plan into practice. They are able to do so because they have the power at their disposal.
2. Verse 2: "And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage."
 - a. They covet the fields of their neighbors, and plot how to acquire them. Ahab wanted the vineyard of Naboth; his evil wife Jezebel cooked the scheme by which he was able to obtain it. [1 Kings 21].
 - b. Amos prophesied to the Northern Kingdom a little earlier than Micah's work in the Southern Kingdom. Israel had the same kind of evil plotters as these addressed by Micah. The weak and poor were forced to turn over their possessions to the strong.
 - c. When God had Palestine divided among the first generation of Israelites, it was his intention and will that the property remain in the hands of that man and his descendants throughout their history. For this reason, it was contrary to God's will for Naboth to sell his land to Ahab (1 Kings 21).
 - d. But these evil, rich people being described concocted plans by which they could force their neighbors from their lands and houses, or take them over by devious means.
3. Verse 3: "Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil."
 - a. These people had devised evil against the innocent and powerless; God would therefore devise an evil against them. But God's punishment for them would be such that they could not extricate themselves; it would be certain and permanent.
 - b. Their haughty demeanor would be removed from them; they would be debased and humbled. God would be able, even in this life, to bring about justice!

B. Micah 2:4-6: Others Would Ridicule Their Fate.

1. Verse 4: "In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields."
 - a. Someone would see the predicament these oppressors now faced and would take up a parable of lamentation against them. The statement cited was given by these others in reviling these haughty ones, but using the words as if the ones being described were actually making the statement.
 - b. "We are utterly spoiled; we have lost our inheritance; our possessions have been given to the rebellious." They just could not understand why God had treated them so! They were willfully ignorant or would not admit to themselves their own many crimes. They were getting a just recompense.
2. Verse 5: "Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD."
 - a. ASV: "Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast the line by lot in the assembly of Jehovah."
 - b. They will not have anyone to cast a lot or measure an inheritance for them. Casting cords by lot indicates the dividing of an inheritance. When Israel entered Canaan, the land was divided among them by lot.
 - c. When they were able, these rich men conspired to take land from their neighbors; now their possessions would be taken by the enemy; they would be cast off their own inheritance, and no mercy would be shown.
3. Verse 6: "Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame." "Prophecy ye not, thus they prophesy. They shall not prophesy to these: reproaches shall not depart" (ASV).
 - a. These wicked persons being described tried to put the true prophets to silence; they did not want to hear what they had to say. Ahab did not want to hear what the former Micaiah had to say; he accused

the prophet of hating him.

- b. They prophesy, "Prophecy ye not." They prophesied telling the true prophets not to prophesy.
 - 1) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits."
 - 2) Jeremiah 5:30-31: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"
 - 3) Amos 2:12: "But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - 5) 2 Timothy 4:3-5: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
- c. "Men teach their teachers how they wish to be mistaught, and receive the echo of their wishes as the voice of God" (Quoted in *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p.202). Several years ago, a group who wanted to establish a new kind of religious work, conducted interviews among the general population, asking what they liked and disliked in religion. Based on the responses they received, they set up a congregation—and thousands of misguided souls flocked to it. They purposely intended to give the people what the people wanted, not what the people needed. God's word did not enter into the plan.
- d. They wanted to be let alone in their practices, to do what pleased them. It was all right to tell others not to prophesy, but it was wrong for the true prophets to point out their sins.
- e. This sounds like modern-day Americans. They want to tell gospel preachers and other Christians to be quiet; they reserve the right to preach their message but deny to gospel teachers the right to say anything.

C. Micah 2:7-11: Micah Rebukes the Evil Men Who Speak Against His Inspired Message.

1. Verse 7: "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"
 - a. The prophet asks them whether the Spirit of the Lord is straitened so that he no longer has a voice. He addressed this remark to those who are called "the house of Jacob." They claimed to be God's chosen people, but does that mean God no longer has anything to say to them? Is God content to allow them to do as they please? Were the words Micah gave them from God? Are they not intended for your good and not your hurt?
 - b. This is a common mistake: that those who seek to teach God's word are trying to harm those to whom they speak; the very opposite is the truth. "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).
2. Verse 8: "Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war."
 - a. God says that those who claim to be his people have become his enemy; instead of following his will, they do as they please, even to the hurt of the innocent.
 - b. Their crimes included stripping a man of his robe who was innocently passing by. The traveler meant no one any harm, but because the ones described had the means and the opportunity, and could get by with it, they robbed the man even of his clothing. The robe was the outer garment which was also used as covering at night.
 - c. Those who try to live uprightly, and are opposed to violence and war, are often made the victims of those who have no such compunctions. It is also the case, that many times those who claim to be opposed to violence and war are proficient at practicing both. Some of the greatest crimes and some of the vilest actions have been done by corrupt religionists in the name of religion.
3. Verse 9: "The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever."
 - a. "The outrage and presumptuous arrogance of Israel's sins are in this verse exposed as being particularly despicable in that they were perpetrated against defenseless women and children, the

implication being that the women were widows and the children orphans" (Coffman, p.303).

- b. The heartless rulers had women and children evicted from their homes. The land of Canaan was intended to be a place of rest and plenty, but these wicked ones had violated the sacred principles of mercy, justice, and righteousness; consequently, their wicked ways became a source of their own destruction.
 - c. There was no concern on the part of these people for their victims. No doubt they could rationalize so as to deceive their own consciences. God will not hold him guiltless who refuses to show mercy, practice justice, or who will otherwise refuse to follow the word of God (Micah 6:8; Mark 12:29-31; Matt. 23).
4. Verse 10: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction."
- a. God addressed these merciless men, ordering them out of his land; it was to be a land of rest, but they had polluted it; it would be the means of their own destruction, and that destruction would be severe.
 - b. The Almighty is able to turn a wicked man's blessings into a curse.
5. Verse 11: "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people."
- a. There were many people who would be perfectly willing to give these wealthy plunderers what they wanted to hear. There have always been more than enough of this kind.
 - b. "The prophet who will tell them the things they want to hear, speaking of prosperity, luxuries, and strong drink, 'he shall even be the prophet of this people,' and the one to whom they would listen" (Hailey, p.200). Notice that the false prophet is placed on the side of those who want wine and strong drink.
 - c. This kind of prophet is a mere hireling; he can speak on any side of an issue, depending on who is around him. One politician said, when asked his position on a certain issue, "I have good friends on both sides of this matter, and I always stick with my friends!"
 - d. Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - e. 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
 - f. The prophets, including Micah, were able to describe situations that are as up to date as the latest issue of brotherhood publications!

D. Micah 2:12-13: The Prophet Speaks of Better Times.

1. Verse 12: "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men."
 - a. Despite the great judgment about to descend upon the rebellious population, Micah holds out hope for the salvation of a remnant.
 - b. God would assemble the people again, delivering the remnant of those who were faithful. The time would come when the Lord would bring back from the land of captivity those who desired to come back; this desire was not only to return to the land of Canaan, but to the Lord, also. This was accomplished under the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C.
 - c. He would gather them as the shepherds of Bozrah (a chief city of Edom noted for its large flocks of sheep).
 - d. The remnant may also have reference to the relative small number who would obey the gospel of Christ. Although the number is described as a remnant, Micah speaks of them as being multitudinous.
2. Verse 13: "The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them."
 - a. ASV: "The breaker is gone up before them: they have broken forth and passed on to the gate, and are gone out thereat; and their king is passed on before them, and Jehovah at the head of them."
 - b. The *breaker* was the one who would break in pieces. The reference seems to be to the invaders who would break up the nation of Israel, and carry the survivors into captivity. Some think the breaker is the Liberator, who would break the yoke of their bondage. This part could have a Messianic import.
 - c. But the last part of the verse seems to clearly speak of the gospel age. The King would, of course, be

Christ; he would be their guide; and he would be their head.

- 1) Ephesians 1:20-23: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - 2) Ephesians 5:23-25: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."
 - 3) Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence."
- d. The only king that the Israelites could have after the Babylonian Captivity would be Christ—and they could have him as their king only if they obeyed the gospel. Their earthly monarchy was destroyed when Babylon took Jerusalem. No other king was allowed by the Lord. "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30).

MICAH 3

A. Micah 3:1-4: The Evil Leaders of the Nation are Denounced.

1. Verse 1: "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?"
 - a. The prophet raises a rhetorical question which is directed toward the national leaders of Judah. "Is it not your responsibility as leaders to understand justice?"
 - b. This was tantamount to telling them directly that they who were the dispensers of justice did not even know what justice was!
 - c. "And I said" indicates that the prophet introduces a new subject from that which he covered in the preceding chapter.
2. Verses 2-3: "Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron."
 - a. Continuing the theme, Micah affirms that the leaders were guilty of hating that which was good and loving that which was evil. They turned right into wrong by flaying the skins from the bodies of their subjects. Through the miscarriage of justice, they were able to steal the possessions of the weak.
 - b. Using figures of speech, Micah properly flays the rulers for their ill treatment of the people. The figures he employed showed the extreme affliction the unfortunate people suffered at the hands of their rulers. Micah accuses them of flaying and eating their subjects.
3. Verse 4: "Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings."
 - a. When judgment comes upon the wicked rulers, they would cry for mercy from God; but the Lord says that he will not hear their pleas for help.
 - b. No doubt, they turned deaf ears to the cries of their victims. They would reap what they had sown.
 - 1) Isaiah 1:12-15: "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."
 - 2) James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

B. Micah 3:5-8: The False Prophets are Denounced.

1. Verse 5: "Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him."
 - a. The false prophets of the land were probably very numerous. When a society or nation decides they do not want to hear God's pure word, there will always be plenty of evil men who will deliver exactly what the people want.
 - 1) Isaiah 30:10: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:2-5: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
 - b. These false prophets caused the Israelites to err. They promised peace when there was no peace in the offing; they spoke with smooth words, but their message was one that would bring great injury to the people; it had a "bite" in it. They did not have the real interests of their followers in mind, but their hurt. They just did not care about them.
 - c. They claimed to be speaking for God, but he did not put their evil message in their mouths. Their work was an attack against God for they spoke words which opposed and contradicted God's word. The ASV indicates the attack the false prophets waged was against anyone who would not feed (pay) them. Jezebel slew the prophets of God, and sought Elijah's life.
 - d. False teachers today imitate these ancient enemies of God and truth. These of our day seek financial gain at the expense of the welfare of their followers, without regard to God and his word.
2. Verse 6: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you,

- that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."
- a. The sun of popularity and prosperity would set on these false prophets. The night of divine judgment would come upon them. Micah is not suggesting that these evil men had any divine inspiration.
 - b. When it became known that they were false prophets, the people would desert them; and when that time came, the false prophets themselves would no longer find any desire to deceive the people; they would at that time learn the horrible end toward which their evil doings had taken them.
 - c. This is the inevitable result of promoting and following false teaching.
 - 1) Jeremiah 15:9: "She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while *it was* yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD."
 - 2) Matthew 15:14: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
 - 3) John 12:34-36: "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
3. Verse 7: "Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God."
- a. When the time of captivity arrived, the false teachers would be exposed for the liars they were. They would need to cover their upper lips as the lepers were required to do (Lev. 13:45). Those in mourning sometimes covered their lips (Ezek. 24:17).
 - 1) Leviticus 13:45: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean."
 - 2) Ezekiel 24:17: "Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men."
 - b. These spiritual lepers would be made ashamed when the truth about them was finally revealed; there would be cause for them to mourn, but there would be no answer from God to their pleas for mercy. God will have nothing to do with one who will not seek to learn and to do his will wholeheartedly.
4. Verse 8: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."
- a. This is Micah's statement about himself which shows the contrast between a true prophet and a false prophet. Micah was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord.
 - 1) False prophets claim to speak for the Lord, but their messages are always contradictory; what one false prophet says on one occasion will contradict something he says on another occasion; and the messages of different false teachers will contradict each other; and their messages will contradict the word of God. There was no contradiction in the messages Micah delivered.
 - 2) False teachers of today claim to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but one set of them maintains there is only one person in the Godhead, while another set asserts the Godhead is comprised of three divine beings. If what they claim is true, in this case and in many other cases, then God called one set to deny what he called the other set to affirm! And in each case, their doctrines conflict with the Bible in virtually every major subject.
 - b. Micah was full of judgment and might by the Spirit of the Lord.
 - 1) Micah spoke with the full authority of God. His message contained declarations of divine judgment and might. It is possible that miraculous demonstrations were also in evidence to confirm his preaching, although none are cited.
 - 2) False teachers are deathly afraid of the truth of the Bible. There was a time when many of them were bold enough to confront the truth in honorable debate, but that day has long since passed. Through faithful, forceful gospel preaching and debating, many denominations dropped doctrines that were obviously exposed as erroneous.
 - 3) When the mouths of the councils and synods, etc., have been stopped, we who have always preached the truth will continue to preach. May God hasten the coming of the day when the false teachers of our era have their false messages exposed for all to see, and may he give our nation a

receptive heart so that we may impart to them the pure word of truth!

- c. Micah was full of power, judgment, and might for the purpose of exposing the sins of the Israelites. One who has nothing to say but smooth words that are easy to hear, has nothing of value to offer to a sinful people.
 - 1) Even when pleasant words may be properly applied, and such is always needful since we all have to struggle with temptation and sin, we also need to hear words of warning to spur us on to faithfulness.
 - 2) The currently popular trend of "positivism" has been productive of much evil, for one cannot teach the whole counsel of God without presenting the warnings and threats which the Bible enjoins (2 Tim. 4:1-5).
- d. Micah received his message from the Lord by revelation; the false prophets he denounced heard nothing from on high. His statement in this verse is similar to Jeremiah 6:11: "Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days."

C. Micah 3:9-12: The Prophet Tells the Leaders the Result of Their Evil Rule.

1. Verse 9: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity."
 - a. Those who were primarily responsible for the coming judgment were the corrupt rulers, prophets and priests. But if the average people had sought after God's true way, perhaps they could have caused the leaders to guide them in the right way. However, as a stream cannot rise above his source, so a nation cannot rise above its leaders.
 - b. These men had corrupted justice and fairness in their work; they had perverted their offices for personal gain, giving little thought to the consequences they and the whole nation would have to face.
 - c. The people could not succeed in laying the blame for their own sinful conduct on having been misled by their prophets and priests; the prophets and priests could not avoid responsibility for their actions by claiming that they were merely giving the people what they wanted; and none of them could evade judgment by placing the blame on their predecessors. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).
2. Verse 10: "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity."
 - a. The civil and religious leaders of Judah are condemned for seeking to build up the city (and nation) by evil means. It may be that they had the sincere desire that their nation be strong and prosperous; but it is certainly true that the means they chose to use were condemned by the Lord.
 - b. Their efforts to build up Zion (Jerusalem) were by blood and iniquity. As already indicated by Micah, the leaders perverted justice in accomplishing their aims. How many of them followed the evil example of Ahab and Jezebel in obtaining property belonging to others? (Cf. 1 Kings 21.)
 - c. "Their whole society was built on blood and wrong. Zion and Jerusalem in this verse are synonymous and stand not only for the great and revered capital city but for all of Judea" (Elmo Scoggin, Quoted by Coffman, p.317).
 - d. A nation or state or society which seeks to build itself up by violence, winking at sin, or relaxing laws to give more latitude to those seeking sinful lifestyles, is not only building on sand, it is building on quicksand!
 - 1) Through the centuries, men have learned hard lessons regarding the evils of sexual laxity and perversion, but in our day we are seeing the time-honored lessons being gradually laid aside, making room for the homosexuals and the profligates to do as they please, without rebuke or discouragement or warning.
 - 2) Through the years, men have learned hard lessons regarding the evils of gambling and alcohol. The law prohibiting alcohol was a good ruling, and was successful in cutting down on many of the evils that alcohol produces. Since the repeal of that law, the consumption of alcohol has increased by enormous leaps, and the evils of its use have reared up to haunt us!
 - 3) When a state or nation seeks to build itself up by appealing to the base desires of its people, it will succeed eventually in destroying itself. Lottery advocates in Florida deceived the people into believing that if they would vote-in their gambling program, the education needs of the state would be more than met. The opposite has proved true. The spread of gambling encourages the spread of crime, thus requiring an increase in spending on law enforcement. Those who can not afford to gamble, do so anyway, and in the process lose the money which ought to have been spent on food and shelter; when they cannot provide for those basic needs, the state must offer help, thus costing the taxpayers additional money. But the greatest cost cannot be measured in dollars and cents. How much is a destroyed life worth; how much is a splintered family to be valued; and how

- much is a lost soul worth?
3. Verse 11: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us."
 - a. Micah gives the details of the evils of the rulers, priests and prophets. Their prime desire was financial gain. The judges perverted justice to get a bribe; the priests taught for the money they could obtain; the prophets prophesied for financial gain.
 - b. Money is usually essential, but it cannot buy many things. Compare:
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 10:19: "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things."
 - 2) Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 - 3) Luke 12:15-21: And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - c. Even money that is legally and honorably obtained cannot buy the best things of life. Money obtained dishonorably or illegally cannot do any better, and will in fact cause the soul of the perpetrator to be lost.
 - d. It appears strange to us that those who were so obviously steeped in sin, still claimed to have God as their protector. They did as they pleased in mistreating and defrauding others, and did not admit any spiritual problem in their lives. But we have the same thing going on today, with those people who believe, and teach, and follow anything but the truth, and yet still claim to be in fellowship with God! The sins of famous men are overlooked and explained away by saying, "No one is perfect." No one is perfect in the absolute, but one who persists in a sinful act will surely be condemned.
 - 1) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
 - 2) 1 John 1:6-10: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - e. This sinful disposition is present in the nation and in the church today.
 4. Verse 12: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."
 - a. Here is the point of the passage. Because the leaders of the nation had led sinful lives and encouraged iniquity on the part of the nation, and succeeded in polluting the majority of the people: God would cause Jerusalem to become nothing but heaps. Compare: "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Jer. 26:18).
 - b. Zion would be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem would become as heaps of rocks and underbrush removed from the field. Furthermore, the temple would become as the high places of the forest; the site of the temple would become as a mound in the woods: deserted and unused for the holy purposes God intended.
 - c. When the Babylonian army came to Jerusalem in 586 B.C., they destroyed the walls and the city, and razed the temple.
 - d. Despite the many warnings of the many prophets God sent to the people, to turn them away from their ways and back to God, and in spite of having the word of God as the infallible guide, they persisted in their rebellion until just punishment came.
 - e. There are many lessons the people of our generation need to derive from this chapter, including these:
 - 1) Heeding false teachers and other religious hirelings is fraught with gravest dangers, to the soul and

to the nation.

- 2) Teachers who give the people what they want to hear are doing themselves and the people the worst possible disservice.
- 3) People who develop a hunger and thirst for anything but God's word will surely destroy their own souls.
- 4) Leaders of a nation, state, or city who seek to build up their domain by evil means are actually working to destroy it, whether they realize it or not.
- 5) Sin is still a reproach to any people, individually and collectively.
- 6) God means what he says.

MICAH 4

A. Micah 4:1-2: The Establishment of God's House.

1. Verse 1: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it."
 - a. Having dealt with the evils of his day, Micah now turns to the future. He has given a description of their future up to the captivity, and now takes them to the "last days" (the latter days—ASV).
 - b. The phrase *last days* refers to the Christian Age, the time of the Messiah's reign. Peter said the *last days* of Joel two was a reference to the Christian Age (Acts 2:16-17). Mankind has been living in the last days since the Pentecost Day of Acts 2. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:16-17).
 - c. In the last days, Micah said the mountain of the Lord's house would be established. The Lord's house is the Lord's church (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is also called the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19).
 - 1) 1 Timothy 3:15: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
 - 2) Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - d. The *mountain* aspect of the church emphasizes its permanency and greatness. It will never be destroyed.
 - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 2) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
 - 4) Daniel 2:34-35: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."
 - e. The establishment of the Lord's church (kingdom) took place in Jerusalem, which is literally in the top of a mountain. But Micah is saying that it would be a glorious entity, exalted above the hills. The *hills* are all other institutions.
 - f. People will flow unto it. On the day it came into existence, 3000 souls were added to it. Through the centuries, there has been a continual flow of people who obey the gospel and are translated into it. They are drawn by the word of Christ.
 - 1) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
 - 2) Acts 2:41, 47: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls....Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - 3) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (ASV).
 - 4) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (ASV).

2. Verse 2: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - a. People from many nations would unite in the church. On the day of Pentecost, men from every nation were present and many of them obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:5-11). The gospel is intended for all:
 - 1) Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
 - 2) Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - 3) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - b. The teaching process of Christianity is stated in the verse. The Lord will teach us his way and we will walk in his paths. The gospel is powerless without teaching; it cannot help those who do not know it. The manner in which the Lord teaches us is by having faithful people communicate it:
 - 1) Mark 16:20: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
 - 3) Acts 14:1: "And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed" (ASV).
 - c. The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Zion and Jerusalem are the same, hence the law and the word are identical. Those who deny that the gospel is a law do not understand this verse, or the many other passages which identify it as a law.
 - 1) Romans 8:1-3: "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."
 - 2) Galatians 6:2: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

B. Micah 4:3-7: Spiritual Blessings in the House of the Lord.

1. Verse 3: "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - a. The Lord would judge among the people. That is, he would decide and settle all pertinent matters. He does this through the teaching of his word. The nations which were far off were the Gentiles. His judgments would apply to both Jew and Gentile, and would be the final word.
 - b. The nature of the kingdom would be different from any with which Israel was familiar. They had an earthly king, ruling from a literal throne, controlling the kingdom with his own edicts enforced by military and judicial might. Any spread of that kingdom was accomplished by conquest. But the Lord's kingdom would not be established, spread, or maintained by carnal weapons.
 - 1) John 18:36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 - 3) Ephesians 6:10-18: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take

- the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."
- c. Millennialists maintain that this is speaking of events to take place during the Lord's supposed millennial reign on earth. However, the kingdom has already come, so there is no coming of a future kingdom.
 - 1) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
 - 3) Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."
 - d. And since the kingdom has come, and is spiritual in its nature (Luke 17:20-21), then the destruction of weapons of war has a figurative fulfillment.
 - 1) Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 - e. Ephesians 2:11-22 shows the fulfillment to be the peaceful nature of the kingdom. Those who enter it do so by obeying the gospel of peace; they follow the Prince of peace; they have peace between each other and are at peace with God.
 - f. The centuries-long conflict between Jew and Gentile is dissolved among those in the kingdom; the division and strife that exists between different nations and races outside the kingdom are not present among those in the kingdom. Isaiah 11 gives another figurative description of the peaceable nature of the kingdom. Compare: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14-15).
2. Verse 4: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."
 - a. Micah continues to illustrate the peaceful conditions in the kingdom. "Sitting under one's vine and fig tree was a symbol of peace, security, and safety (cf. 1 Kings 4:24b-25). There would be none to make them afraid; for this spiritual Zion, the dwelling place of Jehovah, would be their permanent stronghold" (Hailey, p.205).
 - b. During the first century, our brethren were severely and cruelly treated by their enemies, but that persecution does not belie this prediction.
 - c. Although they faced hardships, deprivations, imprisonment, and even death, there was no reason for any of them to be fearful; the Lord was with them, and would give them far greater advantages and blessings in heaven than they forfeited on earth.
 - 1) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - 2) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 3. Verse 5: "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." ASV: "For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever."
 - a. Micah recognized that not everyone in the Christian Age would be obedient to the Messiah. Isaiah 53:1 shows a knowledge of that fact also, and was used by Paul to show that God knew that only a portion of humanity would believe the gospel (Rom. 10:13-21). Compare: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).
 - b. Those who would not serve Christ, would serve another god of their own choice. The great majority

- of every generation chooses to follow another god. Modern idols include literal images, but also embrace money, political power, social standing, human wisdom, fancy titles, and property. Anything that takes the place of God in a man's heart is an idol (cf. Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; Matt. 6:24).
- c. Those in the kingdom would follow the Messiah, conducting all their affairs in the name of the Lord.
 - 1) Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 - 2) John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand." [The individual must hear and follow Christ's word before the benefits promised can be obtained].
 - 3) Ephesians 1:22-23: "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - 4) Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence."
 - 5) Colossians 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."
 - 6) Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 4. Verse 6: "In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted."
 - a. *In that day*, during the Messiah's rule over his spiritual kingdom, God would open the door of salvation to all men, including the downtrodden, the outcasts of society, the lowly, and all who are afflicted and wounded by sin. The critical condition of living in an imperfect, stained and corrupted by sin, brings harsh problems for nearly all of us.
 - b. Those who had been cast off by divine judgment would be offered a haven in the kingdom, but none could find sanctuary who was unwilling to humble himself in sincere obedience to the gospel.
 5. Verse 7: "And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever."
 - a. ASV: "And I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever."
 - b. The remnant are those who obey the gospel. There was a remnant in ancient Israel that remained loyal despite the apostasy of the majority. Seven thousand had not bowed to Baal during Elijah's time. See 1 Kings 18:18.
 - c. Those who faithfully followed Christ during his earthly ministry were hated by the religious leaders and their disciples. The same was true of the early Jews who entered the kingdom. These were *lame* as far as the rest of the nation was concerned but they were the elect of God.
 - d. God had cast off his people Israel, but not completely; he gave them ample occasion and invitation to obey the gospel and be saved. Hence, the nation that had been subjected to God's wrath was still offered citizenship in the Messiah's kingdom, but only if they would genuinely obey his will.
 - e. From this remnant and the obedient Gentiles, God would make a strong spiritual nation, and would reign over them in spiritual Zion forever.
 6. Verse 8: "And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem."
 - a. Towers were erected in the ancient days as a means of better overseeing the flock. "Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry" (2 Chron. 26:10).
 - b. "The reference here is to the spiritual watchtower from which Jehovah would watch over His flock. To the hill of this tower, Zion, would the former dominion come. At this point the prophet introduces the Messiah who would come and through whom Jehovah would exercise the rule thus far discussed" (Hailey, p.207).
 - c. The *former dominion*, a reference to the glorious days of David and Solomon, would be reestablished (figuratively) in the kingdom of the Messiah. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this" (Amos 9:11-12).
 - d. Again, Micah shows that the kingdom would be established at Jerusalem. He plainly speaks of it as a **kingdom**, revealing that the "house of the Lord" in verse one and the "kingdom" of verse eight are the same.

e. The church is called "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:22-31).

C. Micah 4:9-13: The Prophet Returns to Discussing The Current Problems of Israel.

1. Verse 9: "Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail."
 - a. Micah turns again to addressing the problems of the Judah of his generation. He asks them why they are crying aloud. He draws their attention to the pain they were facing under the heavy weight of tribute they were paying to Assyria, and under threat of armed attack by them and others.
 - b. The pangs they were suffering (and were to suffer) are likened to a woman whose time for delivery has come. Nothing can be done to avoid the pains; the travail must be undergone before any hope of relief can be obtained.
 - c. Micah is describing the immediate future of Judah. They would lose their king and thus could not call on him for help. When Babylon later came against Jerusalem, their king was replaced by the Babylonians. The ultimate overthrow of their king and their nation is being emphasized here. There was no more hope of avoiding the harsh judgment God had in store for them than there was for a pregnant woman to avoid giving birth.
2. Verse 10: "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies."
 - a. He plainly states that their future would be captivity in Babylon. Illustrating their travail, he pictures it as a woman in childbirth.
 - b. They would not be allowed to remain in the city, but would be taken into the field, even to Babylon, where they would endure the fullness of their travail. They would eventually be redeemed from the hand of their enemies, but in the meantime, there was a terrible penalty they must pay.
 - c. It is significant that he names Babylon as their chief antagonist. At the time, the country to reckon with was Assyria. But Micah envisions the time when Babylon would be able to subdue Assyria, and gain control over the civilized world.
 - d. The Babylonians came against Jerusalem just as Micah had predicted (Jer. 39:1-6). "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Jer. 26:18).
3. Verse 11: "Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion."
 - a. Even at the time Micah spoke these words, many nations were gathering against Judah. The many nations included those which comprised the Assyrian Empire.
 - b. These nations and Judah's neighbors hated her, and longed to see her overcome and defiled.
4. Verse 12: "But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor."
 - a. But those nations did not know what was in the mind of God. No one can know God's will except by revelation:
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:9-14: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."
 - 3) Jude 3: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints: (ASV).
 - b. Those wicked nations wanted to see all of Israel annihilated, but God was only minded to punish them for a period of time, and then restore them to their land. He was not through with them.
 - c. Those who were to be gathered as sheaves to the threshing-floor were the enemies of Israel; the figure

depicts the punishment God was going to bring upon them.

5. Verse 13: "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."
 - a. "The people governed from Zion are called upon to arise and thresh, for God will give them the strength and instruments with which to tread and destroy the enemies. The substance and gain of these would-be destroyers will be devoted as Jehovah directs. Whether this prophecy had reference to the destruction of Sennacherib's army at the gates of Jerusalem (Isa. 37:36-38) or to the ultimate destruction of Assyria and the triumph of God's remnant, is uncertain" (Hailey p.208).
 - b. The Israelites are instructed here to arise and thresh; the Lord would supply the strength and the instruments with which to fight the enemy.
 - c. When God established his covenant with Abraham in the long ago, he made certain definite promises to that grand old man. God's purpose was not to be thwarted by the rebellion of the Israelites or by the might of heathen armies. Israel and Judah were to be sorely punished by the Assyrians and Babylonians, but each of those pagan empires was to suffer the full brunt of God's displeasure. The Assyrians were overcome by the Babylonians, and the Babylonians were later subdued by the Medo-Persian army.
 - d. God was able to fulfill all of his promises.

MICAH 5

A. Micah 5:1-9: The Coming of the Messiah.

1. Verse 1: "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."
 - a. Verse one continues the thought on which chapter four ended. Many nations were against Israel. The Assyrian and the Babylonian armies were comprised of men from the various nations which these world rulers conquered in their times of ascendancy. The call of the verse is for the people to array themselves against the invaders.
 - b. In the case at hand, the Assyrian army is likely the one indicated to be threatening them (Isa. 37:36-38). The Assyrian king returned home from the disastrous invasion of Judah, claiming that he had shut Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage; the truth was, however, that his mighty army had been decimated by the miraculous work of a single angel! He probably never knew what destroyed his troops.
 - c. The following is a translation of Sennacherib's boastful claim:
 - 1) "As for Hezekiah the Judahite, who did not submit to my yoke: forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small towns in their area, which were without number, by levelling with battering-rams and by bringing up siege-engines, and by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels, and breeches, I besieged and took them. 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. (Hezekiah) himself, like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up earthworks against him? the one coming out of the city-gate, I turned back to his misery. His cities, which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land, and to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Silli-b'1, king of Gaza, I gave (them).
 - 2) "And thus I diminished his land. I added to the former tribute, and I laid upon him the surrender of their land and imposts?gifts for my majesty. As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him, and the Arabs and his mercenary troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, deserted him. In addition to the thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver, gems, antimony, jewels, large carnelians, ivory-inlaid couches, ivory-inlaid chairs, elephant hides, elephant tusks, ebony, boxwood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians, which he had brought after me to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute and to accept servitude, he dispatched his messengers."
 - d. The threat Micah here describes would be one leading to humiliation for Israel's king, who would be struck with a rod upon the cheek. Some scholars see a Messianic message in this verse.
 - 1) Compare Isaiah 50:6: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."
 - 2) Matthew 26:67-68: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?"
 - e. "He hath laid siege against us." The invading king is the man indicated. Notice how Micah includes himself with those who were besieged, suggesting that Jerusalem is the site of the struggle.
2. Verse 2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
 - a. The prophet clearly predicts here the birth and birthplace of the Messiah. His entry into the world would be at Bethlehem. Joseph Smith, in his infamous production (*The Book of Mormon*), claimed that Jesus was born in Jerusalem (Alma 7:10). He was wrong about that, as he was wrong about his entire farcical "revelation."
 - b. The ancient Jews understood from this passage that the Messiah, when he came, would be born in Bethlehem. Consequently, when the wise men came from the east seeking the new-born King, inquiry was made as to where he should be born. The reply was:
 - 1) "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matt. 2:5-6). They understood this to be the place because of Micah's prediction, which was made more than seven hundred years earlier.
 - 2) The different rendering given in Matthew's account may be due to some "fine-tuning" of the passage by the Holy Spirit, or perhaps the Jews, who were being quoted by Matthew, did not have it precisely as Micah gave it. It is true that Bethlehem was small, and it is also true that Judah was rich for the greatest of all princes was born there. It was the least in one sense, but greatest in

- another sense.
- c. Bethlehem was a little place, virtually unnoticed by the masses of Judah. *Bethlehem* means "house of bread" and *Ephrathah* means "fruitfulness." It was the ancestral home of David, located about six miles from Jerusalem. God consistently chose the things, places, and people least likely to have been chosen by the wisdom of man (Isa. 55:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:27; Isa. 53:1-3).
 - 1) The birth place of Christ was of no great importance to the Jews. The place where he grew up [Nazareth] was despised (John 1:46). There was nothing about Christ's physical appearance or dress to attract the masses to him. He was uneducated by formal schooling standards (John 7:15).
 - 2) Yet, by means of who he was, what he was capable of doing, how he lived, what he taught, and by genuinely being concerned about people, he was able to bring changes to this world that no one else could have accomplished.
 - d. At Bethlehem was one to be born who was destined to be ruler in Israel. There is nothing in the statement that indicates he was to rule in an earthly sense, as had David and Solomon. Indeed, Christ was the Father's agent in the creation.
 - 1) John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."
 - 2) Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*."
 - 3) Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
 - 4) Hebrews 7:14: "For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."
 - 5) Zechariah 6:12-13: "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
 - e. Christ is on his heavenly throne today, ruling over spiritual Israel.
 - 1) Acts 2:29-36: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - 2) Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."
 - 3) Ephesians 1:22-23: "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - f. Bethlehem is given the subtitle *Ephrathah* to specify which Bethlehem was meant. There was another place by that name in the territory of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). Micah predicted the Messiah's birth place, and Isaiah showed that his birth would be by a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Matthew verifies both (Matt. 1:18-25; 2:1-6).
 - g. Christ is depicted as an eternal being, thus divine. His activities have been going on, Micah says, from "of old, from everlasting." John 1:1-3 authenticates this truth.
 - 1) The "Watchtower Witnesses" assert that Christ had a beginning, that he was the first thing God created. They cite Revelation 3:14 as evidence, but the word *beginning* in that passage refers to Christ, the *beginner* of all things; he created everything (Col. 1:15-17; John 1:3).
 - 2) Christ possesses all the characteristics of God (Col. 2:9). *Godhead* speaks of the qualities that pertain to being God; Christ has all of these attributes. One of the features of God is the possession of an eternal nature. In other words, since Christ is God (deity), he could not have ever had a beginning; there was never a time when Christ did not exist. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

- 3) Christ is called "God" in the Bible (Heb. 1:8-12; John 20:28; Isa. 6:1-5; John 12:41). John's account shows that Christ was being described in Isaiah's vision.
 - a) Hebrews 1:8-12: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."
 - b) John 20:28: "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."
 - c) Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
 - d) John 12:41: "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."
- 4) The only way Christ is subordinate to God is in authority:
 - a) John 13:16: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." The sender is greater in authority than the one who is sent.
 - b) Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. God sent the Son into the world.
 - c) John 15:26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." The Son sent the Holy Spirit.
- 5) He not only created the universe, but he maintains control over it.
 - a) John 1:3: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."
 - b) Colossians 1:13-17: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."
 - c) Hebrews 1:1-3: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."
 - h. "Whereas the king had suffered severe humiliation (v. 1), the one to come would lead the people to victory" (Hailey, p.209). This second ruler is Christ, who was to be born in Bethlehem of a virgin. Notice the contrast between verses 1 and 2. The Messiah would return the "first dominion" (4:8), in that he would take the spiritual throne of the spiritual kingdom, and give spiritual Israel a figurative return to the splendor and glory fleshly Israel enjoyed under David and Solomon.
3. Verse 3: "Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel."
 - a. The key to understanding this verse is to correctly identify the woman who underwent the travail of childbirth. This is clearly Mary who brought forth her firstborn son, Jesus. The verse begins with "therefore," clearly alluding to the birth of the previous verse, which is a prophetic reference to the birth of Jesus.
 - b. God here promises to give *them* up (the Israelites) *until* a certain time. God brought them back from Babylonian captivity and established them once again in the land of promise. They served him for a short period of time, although they were only nominally faithful.
 - c. By the time of Malachi (440 B.C.), they had apostatized again; they were still in apostasy when John the Baptizer came, calling on them to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:5). Baptists misuse this

- verse, twisting it to make it say alien sinners must repent before they can believe the gospel. But these were not alien sinners; they were rebellious children of God. They believed in God, but they did not believe Christ. Hence, they must repent of the crimes they had done against God, and listen to the gospel message for the purpose of gaining faith in the new order God was in the process of establishing.
- d. From the time of Malachi, when the Old Testament Scriptures were completed, until the coming of John, the Israelites were in apostasy. The majority of them remained so, but a remnant believed the preaching of John, and later that of Christ.
 - e. Following the virgin birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem, a portion of Israel came back to God by obeying the gospel of Christ. Thus, they "were given up until the time" when Mary brought forth her firstborn Son, Jesus. The specific time was, of course, when Jesus reached maturity, and began his public ministry and later established his kingdom on the first Pentecost following his resurrection. [Hailey identifies the woman as that part of Israel which had remained faithful before John].
 - f. The remnant of his brethren would return unto the children of Israel. The reference here is to the remnant of Edom, Moab, Samaria, and the Gentiles in general who would obey the gospel of Christ.
 - g. "The prophet was looking to the birth of the Messiah and the kingdom that began on Pentecost. The 'great sign' seen by John on Patmos, a woman arrayed with the sun, having the moon under her feet and a crown of stars upon her brow, who gave birth to the man-child, is this same woman (Rev. 12:1-6). She is the remnant of the spiritually faithful through whom the Christ came, fulfilling the prophecies of Micah and Isaiah. Under this ruler the residue or remnant of the ruler's brethren would return to the family of Israel" (Hailey, p.210).
4. Verse 4: "And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."
 - a. The prophet continues to describe the Messiah. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25). Job saw beforehand a picture of the Messiah's first advent, when he came to seek and to save those who were lost (Luke 19:10).
 - b. When we see the New Testament picture of Christ among the multitudes, preaching the truths of God, we see the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy. While he rules in heaven seated on the majestic throne of his kingdom, he continues to feed our starving souls the sincere milk and meat of God's word (Isa. 9:6-7; Heb. 5:12-14).
 - c. His feeding those who hunger and thirst for righteousness is done by the name of the Lord his God.
 - 1) John 17:8: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."
 - 2) John 8:28: "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."
 - 3) Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 - 4) Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 15:24-28: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."
 - d. Those who partake of his spiritual food will continue to live. John 10:27-28; cf. Ezekiel 18:31-32; John 4; Revelation 22:17; Matthew 11:28-30; 10:22; Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
 - 1) John 10:17-18: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
 - e. From the first century to this day, what one person is the most widely known by the most people? While such a proposition does not lend itself to an easy resolution, it seems certain the Jesus Christ

is that person. Extremely famous and infamous men and women have lived through the centuries, but most of them had only a limited reputation. But the majority of people living today know at least something about Christ, whether they believe in him or not. His message has been carried, to some degree, to the ends of the earth.

5. Verses 5-6: "And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders."
 - a. The reference to Assyria here depicts all the Messiah's enemies. "Being Israel's most powerful foe at that time, Assyria is made the representative of all the foes of Israel in all ages, who shall receive their final destruction....It is striking how the two contemporary prophets, Isaiah and Micah, concur in foretelling the deliverance from Assyria, though then it was in the height of its world-empire (Isa. 10:24-34)" (JFB, p.601).
 - b. The Messiah will provide peace and strength for his people (Eph. 2:12ff; Isa. 9:6). He provided the means by which men are reconciled to each other and to God, and for them to have peace within themselves. Peace is a blessing that can be taken for granted, and sorely missed when it is gone.
 - c. Seven is the perfect number in Bible usage. One more than seven would be more than perfect (symbolically). When the enemy comes against the Lord's people, he will raise up seven shepherds, and eight princes of men. When the literal army of literal Assyria came against Jerusalem, God took direct action to ward them off: "Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead" (Isa. 37:36-38).
 - d. In spiritual Israel, God will see to it that we have the means of overcoming the enemies who rise against us. He would not use carnal weapons, however:
 - 1) John 18:36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:5-6: "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (ASV).
 - e. The passage on the surface could fit the current problem in Micah's day, when the Assyrians posed a very real and serious threat to Israel. But the context is one that is filled with Messianic overtones, thus the primary emphasis seems to be on future events, under Christ. Assyria would be crushed in the Lord's own time and way, and according to what he had sown, so would he reap.
 - f. The ultimate victory of the Lord's rule will be in the Judgment, when he will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31; Matt. 25:31-46).
6. Verses 7-8: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver."
 - a. The remnant of Jacob (spiritual Israel) would be in the midst of many people. After a time, the Lord's kingdom would have many Gentiles. The Jewish Christians were in time outnumbered by Gentiles Christians.
 - b. The picture presented in the prophetic language of Micah is pleasant; it is as the dew from the Lord, and the showers of rain upon the grass; it comes whether man wants it or not. The coming of rain is refreshing and life-sustaining; the spread of spiritual Israel would have that kind of pleasant effect on the human family.
 - c. The remnant of Israel would be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as the lion dwells among the beasts of the forest. The lion lives without fear of any enemy; God's people would be able to live without fearing their enemies (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; Heb. 13:5-6). The picture here

describes the disbursement of the church throughout the world. As Christians spread over the earth, they would have strength and influence among the race. Although surrounded by unbelievers, there would be no reason for them to live in terror.

7. Verse 9: "Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off."
 - a. As Christianity spread and its converts multiplied, its influence would be felt in all quarters of the civilized world. As the centuries rolled by, the Lord was able to subdue even the mighty Roman empire, just as he had earlier predicted by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 2).
 - b. There are always enemies of the Lord's church where ever it exists. All that will live godly lives will be opposed by ungodly men (2 Tim. 3:12).
 - c. This verse gives assurance of the Lord's ultimate victory over every enemy. Where are the Lord's enemies of Old Testament times? Where are the Philistines? The Amorites? The Moabites? The Assyrians? The Babylonians?
 - d. Where are the Lord's enemies of the first century? Where are the Romans? Where are the Pharisees? The Sadducees?
 - e. Catholicism has opposed pure New Testament Christianity for centuries. Modern Protestantism, Mormonism, Adventism, Watchtowerism, Pentecostalism, modernism, liberalism, and all the other enemies of the Lord will one day be cut off.

B. Micah 5:10-15: God's Vengeance Will be Shown Against All His Enemies.

1. Verse 10: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots."
 - a. *In that day* appears to be a continuation of the theme of the previous verses. Some scholars apply this passage, however, to the immediate future from Micah's time, thus make it applicable to the enemies of that ancient time.
 - b. Quite possibly, as is the case many times in the prophets, the immediate literal fulfillment is the initial view, with the figurative application to the Messianic Age the primary point.
 - c. The war-making capabilities of the ancient Israelites would be removed, which was one of their problems; they relied on their own strength for protection, instead of trusting God. God had forbidden them to multiply horses (Deut. 17:16; 20:1). During the times of Isaiah, the land was full of horses and chariots (2:7). The primary purpose to which horses were put in ancient days was in war.
 - d. Hailey says, "The cutting off of the horses and chariots indicates that in the Messianic kingdom these symbols of force and war will have no place" (p.211). Compare:
 - 1) Hosea 14:3: "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."
 - 2) Zechariah 9:9-10: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth."
2. Verses 11-12: "And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds: And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers."
 - a. The cities were the strongholds where the Israelites believed they would be able to repulse any enemy. They had also countenanced the presence of witches and soothsayers, thinking that these deceivers had genuine powers.
 - b. God had forbidden these evils to exist, and had given orders for their removal.
 - 1) Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 18:10-14: "There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so *to do*."
 - 3) Acts 19:18-20: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
 - c. Under Christ, such foolish beliefs and practices are forbidden; we have the enlightenment of the New Testament to expose their folly.

3. Verses 13-14: "Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities."
 - a. The common error of idolatry was also forbidden profusely by the prophets of the Old Testament. Even the places of idolatry were to be demolished.
 - b. Only a confused and foolish mind would ever entertain the idea that worship of an idol could produce any good. Under Christ, all forms of it are prohibited, and its foolishness is exposed.
4. Verse 15: "And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard."
 - a. If the fulfillment was in ancient times, it was literal; if the application is to the Gospel Age, the fulfillment would be figurative.
 - b. However, nations that reach a point of corruption so that there is no hope of recovery, have been literally overthrown. Hitler's Germany is one notable example. The USSR practiced atheism and many other forms of unbelief and rebellion, and has ceased to exist as a nation. Our nation faces an awful end if righteousness continues to recede.

MICAH 6

A. Micah 6:1-5: God Invites the People to Defend Themselves Against His Charges.

1. Verses 1-2: "Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."
 - a. God has presented his case against the people, so he now invites them to offer their defense. "The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him" (Hos. 12:2).
 - b. God calls on the hills and mountains to be impartial witnesses to hear the case, and serve as jurors in this lawsuit. These *jurors* are old and experienced.
 - c. The figure used is that of a lawsuit before a jury, with God as the offended party, presenting his case against Israel, and Israel as the defendant being offered the opportunity to put on a defense against the charges.
2. Verse 3: "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."
 - a. Jehovah opens with a plaintive plea, requesting them to show what he had done to hurt them, and to reveal how he had wearied (bored) them. He invites them to bring such charges against him that could be proved.
 - b. The only way they could justify their failure to keep the covenant they had made with God, was to show that he had defaulted in his obligations. Of course, God being the Supreme One, had not failed to keep his end of the agreement.
 - c. By inviting them to examine the case, they would have to see that the failure was on their part. If they would carefully and objectively investigate, being willing to accept the truth of an honest and complete analysis, they would see their own sinful status. They were unwilling to make the critical study, unwilling to admit their own predicament, and would not make the change.
 - d. If people today would be willing to investigate the Bible with an open mind, and honestly see themselves as their condition is depicted by the word of God, and be willing to make the proper change, they would all become members of the Lord's church. But the men are few who are willing to make such an investigation. The majority will often hate those who try to be their friend.
 - e. Members of the church who quit attending or who join a man-made church are almost always of this closed-minded disposition. They decide that there is something wrong with the Lord's church; they convince themselves that they are right; their contentions grow out of misinterpretations of the word of truth or a prejudiced mind. As Israel was unwilling to receive correction for their own good, so these wayward brethren reject the truth that could save their souls and scorn those who would lead them back into the light.
 - f. Jeremiah 2:5-8: "Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit."
3. Verse 4: "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."
 - a. God reminds them that he is the one who delivered them from their Egyptian slavery. If he had not taken direct and supernatural action, they would have continued to serve as lowly slaves; they could have been over time absorbed by the lower classes of Egypt, losing their identity as descendants of Abraham.
 - b. God had sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam who had been the avenue of God's blessings for their nation. He had given them these great leaders. What other family had provided such leaders for the nation? Moses was their lawgiver and prophet; Aaron was their high priest; and Miriam was a prophetess and leader of women.
 - c. The Lord is directing their attention to what he has done for them; his aim is obviously to make them see that all of their advantages and blessings had come from heaven. If they can be made to realize this truth, perhaps they would repent.
4. Verse 5: "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of

- Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD."
- a. God's challenge of the preceding verses is for them to remember the many good things he had done for them. Here, the Lord calls on them to remember what Balak plotted and what Balaam told Balak; what he told Balak had repercussions in Shittim and Gilgal. **Coffman sagely perceived this point** (pp.356f). See Numbers 22-25.
 - b. Coffman:
 - 1) It appears that most of the commentators have missed the point here, Deane, for example, stressing that, "An these instances of God's interposition prove how faithful he is to his promises." Cross Reference W. J. Deane, The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 14, Micah (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 87." However, what the children of Israel were commanded to remember here was not merely God's blessing which had indeed included many marvelous things, even the passage of the Jordan river on dry land at flood stage, but not even mentioned here.
 - 2) They were commanded to remember what Balaam answered to Balak. And what was that? He had counseled Balak that Israel could be destroyed by inducing the people to worship Baal through the temptation to commit adultery with the sacred-prostitutes of that religion. The whole nation (practically) fell into the trap and "joined themselves to Baal at Baal-Peor" (Numbers 25:1ff). That was what Jehovah commanded Israel to remember here. Shittim and Gilgal, mentioned at the same time, had the same wretched significance in the history of Israel. It was when Israel was in Shittim that, "they began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab" (Numbers 25:1).
 - 3) Another moral disaster occurred at Gilgal. There Saul was anointed King, signaling their rejection of God that he should reign over them. We believe that it was at Gilgal and Shittim that the moral ruin of Israel became inevitable. Therefore, they were commanded here to "remember," why? "That ye may know the righteous acts of Jehovah." (Last clause of this verse). In that remembrance, Israel was expected to see that God's rejection and punishment of his people was not a capricious or unjust act, but a result of his righteousness. God in justice simply could not do anything else.
 - 4) The blindness of most of the scholars to the tremendous significance of all this is evident in such a criticism as this: "The progress of Israel from Shittim to Gilgal cannot be part of the Balaam incident." But of course, both places were intimately connected with the Balaam incident. It was in those places that the people of Israel fell into the error of Balaam. Baal-Peor of infamous connotation in Israel's history was situated precisely there. (See Numbers 25:1ff). "All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them." (Hosea 9:15, also Amos 4:4). Therefore, the mention of Shittim and Gilgal in this passage was not for stressing the wonderful blessings of God upon his people, but for the purpose of showing what an evil response Israel had made to those blessings.
 - c. Balak sent to Mesopotamia (Deut. 23:4) to get Balaam to come to Moab and curse the children of Israel. Contrary to God's wishes, Balaam went, desiring the reward he was promised (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). To his credit, Balaam delivered the messages God gave him, which were blessings for Israel, instead of curses.
 - 1) 2 Peter 2:15: "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."
 - 2) Jude 1:11: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."
 - d. But at some point in his dealings with Balak, the Moabite king, Balaam revealed the very thing that would bring a curse on Israel: if he could get the people to commit fornication with the priestesses of Baal, God would curse them.
 - 1) Numbers 25:1-9: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand."

- 2) Numbers 31:16: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."
 - 3) Revelation 2:14: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."
 - e. When Israel committed fornication and sacrificed to idols while they resided at Shittim, God slew 24,000 of them (Num. 25:1-9). When our government executes a single criminal, the story makes the front pages of the nation's newspapers. But God slew 24,000 of his own people! It is no wonder that Micah mentions Shittim as a major feature of Israel's rebellion against God. Balaam's unholy counsel led to this moral and national disaster in Israel.
 - f. Gilgal, located just east of Jericho and on the west side of Jordan, was the place Israel officially cast off the yoke of Egypt (Josh. 4-5). But Gilgal also has evil connections. It was at Gilgal that Saul became the first king of Israel (1 Sam. 11:14-15). Their rejection of God as their only Ruler and demand for a human king marked a major rebellion. It was at Gilgal where Saul's failure to obey God in the matter of the Amalekites was exposed, which led to God's rejection of him as king. Gilgal later became the symbol of Israel's idolatry.
 - 1) Hosea 4:15: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth."
 - 2) Hosea 9:15: "All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes *are* revolvers."
 - 3) Hosea 12:11: "*Is there* iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields."
 - 4) Amos 4:4: "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes after three years."
 - 5) Amos 5:5: "But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought."
 - g. Micah calls on Israel to remember what Balaam told Balak; that his counsel led to the sorry conduct of Israel at Shittim, and paved the way for their further departures from God at Gilgal. When they recalled these evils, then they would realize that God's position in the lawsuit was the righteous one. God had done much good for the nation, and he was in the right on this current controversy.
- B. Micah 6:6-8: What God Requires of Israel is Not Burdensome.
1. Verse 6: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?"
 - a. The inspired prophet puts words in Israel's mouth, personifying the nation by describing the potential words of one individual.
 - b. This passage (vv. 6-8) does not teach that the only way to worship God is by serving humanity; it does not teach that Jewish sacrifices were wrong or meaningless. The passage teaches, as does the Bible in other places, that worship offered to God is acceptable only if it comes from the heart of a person who is guided in all his worship by God's will.
 - c. How shall the person under the Mosaic Law come before God? Shall he come with burnt offerings? Shall he offer calves of one year of age? These were things the Law of Moses required.
 - d. The ceremonies and offerings of the Law were pleasing to God, but he wanted their hearts behind their services (Deut. 6:1-9; Mark 12:29-31). They often merely went through the outward forms, without due consideration to the inward requirements. In Malachi's day, they offered imperfect animals in their sacrifices, thus revealing their inward covetousness and insincerity (Mal. 1:7-8).
 - e. There are members of the church today who are afflicted with the same spiritual disease. They attend only to "put in their time" or "to get their ticket punched." They come only out of a sense of duty, which makes their *worship* less than worthless; their perverted offerings add sin to their record. Others will put an extra bill into the collection plate in a vain attempt to "make up for" some omission of duty or commission of some transgression. "I'll put an extra \$10 in the plate, and go on to the lake for the rest of the day." While we may not know any individual who does this, we do know that such is possible.
 2. Verse 7: "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
 - a. Israel's mistake was in thinking that if they went through the outward motions of offering the sacrifices, that was all that was required. God is not presumptuous in putting words in their mouth.

- He knew their hearts.
- b. It would not matter how many sacrifices they offered, they would not be acceptable if their hearts were not in the service. Even thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil would not turn an insincere offering into an acceptable act of devotion.
 - c. John 4:23-24 was spoken to a woman who thought she and her people were worshipping God properly: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." This Samaritan woman and her nation, however, did not worship in the right place, their worship was not according to God's truth, and may not have been sincere. The only worship that is acceptable to God is the devotion that meets the prescribed guidelines Christ stated here:
 - 1) It must be directed to God (not to some idol, some man, some angel, some institution, etc.).
 - 2) It must be offered in spirit (it must be from the heart of the worshipper; it must be sincere).
 - 3) It must be in truth (in accordance to the teachings of God's truth; only God has the right to specify how he wants to be worshipped). "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9).
 - d. Even if they offered their firstborn son, the fruit of their body, that offering could not remove the guilt of their souls. There were times in the history of ancient Israel when they offered their children as sacrifices.
 - 1) Jeremiah 32:35: "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin."
 - 2) Leviticus 20:1-5: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people."
 - 3) 1 Kings 11:7: "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon."
 - 4) 2 Kings 3:27: "Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land."
 - e. "Their question is, How must they come before Him? Must it be with burnt-offerings and calves a year old, the choicest of their animal possessions? They have forgotten the law of their God so far that they are ignorant of how to approach Him. Quantity is the essence of the next question: Must they come before Him with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Or must the offering for their sin be the most precious possession that one has, his son or daughter? Certainly not this last! This would be an abomination. In these rhetorical questions the people are ascending from the minimal, the burnt-offering, to the most precious gift, the greatest they could offer. But in all these questions they indicate a willingness to do anything except what Jehovah required. Sacrifices such as these are not what God wants (cf. Ps. 51:16,17); what He desires is the penitent heart of the individual, toward Him and one's neighbor" (Hailey, p.214).
 - f. God wants people to live righteous lives. His desire for man is for him to live a life of obedience to the will of heaven, be compassionate to others, and treat everyone with fairness. This is the essence of our obligations to God.
 - g. In the work of the local congregation, programs are necessary, but righteous living on the part of every member is of greater importance. Cooperation for the sake of cooperation is not good; cooperation for the purpose of bringing greater glory to God, edification for every saint, and salvation to every sinner ought to be our sincere aim.
3. Verse 8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - a. NKJ: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"

- b. God has shown to them what is good; this he revealed in his Law given through Moses. God required them to love that message so much that they would dedicate themselves to following it with a whole heart and that they would teach it diligently to their children (Deut. 6:1-9). In reality, what is it that God required of them? God summed up their responsibilities to him in three short categories. These same three principles sum up our total responsibilities to God, also. When we can see our duty stated in condensed form, it does not seem so imposing.
- 1) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - 2) Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - 3) Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
 - 4) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 - 5) Deuteronomy 10:12: "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Deuteronomy 10:12.
- c. They were to do justly.
- 1) This means they were to deal fairly and honestly with each other (Rom. 12:17; 1 Pet. 2:12-13), with God (2 Cor. 8:21), and with themselves (Rom. 14:22-23).
 - a) Romans 12:17: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."
 - b) 1 Peter 2:13-14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."
 - c) Romans 14:22-23: "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."
 - 2) We must deal honestly and fairly by keeping our promises (Eccl. 5:4-5; Deut. 23:21; Rom. 13:8); by speaking only the truth (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9-10); by doing our best in all of our relationships (Eph. 6:5-9); by respecting the rights, the property, and the good name of others (Eph. 4:28; Matt. 7:12).
 - 3) Men live by other rules than the one which is called "Golden." Some live by the Iron Rule ("Might makes right; I'll take it if I can"). Some live by the Silver Rule ("Don't get involved; take care of yourself"). But Christians follow God's Golden Rule.
 - a) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - b) Luke 6:31: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."
- d. They were to love mercy—To be merciful is to show kindness.
- 1) Matthew 5:7: "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - 3) Mercy or kindness is above strict justice: cf. John 8:1-11.
 - 4) We all deserve justice, but we all need mercy (Rom. 3:23; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 5:6-9).
 - 5) The Second Great Command is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mk. 12:31). How do you want to be treated when you err? When your best is not good enough to please your superiors or peers? When you are ill? When you are tired? When you are sorely discouraged? If we want to be treated with compassion, we must show that same warmhearted sympathy to others: we want it and God requires it (Matt. 7:12).
 - 6) Kindness says, "Give others the benefit of the doubt" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:7b).
 - 7) Kindness says, "Render aid when possible" (Gal. 6:9-10; Matt. 25:31-40).
- e. They were to walk humbly with their God.

- 1) WALK speaks of the manner of life we live (Eph. 5:2, 8; Phil. 3:16; Col. 2:6; 4:5).
- 2) They were to walk HUMBLY (Eccl. 5:2; Prov. 3:5-6; Isa. 5:21; Col. 2:23; Mt. 5:3).
- 3) They were to walk humbly WITH God (Amos 3:3; Gen. 5:24; 6:9; Heb. 11:5).
- 4) They were to walk humbly with THY GOD: he is yours and you are his (Eph. 4:6). No one can walk with Buddha, Baal, or with any other idol; these are only manmade objects constructed from earthly elements. But God is personal and cares (1 Pet. 5:6-7; 1 John 4:9-10).
- 5) To walk humbly with God is to do what he says (Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 7:21; Eph. 2:8-10; Acts 10:34-35).

C. Micah 6:9-16: God Must Punish Israel.

1. Verse 9: "The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."
 - a. Micah underscores what he is about to announce by showing the source of the pronouncements. It is the voice of God that utters these things, and they would do well to hear and hearken to his words.
 - b. The punishment that is impending is necessary because Israel is lacking in the three precepts of verse eight. The rod is the instrument by which the punishment is to be applied. God often spoke of some nation, such as Assyria or Babylon, as his rod of punishment.
 - c. Only those who are wise would hear and heed God's warning. This is still true today, for the majority are misled by worldly concerns or "doctrines of demons." The wise are those who will diligently and honestly examine the word of truth, looking to learn the truth, and testing every currently-held belief by the word of God.
 - d. In the following verses, the Lord sets forth the various sins which were characteristic of covetous people.
2. Verse 10: "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?"
 - a. ASV: "Are there yet treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and a scant measure that is abominable?"
 - b. God calls attention to their past record of using crooked scales in buying and selling; he asks whether they still have the treasures accumulated by this evil means. Such business practices are abominable for they reveal a covetous heart, and one that is unconcerned about the welfare of others. This practice violates all three of the precepts cited in verse eight.
 - c. Their civil law then did not have provisions by which scales were checked; their business dealings were not controlled by the government.
 - d. They operated on the basis of honesty, which is the best system, provided all of the parties involved are honest. God had legislated on the matter, but when they lost their fear of God, they lost all respect for their fellowman. Hence, crooked scales and other business evils prevailed
 - 1) Deuteronomy 25:13: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small."
 - 2) Proverbs 11:1: "A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight."
 - 3) Proverbs 16:11: "A just weight and balance *are* the Lord's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work."
 - 4) Amos 8:5: "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"
3. Verse 11: "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?"
 - a. God's rhetorical question states a fact. He will not count them pure who use wicked scales, and who employ a bag full of deceitful weights. They were far more interested in amassing a fortune than they were in obtaining God's favor.
 - b. For many years, our nation has been losing its fear of God. This is seen in the frequency with which God's name is used in a profane manner, and in the great number of people, of all ages and backgrounds, who use his holy name in vain.
 - c. People who have such a flippant attitude toward the majestic name of Almighty God, will not long respect anything he has ordained. We are seeing fruits of such. The rising crime rate, the increasing marriage-divorce-remarriage dilemma, scandals and thievery at all levels of society and government, the lack of respect for others, price-gouging, and a host of other such things, all indicate Americans are regressing toward a jungle morality. And what about other nations which do not have the Biblical and moral background that we have had?
4. Verse 12: "For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth."

- a. The rich and powerful were full of violence; many there were who spoke lies and uttered deceit. They did not want to live righteous lives; God's simple requirements were just too much for them.
 - b. To their corrupt business practices, they added violence and lies, oppressing their fellowman and destroying their own nation and condemning their souls, all at the same time. We would not want to take up residence in such a society as that!
5. Verse 13: "Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins."
- a. God would induce a fatal sickness on them; he would smite them with such a judgment that its effects would never be fully removed. The Jews of today carry with them a knowledge of the wickedness of their ancestors.
 - b. Their cup of iniquity was rapidly filling, and must be punished. God would smite them with such a grievous wound that they would be made desolate. Many of them would lose their lives, many would lose their freedom, and all of them would lose the glorious and prosperous nation they had helped destroy.
 - c. How important is it to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God? Let the record of those ancient rebels answer! Compare: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38).
6. Verse 14: "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword."
- a. God would remove their treasures and empty their storehouses; they would not be permitted to enjoy the full measure of their amassed plenty.
 - b. What is in view is a military defeat of such proportions that all would be lost. Their goods would be used or eaten by others.
7. Verse 15: "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine."
- a. This verse continues the thought of the previous verse. Because they had not followed the instructions given in the Law, they had corrupted themselves to the point that God was forced to wreak vengeance on them for their crimes.
 - b. They would plant and sow their crops, but would not be around to enjoy the fruit thereof. They would tread out the olives, but would not be able to use the oil; they would press out the sweet wine, but would not be allowed to drink it.
 - c. This sounds like the rich, foolish farmer of Luke 12; he built greater barns in which to store his goods, and thought within himself that he would now enjoy life. But God took it all away from him when his soul was required of him. A man cannot feed his soul on material wealth. And a covetous man is naked indeed when he is stripped of his earthly possessions.
8. Verse 16: "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."
- a. Omri was Ahab's father. The chief thing we remember about Omri is that he was worse than all of the kings he followed on Israel's throne. That is an epitaph that no right-thinking person would desire!
 - b. The nation continued to walk after the influence of these wicked kings. Even Judah was affected by their evil ways.
 - c. "No special statutes of his [Omri's] are anywhere mentioned; but he was the founder of that evil dynasty that gave Abab to Israel and Athaliah (the murderess) to Judah" (Coffman, p.364).
 - d. Archaeological evidence suggests that Omri was highly-respected in the realm of international politics. (See J.A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, The Paternoster Press, 1962, pp.120ff). Omri's name was inscribed on a stone left by one of the Moabite kings. It is more than of passing interest that the Moabites, who enticed Israel into a horrible act of rebellion against God, should leave behind a record of one of the greatest apostates among the Israelite kings.
 - e. The reproach that God would bring upon the Northern Kingdom would also be visited eventually upon the Southern Kingdom. Both nations had gone after Baal, with all the corrupt practices that accompanied it. Their departures from God resulted in awful punishment. But things could have been vastly different if they had only heeded God's word, to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God!

MICAH 7

A. Micah 7:1-6: The Prophet Laments the Wayward Condition of the Nation.

1. Verse 1: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit."
 - a. Micah is not revealing the actual disposition of the people in the statement given here, but is expressing God's view of their condition; or perhaps he personifies Zion, and states the lament of the land itself over the absence of righteousness within its borders; in either case, he is presenting the inspired view.
 - b. Only the true prophets and other righteous people of the land would realize the awful spiritual condition of the nation, and thus lament over it.
 - c. The nation is depicted as being stripped of its summer fruits; the grapes have all been harvested, and there is no cluster of which a hungry one may partake and be filled. There was nothing in the nation that would satisfy the desires of God.
2. Verse 2: "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."
 - a. The emptiness of the land is not a material void; it is the dearth of godliness on the part of the great majority of the citizens.
 - b. There is a point, known only to the Almighty, beyond which God will not allow a nation to descend and continue to survive. If ten righteous people could have been found in Sodom, it would not have perished. The seven thousand in Israel during Elijah's day, who had not turned to Baal, caused the nation to continue. How many were loyal during Micah's time? How close to punishment were they?
 - c. The godly man is perished, Micah writes. The people are characterized as lying in wait for blood, setting an ambush for their fellowman for the purpose of enriching themselves. Justice, fairness, and righteousness were absent. This sounds like America's high-tech business practices. Godliness includes a benevolent and just treatment of others, as well as sincere obedience to the other features of will of God (Mark 12:29-31; Micah 6:8).
 - d. The godly and the upright have vanished. Diogenes is said to have wandered through the streets of Athens with a lantern, in broad daylight, looking for an honest man.
3. Verse 3: "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up."
 - a. When the leaders of a nation have corrupted themselves, what is the common man to do? The prince and the judge demand bribes; the great men exact their demands.
 - b. The wicked of the land do evil with *both hands earnestly!* Not content with what they can grab with one hand, they employ both hands, and do so with enthusiasm.
 - c. Their plans are cunningly laid and skillfully executed so as to bring about the greatest wickedness possible. When men put their minds and skills to the task of working evil, they are often exceedingly productive.
4. Verse 4: "The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity."
 - a. The best of them is like a brier; they all are capable of inflicting injuries to the helpless or unsuspecting. They are like a hedge of briars, so tangled and so dangerous the victim is helpless in freeing himself from its grasp.
 - b. The prophets had given many reports of the impending, severe judgment that was planned for them by the Lord. Then they would reap the awful fruit of their schemes and covetousness; then would they be bewildered and confused and dismayed, as were their victims.
 - c. God sent watchmen (prophets) to warn Israel of the fruit of their rebellion.
 - 1) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 2) Ezekiel 33:7-8: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

- 3) Compare: "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come" (Isa. 21:11-12).
5. Verses 5-6: "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house."
- During the judgment that would descend upon the nation, they would not be able to safely trust even the most trusted friend; even their spouse and offspring could not be trusted.
 - They are warned against speaking too freely to their best friend or counsellor; even one's beloved wife could turn into a betrayer, as could the son, daughter, daughter-in-law, or other kinsmen.
 - During the siege of Samaria and of Jerusalem, women ate their own babies (Cf. 2 Kings 6:24-29; Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53-58). Selfish people can reach a point in hunger that even those they love the most become secondary to the satisfaction of the appetites of the flesh.
 - Christ made reference to this passage in Matthew 10:21,35-36 and Luke 12:53 to describe the persecutions that would prevail when the world sought to destroy Christianity. The gospel can produce great hostility in the hearts of those who will not believe it.
 - Matthew 10:22, 35-36: "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death....For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."
 - Luke 12:53: "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

B. Micah 7:7-17: Micah Speaks From the Viewpoint of the Faithful Few in the Nation.

- Verse 7: "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."
 - The prophet is committed to relying on the Lord; he has every confidence of being heard and assisted. The idea of *waiting for* the Lord is a common expression in the Old Testament, and describes putting trust in him, depending on him to guide and protect and save.
 - In the case of Sarah, she took it upon herself to run ahead of the Lord: "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife" (Gen. 16:1-3).
- Verse 8: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me."
 - Micah cautions the enemy to refrain from rejoicing against him when it appeared that he was not going to survive. Even when he sat in darkness, God would provide all the light he needed. This was true of the faithful prophet and of the righteous remnant among the nation.
 - God would not utterly desert the descendants of Abraham, but would stay with the righteous to insure their continuance. His eternal plan to offer salvation to all men through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16) would be realized, despite the most horrible circumstances that would develop for the nation. God would make sure a remnant would survive, to carry out his designs.
 - The worst spiritual condition the world has ever known was during the time of Noah, when only eight people were righteous. Eight was enough to spare the race, but was not sufficient to spare that generation from destruction. The race continued due to the faithfulness of Noah and his family.
- Verse 9: "I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."
 - Speaking for the righteous element in the nation, Micah declares their determination to endure the punishment God would send, and confesses their short-comings to God. No right-thinking person will see himself as perfect in his conduct. Under the best of conditions, the most faithful person falls short of God's ideal (Rom. 3:23).
 - Micah knew that God would show mercy to the penitent (Cf. Matt. 5:3; John 15:1 ff; Jas. 4:6-10; 1 Pet. 5:5-6, 10; Prov. 3:5-6).
 - The penitent person will be willing to accept the penalty for his digressions (Lev. 26:41,43), but those who are bitter can expect only more punishment.

4. Verse 10: "Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets."
 - a. Addressing the enemy again, the prophet warns them of the folly of rejoicing in seeing Israel humbled by God's judgment against her.
 - b. The enemy had seen the punishment being brought to bear upon Israel, and gloated that now they would see her trodden down. Seeing Israel in the process of destruction, they would gleefully cry, "Where is the Lord thy God?"
 - c. This is the common response from the unrighteous when they see a righteous man afflicted. The enemies of the Savior gloated when they saw him suffering on the cross: "Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" (Matt. 27:38-44).
 - d. When a real enemy of a Christian falls victim to his own wickedness, the faithful saint will not rejoice over his downfall. The spirit of Christianity calls for those who follow Christ to be sorrowful over his fate, and even have the desire to assist him if possible.
5. Verses 11-13: "In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings."
 - a. Looking to the future when the people shall be in bondage in a foreign land, Micah speaks of a time when they shall rebuild the walls of their city. His reference is to the Babylonian Captivity and the return to Canaan to raise the walls of Jerusalem again. Perhaps the walls being envisioned here were the spiritual walls of God's protection (Zech. 2:4-5). It is possible that reference is to the spiritual walls of the Messiah's kingdom.
 - b. At the time when they will be able to work on the walls, God's decree that brought the destruction of the nation and captivity of the people would have been removed. Micah has already spoken of the Babylonian Exile and their return from it (4:10).
 - c. More is involved in verse twelve than the return of fleshly Israel from captivity. The prophet clearly speaks of the Messianic Age here. "...The true Zion citizens will come from Assyria, the east, from Egypt, the west, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain; they will come from all directions to build in the new Zion. The prophet here looks beyond the desolation of his day and the return from captivity to the Messianic age, when men of all races and nationalities will come and build (cf. 4:5-6; Isa. 11:10-16; Zech. 9:9-10)" (Hailey, p.219).
 - d. Verse thirteen continues a description of the Christian Age, presenting a prophetic picture of the spiritual condition of those who are not part of the Messiah's kingdom. The state of those outside of Christ is one of desolation, a malady that is of their own making (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 3:4; 5:17; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3; 6:16-18; Mt.1:28-30; Rev. 22:17; Eph. 2:11ff).
6. Verse 14: "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old."
 - a. From the hearts of the penitent remnant arises a prayer to God that he would feed his people. The rod is a symbol of rule (authority); the flock represents the people. What is said here relates to both the ancient Hebrews who returned to the land of promise following their captivity, and to the present reign of Christ.
 - b. The names of Carmel, Bashan, and Gilead carried remembrances and relationships of special importance to the people of Israel. They were related to former days of happiness and plenty. Forested areas were located near Carmel; Bashan and Gilead were pasturelands.
 - c. Having God to rule over us includes chastising us if necessary (Heb. 12).
7. Verse 15: "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things."
 - a. During the time that Israel was being delivered from Egyptian bondage and led to the land of Canaan, God employed great supernatural signs. The period of time involved was about forty years, including the time of the wilderness wanderings.
 - b. Clarke: According to (*as in*) the days. The Lord answers the prophet's prayer, taking up his last word, and promising even more than he asks, engaging to equal the wonders which marked the exodus from Egypt. That great deliverance was a type and foreshadowing of Messianic salvation (comp. Isa 43:15, etc.; Isa 51:10; 1Co_10:1, etc.). Unto him; unto the people of Israel (Mic_7:14). Marvellous things; Septuagint ... "Ye shall see marvellous things." Supernatural occurrences are meant, as Exo_3:20; Exo_15:11; Psa_77:14. We do not read of any special miracles at the return from captivity, so the people were led to look onward to the advent of Messiah for these wonders.

- c. Micah predicts that God would show "unto him marvellous things" according to those days. Micah does not identify, in this verse, the person indicated. That the Lord Jesus Christ is meant, is manifest.
 - d. Micah had predicted the establishment of the house of the Lord (4:1-2), which is shown in the New Testament to be the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19; 1 Tim. 3:15). Micah had also predicted the birth of the Savior (5:2). In this very chapter the prophet has discussed the reign of the Messiah. Christ is the person of verse 15.
 - e. Moses had predicted that God would raise up another Prophet, who would in some ways be like Moses (Acts 3:22-23; Deut. 18:15ff). Both were lawgivers; both were deliverers; both were workers of tremendous miracles. For the space of forty years, Moses was involved in supernatural acts; for about forty years Christ was involved with the working of miracles (from his ministry to the close of the age of miracles).
 - f. Hence, in this ancient prophecy is to be found evidence of the fact that miracles of the New Testament time were to have a built-in time limitation. For roughly the same space of time occupied in bringing Israel from Egypt into the land of promise, miracles would be done in the Christian Age (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-15).
 - g. Chronologically, in the New Testament, what was the last miracle wrought on earth? When did it occur? Who was the human through whom the miracle took place? We are not privileged to know. When the last apostle of Christ died, and the last person upon whom an apostle had laid hands to confer one or more of the miraculous gifts, died—it was then that supernatural powers ceased to be exercised upon humanity. The apostle John was the last of the apostles to die. When he penned the last book of the New Testament, (the book of Revelation), which was revealed and written by the end of the first century, no new inspired material was given to mankind. Inspiration ceased. The delivery of this last book was empowered by the baptism of the Holy Spirit which John had received in Acts Two; while that was a supernatural process, it was not of the same nature as healing the sick, restoring sight or hearing to some afflicted person, or raising the dead. It was indeed, the last revelation from Heaven of an inspired message.
8. Verses 16-17: "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee."
- a. No one who witnessed the miracles done by Christ, the apostles, and the others who were empowered to work them in the first century, could explain these supernatural actions by natural explanations. That those miracles were genuine, even the enemies of Christ and his church did not deny (cf. Acts 4:13-22).
 - b. Except by admitting a miracle, no one could explain how people who were known to be dead had been raised to life again. That diseased bodies were healed, blind eyes given sight, deaf ears given the ability to hear, could only be understood in the light of supernatural power.
 - c. When the unbelieving Jews and the pagan world raised their great might against the church of Christ, but only to see it flourish, bewildered and confused them; unless God was with this movement, how could the unbelievers explain its continuance?
 - d. If Micah has in mind the return of Israel from their captivity, the same result is seen. How could they have gained their freedom from a powerful empire unless by the power of the Almighty God?
 - e. In both cases (the New Testament situation and the return of Israel from bondage), the desires of the enemies of each were set at nought. God's people obtained the triumph in both situations, despite much opposition.
 - f. The description Micah gives of their astonishment and shame is graphic. They would cover their mouth and ears with their hands; they would be humbled to the earth as serpents who crawl in the dust; they would emerge from their holes like worms; and their fear before the might of Jehovah would be great.

C. Micah 7:18-20: The Book Concludes With an Expression of Praise for God.

- 1. Verse 18: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."
 - a. The tribute to God in this verse is to his merciful forgiveness. He is willing to pardon iniquity and overlook transgressions. But this blessing was given only to the "remnant of his heritage."
 - b. This remnant are those who retained their faithfulness during the dark days of Israel's apostasy and those who would follow the Messiah.
 - c. God's greater desire is to show mercy, not anger. Although he is capable of both actions, and frequently engages in both, yet his will is to show mercy.
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:31-32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no

- pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
- 2) 1 Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
2. Verse 19: "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."
 - a. Micah looks to the future, to the kingdom of Christ, in this passage; it is in the present dispensation that forgiveness is fully known.
 - b. The blood of animal sacrifices could not remove the guilt of sin (Heb. 10:1-4; 9:22); but the blood of Christ is able to erase guilt (1 Pet. 1:18-25; Rev. 1:5; Matt. 26:28).
 - c. To cast our guilt into the depths of the sea is a powerful figure of the utter removal of sin. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is ready to vanish away*" (Heb. 8:12-13).
 3. Verse 20: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."
 - a. Micah promises the people that God would fulfill the promises he made in the ancient days to Abraham and Jacob, and which had been repeated at other times in many different ways.
 - b. These promises have their full completion in Christ, under the New Testament Age.
 - 1) Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."
 - 2) Luke 24:44-49: "And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - 3) Acts 2:14-47.
 - c. God is dependable (1 Cor. 10:13). Men may be unable to see how he could possibly complete what he has promised to do, and many powerful enemies may try to thwart his efforts, but when all is said and done, God always has the victory.
 4. With these positive words of promise, Micah closes his book. He has completed his purposes, which included:
 - a. Exposing the sins of the rebellious nations of Israel and Judah.
 - b. Issuing stern warnings of severe punishment unless they repented.
 - c. And offering a message of hope to the faithful few who sought to maintain their loyalty to the God of heaven.

INTRODUCTION TO NAHUM

A. Nahum, the Prophet.

1. Very little is known about the private circumstances of this prophet.
 - a. His name means *consolation*. It is significant that he offered a consoling message to the people of Judah.
 - b. Nahum was from the town of Elkosh, but its exact location is unknown. "Nahum's birthplace. Elkesi, a village of Galilee, pointed out to Jerome, with traces of ancient buildings. The Elkosh E. of Tigris, and N. of Mosul, believed by Jewish pilgrims to be Nahum's birthplace and burial place..." (Fausset Dictionary).
2. The time of his prophecy was between 663 and 612 B.C.
 - a. He alludes to the overthrow of No-amon (Thebes) which occurred about 663 B.C.
 - b. He foretold the destruction of Nineveh which took place in 612 B.C.
 - c. "Most scholars narrow the date to the time between 630 and 612 B.C." (Hailey, p.250). We put the time at 625 B.C.

B. The Book of Nahum.

1. The theme of the book is the overthrow of Nineveh.
 - a. During the time of Jonah, more than a hundred years earlier (c.a. 773 B.C.), God forgave and spared Nineveh.
 - b. But in Nahum, God announces Nineveh's doom; she had returned to wickedness, and must be punished; she had filled her cup of iniquity.
 - 1) Compare: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16).
 - 2) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."
 - c. Nahum rejoices over its coming downfall, but only because justice was being served by its collapse. The Assyrians had long been enemies to God's people, having tried unsuccessfully to destroy Jerusalem during Hezekiah's time. However, they had conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.
 - d. Nahum says nothing about the sins of Judah. The message would be one of encouragement to God's people.
2. The major idea in the book is indicated by this statement: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."
3. God gave a *burden*, a divine verdict, against Nineveh, the primary foe of Judah at the time.

C. Some facts about Nineveh and its people.

1. Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire.
 - a. It was a very old city (Gen. 10:11). Some scholars date it back to 4000-5000 B.C.
 - b. It was fortified by walls, moats, and towers. Its walls were 7.5 miles in circumference, and were broad enough for three chariots to drive abreast on its top. The outer perimeter formed a triangle which extended about 60 miles.
2. Assyria was a nation largely equipped for war.
 - a. It had the capability of conquering other nations, but could not maintain control of those conquests.
 - b. The nation rendered no service to mankind, but did leave behind a great deal of valuable archaeological material.
3. Assyria reached its zenith under Ashurbanipal, one of the cruelest rulers of ancient times. (See Robinson).
 - a. He boasted of tearing off the lips and limbs of conquered kings.
 - b. He and his queen feasted in a garden with the head of a Chaldean king hanging from a tree above them.
 - c. He forced a captured prince to wear the decapitated head of his king around his neck.
 - d. "Such was Nineveh, the capital of the most powerful, sensual, ferocious, and diabolically atrocious race of men that perhaps ever existed in all the world..." (Robinson, p.110).
4. The fall of Nineveh is described in historical records.
 - a. Following the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C., the downfall of Nineveh came quickly.
 - b. The Medes, Babylonians, and Scythians destroyed the surrounding fortresses (cf. Nahum 3:12), and besieged Nineveh.

- c. The last night was spent by the Ninevites in drunken orgies in which the effeminate king set the example.
- d. The Tigris River overflowed and broke breaches in the city's wall. The king burned himself alive in his palace when he saw the impending doom.
- e. When Nineveh was taken in 612 B.C., its riches were plundered, and the city itself was destroyed completely. The nation itself was fully conquered in 606 B.C.
- f. So completely was Nineveh devastated that its very existence was known primarily by Biblical references. Its location was discovered in the mid-1800s.

D. Great Ideas in the Book of Nahum.

1. God rules in the kingdoms of men.
2. God is a stronghold in times of trouble.
3. God's patience is not without a limit.
4. There are no strongholds secure against the vengeance of God.

E. A Brief Outline of Nahum.

1. Chapter One: the destruction of Nineveh declared.
2. Chapter Two: the destruction of Nineveh described.
3. Chapter Three: the destruction of Nineveh defended.



NAHUM 1

A. Nahum 1:1-8: The Divine Vengeance and Mercy of God.

1. Verse 1: "The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite."
 - a. The *burden* of Nineveh was a *heavy load* which would be forced upon that cruel and sinful city. Nahum, the prophet from Elkosh, saw visions which concerned the Ninevites, and recorded them in the book which carries his name.
 - b. The next verse shows that God was the author of the visions and the book.
2. Verse 2: "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."
 - a. The God of heaven is rightfully jealous. He is the Creator and Sustainer, and properly possesses the right to the service of his creation. The universe, with all that it contains, maintains perfect submission to God; the lower creation operates in absolute agreement with God's will; only mankind is the exception to this rule.
 - b. God is jealous in that he will not allow man to divide his loyalty between him and some other being or object.
 - 1) Exodus 20:5: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me."
 - 2) Matthew 6:24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
 - c. When mankind rebels against God, he pours forth a furious revenge. But this wrath is not spiteful; it is intended to teach others the needed lesson of obedience to God; and obedience to his will is for the specific good of those who obey, and for the general good of all humanity.
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:31-32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."
 - 2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 3) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 4) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - d. God's vengeance is not petty; it serves very important ends. First, those who have done evil are duly punished; second, God's righteousness is maintained.
3. Verse 3: "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."
 - a. Nahum depicts God's attributes of patience and power in this verse. Although he is omnipotent and entirely righteous, he is slow to become angry and his wrath is not quickly poured out. God's wrath is a judicial anger, expressed by directing a penalty toward one who deserves the punishment imposed.
 - b. He is *longsuffering* toward his offspring, not desiring the destruction of any precious soul.
 - 1) Exodus 34:6: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."
 - 2) Numbers 14:18: "The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*."
 - 3) Psalms 86:15: "But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."
 - 4) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - 5) Romans 9:22: "*What* if God, willing to show *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction."

- 6) 1 Peter 3:20: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."
- 7) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
- 8) 2 Peter 3:15: "And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you."
- c. But Nahum points out that God will not acquit those who are guilty of sin. They must repent, or perish (Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:30-31).
- d. His power is such that it could only be described as *great*. Nahum illustrates God's power by asserting that he can control the whirlwind, the storm, and the clouds. The whirlwind would be the tornado (cyclone); the storm would include the hurricane. Mankind quakes in fear before either of these destructive powers of nature, but each is easily within the command of God!
4. Verses 4-5: "He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein."
 - a. Continuing to illustrate the almighty power of God, the prophet calls attention to situations in which his power has been demonstrated.
 - b. God can rebuke the sea and cause it to be dried up. He did this very thing in helping Israel to cross the Red Sea on dry land (Exod. 14). He also caused the waters of Noah's flood to dry up, and brought forth the dry land again. Coffman points out that the site of Houston, Texas was once covered by the sea, and that the former ocean shore line can still be seen a few miles inland from the city.
 - c. God parted the Jordan River, which was at its flood-stage at the time, to allow Israel to enter Canaan on dry ground (Josh. 3).
 - d. Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon are names of fertile and beautiful sections of Canaan; they are thus despite the limited amount of rainfall they receive. God is able to bless such places and bring prosperity to them, because of his power—by his natural laws and providential operations.
 - e. The entire earth, including the great mountains and hills, quake at his command. The earth and all that is in it are subject to his dominion.
5. Verse 6: "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."
 - a. The prophet applies the lesson of the previous passage. By a rhetorical question, he teaches that no man can withstand God.
 - b. He who was able to create the mountains, can likewise destroy them; and since this is true, what can feeble man do against God in the long run?
6. Verse 7: "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."
 - a. Having shown that God is longsuffering and powerful, Nahum now affirms that God is also good. He is a refuge for his people in the day of trouble.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 33:27: "The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them*."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 22:3: "The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence."
 - 3) Psalms 9:9: "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."
 - 4) Psalms 46:1: "God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
 - 5) Psalms 57:1: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast."
 - 6) Psalms 59:16: "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble."
 - 7) Isaiah 4:6: "And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."
 - 8) Isaiah 25:4: "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall."
 - 9) Hebrews 6:18: "That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

- b. God knows those who are his, those who trust in him (2 Tim. 2:19). This truth would be of great comfort to the faithful when the enemy arose against Judah, just as it is a source of hope to the righteous of this age, when troubles or tormentors come.
- 7. Verse 8: "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies."
 - a. On the other hand, in view of God's overwhelming and irresistible power, those who are his enemies have much to fear. As with an overrunning flood, his wrath will overcome and sweep away all his adversaries.
 - b. A friend of God is one who obeys his will (cf. John 15:14; Jas. 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8); an enemy of God is anyone who will not obey him.
 - c. The prophet states that God will pursue his enemies into darkness. Some regard this as a figure of speech, and it may be thus used here in the sense that Nineveh disappeared from the earth.
 - d. "...He shall pursue his enemies into darkness, so that they disappear from the earth. If this is the meaning of the clause, it resembles the termination of many Assyrian inscriptions which record the defeat of a hostile chieftain: and no one has seen any trace of him since" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - e. But in eternity, God's enemies will be consigned to a place of *outer darkness* where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:40).
 - f. Ancient records show that the Khosr River overflowed its banks, breaking away a very large section of Nineveh's walls, giving the enemy full access into the city. Nahum's prophecy met with a very literal fulfillment! Nineveh vanished from the knowledge of men until its ruins were discovered during the 19th century. The Bible had retained a record of the city's past existence all through these years.

B. Nahum 1:9-13: The Utter End of Nineveh is Plainly Affirmed.

- 1. Verse 9: "What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time."
 - a. Verse one showed that the object of this prophecy was Nineveh. Nahum's question here, therefore, depicts the disposition the Ninevites had toward God.
 - b. They devised evil schemes against God's purposes. This attitude cast them as God's enemies. Their efforts would come to nought! Since the great mountains of the earth could not successfully resist God's power, it is certain that the might of the Assyrians would be as straw in a tornado when they confronted the dynamic power of the Almighty!
 - c. The Assyrians were among the cruelest of all time. Records of the cruelty of Assyrian kings include the following:
 - 1) "Six hundred of their warriors I put to the sword; three thousand captives I burned with fire; I left not a single one among them alive to serve as a hostage. Khulai their governor I captured alive. Their corpses I piled into heaps; their young men and maidens I burned in the fire; Khulai, their governor, I flayed and his skin I spread upon the all of the city of Damdamusa; the city I destroyed, I ravaged, I burned with fire" (J.A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, pp.117f).
 - 2) "I tore out the tongues of those whose slanderous mouths had uttered blasphemies against my god Ashur and had plotted against me, his god-fearing prince; I defeated them. The others I smashed alive with the very same statues of protective deities with which they had smashed my own grandfather Sennacherib—now as a belated sacrifice for his soul. I fed their corpses, cut into small pieces, to dogs, pigs, sibu-birds, vultures, the birds of the sky and to the fish of the ocean" (ibid., p.145).
 - d. So complete would be the overthrow of the Assyrians, that they would not be able to rebuild their city; they would not rise up a second time. Isaiah 10:24-27 also gave a prophecy of the demise of the Assyrians: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction. And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and *as* his rod *was* upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing."
- 2. Verse 10: "For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry."
 - a. Nineveh is pictured as being securely defended, as if they were surrounded by a hedge of thorns which had been so interwoven that it was impregnable.

- b. Such hedges were likely erected in ancient times to keep wild animals out of a field or vineyard. But no defense could withstand the Lord's onslaught. Their *thorns* would be consumed as if they were stubble.
 - c. During the last days of Nineveh, ancient records indicate that the king ordered a drunken orgy. When the city fell, the king gave instructions that he, along with his wives, concubines and servants, and his palaces, were to be burned.
 - d. The Assyrians had the false sense of security and strength that drunks often possess.
3. Verse 11: "There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor."
 - a. Nineveh's counsellor was wicked and his counsel was worthless. No name is given this counsellor; it may be as Hailey suggested, that the counsellor simply is a personification of the rebellious and wicked spirit of the Assyrians.
 - b. The last known threat by Assyria on Jerusalem was when Sennacherib came (Isa. 37).
 4. Verses 12-13: "Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder."
 - a. This statement is spoken to God's people, and shows them that they have no reason to fear the Assyrians anymore. God assures Judah that although the Assyrians appear to be secure and calmly confident because of their military might, they would be cut down. At the time, the Assyrian army was still a very formidable force.
 - b. "They shall be cut down when he shall pass through." *They* refers to the army of Assyria; *he* apparently refers to the counsellor of Belial (verse 11). Possibly, this *person* was one of the latter kings of Assyria, perhaps Ashurbanipal, considered to be the cruelest of the lot.
 - c. God had afflicted Judah in the past, but he would not allow Assyria to bring any further violence against her. This does not mean that they would face no other tormentor, for their future included three attacks by Babylonia, the last of which led to their complete subjection and captivity.
 - d. But as for Assyria, God would break the yoke that they had imposed on Judah. They had been forced to pay tribute, and lived under a continuing threat from that brutish nation. In keeping with Nahum's overall prophecy, therefore, the Lord speaks openly of Nineveh's forthcoming demise.
- C. Nahum 1:14-15: Nineveh's Grave Was To Be Dug by the Lord.
1. Verse 14: "And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile."
 - a. It is an awesome thought to realize that our casket may have already come off the assembly line! But to say that our grave has already been dug is even more awe-inspiring! God promised to make ready the grave for the Assyrians.
 - b. God had decreed that no more people bearing their name would be sown; in other words, their nation was at an end; there would be no more Assyrians. History shows that their capital city, Nineveh, was even lost to human knowledge for 2500 years!
 - c. Lying at the heart of their sinful condition was their idolatry; God would remove their graven images, thus destroying their idolatrous practices.
 - d. God promised to dig their grave, because they were vile! How monstrous must be their condition if God pronounces them as vile.
 2. Verse 15: "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off."
 - a. God calls Judah's attention to the approach of messengers who were to bring the good news of Nineveh's demise.
 - b. He tells them to keep the solemn feasts and continue to perform their vows, because their arch-enemy was soon to be utterly cut off.
 - c. Similar language is used in reference to those who bring the good tidings of the gospel to those who know it not. "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15).

NAHUM 2

A. Nahum 2:1-7: The One Who is to Annihilate is on His Way.

1. Verse 1: "He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily."
 - a. ASV: "He that dasheth in pieces is come up against thee: keep the fortress, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily."
 - b. The one addressed is Nineveh (1:1; 2:8); the one who is to dash Nineveh to pieces is not identified, but history shows that it was an army comprised of the Babylonians and Medes.
 - c. The Assyrians had abused their conquered subjects so harshly that the time finally came when their vassals rose up in arms to throw off the tyranny of their masters. However, without the aid of God, they could not have succeeded. In reality, the one who dashes in pieces is Almighty God, operating through the Babylonians and Medes.
 - d. The inspired prophet then warns Nineveh (capital city of Assyria) to keep the munition (the fortress), to mount guards in the towers, to strengthen their loins, and to fortify their power to its greatest degree. Thus, God counsels them to get ready to face the enemy.
 - e. Since God was behind the forthcoming attack, there was no hope for the survival of Nineveh, a truth clearly declared in chapter one.
2. Verse 2: "For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches."
 - a. The ASV gives this translation of the verse: "For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and destroyed their vine branches."
 - b. *Jacob* and *Israel* are used interchangeably here, and not as references to the two nations of the divided kingdom. The blessed son of Isaac was Jacob; here the descendants of Jacob are meant. *Israel* was the new name God gave to Jacob.
 - c. The nation of Jacob (the Israelite people) had been emptied by their enemies. The Assyrians had demolished the northern Kingdom (Israel), and Babylon was about to do the same for the southern Kingdom (Judah). The first was a fact of history and since God had ordained the second to happen, it could be considered, ahead of time, as a fact of history.
 - d. The Lord does not identify *the emptiers* here, but probably includes all those nations which had had a hand in the corruption and subjugation of his people, with the Assyrians heading the list.
 - e. "The northern kingdom of Israel was barbarously trampled by the indifferent feet of Assyrian soldiers. This was the appointment of an outraged God. Assyria must not make the mistake of supposing she had overrun Israel by her strength. As Habakkuk observed, Jehovah will use evil people to punish his wayward children. Those who breach a covenant with God may be chastised by people more evil than they. Still, God watches from within the shadows, and ultimately he will restore the excellency of his chosen people" (H.A. Dobbs, Power Lectures, *The Minor Prophets*, p.205).
3. Verse 3: "The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken."
 - a. The subject of this verse is the invader who dashes in pieces (verse one). It is this person's mighty men and weapons that are described here.
 - b. His mighty men would bear shields which were red, perhaps stained by the blood of those they slew. His valiant men would be dyed (margin) in scarlet, which also may suggest blood-spattered soldiers. Scholars have asserted that red was the favorite color of the Medes and Chaldeans. Compare: "And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion" (Ezek. 23:14). Hailey suggests that the shields may have been covered with red material or a copper-overlay which would reflect sunlight.
 - c. Nahum further depicts the attacking force as having chariots which bore flaming torches, or as the ASV renders it, "The chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation." Something about the chariots would be bright like a torch, perhaps a shining surface, perhaps of ornaments or armament.
 - d. The day of *his preparation* has reference to the day of doom which God had prepared for Nineveh.
 - e. The "fir trees shall be terribly shaken" is translated "the cypress *spears* are brandished" in the ASV. Their spears may have been fashioned from cypress (fir) trees. If their weapons are described, which seems the case since the other parts of the verse describe implements of fighting, then the weapons (spears) were being frightfully shaken (brandished) before the Ninevites, in promise of sure death.
4. Verse 4: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings."

- a. A fearful picture is drawn by the inspired words of the invaders' chariots racing through the streets of Nineveh, jostling against one another in the plazas.
- b. Perhaps the chariots of Nineveh are doing battle with them. Their swiftness in carrying out the slaughter is depicted as lightning, which flashes so quickly that there is no time to avoid it.
5. Verse 5: "He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared."
 - a. The ASV translation clearly states the prophet's description: "He remembereth his nobles: they stumble in their march; they make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared."
 - b. The Assyrian king remembers his mighty men who have served him with success in the past. He summons them to the defense of the city, but they stumble as they hasten to the wall.
 - c. A mantelet was a movable protective shelter or screen used by attacking forces; the mantelet shielded a certain number of soldiers as they came near the defensive positions of the city. As the great warriors of Nineveh came to defend the wall, they saw the mantelets of the attackers, which would strike fear in their hearts.
6. Verse 6: "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved."
 - a. "An ancient historian (Diodorus Siculus) states that due to heavy rainfall and the rise of the rivers Khosr and Tigris, the floodgates were overrun and a section of the city wall dissolved, enabling the enemy to enter the city" (Hailey, p.261). It is debatable whether Nahum has this literal event in mind, but on the surface this seems to be the likely meaning.
 - b. Another possible understanding of this verse is to see it as a figurative inundation of the city by the invading army of the enemy (Isa. 28:2; 30:28; Jer. 47:2). The result of the flood would be the dissolution of the palace, suggesting the fall of the city.
 - 1) Isaiah 28:2: "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand."
 - 2) Isaiah 30:28: "And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err."
 - 3) Jeremiah 47:2: "Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl."
7. Verse 7: "And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts."
 - a. Nineveh would be taken captive, and the young ladies of the city would weep, beating upon their breasts in mourning.
 - b. "Nineveh's shame was exposed. The people became slaves. The low, sad wail of the mourning dove was heard in the land. The young ladies of Nineveh wept, and beat upon their hearts" (Dobbs, *ibid.*, p.205).
 - c. *Huzzab* ("it is decreed"—ASV) is used in reference to a feminine personality, but her identity is uncertain. The most likely reference is to Nineveh, who would be captured, and at whose fall, there would be much lamenting on the part of the survivors.

B. Nahum 2:8-13: The Ninevites Would Be In Terror.

1. Verse 8: "But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back."
 - a. Nineveh was like a pool of water in the desert, to which many people from many places gathered. Being a large city, and the capital of the great Assyrian Empire, it would be the natural gathering place for merchants and others who sought something the city offered.
 - b. But the time was coming when those who gathered there would be dispersed. The citizens would call to them to stand and help them defend the city, but none would so much as look back.
2. Verse 9: "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture."
 - a. This statement is evidently spoken from the point of view of the attacking force, admonishing each other to take the silver and gold for spoils.
 - b. "Take all you want, for there is plenty for all; there is no end of the treasures of Nineveh!" The *pleasant furniture* is called *vessels of desires* in the margin.

- c. For many centuries, Assyria had plundered the wealth of other nations, and must now reap what she had sown (cf. Gal. 6:7-8). From the time of Nineveh's overthrow until modern times, only a mound remained to mark the location of the city. Its location was not even known until 1842.
3. Verse 10: "She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness."
 - a. The wasted city is described prophetically. The cruelty with which the nation afflicted their victims, was now being visited upon them.
 - b. Nineveh was now emptied of its wealth; its splendor was now void. The hearts of its citizens were melted in their grief; fear was so strong within them that their knees smote against each other; so afflicted were they that pain was in all their loins; and sorrow was so powerful that their faces were black with grief.
4. Verse 11: "Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?"
 - a. So domineering and fierce were the Assyrians when they were at the zenith of their power, that the prophet speaks of them as lions. But in their condition following their defeat, Nahum asks, "Where are the lions now?"
 - b. They once proudly and rapaciously walked where they desired, fearing no one; but now they are victimized, and could expect no mercy.
5. Verse 12: "The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin."
 - a. Nahum carries the figure of the lion into this verse, describing the actions of the lion who is in his full strength. As the lion brings down the prey for the young of his pride, so Assyria violently took prey for its citizens.
 - b. "The king of Nineveh had provided for his young by plundering the nations of the world, tearing them in pieces. But he was not content with this; he also 'filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin.' As the lion brings in the prey to his cave and young, so the rulers and the great of Nineveh had brought in the prey to their city and had filled the dens with 'ravin.' The word 'ravin' is from a word that meant to tear, hence with that which had been torn from others, booty" (Hailey, p.263).
 - c. The remains of last week's prey would make for a foul habitat for the lion; the great store of plunder hoarded by the Assyrians was a foul stench in the nostrils of the prophet (and God).
6. Verse 13: "Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard."
 - a. The Lord plainly declares in this verse his strong opposition to the nation of Assyria. He vows to burn her chariots, and to send the sword to devour their young *lions*.
 - b. Thus would God cut Nineveh off from her prey which she had taken from the far quarters of the earth.
 - c. He would still the voices of the messengers which brought information from their far-flung empire. Compare: "Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed" (Esther 3:12-15).
 - d. They would no longer be able to send out their armies to bring other nations under their cruel dominion; all they had gained by military conquest, and maintained by unspeakable brutality, would be stripped from them.
 - e. While righteousness exalts a nation, sin is a reproach to a nation or individual. The Assyrians were now to face one of the penalties of their many sins.

NAHUM 3

A. Nahum 3:1-7: Nineveh Was To Suffer The Just Fate For Her Great Crimes.

1. Verse 1: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not."
 - a. A horrible fate awaits this bloody city. What was to befall them was fully earned by a past that was filled with cruelty and bloodshed.
 - b. "The cruelty of the Assyrians is attested by the monuments, in which we see or read how prisoners were impaled alive, flayed, beheaded, dragged to death with ropes passed through rings in their lips, blinded by the king's own hand, hung up by hands or feet to die in slow torture (see Bonomi, pp. 168, etc., 190, etc., 225). Others have their brains beaten out, or their tongues torn out by the roots, while the bleeding heads of the slain are tied round the necks of the living, who are reserved for further torture (Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 456; Rawlinson, 'Ancient Monarchies,' 2:503, etc., edit. 1864).
 - 1) "The royal inscriptions recount with exultation the number of the enemies slain and of captives carried away, cities levelled with the ground, plundered, and burnt, lands devastated, fruit trees destroyed, etc. It is all full of lies....
 - 2) "The Assyrians used treachery in furthering their conquests, made promises which they never kept, to induce nations to submit to their yoke. Such, doubtless, were those of Rabshakeh (Isa 36:16). Rawlinson, 'Falsehood and treachery...are often employed by the strong, as furnishing short cuts to success, and even, where the moral standard is low, as being in themselves creditable (see Thucyd., 3:83).
 - 3) "It certainly was not necessity which made the Assyrians covenant breakers; it seems to have been in part the wantonness of power—because they 'despised the cities, and regarded no man' (Isa 33:8); perhaps it was in part also their imperfect moral perception, which may have failed to draw the proper distinction between craft and cleverness" ('Ancient Monarchies,' 1:305). Robbery; rather, rapine, or rending in pieces.
 - 4) "The figure applies to the way in which a wild beast kills its prey by tearing it to pieces. So the three crimes of Nineveh here enumerated are bloodshed, deceit, and violence....The prey departeth not. They go on in the same way, gathering spoil into the city, never ceasing from this crime.
 - 5) "The monuments continually record the booty that was brought to Nineveh..." [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - c. "One Assyrian mural depicts a prisoner with a ring through his lips and a rope tied to the ring, on his knees, hands lifted in entreaty as if pleading for mercy, and the king punching out both eyes with a spear" (Dobbs, p.207).
 - d. Falsehood and rapine filled the city; and through their cruelty, lies, and robbery, they were able to keep themselves well-supplied with plunder.
 - e. Our nation has embarked on the bloody boulevard of abortion, which will inevitably lead to even greater atrocities in the future. Many of this generation will live to witness such things as wholesale euthanasia, unless a major change is made to alter our nation's headlong rush into moral savagery.
2. Verse 2: "The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots."
 - a. In terse statements, Nahum describes the means by which the wrath of God would be administered.
 - b. There would be the noise of the whip, which drove the war horses pulling the chariots; they would hear the rattling of the chariot wheels; the prancing horses and the bounding chariots would be seen.
 - c. The chariot was a fearsome weapon on ancient battlefields (Ex. 14:5-10; Judg. 4:4-16).
3. Verse 3: "The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses."
 - a. Nahum further depicts the battle scene in which Nineveh was to be decimated.
 - b. The horseman would use both the bright sword and the glittering spear in slaying the Assyrians. As these weapons were used, the sun would be reflected off their shiny surfaces, giving a kind of beauty to the awesome spectacle.
 - c. There would be multitudes of people slain in the fighting, with great numbers of carcasses littering the scene; so many would be the corpses that those engaged in the battle would stumble over them.
4. Verse 4: "Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts."

- a. NKJ: "Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries."
 - b. The sinfulness of the nation was the cause of this coming distress. Their evil deeds are described as the "multitude of whoredoms of the well-favored harlot."
 - c. As the good looks of a harlot will insure a large clientele, so Nineveh's blessings and strengths were used in ungodly ways. The whoredom here is probably a reference to their fall away from righteousness. Under the preaching of Jonah 100 years earlier (773 B.C.), the Ninevites had repented of their wicked ways; but now they had returned to their former state.
 - d. Among their wicked deeds was the practice of witchcraft. This was the practice of necromancy, communicating with the dead (cf. 1 Sam. 28; Deut. 18:9-14).
5. Verse 5: "Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame."
 - a. Assyria was not dealing merely with other nations of men, but with God. They had removed the God of heaven from their plans, thinking that they had the unending and unquestioned right to do as they pleased.
 - b. But God said through Nahum that he was against them, and would take such action as the situation demanded. In their case, having obviously exhausted the patience of the Almighty, he would bring his wrath to bear upon them in punishment.
 - c. Using a figure of speech, he said he would throw their skirts over their heads, and thus expose their nakedness. This would be a great shame for a woman. The mighty Assyrians would be shamed before the nations.
 6. Verse 6: "And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock."
 - a. Not only would God shame them before the nations, but he would throw such repulsive filth upon them that they would be made a gazing stock, and thus be reviled by those who formerly stood in awe of them. Gazingstock: "a person or thing gazed at by many especially with curiosity or contempt."
 - b. The ancient warriors were not kind in their treatment of a defeated enemy.
 7. Verse 7: "And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"
 - a. Returning to more literal language, God describes the attitude of the nations when they perceived the fall of Nineveh. They would flee from the sight of Nineveh's ruins, crying far and wide that the great city was laid waste.
 - b. The Lord then asks, "Who shall bewail your fall?" While the nations would be awe-stricken over their demise, yet they would not mourn over her loss.
 - c. The Lord asks further, "Where shall I find anyone to comfort you in your distress?" In their might, Assyria commanded respect, but in their fall, there would be none willing to offer comfort.
- B. Nahum 3:8-11: Nineveh Was To Suffer The Fate Of No.
1. Verse 8: "Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?"
 - a. The Egyptian city of No (No-Amon, ASV; also known as Thebes) was successfully attacked and destroyed by the Assyrians in 663 B.C., under the leadership of Ashurbanipal. What No was to Egypt, Nineveh was to the Assyrians.
 - b. Since No had been overcome and wasted, so could Nineveh suffer the same fate. The city of No was surrounded by moats filled with water from the Nile River, but that defense did not insure its continual survival. No was the capital of Egypt, and the center of idolatrous cults worshipping Amon, Mut and Khonsu.
 - c. Nineveh was protected by the river Tigris, as well as by her great walls. To an enemy force, Nineveh looked impregnable. Knowing this, the Ninevites felt fully secure.
 - d. But since God was against Nineveh, she would not continue any more than No had continued. When God decrees the end of a city or nation, their doom is certain.
 2. Verse 9: "Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers."
 - a. The Egyptian city of No, having the physical defenses noted in verse eight, plus having the might of the rest of Egypt and of Ethiopia in her support, thought they had nothing to fear from an invading force.
 - b. As the Assyrians well-knew, none of these advantages kept No from being taken. The armed forces of Assyria had conquered No.

- c. Just so, God warns them that neither the defenses of Nineveh, nor the strength of her allies, Put and Lubim, could protect her. Were Put and Lubim helpers of No or helpers of Nineveh? The margin says "in thy help." No is spoken of in the third person (*her*) in the first part of the verse; it seems strange that the third person would be changed to the first person in the same verse. It may be that Put and Lubim were allies of No, but aided Assyria when they attacked No.
3. Verse 10: "Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains."
 - a. Despite the apparent strength possessed by No, that mighty city fell. The citizens were carried away as captives, their young children were slain at the head of the streets, and the great men of the city were bound in chains.
 - b. The Assyrians displayed their cruelty in these actions, particularly in killing the young children of No by dashing them to pieces. The picture seems to describe their taking a little child by the heels, and dashing his head against the stone street or wall.
 - c. Nahum uses one of the renowned victories of Nineveh as a fitting description of Nineveh's own end.
4. Verse 11: "Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy."
 - a. Some people will become extremely boastful and proud under the influence of alcohol. The successes of their long rule over other nations, and their seemingly invincible army and impregnable capital city, had doubtless given Assyria a cocksure disposition. They were intoxicated with pride over their strength and wealth.
 - b. But also, as a drunk man is unstable on his feet, so Assyria would reel when the full force of divine retribution was unleashed upon her.
 - c. They would be forced to seek refuge from the invaders, an unaccustomed role for mighty Assyria.
 - d. Perhaps there is an allusion here to the drunken orgy ancient writers say occurred when the final assault came against Nineveh. There may also be an allusion in the verse to the historical fact that Nineveh would be concealed from view for many centuries. Following the final destruction of Nineveh, the actual location was unknown until 1842.

C. Nahum 3:12-19: None Of The Possessions Or Powers Of Nineveh Could Deliver Them.

1. Verse 12: "All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater."
 - a. The strongholds of Assyria would be no more secure than a ripe fig on the branch; when the branch is shaken, the fig falls into the mouth of the eater. Just so, when God shook the Assyrians, they would fall into the maw of God's wrath.
 - b. Under the combined forces of Babylonians, Medes, and Sythians, the surrounding fortresses were taken.
 - c. Then came the siege and fall of Nineveh, the heart of the Assyrian Empire.
2. Verse 13: "Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars."
 - a. God's description of the people is one of derision. They are women. This is not intended to disparage women, but a comparative depiction of their strength as opposed to God's might. In a physical battle, using swords and spears, a company of men would be sure to defeat a comparable number of women soldiers. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).
 - b. Their walls would be unable to protect them; it would be as if the gates were wide open. The bars which secured the gates would be as though they were burned with fire, destroying any hope of defense.
3. Verse 14: "Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln."
 - a. The Lord calls on the Ninevites to prepare for the siege by storing up a good supply of water, and by making the fortress stronger.
 - b. To do the latter, they must obtain clay, and mix the material for bricks, and repair the brick-kiln for firing the bricks. The bricks, of course, would be used in strengthening the defensive wall.
4. Verse 15: "There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts."

- a. All the work they would make in securing their defensive positions would be in vain. They would still be devoured by fire, and slain by the sword; the sword would eat them up as a cankerworm eats the crops of the field.
- b. The latter thought in the verse calls on them to multiply their numbers as do the cankerworms and locusts in an invasion of locusts. But that would have no effect on the outcome.
5. Verse 16: "Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away."
 - a. They had increased the number of merchants to be equal, in a figure, to the stars of the sky. The many merchants of Nineveh spread out over the country, bringing tremendous wealth to the city.
 - b. But their great wealth and prosperity would be spoiled as by locusts, who would consume their riches and then fly away.
6. Verse 17: "Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are."
 - a. The high-ranking people of the city were numerous; the military leaders were many; but these would be unable to deliver the city from the invaders.
 - b. The military people would be present, but would fly away in every direction as does a swarm of locusts.
 - c. "The picture that follows is that of a cold day in which the wings of the locusts or grasshoppers become stiff, causing them to encamp in the hedges or on the wall. But when the sun breaks through the clouds and the insects are warmed by its rays, they fly away. So will the Assyrian army flee away, perish, and disappear for ever, leaving no trace of its having ever existed" (Hailey, p.269).
 - d. The point of the verse is: despite having many great men, and a strong and capable military presence, there would be no hope for the survival of the city. Its fall was a foregone conclusion, decreed by the will of heaven.
7. Verse 18: "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them."
 - a. The counsellors and other great men of the nation are called *shepherds* by the prophet, and are said to be sleeping in the dust (i.e., dead). They cannot help the desperate situation.
 - b. The people of the nation are depicted as sheep which have been scattered upon the mountains, with no shepherd present to gather them into the fold.
 - c. The shepherds being dead and gone, and the sheep scattered, the king has no helpers to assist him in his rule, and no people over which to exercise dominion. Everything is lost .
8. Verse 19: "There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?"
 - a. The grievous wound inflicted on the king in the overthrow of his city is a wound which cannot be healed. The reference to the king does not have any particular monarch in mind, apparently, since the ancient reports say the king died as the city was being overrun; it appears, therefore, that the reference is to the entire line of Assyrian kings.
 - b. Those who hear the report (*bruit*, KJV) will clap their hands in happiness over the fate of this scourge of humanity. Despite the awfulness of this attitude, the Assyrians had earned this response; they had shown no mercy, and they would get none!
 - c. The book closes with a question: "Upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" "The whole earth had felt the pain of Nineveh's destructive sword and unbounded cruelty, not once or twice, but continually. And now with the good tidings of her fall, the whole world rejoiced" (Hailey, p.270).

INTRODUCTION TO HABAKKUK

A. Habakkuk, the Prophet.

1. His name means *to embrace*. It is not found anywhere else in the Scriptures.
2. The time of his book is prior to the Babylonian Captivity. Habakkuk 1:5-6 shows that the exile of Judah to Babylonia was still in the future: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are* not theirs."
 - a. It was a time of violence and apostasy in Judah. The time frame of 630-606 B.C. fits this background.
 - b. His work is put at 625 B.C., which was about the time of Zephaniah and Nahum, making him a contemporary of Jeremiah during the closing years of the Southern Kingdom.

B. The Book of Habakkuk.

1. An examination of the contents reveals the following:
 - a. Habakkuk raises a complaint to God: 1:1-4.
 - b. Jehovah's response to the complaint is given in 1:5-11.
 - c. The prophet expresses his dismay over the fact that God was going to allow a nation more wicked than Judah to punish Judah: 1:12—2:1.
 - d. God gives his final reply to the prophet: 2:2-4.
 - e. The prophet gives a series of five woes: 2:5-20.
 - f. An inspired prayer is given: 3:1-19.
2. The aim of the book of Habakkuk is twofold.
 - a. It foretells the downfall of the Chaldeans, who were soon to overwhelm Judah.
 - b. He gives encouragement to Judah in a time of crisis. It is true that they were to be punished for their wicked ways by the more wicked Chaldeans, but these pagans were to be punished, also.
3. The book contains several timeless lessons.
 - a. **It teaches the fact of divine discipline.** "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs" (Hab. 1:5-6).
 - b. **It shows that evil reaps it proper reward.** "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" (Hab. 2:12-13; cf. Gal. 6:7-8).
 - c. **It reveals the fact that faith required for godly living.** "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).
 - d. **The folly of violence is taught.** "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction" (Hab. 1:12).
 - e. **Courage is necessary when troubles come.** "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" (Hab. 3:17-19).

C. The Chaldeans.

1. The Chaldeans were Semites from southern Babylonia.
 - a. They were able to remove the yoke of Assyria in 625 B.C.
 - b. Under Nabopolassar, they became rulers of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
 - c. They joined with the Medes and Sythians to destroy Nineveh in 612 B.C.
 - d. In 606 B.C., the Babylonians defeated the remnant of the Assyrian army and the Egyptian army in an historic battle at Carchemish: "The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah" (Jer. 46:1-2).
 - 1) Following this success, the Babylonians brought Judah under their domination.

- 2) Nebuchadnezzar was the general of the Babylonian army; he could have occupied Egypt, but he learned that his father (Nabopolassar) had died, and he was needed back home to take over as king.
 2. Under Nebuchadnezzar, Judah was dismembered.
 - a. When Judah was initially conquered by Babylon in 606 B.C., a large group of Jews were taken away.
 - b. King Jehoiachin was exiled, along with many other Jews, in 597 B.C.
 - c. When the Jews rebelled against Babylon in 586 B.C., Jerusalem and Solomon's temple were destroyed, and another group of Jews was taken to Babylon.
 3. These events were in Judah's near future when Habakkuk did his work.
 - a. Judah had been amply warned to repent.
 - b. The fact of their coming punishment was affirmed by God's prophets, because Judah would not repent.
 - c. The means of their punishment was clearly set forth by the prophets: Babylon would be brought to great power; they would overwhelm Judah.
 - d. But Habakkuk offered words of encouragement to Judah, in that Babylon itself would have to face God's wrath.
- D. Several Verses of Habakkuk are Noticed in the New Testament.
1. Habakkuk 1:5 is cited in Acts 13:41.
 - a. Habakkuk 1:5: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*."
 - b. Acts 13:41: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."
 2. Habakkuk 2:14 accurately describes the situation when the gospel was spread abroad through the world.
 - a. Isaiah 11:9: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."
 - b. Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."
 - c. Compare:
 - 1) Colossians 1:6: "Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth."
 - 2) Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
 - 3) Romans 10:17-18: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
 3. Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:37-38.
 - a. Habakkuk 2:4: "Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."
 - b. Romans 1:17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - c. Galatians 3:11: "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith."
 - d. Hebrews 10:37-38: "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."
- E. The Uniqueness of the Book.
1. The book of Habakkuk addresses a matter that sets it apart from the rest of the Bible. It directly approaches God with the question of *why does God punish one party for evil while overlooking another who is more wicked?*
 2. "In a bold and dramatic presentation of the profound theological problem involved in God's longsuffering toleration of wickedness, the execution of wrath against it through the use of agents themselves more wicked than those punished; Habakkuk confronted God himself with the problem and waited patiently for the answer! There is nothing else quite like this in all the Bible. Habakkuk's fundamental conviction of the integrity and justice of God strongly remind one of the apostle Paul in Romans (who quoted Habakkuk in Rom. 1:17)" (Coffman, pp.63f).

HABAKKUK 1

A. Habakkuk 1:1-4: The Prophet Offers a Complaint to the Lord.

1. Verse 1: "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see."
 - a. This prophet began his book with a similar thought expressed elsewhere in the writing prophets. He simply states that what follows is the burden (a divine verdict, an oracle) in reference to some nation.
 - b. He does not identify in verse one the recipients of this verdict, but the book shows it included both Judah and Babylon. He also states that he saw this verdict, meaning it was revealed to him by means of a vision of inspiration.
2. Verse 2: "O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!"
 - a. His plaintive lament unto God is in regard to the violence which he has seen around him in Judah. Verse four shows that the law (God's word) was being slacked, and justice was not being administered among the people.
 - b. He laments that he has cried unto the Lord many times, yet his plea has gone unanswered. God heard his lamentations. It is fruitless for anyone to ask God to do something which is contrary to his will. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).
 - c. Since God did not condone the conduct of the evil people among Judah, why did he not take action to correct the problem and punish the offenders?
 - d. Habakkuk was inspired to speak for the righteous people of Judah. What he states in this passage (verses 2-4) expresses the sentiment and pain of those who were being oppressed by their own brethren (cf. Rev. 6:9-10).
 - e. Zephaniah (630 B.C.) and Micah (730 B.C.) had chronicled many of the evil works of the wicked in Judah. Why did God withhold judgment against these wicked men? The most logical answer is his longsuffering desire to save rather than destroy.
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
 - 3) Ezekiel 18:30-32: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."
 - 4) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
 - 5) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"
 - f. "His complaint was that Jehovah would not save, but Jehovah does not violate the sovereign will of man by directly interfering. He appeals through the moral suasion of his law and the word of the prophets. When this fails he interferes by judgment. Why, then, does not God interfere with a judgment?" (Hailey, p.276).
3. Verse 3: "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention."
 - a. Instead of taking direct action to correct the evils among Habakkuk's people, God permitted iniquity to continue unpunished. The prophet continued to see perverseness (grievance, KJV) running amok, and destruction and violence were ever before his eyes. There were many who raised up strife and contention to the hurt of the righteous.
 - b. Why did not God take immediate action? God directed the prophet to raise these points. The question shows that God was well aware of the evil situation, thus there were other factors involved as to why he did not directly move against the wickedness he beheld.
4. Verse 4: "Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth."

- a. Habakkuk continues his lamentation, showing the iniquity he described was done among the people of Judah by evil men of the nation. The situation had not improved since the days of Micah, as Zephaniah also shows.
- b. The law is slacked. The will of God as expressed through Moses was not being kept. This is the only law that could be meant, hence the wickedness was that of Judah. A law, any law, is only as effective as it is followed and enforced.
- c. Justice can come forth from the courts of the land. Every court reaches some kind of judgment, but not all courts will dispense justice. When evil men control the judicial system, the common man cannot expect justice. Administering justice is always considered a high priority and requirement of God.
- d. The wicked encircled or outmaneuvered the righteous, and obtained the perverted judgments they sought. When evil men come to power, they pervert the laws to their own selfish ends. But the most corrupted courts maintain a semblance of legality; even Hitler claimed to follow the law.
- e. The righteous had to suffer the consequences, without any recourse, except to God, and he was not yet taking any direct action.

B. Habakkuk 1:5-11: God Responds to the Prophet's Lament.

1. Verse 5: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you."
 - a. ASV: "Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvellously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you."
 - b. God tells Habakkuk and the other righteous individuals of the nation to consider what is transpiring among the heathen nations. What they will be able to see will cause them to wonder marvelously.
 - c. God's hand could be seen, or would soon be seen, bringing about effects which would astound those who had eyes to see. The impregnable fortress city of Nineveh, where the awesome power of the cruel Assyrians was centered, would soon be overthrown.
 - d. God's hand was behind Nineveh's downfall, thus he can say that his power was the destructive force which devastated that corrupt city. So shocking would be the effect, that the people of Judah would not be inclined to believe the report!
 - e. The greatest event in the near future to the time of Habakkuk's ministry was the fall of Nineveh, but other great events were also in the offing. Within about twenty years, the Assyrian Empire would be utterly destroyed, and another great power would rise—the Babylonian Empire. Powerful Egypt would be defeated, and brought under the sway of the Chaldeans.
 - f. All of these things came to pass during the lifetime of Habakkuk's generation. It is not often in history that such great upheavals occur within the span of one generation.
 - g. Paul quoted this statement in Acts 13:41 to show the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia that, as their Old Testament counterparts were to see some astounding things, so they were witnessing God's hand doing marvelous things. Because they were unwilling to see God's hand behind the events taking place in their midst, they would perish.
 - 1) Acts 13:41: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."
 - 2) Acts 13:44-46: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
2. Verse 6: "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs."
 - a. God plainly affirms that the events he has in mind will be brought to bear by the Chaldeans, to whom he would give power and success. The Chaldeans thought that what they accomplished was by their own strength and skill, and prided themselves in their great accomplishments. Nebuchadnezzar was given a pointed lesson in this regard in Daniel 4:28-37: "All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing

fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

- b. God describes the Babylonians as bitter and hasty, who would quickly move through the whole land, taking possession of houses and cities which were not theirs. Legal ownership and justice would be of no interest to them.
- c. One of the amazing things about the Babylonian Empire was its rapid rise to power and success. But equally amazing is their quick fall into ruin. Their empire lasted less than a century (606-539 B.C.).
3. Verse 7: "They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves."
 - a. They are depicted as terrible and dreadful. Remember, it is the Lord who is describing them. If God says someone is terrible and dreadful, the description is not misdirected!
 - b. They will decide their own judgments and maintain their own dignity. In other words, they were a self-willed and proud people who would recognize no master.
4. Verse 8: "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat."
 - a. Their weapons of war would be awesome in power and swiftness. Their horses are swifter than leopards; they are more fierce than evening wolves. Wolves hunt especially at night, and as the evening descends, wolves can be expected to be hungry, and therefore very ferocious.
 - b. The horsemen would spread out in wreaking havoc on their victims. Distance would mean nothing to them. They would speed to the prey just as an eagle rapidly swoops down upon its intended meal.
 - c. Ancient military forces used chariots to a great advantage, much on the order of tanks on the modern battlefield.
 - d. To this point, God has been describing the effects of the Chaldean army on the Assyrians and Egyptians. Following the defeat of these foes, Babylon would march into Palestine, conquering and punishing Judah. Indirectly, God is answering the lament of Habakkuk.
5. Verse 9: "They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand."
 - a. This fierce invader would come in violence, perhaps rivaling even the harshness of the Assyrians. The ASV gives a clearer statement of the second part of the verse: "the set of their faces is forwards." The KJV gives two alternate renderings in the margin: *The supping up of their faces* and *their faces shall look toward the east*.
 - b. They scoop up captives whose numbers would be like the sand. As Assyria before them, they brought great numbers of captives back with them, to serve as slaves.
6. Verse 10: "And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."
 - a. The strength and pride of the Babylonians would be such that they would have respect for no king, or prince, or strong hold. They would raise up protective mounds around a fortress city, laying siege to it until they were ready to mount a decisive attack.
 - b. Thus, they would capture the king, the royal family, and the important men of the city. They would respect no one.
7. Verse 11: "Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god."
 - a. But the Babylonians would transgress. They would ascribe their power and success to their own god, instead of to the Living God. That would be their downfall (cf. Daniel 4:30-32). As even the most terrible storm must expend all its energy in time, and dissipate, so the great power and threat of Babylon would fade away.

- b. God was the source of their rise, and he would be the cause of their fall. They accomplished the purposes God intended for them to fulfill, and due to their own wickednesses, he would bring about their demise (cf. Isaiah 10:5-19).
- c. God, therefore, gives a long-range picture of what would happen, implying the ultimate end of Babylonian power, which had not even risen to prominence at the time Habakkuk wrote.

C. Habakkuk 1:12-17: The Prophet Presents Another Complaint.

1. Verse 12: "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction."
 - a. Habakkuk recognized the implication of the Lord's previous statement, that Babylon would overrun Judah. He addresses God in reverential terms, stating in the form of a question that God is everlasting, he is the prophet's God (his Holy One). Inspired men and others who had the fearful experience of being in the presence of a manifestation of God's majestic being and power, were always in awe.
 - b. The prophet then states, on the fact that God is the God of Judah, and that God is both eternal and holy, that they (the righteous of Judah) would not die. In other words, we are the people of the Eternal and Holy God; how can the Babylonians, who serve false gods, overrun us? The inspired prophet expresses confidence that God, although he would punish those who needed it, would not permit the righteous few to perish; God would fulfill his purpose for Abraham's descendants.
 - c. Habakkuk has already admitted the wickedness of many in the nation of Judah; the righteous remnant of Judah were being sorely oppressed in many ways by the sinful majority in Judah. But the Babylonians were little better than the evil Assyrians; what good would be accomplished if the cruelty of the Assyrians was replaced by the cruelty of the Babylonians? Judah lived in daily dread of being overwhelmed by the Assyrians; what improvement would have been gained by simply replacing one pagan overlord with another? What relief to the righteous in Judah would be gained?
 - d. The prophet recognized and admitted the fact that God did use certain pagan powers as instruments of dispensing judgment against the wicked (cf. Jer. 51:20-21; Isa. 7:20; 10:7ff). God is actually directing this conversation.
2. Verse 13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"
 - a. Again, using Habakkuk to express the viewpoint of the righteous in Judah, God has him describe God in glowing terms, and then ask a pointed question. God has too pure a nature to countenance evil; he cannot condone or foster iniquity of any kind.
 - b. That being the case, how can the pure and holy God of heaven permit a nation of extremely wicked men to overrun and consume a nation of men less evil than they? It is true that Judah had many evil men in their midst; but it is also true that the Babylonians were terribly wicked people. However, the greater the knowledge and opportunity, the greater the responsibility (Luke 12:47-48). Judah had direct access to the written will of God; the Babylonians did not have this advantage. Judah had great guilt because she rebelled against God despite their knowledge of God's will, and despite the many warnings issued through God's prophets. The Babylonians lived in ignorance of the Law of Moses; they were cruel and corrupt people, but from God's viewpoint, their iniquity did not exceed that of Judah.
 - c. From the human point of view, it appears that God ought directly to punish the Babylonians, perhaps even to exterminate them from the earth, and to use a lesser means of punishing the evil people of Judah. So the prophet raises the question: How can God look upon the idolatrous Babylonians and permit them to go unrestrained about their vile and vicious mission without any heavenly rebuke; and especially when their victims are more righteous than they?
 - d. This very point often occurs to modern men of God, just as it did the psalmist (See Psalm 73). He thought that he had cleansed his life in vain, for the wicked man lives in ease and plenty, while he was afflicted and plagued. But then he considered the ultimate fate of the wicked; they have their reward now, but must face the penalty their sinful ways have earned them. The reward of righteousness is far greater than the severity the godly man may endure in this life (Rom. 8:18).
 - e. God's dealings with mankind are far more complex than the greatest minds can conceive. The infinite wisdom of God meshes his infinite love and infinite justice into the perfect agenda of operation. Nothing God does is haphazard; every act or absence of action is calculated for the ultimate good of the righteous.
 - 1) A precept of science says that for every action there is a corresponding reaction. A stone dropped into a pool of water creates rings of wavelets that extend in expanding circles from the point the stone entered the water. When the mother of a new-born fawn is slain by the hunter, her infant offspring is apt to starve to death or be taken by some carnivore.

- 2) If God were to take the immediate and stern action that we might think required, the consequence might portend greater evil than good. Hence, we must let the will of God be done; it is always right.
 - 3) Since God intervened in mankind's ancient history in a direct way only when absolutely necessary, to have eliminated the Assyrians by divine fiat without the instrumentality of the Babylonians, would have required his removing the Babylonians in the same way. The Medo-Persian Empire would have had to be dealt similarly. The same would have been true with the Grecians and the Romans.
 - 4) In such an operation, man would have learned to depend on God to do everything for him, and would not have the motivation to develop those dispositions and skills as are required to be prepared for eternity with God. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. God plans for all of time and eternity.
- f. Because sin is rampant in the world, and since all accountable people become contaminated by sin, the consequences of sin are felt by all. The righteous people must suffer along with the wicked—in this world. In the Judgment of the last day, all things will be rectified.
3. Verse 14: "And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?"
 - a. The prophet continues the question of complaint begun in the previous verse. He is not speaking evil of God or questioning the motives of the Almighty. His statements and questions are being given to him by inspiration. The points being made are items the common people would be thinking.
 - b. "As a fisherman drops his net into the sea and takes everything before it, so the Chaldean has taken the peoples of the nations in his wild rampage of conquest. 'The creeping things' are the swarms of smaller water creatures that, with the fishes, suffer at the hand of the netter. Neither the fishes nor creeping things have a king to whom they can look for protection. If God gives up his people to the Chaldeans then they, too, have no king and no protection, but are equally helpless" (Hailey, p.280).
 - c. Habakkuk's point is this: Are the people of God to be taken in the nets of Babylon without God intervening in their behalf? Although the righteous in Judah were more righteous than the Babylonians, yet none of these righteous people were guiltless. Man's viewpoint is extremely limited; God's is infinite and just; God's plan of action will always result, in the long run, in the best outcome for the righteous.
 4. Verse 15: "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad."
 - a. Different kinds of fishing equipment are named in this verse, each being used by the Babylonian fishermen as they catch "all the fish in the pond."
 - b. The *angle* is a hook. We speak of fishermen as *anglers*. The *net* would be the small casting net. The *drag* would be the larger net which is lowered into the depths and dragged through the water.
 - c. The result of this fishing excursion would be rejoicing on the part of the Babylonians. If you are defeated in a game of chess, you can take that defeat with a good spirit, and even congratulate your opponent. But if your opponent gloats over his victory, and castigates your playing ability, the natural impulse is to be enraged. The rejoicing of the Babylonians should, Habakkuk implies, cause God to be grieved.
 - d. As Coffman points out, Habakkuk employs poignant figures of speech to describe the events he portrays; hence, he is not describing a fact of history, but foretells what is soon to occur.
 5. Verse 16: "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous."
 - a. The fishing expedition being highly successful, the Babylonians express their happiness by offering sacrifices and burning incense to the implements which have brought them success.
 - b. In effect, therefore, they were rejoicing over their own strength and prowess. Compare: "Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god" (Hab. 1:11).
 6. Verse 17: "Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?"
 - a. The prophet continues his lament. God had earlier in the chapter told the prophet that the Babylonians would rise to be a great power, and be a scourge to the nations.
 - b. "In their career of conquest, plundering and destroying, will they continue without interference from Jehovah? Will the spoiler empty his net of plunder to set out on a further expedition of rape and destruction? When will he be stopped? These are questions now contributing to the perplexity of the prophet and for which he seeks an answer. These are questions which through the centuries have been raised in the hearts of many as they beheld the ruthless destroyers riding roughshod over the weaker. God answers this question in the next chapter" (Hailey, p.281).

- c. God deals not only with the present, but with the future; he is interested in the affairs of those who are close to him, and of those who are farthest from him (John 3:16; Acts 17:30-31; 1 Tim. 2:4-5).

HABAKKUK 2

A. Habakkuk 2:1-4: God Responds as the Prophet Listens.

1. Verse 1: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd."
 - a. The prophet expresses his resolve to await the Lord's reply to his complaint.
 - b. He describes his patient wait for God's answer as standing a watch upon a watchtower. "What will the Lord say, and how will I react when he responds?"
2. Verse 2: "And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."
 - a. God's response came, and first instructed the prophet to set down the words in writing for the benefit of future generations. It is because of this command that we have the privilege of reading the information Habakkuk received.
 - b. The running comes after the reading, and not that one was to read the material as he ran. The message was intended to provoke the reader to action, hence after it was read and understood, something was to be done.
 - c. The message was to be made plain; only if it could be understood, could it move the reader to follow its directions.
3. Verse 3: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."
 - a. The vision revealed events that would unfold in the future, at an appointed time of God's choosing. Because the vision would not be immediately fulfilled, it was to be recorded in written form.
 - b. The events predicted were hastening to be fulfilled, but would not instantly come. Habakkuk is cautioned, that although they would not appear soon, they would surely be accomplished. The amount of time that passes before the fulfillment of a God-given promise or threat does not weaken it (cf. 2 Peter 3:1-10).
 - c. "But what end is before the prophet? Does he look to the end of the Babylonian power for which the vision hastens or pants, or does he look beyond the judgment and destruction wrought by the Chaldeans to the coming of the Messiah, in whom all Old Testament vision would find its ultimate realization? The answer is uncertain....The indication here is that he is assuring the suffering few that God will bring them through the ordeal at hand and destroy the destroyer" (Hailey, p.282).
 - d. Coffman says that there are overtones of the final Judgment in this verse, which is indicated by the use of the next verse in Hebrews 10:36-38: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." However, the punishment of Paul's reference might be that in connection with the Roman invasion and overthrow of Judaism in 70 A.D.
4. Verse 4: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."
 - a. One whose soul is puffed up in him is not upright. Since Habakkuk had asked about the rightness of God using a wicked nation (Babylon) to punish a less wicked nation (Judah), and with verse 5 in mind, this *puffed-up one* is the Chaldean nation.
 - b. God is, therefore, telling Habakkuk that he well-knows the wicked condition of the Babylonians, and in the following woe (verses 5-8), he promises a just punishment for them. The singular pronouns are used in reference to the king of the Babylonians, who is representative of the whole nation.
 - c. God adds that the just (righteous) person shall live by his faith. This is the principle by which God has always dealt with mankind. As long as Adam and Eve adhered to the instructions and commands issued to them, their continuing abode in Eden was assured; when they disobeyed, they were evicted forthwith! The principle is seen throughout the Old Testament, and continues in Christianity.
 - d. The faith envisioned in the passage is an obedient faith; faith without works has always been dead (Jas. 2:14-26; Heb. 11). Paul cites Habakkuk's statement in Galatians 3:11 to show the Judaizers that justification by the Law of Moses was impossible, since no one was able to keep it perfectly. Every year, a sacrifice for sin was to be offered, but which was unable to remove guilt (Heb. 10:1-4). Every one of these annual atonement sacrifices pointed to the one sacrifice which Christ was to accomplish on the cross, which would forever remove the need for any other such offering (Heb. 9:22-28).
 - e. The New Testament usages of Habakkuk 2:4b are inspired commentaries on the statement. In Galatians 3:11, Paul used it to emphasize the truth that the righteous *shall live* by faith. He used it in Romans 1:17 to underscore *justification*. Hebrews 10:38 stresses *faith*. In the context of each of these

New Testament occurrences of the statement, the necessity of obedience is shown (Gal. 3:11-27; Rom. 1:5-17; 16:26; Heb. 10:36-39; 11:1-31).

B. Habakkuk 2:5-20: Five Woes Pronounced Upon the Unrighteous.

1. Verse 5: "Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people" (KJV). "Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples" (ASV).
 - a. The identity of the person whose soul was not upright (verse 4) is revealed here, although not by name. That person is the Chaldean king, who personified the whole nation (Hab. 1:6).
 - b. His transgressions included the use of wine. The nation of Babylon had this major spiritual problem; it did not go unnoticed by the Lord. The ASV says, "Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man that keepeth not at home...." When Babylon was conquered, it was at a time when a drunken party was in progress (Dan. 5).
 - c. Pride was another common fault possessed by the Babylonians (cf. Daniel 4:30ff). Men often think of pride as being a desirable trait, but God condemns it as sinful. "It is said that the Chaldeans were fond of drinking and excess, but here the Chaldean's wine is his pride; he is intoxicated on power and conquest, which are equally treacherous. For a similar drunkenness, but not on literal wine, see Isaiah 29:9 and 51:21" (Hailey, p.283).
 - d. He keepeth not at home. The Babylonians were wont to spread out and conquer their neighbors. If the ASV rendering is taken, this statement is applied to wine. But alcohol is harmless unless it is consumed; the damage it causes is by its effect on those who drink it. As the effect of strong drink does not stay away from others, so Babylon was not content to let other nations alone. As the drunkard cannot get enough wine to satisfy his craving, so Babylon could not conquer enough nations to sate its thirst for conquest.
 - e. His desire is as insatiable as sheol and death; no matter how many die and enter the unseen abode of the dead, there is always room for another. Babylon was not satisfied with their own territory and wealth, but actively and unrelentingly sought to conquer and pillage other nations.
2. Verses 6-8: "Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein."
 - a. God has painted a stark picture of the unholy nature of the Babylonian Empire. As their king was sinful and grasping, so were the people of the empire. God authors a taunting proverb against him. This first woe denounces him because he increases his own wealth at the expense of others.
 - b. *All these* is a reference to those nations which had been conquered and plundered by the Chaldeans. The question "how long" is left unanswered in keeping with the Lord's original proclamation in verse three, which left the appointed time in the shadowy future, while affirming the absolute certainty of its fulfillment.
 - c. The woe is addressed first to those who increase with another's substance, and then to those who "ladeth himself with thick clay" [with pledges—ASV]. The word *clay* is found nowhere else in the Bible (Coffman). The ASV rendering seems more correct, and refers to the tribute imposed on the nations Babylon conquered; those tributes became so burdensome, like thick clay caked on a man's feet as he walks through a muddy field.
 - d. God promises in verse seven that those who were harshly treated by the Babylonians would rise up and bite their conquerors; they would awake and vex these oppressors. The Babylonians would become booty to them, in the long range plans God has.
 - e. Verse eight gives the cause for the forthcoming spoilage of Babylonia. They had spoiled many nations in their quest for supremacy and wealth; just so, they would be spoiled. And because Babylon had shed the blood of man and had been so violent in their relentless rush to conquer, this woe would descend upon their own heads (Gen. 9:5-6; Gal. 6:7-8).
 - f. The verdict was: the remnant of the nations would plunder Babylon. "This was fulfilled against the Chaldeans by Cyrus, ruler of the Medes and Persians, who entered Babylon, October, 539 B.C., twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar (562 B.C.). The execution against nations of today is by those whom Jehovah raises up for the purpose" (Hailey, pp.284f).
3. Verse 9-11: "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off

many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

- a. The second woe is pronounced against those who "get an evil gain for his house." The Babylonians did this in that they enriched themselves by plundering the wealth amassed by others.
 - b. The Babylonians, from the time of Genesis eleven, had a bent for tall structures. Their *ziggurats* were world-famous and the walls of Babylon were likely the greatest ever constructed to encompass a city (11 miles long; 85 feet thick; 300 feet tall). As Edom considered their fortress nation impregnable (Obadiah 3,4; Jer. 49:16), so the Chaldeans gloried in their man-made security. Both Edom and Babylon fell.
 - c. The Great of China was very long and was built to protect their nation from invading hordes. "Few cultural landmarks symbolize the sweep of a nation's history more powerfully than the Great Wall of China. Constructed by a succession of imperial dynasties over 2,000 years, the network of barriers, towers and fortifications expanded over the centuries, defining and defending the outer limits of Chinese civilization. At the height of its importance during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the Great Wall is believed to have extended some 4,000 miles, the distance from New York to Milan. From its origins under the first emperor in the third century B.C., the Great Wall has never been a single barrier, as early Western accounts claimed. Rather, it was an overlapping maze of ramparts and towers that was unified only during frenzied Ming dynasty construction, beginning in the late 1300s. **As a defense system, the wall ultimately failed, not because of intrinsic design flaws but because of the internal weaknesses—corruption, cowardice, infighting—of various imperial regimes.**" [Source: Brook Larmer, Smithsonian Magazine, August 2008].
 - d. The Chaldeans had built such a secure citadel (Babylon) that they looked down on the surrounding countryside as an eagle peers down upon the world from his lofty nest. Their security was more apparent than real. They had exploited and extorted the wealth of other nations, but thought they were above any such danger.
 - e. Verse ten says they had brought shame to their house, instead of lasting security. They had looted the wealth of others, but what they really obtained was shame! The shame derived from the sin of their actions. Righteousness has always exalted a nation, and sin has ever been a reproach to any people. What is true of a nation is also true of an individual.
 - f. In verse eleven, the prophet declares that even the stones of their great wall would cry out against their wickedness, and the timbers would bear witness to their crimes.
 - 1) In exceedingly vivid imagery, God describes the shamefulness of the Babylonian conquests. The mountains were called on to bear witness to the charges God made against Judah (Micah 6:1-2), and the blood of Abel was said to have called out to God from the ground (Gen. 4:10).
 - 2) In a similar statement in Luke 19:40, Jesus said that if his followers had not given him praise during his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."
4. Verses 12-14: "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."
- a. The third woe denounces the cruelty and barbarism of the Chaldeans. They were known to execute the children before the father, and then put out the eyes of the father! The last thing Zedekiah saw was his children being slaughtered. "And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon" (2 Kings 25:7).
 - b. A nation which seeks to establish itself by such violence is doomed to a similar fate (cf. Dan. 5). Their cities were built only to be consumed by fire. Their labors would be profitless; they would only succeed in wearying themselves.
 - c. Pointing to the time when Babylon was overwhelmed by the Medes and Persians, and when Cyrus would release the Jews to return to Palestine, the prophet announces that the earth would know about God.
 - 1) A prophecy which named Cyrus by name, and described what he would do, had been given about 200 years before the fact (Isa. 44:28; 45:1ff; 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2-3). How surprised Cyrus must have been when he saw his name prophetically cited two centuries before his birth! And how impressed the general population must have been with the power of God when the prophecy was fulfilled, and the Jews returned to their homeland.
 - a) Isaiah 44:28: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

- b) 2 Chronicles 36:22-23: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up."
- 2) When the work of the apostles and others of the first century church was done, knowledge of God and his Son was spread over the earth. Through the centuries, that knowledge, at least in a general way, has continued. The prophecy here does not say that everyone would become sincere servants of God, but that the knowledge of God would be available to all.
5. Verses 15-17: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein."
- a. The fourth woe is addressed to those who encourage the neighbor to become drunk so as to take advantage of him. The reference is still to Babylon, but is applied as if to an individual case. The same points are true in either situation. Babylon had developed such things as sorcery, magical arts, etc., which they shared with other nations. There is a sense in which one can become intoxicated with false religion, as is true with strong drink. Those who imbibe the false doctrine of premillennialism or pentecostalism usually become so involved with these that they are utterly indifferent to the truth. The roots of the "New Age Movement" go back to ancient Babylon.
- b. Whether applied to the literal act of getting a neighbor drunk, or to mislead him with false religious tenets, the result is the same: the perpetrator will be sorely punished. They would be filled with shame instead of glory; their nakedness would be exposed; the shameful vomiting of a drunk would be on their glory.
- c. The violence done to Lebanon would be theirs to suffer; destruction as that done by wild beasts would come upon them. The reasons: they had shed human blood; they had done violence to the land, to the city, and to the inhabitants thereof. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:5-6).
6. Verses 18-20: "What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."
- a. The fifth woe is directed against idolaters. The Babylonians were idol worshippers. The prophet begins by stating with rhetorical questions that there is no profit in worshipping idols; these have been made by man's skill and tools. The idols are less than the man; man is the creator of them and they are his creation. Therefore, woe to those who attribute life and power to these lifeless objects. No such object can speak, move, or act in any way.
- b. On the other hand, the living God is in his holy temple; earth's inhabitants had better reverence him; he is alive, powerful, and is fully able to enforce his will upon mankind. Obedience to him is in the best interest of us all, for not only does he have power to punish, he also is able to reward; and his rewards are far beyond our frail capabilities to comprehend or appreciate in this life.

HABUKKUK 3

A. Habakkuk 3:1-2: The Prophet Prays for Mercy as the Nation Faces the Frightful Judgment.

1. Verse 1: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth."
 - a. "The prophet concludes his book with what is conceded by many writers to be one of the most beautiful psalms in the Bible. The Lord has answered his complaints. He now understands that Judah and Jerusalem must be punished for their sins, that God is going to use the Chaldeans for his work of judgment, and that God will then punish the wicked Chaldean nation who deified its power, going beyond the bounds of all restraint" (Hailey, p.289).
 - b. The word *Shigionoth* indicates that the prayer (psalm) was to be sung.
2. Verse 2: "O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."
 - a. Habakkuk grasps the picture of Judah's predicament; they had sinned grievously and must be punished, or else they would become so polluted that God would be unable to work out the ultimate plan he purposed to do through Israel.
 - b. The prophet confesses his fear over the dreadful judgment that God must send upon his people, but now that he perceives the need, he is reconciled to the fact.
 - c. He hastens to implore God to revive his great work in the "midst of the years."
 - 1) God had taken the necessary actions to bring the nation of Israel into being by raising up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by multiplying the descendants of Jacob in Egypt, and bringing them forth from their bondage to become a full-fledged nation. He gave Israel the Law, and protected, blessed and punished her down through the centuries to the present.
 - 2) The prophet pleads with God to preserve his handiwork even through this forthcoming judgment. Although the severest punishment Israel had ever faced lay in her immediate future when she would be captivated and enslaved, and deported into a foreign country, with a very great many of its citizens being slain, and its greatest city and their temple utterly destroyed in the process, Habakkuk earnestly prayed for God not to forsake his work, but revive it.
 - d. In exhibiting divine wrath, the prophet entreated the Lord to remember mercy. As God had been moved to show lovingkindness to his people in the past, he urged him to temper his wrath with mercy. God would have to do this or else the entire population of Judah would have been destroyed or would have been absorbed by the pagans during the seventy years of captivity.

B. Habakkuk 3:3-15: The Prophet Portrays God as Coming to Bless His People.

1. Verse 3: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise."
 - a. Teman (*south*) was the name of a place in Edom; Paran was the name of a mountain and plateau region to the west of Edom. Deuteronomy 33:2 contains a thought similar to the statement of this verse: "And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them."
 - b. Some have foolishly thought that this verse identifies the place God originated. The Greeks maintained that their god Zeus dwelt on Mount Olympus. But the Almighty does not dwell on his footstool! "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27). In fact, the verse affirms that God's glory extends to all of the heavens and the earth is full of his praise. The God of Israel is not some local idol, fictitious and without being.
 - c. God is pictured as coming from Teman and Paran, where his mighty power and glory had been manifested. It was in these areas that Israel had witnessed some of God's works. They camped at Kadesh-Barnea for a long time. "What is indicated is that in the entire district bordered by Teman (Edom) and Paran, God's hand had been very visible in his dealings with Israel" (Coffman, p.104).
 - d. "In this episode Habakkuk takes his imagery from the accounts of God's dealings with his people in old time, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, at the Jordan, in Canaan; he echoes the songs of Moses and Deborah and the psalmist; and he looks on all these mighty deeds as anticipative of God's great work, the overthrow of all that opposes and the establishment of the kingdom of Messiah. God (Eloah) came from Teman.
 - 1) "The words are connected with Moses' description of the Lord's appearance at Sinai (Deut 33:2; comp. Judg 5:4). As he then came in glory to make a covenant with his people, so will he appear again in majesty to deliver them from the power of evil and to execute judgment. The verbs throughout are best rendered in the present. The prophet takes his stand in time preceding the

- action of the verb, and hence uses the future tense, thus also showing that he is prophesying of a great event to come, symbolized by these earlier manifestations....Teman; i.e. Edom....
- 2) "In Moses' song the Lord is said to come from Sinai. Habakkuk omits Sinai, says Pusey which was the emblem of the Law, and points to another Lawgiver, like unto Moses, telling how he who spake the Law, God. should come in the likeness of man. The Holy One. A name of God (Hab 1:12), implying that he will not let iniquity pass unpunished, and that he will preserve the holy seed. Mount Paran. The mountainous district on the northeast of the desert of Et-Tih.
 - 3) "The glory of the Lord is represented as flashing on the two hilly regions separated by the Arabah. They both lay south of Canaan; and there is propriety in representing the redeemer and deliverer appearing in the south, as the Chaldean invader comes from the north" [Pulpit Commentary].
- e. The word *selah* is thought by many scholars to indicate a pause in the singing or reading of the passage, and that the word itself was not pronounced.
2. Verse 4: "And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power."
 - a. This picture of God is one of bright glory. He had horns (rays—ASV) coming forth from his hands. *Horn* is used in the Scriptures as symbolic of power.
 - b. His power was so mighty that there was no way it could be hidden from view, thus it is pictured as streaming from his hands.
 3. Verses 5-6: "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting."
 - a. Figurative language is used again to show God's power. His coming was one of judgment against the wicked, with disease preceding him and burning coals at his feet.
 - b. God used plagues and pestilences in punishing his enemies. They appeared in Egypt, in the wilderness wanderings, and in Palestine. What he has done, could again be done. The judgment could have reference to Judah or the Chaldeans, or both.
 - c. In verse six, he is pictured as measuring the earth for the purpose of prescribing the right amount and extent of judgment. Even the mountains, which seem to be able to stand forever, can be moved by God's power. The point here may be in reference to the seemingly invincible adversaries of God; even their power can be broken.
 - d. Judah could take note of two things in this: their punishment was certain; but that of the Chaldeans was also sure. The punishment of Babylon would result in Judah being blessed.
 4. Verses 7-10: "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high."
 - a. Two of Israel's ancient foes are used to represent all of God's enemies. As Cushan (Cush, i.e., Egypt and Ethiopia) had been defeated in the long ago, and the yoke of the Midianites had been cast off by Gideon, so all of those who would seek to withstand God would be caused to tremble in affliction and defeat.
 - b. God was not angry against the rivers and sea when he used them in defeating the intent of Pharaoh (Exod. 14). Rather, he used the Egyptian horses as a means of destroying their army, when they rushed into the gap between the two walls of water, in hot pursuit of Israel (cf. Psalm 77).
 5. Verse 11: "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear."
 - a. The miraculous event of Joshua 10:12-13 is referred to by this statement. In a supernatural operation that may be inexplicable to our feeble minds, God was able to extend the length of the daylight so as to enable Israel to conquer the Ammonites.
 - b. God's awesome power was demonstrated, as it was on countless other occasions. Credit is given to God for the victory Israel won on that "long day."
 6. Verse 12: "Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger."
 - a. The prophet describes here Israel's march through Canaan, when they invaded the land given to them in the promise made to Abraham hundreds of years earlier.
 - b. As in verse eleven, Habakkuk gives God the credit for the victories they won, for without his aid, they would not have been able to conquer the strong pagans occupying the land of promise.

- c. He figuratively depicts the overthrow of the heathen as a *threshing*. The anger of the Lord was on account of the great wickedness of the people then in Canaan.
 7. Verse 13: "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah."
 - a. God's purpose was the salvation of his people. What kind of salvation? And what people? The salvation of ancient Israel is doubtless included, but a broader view may be in the prophet's mind.
 - b. From the beginning, God knew that man would fall into sin, and thus need to be redeemed (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 13:8; Gal. 4:4). The ultimate salvation of all who would obey the will of God is probably the main thrust of the passage. God's *anointed* is most likely Christ. *Christ* [Messiah] means "the Anointed One."
 - c. But God saved Israel time and again through the Old Testament era. He preserved Abraham's seed so that they might develop into a nation; he protected and spared the nation many times. Without the continuation of Abraham's seed through David, God would not have been able to work out his great plan to redeem man by Christ.
 - d. During the ages of the past, God wounded the wicked, which was necessary to save the nation and prepare for the coming of Christ. Israel was finally released from Egypt when God directed his punishment toward the pharaoh himself. He afflicted the rank and file among the enemy. Thus, from the head, to the neck, to the very foundation, the enemies of God were thoroughly shaken.
 8. Verse 14: "Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly."
 - a. God did pierce the adversaries through with his own staves. God was able to join the Medes and Chaldeans together to destroy Nineveh; he was able to turn the Medes against the Chaldeans later, to overthrow Babylon. *Villages* is translated *warriors* in the ASV.
 - b. The enemies of Israel came out against her as ferociously as a whirlwind, intent on scattering the people. Only when God allowed them temporary and limited success, for the purpose of punishing sinful Israel, were the enemies able to subdue her.
 - c. The enemies of Israel, in the case Habakkuk identifies, were the Babylonians, who were more wicked than Israel in many ways. They were so vile that they rejoiced when destroying the poor. God would avenge them, as this verse indicates.
 9. Verse 15: "Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters" (KJV). "Thou didst tread the sea with thy horses, The heap of mighty waters" (ASV).
 - a. The rejoicing of the previous verse was hasty.
 - b. "...For as Jehovah had splashed through the seas and parted the rivers, riding upon his chariots of salvation in coming to the aid of his own (vv. 8-12), so would he now come. The people would remember the examples of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan, and the overflowing of the River Kishon and find assurance. His past actions were expressive of his character, and they become pledges for present and future actions" (Hailey, p.294).
- C. Habakkuk 3:16-19: The Prophet's Confidence For the Future.
1. Verse 16: "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops."
 - a. Returning to the theme of his book, namely that God would allow the Babylonian army to conquer and punish Judah, Habakkuk expresses his resolve to endure the coming affliction.
 - b. When Habakkuk first learned of the Chaldean invasion, he was filled with fear; his belly trembled, his lips quivered, and rottenness entered into his bones. The report was the worst possible news; he was overwhelmed by it.
 - c. But though he trembled within himself, he resolved to quietly wait for its coming, when the enemy would arrive to invade Judah with his troops.
 2. Verse 17: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls."
 - a. He understands correctly that the invasion will spell nothing but trouble for Israel. It would be the same as if the fig tree refused to blossom; and as though the vines would bear no fruit; and as if the labor over the olive trees would be of no avail; and as if the fields would produce no crops; and as if the flocks were cut off (destroyed) from the fold, and there were no cattle in the stalls.
 - b. The picture is one of utter desolation.
 3. Verse 18: "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

- a. Although the dire picture of verse seventeen would describe their condition when the invasion came, the prophet was confident for the future.
 - b. He knew that this was God's plan to punish the wicked in Israel; he knew that the Babylonians would also be properly punished in due time; he knew that God would not abandon his people, but would insure their continuation. He rejoiced, therefore, over the realization that God's ultimate purposes would be fulfilled. He demonstrates great faith.
4. Verse 19: "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."
- a. The reason for his rejoicing is further shown. Although the nation would be severely treated, God would give him the strength to endure.
 - b. He would enable him to run with the *feet of a hind* (a deer). The enemy could not overtake him! He would be enabled to walk upon high places, signifying ultimate victory. As the deer can flee to the mountains and escape danger, so would he.
 - c. God answered the prophet's questions, enabling him to be confident toward the future that was fraught with problems. The just shall indeed live by faith!
 - d. "*To the chief singer on my stringed instruments*. This line, which is evidently a superscription, leads me to suppose that when the prophet had completed his short ode, he folded it up, with the above direction to the master singer, or leader of the choir, to be sung in the temple service. Many of the Psalms are directed in the same way. 'To the master singer;' or, 'chief musician;' to be sung, according to their nature, on different kinds of instruments, or with particular airs or tunes" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft].

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

A. Zephaniah, the Prophet.

1. The name *Zephaniah* means *He whom Jehovah hides* (or has hidden, protected, or treasured).
 - a. It has been conjectured that he was born during the days of Manasseh, and was so-named because he was hidden from the slaughter Manasseh raised. "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 21:16).
 - b. Two other men wear this name in the Old Testament, but there is no indication that the prophet is to be identified with either of them (2 Kings 25:18; 1 Chron. 6:36).
2. Zephaniah traces his lineage back four generations, an unusual procedure for the prophets.
 - a. His father was Cushi; his grandfather was Gedaliah; his great-grandfather was Amariah; his great-great-grandfather was Hizkiah (Hezekiah). He was separated from Hezekiah by about one hundred years. Isaiah and Micah worked in Judah during the days of Hezekiah, about 730 B.C.
 - b. Although the prophet does not identify Hezekiah as King Hezekiah, the time factor fits that righteous ruler. Also, his prophesying was during the days of Josiah; Josiah was a descendant of King Hezekiah, and a cousin to Zephaniah. The lineage of Josiah and Zephaniah:

Hezekiah	Hezekiah
Manasseh	Amariah
Amon	Gedaliah
Josiah	Cushi
	Zephaniah

3. Zephaniah did his work in Judah, especially in Jerusalem. In 1:4, he promises punishment on the "remnant of Baal" in *this place* (Jerusalem).

B. The Date of Zephaniah.

1. The time the prophet assigns to his work is "in the days of Josiah...king of Judah" (1:1). Josiah reigned from about 640 to 609 B.C.
2. His prophecy was delivered prior to the fall of Nineveh which occurred in 612 B.C. In 2:13, Zephaniah predicted Nineveh's desolation.
3. His prophecy was given prior to the reform initiated by Josiah. See 2 Kings 22-23 and 2 Chronicles 34 for details of Josiah's great work of correcting the sinful situations that prevailed in Judah at the time, which had resulted from the evil which Amon and Manasseh had introduced.
 - a. "The fact that Zephaniah denounces foreign customs, worship of the heavenly bodies, religious syncretism, and practical skepticism makes some basis for the claim that the prophet precedes Josiah's reform. There is, however, no sound basis for assuming that his oracles played a part in that reform" (Lewis, p.47).
 - b. Josiah ascended the throne when he was eight years old, and began his reform during his eighteenth year (of age or of rule?). "Josiah *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *that* the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying" (2 Kings 22:1-3). "This is the date of the finding of the Book of the Law and of the Passover (marginal reference, and 2 Kings 23:23), but is not meant to apply to all the various reforms of Josiah as related in 2 Kings 23:4-20.
 - c. The true chronology of Josiah's reign is to be learned from 2 Chron 34:3-8; 35:1. From these places it appear that at least the greater part of his reforms preceded the finding of the Book of the Law. He began them in the 12 th year of his reign, at the age of 20, and had accomplished all, or the greater part, by his 18 th year, when the Book of the Law was found" (Barnes, PC Study Bible).
 - d. The likely date of Zephaniah's work was about 630-625 B.C. He was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah and the prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:14).

C. The Book of Zephaniah.

1. The book contains three elements.
 - a. The prophet's own people are warned.
 - b. Foreign nations are denounced.
 - c. A vision of future glory for Israel is revealed.
2. The major theme of the book is **The Day of the Lord**.
 - a. "No hotter book lies in all the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, saltpits, and owls and ravens looking from the windows of desolate palaces" (George A. Smith, quoted by Hailey, p.226).
 - b. Zephaniah 1:7: "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests."
 - c. Zephaniah 1:14: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."
3. Relevant lessons of the book.
 - a. The greatest danger to God's cause is not by active resistance, but by passive indifference.
 - b. There is a continuing need for God's people to be warned.
 - c. God is the God of the universe. Zephaniah shows that God's "judgment falls upon all. The gods of the nations are non-entities; Jehovah alone is God. As terrors fall upon all alike, so also from among all will some be saved. As he looks beyond the doom and destruction of a world judgment, the prophet draws a sublime picture of the Messianic age (3:14-20), though he does not mention or describe the Messiah Himself....The other prophets make clear that this redemptive work of Jehovah would be accomplished through the Messiah; but to Zephaniah it is Jehovah who will fulfill his purpose" (Hailey, p.226).

D. Zephaniah Exposes Seven Sins of Judah.

1. They mixed true religion with false religion: "And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham" (Zeph. 1:5).
2. They wore foreign apparel: "And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel" (Zeph. 1:8).
3. The practice of fraud and violence was prominent: "In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit" (Zeph. 1:9).
4. The problem of indifference figured prominently in his message of denunciation: "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil" (Zeph. 1:12).
5. Prophets, priests, and judges were violent and wanton: "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law" (Zeph. 3:2-4).
6. They refused to be corrected, ignoring the lessons of history and wisdom: "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!....The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings" (Zeph. 3:1, 5-7).
7. They had a limited concept of God. "The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame" (Zeph. 3:5).

E. The Purpose of the Prophecy of Zephaniah.

1. It seems obvious that some nation was threatening Judah. In view of the fact that within a few short years, the Babylonian army entered Palestine and subjugated Judah, it is clear that this is the threatening enemy.
2. "Scholars are divided over the occasion that gave rise to his prophesying. Some think it was provoked by the invasion of the Scythians, who poured south from the northern steppes about this time. These ruthless hordes invaded the Assyrian empire and followed the Mediterranean coast south to the border of Egypt where they were turned back. Others think that his prophesying was prompted by the rise of the Chaldean power, which Zephaniah saw as the ultimate threat of a general world judgment. The weight of evidence lends greater credence to this latter view" (Hailey, p.223).

3. As Lewis indicates, the Sythian invasion never materialized. "There is no valid reason to make a prophet predict an invasion that never materialized unless the evidence is conclusive that he did so" (Lewis, p.48).

F. The Background of the Book.

1. The political background in Judah helps us to set Zephaniah's prophecy in perspective.
 - a. Hezekiah was followed on the throne by his son Manasseh, who was only twelve years of age. Manasseh undid much of the good work his father had accomplished, and was probably the most wicked of the kings of Judah. He rebuilt the shrines and images of idolatry; he caused his son to "pass through the fire," and dealt with familiar spirits. He filled Jerusalem with innocent blood (2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chron. 33:1ff). He later tried to correct some of his youthful sins (2 Chron. 33:10ff).
 - b. Amon succeeded his father Manasseh, and did evil after Manasseh's early pattern: "Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead" (2 Chron. 33:21-25).
 - c. Amon's son Josiah, who became king at the tender age of eight, was the last good king to reign in Judah. He began a sweeping reform in the kingdom which saw the idols and their altars destroyed; he destroyed the altar which Jeroboam had set up at Bethel, fulfilling the prophecy of the "young" prophet of 1 Kings 13. He polluted the altars by burning the bones of false priests on them. He cleansed and renovated the temple. It was during the days of Josiah that Zephaniah labored.
2. The political scene in the lands to the east of Palestine played an important role in Zephaniah's work. Assyria had held sway in the political arena for many years, being the dominant force during the days of Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah. But the power of the Assyrian Empire was waning; there was a new power coming into being.
 - a. "In 625 B.C. Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, declared the independence of Chaldea from her Assyrian lords, thus establishing an independent kingdom in Babylon. This led to war between Babylon and Nineveh. In 614 B.C. the Medes captured Ashur, a chief city of Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar and general of his army, led an attack against Nineveh. Assisted by the Medes, he was able to take the city and destroyed it completely in 612 B.C. This is an important date in history. The remnant of the Assyrian army fled west where it entrenched itself near Haran. After destroying Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar reorganized his forces and followed the Assyrians to Haran where he attacked and destroyed the remaining forces of Assyrian power in 609 B.C. The last vestige of Assyrian supremacy was now gone. This left the Chaldean nation the undisputed master of the East" (Hailey, p.224).
 - b. Pharaoh-necho of Egypt marched his army north through Palestine, endeavoring to enter the fray in which Babylon defeated the Assyrians. Josiah tried to stop the Egyptians by military force in a battle at Megiddo, but lost his life in the fighting. This was in 609 B.C.
 - c. Pharaoh-necho's army was defeated by the Babylonians in a battle at Carchemish, near Haran, in 606 B.C. The retreat of the Egyptians led Nebuchadnezzar into the land of Judah, where he subdued Jerusalem.
 - d. In the same year, the Babylonian king took Jerusalem and carried captives back with him to Babylon, including Daniel and his three friends. When Judah revolted against their Babylonian overlords in 597 and 586 B.C., the army of Babylonia returned to Jerusalem, where other captives were taken; Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed in the second of these instances.
3. Under the prophetic influence of such men as Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, Josiah conducted a sweeping religious reform in Judah. The need for reform is seen in the presence of injustice, corruption, idolatry, violence, and indifference toward God's law. The evils that Micah had denounced in Judah were rampant in the land.
4. In this background, Zephaniah was raised up by the Lord to speak a very severe message of judgment against the people. But the prophet held out a ray of hope to the remnant who wanted to serve God (3:14-20).

ZEPHANIAH 1

A. Zephaniah 1:1-6: Introduction and Stage-Setting Prophecy.

1. Verse 1: "The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah."
 - a. The prophet immediately connects his lineage with the good king Hezekiah, and in so doing he shows his kinship to Josiah, the current king. Josiah brought about a wide-spread reform during his reign, but it was short-lived.
 - b. Zephaniah's message does not tout that reform, suggesting that he realized it would not last, or perhaps his work was intended to develop the reformation.
 - c. Everyone knew that Josiah was in the royal lineage of David, and that Hezekiah was one of his ancestors. By stating that his great-great-grandfather was Hezekiah, Zephaniah's lineage is linked with that of Josiah, hence would possibly obtain a better hearing of his inspired message.
 - d. The setting of his work was the Kingdom of Judah, about a hundred years after the work of Isaiah and Micah. The Kingdom of Israel had been conquered and many of its citizens had been carried into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Now in 630 B.C., Zephaniah foretells the same kind of fate for Judah.
2. Verse 2: "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD."
 - a. Having given a very brief introduction, he promptly states the leading line of his revelation: God will surely follow a scorched-earth policy when he sends judgment on the nation.
 - b. History-changing events were in the offing at the time of his prophecy. Within the next twenty-five years, Babylon would subdue the Assyrian Empire, and capture Jerusalem. Their rule would be mighty, but they would fall to the Medes and Persians in less than a hundred years (539 B.C.). The Babylonian ascendancy would run parallel to the subjugation of Judah. The rise of the Babylonian Empire led to the demise of Judah, and with the fall of the Babylonian Empire came the release of Judah from captivity. We think of the Babylonian rule as being one of the great periods of history, and so it was, but it rose and fell within the span of a century!
 - c. Zephaniah did not subscribe to the Dale Carnegie philosophy of positivism. He quickly plunged into the severe denunciation of Judah for her rebellion against God. He did not fear offending his audience. That he had the right approach is obvious since he was simply repeating the words God gave him!
 - d. We should not try to offend people; to deliver gospel truths to people without causing offense is our aim, but cannot often be done. But before anyone can be pleasing to God, they must repent; and repentance is a painful experience. Without godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), there can be no repentance; sincere sorrow over past sins must precede a change of life. Since the average person does not want to make a change, he will be angered, and perhaps incensed, when the truth is presented.
 - e. Every significant principle of Bible truth offends someone.
 - 1) The atheists are offended at the idea of God. Jews are offended at the idea of Jesus. The worldly-minded are offended at the standard of morality given in the Bible. The modernist is offended at the idea of Bible miracles. The liberal is offended at the idea that the gospel is God's law. The sectarian is offended at the one-church truth presented in the Bible. The list could be extended considerably.
 - 2) The church is not making much progress in America today; the prime reason is the rebellious disposition of the average person in the land; but another reason is the fear we have of giving offense. Perhaps we have imbibed more of the spirit of Carnegie than we have of the spirit of Zephaniah! Perhaps a little more thunder from us to go along with the lightning of the gospel would produce a greater stir in the indifferent minds of the complacent in our land.
3. Verse 3: "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD."
 - a. The description given here depicts the sweeping invasion of the Babylonian army which would affect all of the land. Birds, beasts, fish, and men would be affected. The point being made is the severity of the judgment God is about to send. The fish and waterfowl escaped the great flood, but they are included in this judgment.
 - b. "This all-embracing declaration is not to be explained away simply as hyperbole, for other prophets had shown that the animal creation is affected by man's sin (Joel 1:18; Hos. 4:3; Jer. 12:4)" (Hailey, pp.228f).
 - 1) Joel 1:18: "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate."

- 2) Hosea 4:3: "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."
 - 3) Jeremiah 12:4: "How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end."
 - c. The judgment would be directed against the *stumblingblocks*, also. Stumblingblocks are hindrances; but hindrances to what? The prophet is addressing people whose service to God is being blocked. Idolatry, with all that is included with it, was their great problem; it interfered with their service to God. God warns here that he will remove these and all other stumblingblocks. Their removal would be violent and painful—and complete.
 - d. The awesome scene depicted by the Old Testament of Babylon's violent and cruel destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.), conforms to the prophetic picture of that terrible event which Zephaniah gives here. 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52.
4. Verse 4: "I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests."
 - a. The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem are pinpointed as the primary objects of God's judgment. The primary cause of his punishment is their worship of Baal; those who followed idolatry would be taken away. The vestiges of idolatry would be removed.
 - b. The Israelites opined that their standing with God was so secure that they would be preserved and blessed, while all of God's wrath would be directed toward their enemies.
 - c. The *Chemarims* (Chemarin—ASV) would be removed. This word is the Aramaic word for *priest*, and carries the root meaning of *black* (i.e., "black-robed").
 - 1) 2 Kings 23:5: "And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven."
 - 2) Hosea 10:5: "The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof *that* rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it."
 - d. These Chemarin were the priests who served the idols. Their future was limited and their fate determined.
 5. Verse 5: "And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham."
 - a. The same fate awaited those who served the host of heaven (those who worshipped the stars and other heavenly bodies), as well as those who worshipped the Lord on the one hand and Malcham on the other (those who divided their loyalty between God and Malcham).
 - b. The star worshippers entered into their evil services on the flat housetops of the land, so as to be better able to see the objects of their devotions. Such worship was strictly forbidden by the law of Moses (Deut. 4:19). It was widely practiced in Assyria and Babylonia, and was adopted by foolish Israelites.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 4:19: "And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven."
 - 2) 2 Kings 23:11: "And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire."
 - 3) Jeremiah 19:13: "And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods."
 - 4) Jeremiah 32:29: "And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger."
 - 5) Ezekiel 8:16: "And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

- 6) Acts 7:42: "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of forty years in the wilderness?*"
 - c. *Malcham* was one of the baalim. The people indicated would swear by Jehovah and by Baal. They made one of the basic blunders of religion, trying to divide devotion between the true God and a false god (Matt. 6:24).
6. Verse 6: "And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him."
 - a. The fate announced for those named in verse four is the fate also of those who fell away from the Lord and for those who did not seek after the Lord.
 - b. This Old Testament reference puts the lie to the denominational dogma that a child of God cannot fall away and be lost. Israelites were born into God's nation, but had to continue to practice those things required in the Law to retain his standing with the Lord. Those who turned back to the ways of the world would be condemned. But what about those Israelites who never sought to serve God? They would be lost.
 - c. The punishment emphasized in the text would be of a temporal nature, but those who die in a lost condition, in the Old Testament or during our own Christian Age, must face the Judgment of the last day, with the inevitable outcome of eternal condemnation (Rev. 20:12-15; Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Rom. 14:10-12; Heb. 9:27).
- B. Zephaniah 1:7-13: God Invites the Nations to His Sacrifice.
1. Verse 7: "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests."
 - a. The nation of Judah was to be sacrificed to the wrath of God's judgment; those invited to witness this awesome event would be the nations of the earth.
 - b. God instructs those invited to hold their peace, because "the day of the Lord is at hand." Even in the affairs of men, there are certain notable occasions so solemn and impressive that a hushed silence voluntarily overwhelms the audience.
 - c. God is usually ignored or even repudiated by lowly mankind; little notice is given him, and even less homage. In those cases where God took a direct hand in earthly affairs during Bible times, the impact upon those men who were witnesses of his actions was tremendous. The guards at Christ's tomb were paralyzed with fear at the appearance of an angel. Belshazzar, the ruler of Babylon, trembled and shook when the fingers of a man's hand materialized and wrote on the wall (Dan. 5).
 - d. We cannot see God with our human eyes, since he is spirit (John 4:24; Lk. 24:39), but there are so many proofs of his existence that one would be truly foolish to deny his being: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Ps. 14:1).
 - e. That there is a God who created and who sustains this earth and universe, no right-thinking person will deny. When we perceive what God has created, we are thoroughly impressed with his greatness in power and wisdom. Those who are truly perceptive will stand in awe of God, gladly tendering to him the reverence and service his majestic nature demands.
 2. Verse 8: "And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel."
 - a. The sacrifice God is describing is shown here to be the punishment of the evil people of Judah. The prince and his children are especially noted as objects of God's wrath, together with all those in the nation who are clothed with strange apparel.
 - b. The royal family in the kingdoms of men are usually exempt from the turmoil and trouble that the common people face. When a famine strikes, the royalty might continue to feast sumptuously. But these would not avoid the judgment God would send. The princes are the offspring of the former kings. All the kings of Israel after Saul were all descendants of David. None of the kings of the 10 tribes were from David. And Babylon carried off the royal seed first.
 - c. God would not punish someone for doing something that was innocent, thus the action described (the wearing strange apparel) must have been sinful. The Mosaic Law forbade men to wear women's clothing, and women to wear men's clothing (Deut. 22:5).
 - d. The Israelites were prohibited from taking any accursed thing from Jericho when the city was taken (Josh. 6:18-19). Achan took, among other items, a "goodly Babylonish garment" (Josh. 7:21). For his violation, he paid the supreme penalty. That garment was classified, by implication, as an "accursed" thing. There was something about those outlandish garments that made them wrong for an Israelite to wear; perhaps it identified them with pagans; perhaps there was something immodest

about them; or perhaps they pertained to the opposite sex. Wearing clothing from pagan lands would make them be that much like the pagans, which God forbade.

3. Verse 9: "In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit."
 - a. "Leaping on the thresholds" is a picture of stewards rushing upon houses to steal or to extort property for their masters. Using violence and deceit, the covetous would seek to deprive the innocent of their possessions.
 - b. Having the steward or some other servant do the evil work, would allow the master to disavow any knowledge of the crime, but God knew their complicity.
4. Verse 10: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills."
 - a. The judgment being described would be at the hands of the invading Babylonian army. Zephaniah depicts certain sounds which would presage the downfall of the city.
 - b. The punishment they would bring to bear would be announced by a cry from the fish gate, which is said to have been located toward the northeastern part of the wall of Jerusalem. A watchman from this location would be likely the first to spot the approaching enemy and give the initial warning. 2 Chronicles 33:14; Nehemiah 3:1-6.
 - c. The second (gate or quarter) was the place from which a "howling" would be heard. Those who were there who spied the enemy would raise a terrible cry of anguish and terror that naturally would send fear throughout the city.
 - d. A great crashing from the hills would be heard, which probably describes the noise of the approaching army, possibly already engaged in fighting. Hailey suggested that the crashing could be the sound emanating from the high points around the city as the enemy took those places.
5. Verse 11: "Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off."
 - a. "Maktesh" would be some well-known part of the city, possible a section where rich merchants were situated. The "merchant people" is rendered "people of Canaan" in the ASV.
 - b. But the merchants were Israelites "who had become as Canaanites in the way they conducted their business (cf. Hos. 12:7)" (Hailey, pp.231f). Those who dealt in silver would be in special trouble.
6. Verse 12: "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil."
 - a. The next part of the population identified as objects of his wrath are those who say in their hearts, "The Lord will neither do good nor evil."
 - b. God says he would search out Jerusalem with candles to find such people. They would be discovered and punished. Diogenes, an ancient philosopher, went about with a lamp in the daytime, saying he was searching for an honest man. As Roy J. Hearn used to say, "His actions imply that he himself was not an honest man!"
 - c. Josephus described the capture of certain leading men during the Roman war in 70 A.D., as being dragged from sewers, pits and tombs where they had hidden. They were unable to avoid punishment, and those back in 586 B.C. could not evade capture by the Babylonians.
 - d. Those who had "settled on their lees" would be punished. This is a figure of speech taken from the ancient method of producing wine. After the grapes were pressed, the juice was poured from vessel to vessel in order to separate the liquid from its settlings. If the juice was allowed to remain on the dregs, a bad taste developed. Thus, a man who had settled on his lees was a man who had contaminated himself by having close contact with evil. (See Hailey, p.232).
 - e. Their idea that God would take no action, good or evil, toward them would be exposed as erroneous. Our modern humanists claim that if the human family is to be *saved*, it must save itself. The salvation they have in mind is maintaining a good life of peace, happiness, and prosperity. The foolish heart of an unbeliever claims that God cannot help and will not punish.
7. Verse 13: "Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof."
 - a. The faulty thinking of the sinful individuals will be demonstrated as false in the most convincing fashion. The goods these evil men had acquired would become booty for the invaders, and their houses would be made desolate.
 - b. In the time prior to the coming of Babylon, some of them would build houses, but would not be able to live in them; others would plant vineyards, but be unable to enjoy the produce thereof.

C. Zephaniah 1:14-18: The Day of the Lord is Near.

1. Verse 14: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."
 - a. The great day of the Lord is near; it is rushing ever nearer; the harshness of its coming will cause even the mighty men to cry out bitterly. The Assyrians were the rulers of the earth at the time prior to the coming of Babylon.
 - b. But in important battles, the Babylonians were able to dislodge the Assyrians, and take over as the great evil empire of the time, which sought to swallow all of the lesser kingdoms. The Lord had predicted that it would be Babylon, not Assyria, which would conquer Judah (Jer. 20:4-6).
2. Verse 15: "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."
 - a. Zephaniah paints a terribly dismal picture of the "great day of the Lord."
 - b. It would not be a glorious day for evil men, but a day of wrath, trouble and distress, wastefulness and desolation, darkness and gloom, of clouds and thick darkness.
3. Verse 16: "A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers."
 - a. He further describes the horror of the day of the Lord. It will be a time of trumpet and alarm, when the fenced cities will be in danger and the high towers will be in peril.
 - b. These would not be sufficient to defend the city. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain" (Ps. 127:1).
4. Verse 17: "And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung."
 - a. In the midst of the tribulation, the sinner would perish. They would be like a blind man, who finds trouble without looking for it; he stumbles into difficulties while sincerely trying to avoid the same.
 - b. The blood of these sinful men would be spilled in the dust and their flesh would be scattered upon the ground; and no one would care.
5. Verse 18: "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."
 - a. They trusted their riches to deliver them, but their silver and gold would be worthless to that end. In fact, their riches would merely spur the enemy to press the battle so that they could enrich themselves at the expense of these Israelites.
 - b. Just so, our fine clothing, beautiful buildings, grand automobiles and yachts will not stay the hand of God when he sends judgment upon our world. God would make a speedy riddance of the sinful men who had corrupted themselves, their nation, and the Law of God.
 - c. 2 Peter 3:8-14: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

ZEPHANIAH 2

A. Zephaniah 2:1-3: A Call to Repentance Before They Are Swept Away as Chaff.

1. Verse 1: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired."
 - a. The first three verses grow out of the denouncement of the preceding chapter. As the judgment grows closer to Jerusalem, the prophet issues this call for their repentance and restoration.
 - b. "In His call to repentance Jehovah addresses His people as 'O nation,' the same term He uses of the heathen people. Judah had sunk to the level of the heathen, having 'no shame,' without a longing for anything better; therefore, it is repent or perish with the surrounding idolatries" (Hailey, p.234).
 - c. The whole nation of Judah is to gather itself together. They are to take stock of themselves, for they are unashamed of their conduct. In their present condition, they are "undesired" by the Lord. A sinful life is repulsive to any right-thinking person. The ASV has *no shame* in place of *not desired* in the KJV.
2. Verse 2: "Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you."
 - a. The people of Judah are called upon to repent before the day of punishment arrives. It is God's desire that all sinful men repent (2 Pet. 3:9), so he offers to them an appeal to this end.
 - b. The *decree* mandating the judgment has already been issued, but there is still time for them to change. Repentance might not change the decree, but it might not be so harsh (verse 3) for the penitent.
 - c. The fierceness of the Lord's anger was to be feared. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).
3. Verse 3: "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."
 - a. The meek of the earth are admonished to seek the Lord. They are to seek righteousness and greater meekness. Righteousness is right-doing; it is obedience to the will of God. Meekness is that quality of mind that causes one to submit to his will.
 - b. The call is addressed to "all ye meek of the earth." There were still some members of the ten tribes on earth, surviving in Assyrian captivity. There were others who sought to serve the True God. Some in Judah were still meek.
 - c. The Lord does not promise to remove the threat of judgment, but offers them the possibility that they might avoid the full brunt of its severity. The only means of hope is for them to seek the Lord, by seeking to be meek and righteous. Compare: "For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17-18).

B. Zephaniah 2:4-7: The Destruction of Philistia is Promised.

1. Verse 4: "For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up."
 - a. Four prominent cities of the Philistines, earmarked for destruction, represent the whole nation. These were cruel and idolatrous people, and hated Israel.
 - b. Gaza would be forsaken; it would be deserted. There is a play on words here, since the word for Gaza is *assah* and the word for forsaken is *asubah*. Gaza is depicted in Acts 8:26 as a deserted area: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."
 - c. Ashkelon would be made desolate. The inhabitants of Ashdod would be driven out at noon, suggesting that they would be forced to leave in the heat of the day or that their eviction would only require a half-day's work. Ekron would be rooted up in this same judgment.
 - d. That this prophecy came to pass is seen by the absence of the Philistines today; and archaeology verifies its fulfillment.
2. Verse 5: "Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant."
 - a. The inhabitants of the sea coast and the Cherethites (1 Sam. 30:14; Ezek. 25:16) are references to the Philistines; the entire context (verses 4-7) has them as its subject matter.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 30:14: "We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire."

- 2) Ezekiel 25:16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast."
 - b. They were situated in Canaan, but following the impending judgment, they would be removed.
 3. Verse 6: "And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks."
 - a. In the place of the Philistines, shepherds would operate there, and there would be dwellings and cottages.
 - b. When the Philistines were in their prime, their territory was a dangerous place for the outsider, but that would be changed when God brought his vengeance upon them.
 4. Verse 7: "And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity."
 - a. In time to come, the remnant of Judah (those who would later return to Canaan from their captivity in Babylonia), would take possession of Philistine territory.
 - b. Only God could have foreseen this.
- C. Zephaniah 2:8-11: The Punishment of Moab and Ammon is Announced.
1. Verse 8: "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border."
 - a. Having addressed the demise of Judah's western neighbor, God now pronounces a judgment against those who resided toward the east. Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot by his two daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).
 - b. Although the descendants of these two were related to the descendants of Isaac, there was little they had in common. The Moabites and Ammonites were wicked people, and strove against and contaminated Israel through the years (cf. Num. 22-25).
 - c. Amos exposed the sins of these evil nations (1:13-15; 2:1-3). The penalty they were to receive was just.
 2. Verse 9: "Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them."
 - a. Moab would become as Sodom, and Ammon as Gomorrah. Those two wicked cities of ancient days (Gen. 19), had had their evil effect on the daughters of Lot, and so the descendants of Lot's daughters would suffer a similar fate as did Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - b. The territories of Moab and Ammon would become inhospitable to human habitation, and productive of nettles.
 - c. "Nelson Glueck, the famous Jewish archaeologist, has located hundreds of rockstrewn ruins of ancient villages and towns of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, which bear mute testimony to the prophet's inspiration" (Hailey, p.237).
 3. Verse 10: "This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The sins of Moab and Ammon included bringing reproach against Israel and lifting themselves up in pride against God's holy nation. For their transgressions they must pay.
 - b. If anyone thinks that opposing the righteous or being haughty is a harmless matter, let him consider the fate of the Ammonites and Moabites.
 4. Verse 11: "The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen."
 - a. God's attitude toward idolatry is severe—and rightly so. The worship of idols is an insult even to human judgment. It turns men from the True God to false gods. It degrades its worshippers by leading them into all kinds of odious practices.
 - b. God will cause the false gods to famish, to starve to death. When he robs them of their worshippers, the idols will pine away. Israel learned a terrible lesson about the emptiness and vileness of idolatry when Babylon carried her away. Since then, the Jews have had no dealings with idols, and the lands controlled by the Arabs have turned from idolatry.
 - c. There seems to be a subtle reference to the Christian Age in the latter part of the verse, when God speaks of men from around the earth turning to Jehovah.
- D. Zephaniah 2:12-15: Judgment Against Ethiopia and Assyria is Announced.
1. Verse 12: "Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword."
 - a. The wicked who lived toward the south of Canaan would be punished.

- b. "Ethiopia was the most remote of the nations to the south known to the Jews. It was located south of the second cataract of the Nile and probably included the third and fourth and possibly the fifth cataract. For years Egypt had been under the rule of Ethiopian kings; therefore, when the prophet foretold the down fall of Ethiopia his prophecy would include Egypt as well" (Hailey, p.238).
- c. God's would send a sword against this nation, which occurred in 586 B.C. when the Babylonian army invaded Egypt.
 - 1) Ezekiel 29:17-20: "And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD."
 - 2) Ezekiel 30:24-25: "And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded *man*. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt."
2. Verse 13: "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness."
 - a. Toward the north from Palestine lay the route to Assyria, although the bulk of the nation lay more toward the northeast.
 - b. The Assyrian Empire would be destroyed, and its capital city (Nineveh) would be turned into a wasteland. About 18 years later, Nineveh fell to the Babylonians.
 - c. So complete was Nineveh's devastation, that it disappeared from human sight until the 19th century A.D.
3. Verse 14: "And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work."
 - a. In 630 B.C., the Assyrians remained a formidable foe for anyone. Nevertheless, Jehovah predicted the demise of their empire.
 - b. Instead of their mighty hosts, their land would be occupied by flocks, beasts, the cormorant and the bittern. The ASV has *pelican* and *porcupine* in place of cormorant and bittern.
 - c. The modern names for the creatures indicated are difficult to know, but the point is clear: whereas the Assyrian cities had once been occupied by the mighty, the time was coming when the creatures of the earth would live there. These creatures would take over; they would lay bare the cedar work that contributed to the richness of Assyrian palaces.
4. Verse 15: "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand."
 - a. The inhabitants of Nineveh were overly proud of their grand city. They lived without a care, believing that there was no earthly force that could breach their walls.
 - b. They considered themselves to be the greatest of all powers. They had a haughty opinion of their greatness, describing themselves in language that only befits the Creator: *I am, and there is none beside me*. Compare: "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is none else*" (Isa. 45:18).
 - c. But Nineveh would become a desolate place, inhabited by the lowly creatures of the earth. So great would be her fall and so complete her destruction, that those who passed by could only shake their head in amazement, and hiss. Well said the wise man: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18; cf. 2 Sam. 24; Dan. 4:28-37; Isa. 3:16-26).

ZEPHANIAH 3

A. Zephaniah 3:1-7: Jerusalem is Again Warned About God's Judgment.

1. Verse 1: "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!"
 - a. The city is not identified by name, but in keeping with the main thrust of the book, Jerusalem is the city. Zephaniah was sent to denounce the sins of Judah and to point to the judgment the people must suffer because of them.
 - b. The prophet describes the city as one that is filthy and polluted, and the source of oppression. They were filthy and polluted because of their rejection of God's word, and their subsequent turn to idolatry. Their rebellion against God's will lead them into acts of violence and perversions of justice for their own enrichment (1:9).
2. Verse 2: "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God."
 - a. Zephaniah pinpoints here the reasons why Jerusalem was filthy and polluted.
 - 1) The people had disobeyed the voice of God.
 - 2) They would not receive instruction in the way of righteousness.
 - 3) They refused to trust God.
 - 4) They turned away from God, and would not approach him.
 - b. These four charges were extremely serious, for the transgressions indicated led to the overthrow of the city and the destruction and captivity of the inhabitants. Today, the same violations are seen on every hand in our world. Man cannot expect to avoid punishment today for these infractions any more than those Jews did.
3. Verse 3: "Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow."
 - a. The princes of Judah were violent men; those who served as judges were like wolves in the evening —tearing and destroying for their own satisfaction.
 - b. When these judges get through, they leave nothing for the future.
4. Verse 4: "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."
 - a. The prophets of Judah were empty and treacherous; they have nothing of value to offer the people, but rather deal in treachery. The messages they delivered were of their own design, for they did not speak for God. The priests of Judah polluted the temple with their services; they did violence to God's law.
 - b. When anyone who purports to be a public servant of God teaches or practices things not condoned by God's law, he does damage to God's purpose.
5. Verse 5: "The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame."
 - a. God is just; he will render only that which is right; he cannot do otherwise. He is in the midst of the corrupted city, beholding the evil that was being done by all of those noted above.
 - b. God must act consistently with his own nature. "If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). He can neither do nor condone anything that is inconsistent with righteousness and holiness. His word is the epitome of righteousness and holiness; it makes a man righteous and holy, and thus prepares the individual to stand in the presence of the Almighty.
 - c. "He had not deceived them; for continuously, 'morning by morning' (margin, ASV), he had brought to light and manifested his justice and righteousness before them in his treatment of both Israel and the heathen nations" (Hailey, p.241).
 - d. Despite a long history of righteous dealing with Israel, the people knew no shame. They could participate in corrupt actions and feel neither remorse nor shame. When a person or a society reaches the point of self-degradation that they are unashamed of their perverse conduct, judgment is all they can expect. Many in our nation are without a feeling of shame when they commit the most unspeakable of moral crimes; and, to our horror we must say, that many of their fellow-citizens defend their *right to follow the lifestyle of their choice!* "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8.)
 - e. In modern America, entertainers started pushing away at the limits our society had developed, first in *smaller* issues, in movies and magazines during the 1950s. The changes were at first gradual, but soon became roaring tide of revolution in morality. By the 80s and 90s, there were few things that shocked many Americans. We have followed the steps of Ancient Israel:

- 1) Jeremiah 6:15: "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD."
 - 2) Jeremiah 8:12: "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD."
 - f. Not many years were required for our great American society to be brought down to the level of tolerating Communistic notions and even rank Atheism. And anyone who objects is denounced as mean-spirited or deranged. Freedom of speech is being undermined.
 6. Verse 6: "I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant."
 - a. Jehovah had already taken action against other nations who had preceded Judah along this path toward ruin. The Northern Kingdom had learned too late the terrible lesson of disobedience. Prior to that, God had used the Israelites to destroy or drive out of Canaan those who had been previous occupants of the land. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Deut. 9:45).
 - b. The defensive towers in which those evil nations had trusted had been destroyed; their streets were filled with rubble so that they were impassable. Their cities were so devastated that there were no inhabitants.
 - c. These many judgments against the nations should have served as awe-inspiring lessons for Judah, but they had paid them no mind.
 - d. "When he gave them the land of Canaan, God had told the people that it was not because of their righteousness but because of the wickedness of the inhabitants whom he was casting out (Deut. 9:4-5), and that if they would forget him, he would likewise cast them out (Lev. 26; Deut. 28)" (Hailey, pp.241f).
 7. Verse 7: "I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings."
 - a. When God brought them into the land, he plainly told them to fear him and receive instruction from his word. He intended for this to be their response so that he could bless them. He did not want to cut them off as he had been forced to do to the Canaanites.
 - b. To persuade them to remain faithful, God punished their departures from his will, but they quickly corrupted themselves again.
 - c. God has richly blessed America and Christ's church in America; but Americans have generally corrupted themselves, and the majority of the Lord's church seem to be in the midst of a general apostasy from the Lord who saved them. As Judah failed to learn the lessons of the past, so we seem to be unable to learn the lessons of history, which has been plainly recorded and widely disseminated.
- B. Zephaniah 3:8-13: The Prophets Speaks of a People With a Pure Language.
1. Verse 8: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."
 - a. Great judgments were to fall upon the nations before the blessings of the context would be given. The gathering of the nations is a harvesting of the earth, the execution of God's indignation against the sinful.
 - b. Great, earth-shaking events were in the offing. Babylon was gathering strength to overwhelm the Assyrians; she conquered Egypt also; and Judah was conquered, the temple and Jerusalem destroyed, and the population either slain or carried into slavery in Babylonia, and many were left in Palestine in a state of poverty and disarray. In the centuries which followed, the Babylonians were overcome by the Medes and Persians; the Medo-Persian Empire was destroyed by the Greek army; the Grecian Empire was conquered by the Romans, who also took control of the land of Palestine. Jerusalem and the new temple were destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.
 - c. In all of these momentous events, God was pouring forth his indignation, his fierce anger, against the sinful inhabitants of the earth. He is not describing a scene of salvation, but of destruction. However, he does not say that every sinful one would be utterly destroyed.
 - d. In the midst of these great events, Christ would come, the gospel would be preached and the eternal kingdom would be established. Many would be given the opportunity to be saved at that time. Hence,

- God prefaced this verse by admonishing the people to "wait ye upon me until the day that I rise up to the prey." The wicked must be punished, but God would bring out of this turmoil the greatest advantages that the world has ever known—the establishment of the kingdom promised in Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
2. Verse 9: "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."
 - a. *Then* God would turn to the people a pure language; that is, when the judgment was accomplished or was on the verge of being completed. God sent his Son on his earthly mission when the fullness of time had come: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).
 - b. The priests and others of the Old Testament system had polluted God's way. A new system would be given. This New Testament would be pure, and would enable those who desired to do so, to call upon the name of the Lord, serving him with unity.
 - c. The prediction describes the service rendered to God in this new system as being offered with one consent. The margin has "shoulder" as an alternative rendering. They would all be putting their shoulders to the task.
 - d. To call on the Lord's name is defined by the apostle Peter in Acts two as obeying the will of Christ (2:21-47).
 - e. The confused languages of Genesis 11 would be rectified, in that the people of God under the New Testament order would be unified in doctrine and practice.
 - 1) Jeremiah 32:39: "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."
 - 2) Ezekiel 11:19-20: "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
 - 5) Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
 - 6) Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
 - 7) Hebrews 13:15-16: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
 - 8) 1 Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
 3. Verse 10: "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering."
 - a. Speaking of the spread of the gospel of Christ, the prophet depicts his people coming from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, to bring offerings of praise before God.
 - b. The "dispersed" is usually a reference to the scattered Jews, but James 1:1 uses the expression to describe all Christians. The remnant among the Jews and the remnant of the Gentiles who would obey the gospel (Rom. 11) are God's suppliants.
 - c. These would come from all parts of the earth, as is evidenced in the New Testament and which we know to be true today.
 4. Verse 11: "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain."

- a. In that day, during the Christian Age, God's people will not be ashamed of their conduct, but that would be because they were living righteous lives. There would be no need for them to feel shame. The guilt of their sins will have been taken away.
 - 1) Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
 - 2) Hebrews 8:8-13: "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away."
 - b. God says he will remove haughtiness from among them. This is done when a person obeys the gospel. One of the first attributes of those who become Christians is the development of "poverty of spirit" (Matt. 5:3).
 - c. The Old Testament Jews were prone to exalt their beautiful temple, taking pride in it. The apostles proudly pointed out to Christ the greatness of the temple (Matt. 24:1-3). "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23-24).
 - d. The nature of the gospel is such that its adherents will not have the desire to boast; there is no need to boast and there is nothing of which one may boast.
5. Verse 12: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD."
- a. Instead of being haughty, they will be afflicted and poor. When a person becomes a Christian, he mourns over his past sins as he repents and turns away from them.
 - 1) "Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).
 - 2) "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. 7:8-10, ASV).
 - b. He sees himself as poor, for he does not have the means of saving himself; all that he has he is willing to use in forwarding the Lord's kingdom and to help others; and in times of persecution he may very well lose his worldly possessions. Saints may be poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 1:26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*."
 - 2) James 2:5: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"
 - c. Their standing with the Lord is based on trust. They believe the Lord, and take him at his word. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).
6. Verse 13: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."
- a. The prophet gives a further accurate picture of Christians. They will not do iniquity; although they will stumble into sin occasionally, they will not live a life of sin (1 John 1:7-10).

- b. They will not speak lies; they will not use their tongues deceitfully. "They will feed on the truth and righteousness of their God and will lie down in the security of Jehovah's protection, for he will be about them as a wall of fire" (Hailey, p.244).
 - c. Lying becomes a way of life for many. Some will tell a lie when the truth would better fit the situation! Nathaniel was highly complimented by Christ as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47). He seems to be the exception to the usual in this matter among the Jews.
 - d. "Honesty, straightforwardness, truth-speaking, and lack of deceit are further hallmarks of Christianity" (Coffman, Vol. 3, p.169).
- C. Zephaniah 3:14-17: The People Will Rejoice Because the Lord is in Their Midst.
1. Verse 14: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem."
 - a. Israel is told to rejoice on account of the blessings God has provided.
 - b. The Israel contemplated is spiritual Israel, the church of Christ. This is evident from the context which is clearly describing the age of the Messiah.
 - 1) Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God."
 - 2) Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."
 - 4) 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
 - c. The prophet presented information that should produce rejoicing.
 - 1) Zechariah 2:10: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD."
 - 2) Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."
 2. Verse 15: "The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more."
 - a. Their rejoicing is based on good causes. The Lord has removed the judgments which had been brought to bear upon old Israel. The enemy by whom the judgments were delivered had been cast out.
 - b. This is a figurative description of the absence of God's wrath upon spiritual Israel. However, the prophet is not saying that spiritual Israel will have no enemies; in fact, we are surrounded by many foes. But God does not bring direct, military action against us by a literal, invading army, when we stumble.
 - c. The Lord dwells in the midst of spiritual Israel. This he does as his word abides in us as we believe it and sincerely try to follow its every precept.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
 - 2) Colossians 3:16-17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 3) 1 John 1:6-10: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

- d. Genuinely devoting ourselves to following the Lord, he dwells in us and protects us from many unseen enemies (cf. Ps. 23; James 4:1-17).
 - 1) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 3. Verse 16: "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."
 - a. In that day, when the Messiah shall reign, there will be no need for spiritual Jerusalem to be fearful; the enemy will have been removed and Christ is in its midst.
 - b. In ancient days, the devil had power to send his demons to take over the bodies of unfortunate men; that power has now been taken away (cf. Heb. 2:14). Satan still has the ability to tempt us, but if we resist him, he will flee (Jas. 4:7).
 - c. *Slack hands* are those which are faint, hanging limp at one's side. It is a symbol of despair and weakness. In Christ, since there is no enemy to fear, and in view of the great responsibilities and privileges of serving Christ, our hands need to be active, and our hearts strong. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12-13).
 4. Verse 17: "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."
 - a. The real basis for our hope and courage is the presence of the Lord; he is with us and will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5). The Lord saves his people; he redeemed them from their past sins (Rev. 1:5); he cleanses them daily as they walk in his light (1 John 1:7); he delivers them from temptations (Matt. 6:13); he provides them with their daily bread (Matt. 6:11); he clothes, shelters, and protects them (Matt. 6:23-33); he releases them from worry and fear (Matt. 10:28; Phil. 4:6-7; Matt. 6:27-34).
 - b. The Lord rejoices over his people. He is happy with them. He praises them. He loves them and honors them. He has reserved for them an eternal rest in glory (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Heb. 11:13; 13:14; Rom. 8:18).
 - c. He will rest in his love. He basks in the quiet enjoyment of our devoted service, ever willing to give wherein we have a lack. As a loving father delights in the health, dedication, and success of his children, so God rejoices when he sees his children walking in love.
 - 1) 2 John 1:4: "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."
 - 2) 3 John 1:2-4: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."
 - d. He will have joy over them with singing. Jehovah is here pictured as singing with happiness over the loyalty and devotion over his children. He *sings their praises*.
- D. Zephaniah 3:18-20: The Gathering of the Sorrowful.
1. Verse 18: "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."
 - a. The Messianic Kingdom is still under consideration. Christ offers comfort, rest, and relief to those who "labor and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28-30). Those who mourn over their sins will be comforted (Matt. 5:4).
 - b. Those who would accept the Lord's invitation would be the remnant of Israel and the remnant of the Gentiles who, listening will learn, and learning will believe, and believing will obey.
 - c. Many people in the world are content with their burden of sin; they feel no weight because they admit no sin. Many others feel the burden of sin, but are unwilling to pay the price to have it removed (Luke 9:23). Others feel the weight of sin, and are willing to allow the Lord to lift it from their hearts. Hence, as the prophet states, the reproach of their sorrow was a burden to them—and they did something about it.
 2. Verse 19: "Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame."
 - a. God would take a hand in addressing those who afflict his people. He would save his people, and would bring about a respect for them where they had been formerly put to shame.

- b. Lying in the background of this prophecy, was the shameful condition which was soon to overwhelm Judah when they were conquered and enslaved by the Babylonians. God would remove them from their bondage at the appropriate time, and restore them to the land of promise.
 - c. But the real point of the passage is the condition of his people in the Messianic Age. They were afflicted and wounded by their adversary, the devil (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8), but would be restored to full spiritual health in Christ (cf. Matt. 13:15).
 - d. When the church was first established, the saints were highly respected by the general population in Judea (Acts 2:41-47). The time came, however, when they were fiercely opposed by their enemies, who persecuted them severely. Their first tormentors were from among the Jews, but the Jewish state was utterly removed in 70 A.D. They were persecuted by the Romans, but eventually the Roman Empire was brought to its knees and destroyed by 476 A.D. (cf. Dan. 2).
 - e. Whereas the church was hated and opposed, it became acceptable to the masses when edicts were issued about 311-325 A.D. by Roman authorities. At other times through the years the Lord's church has been held in respect by many, but often it is the object of scorn and opposition.
 - f. The fullness of the promise to provide honor and respect among all people for the Lord's church will be in the Judgment. It is then that the approval of God for his people will be fully known by all.
3. Verse 20: "At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD."
- a. Again, this is spoken with the Babylonian Captivity forming the backdrop. God would restore them to their former place in Palestine. But the point emphasized here (in keeping with the context) is the gathering of those who obey the gospel into the Lord's church (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:36-47; Col. 1:13-14; Rom. 11:17). Jehovah once more states that he will provide for these saints a name and a praise among the nations when he turns back their captivity. They would be released from their bondage to sin, and set free in Christ.
 - 1) John 8:30-36: "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."
 - 2) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
 - b. Thus, using the captivity of ancient Judah as the background, Zephaniah sets forth a beautiful picture of the redemption God would later offer to the whole world by his Son. The scathing denunciation of the previous part of the book has given way to this wonderful prediction of hope which the Messiah would provide.

INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI

A. Haggai, the Prophet.

1. The name of this prophet means *Festive, Festival, or Joyous One*. He may have been born on a feast day.
2. Little is known about him beyond what is revealed in the book that bears his name. He is named in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14.
3. He was the first of three post-exile prophets (Zechariah and Malachi were the other two); he was a contemporary of Zechariah; Malachi came about 80 years later (440 B.C.).
4. His work in the book is spread over four months in the year 520 B.C., and was directly concerned with promoting the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

B. The Background to Haggai's Work (Ezra 1-6) .

1. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In 536 B.C., Zerubbabel led about 50,000 Jews back from Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1-2).
2. There was a delay in starting the work, but finally the foundation was laid. It was at this point that the enemies of Israel put forth efforts to stop the work (See Ezra 3,4; 5:16).
3. After about fifteen years of delay, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to complete the work (Ezra 5:1-2). As a result of their preaching, the temple was completed in 516 B.C. "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king"(Ezra 6:15).

C. The Book of Haggai.

1. The book stresses one idea: "The rebuilding of the temple must be accomplished." At the time of his prophecy, the temple was lying in ruins, and nothing substantial had been done toward rebuilding it during the 16 years the first returning exiles had been back in the land. The temple was an essential part of Israel's service to God. They could not fulfill their obligations to God without it.
2. The moral conduct of the people is not dealt with in Haggai. While there were likely many sinful attributes with which he could have dealt, the rebuilding of the temple was necessary before spiritual reconstruction could be successfully achieved.
3. The book contains 4 oracles spoken in the second year of Darius.
 - a. August, 520: Haggai shows that the time for rebuilding the temple is overdue. They were not too poor to construct it; and while there was opposition, that was not sufficient reason for the delay. The prophet pointed out that indifference was the real cause for their lingering (Haggai 1:1-11).
 - b. October, 520: The prophet encouraged those who compared the second temple with the first temple (Haggai 2:1-9). Some of those present had seen Solomon's temple before the Babylonians destroyed it; the rebuilt temple was not nearly as resplendent. This was a source of dismay to these (Ezra 3:12).
 - c. December, 520: A reply is given to those who felt God's blessings were too slow in coming (Haggai 2:10-19).
 - d. December, 520: A promise of divine protection is given: "And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth *day* of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:20-23). The prophet pointed to the fulfillment of a spiritual hope, which Matthew shows was fulfilled in the Messiah: "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel....And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:12,16).
4. The book shows the power of the word of God when it is plainly preached. God's word was able to persuade the people to put their interests second, behind God's purpose.

D. Five Lessons of the Book of Haggai.

1. Faithfulness is directly connected to material prosperity. In the main, God provides material possessions to those who obey his will. This was especially the case with his Old Testament people. His primary blessings to Christians are spiritual, but we are given promise that our material needs will be provided (Matt. 6:33).
2. Discouragement is not an adequate reason for shirking duty. Just because we become discouraged does not mean that God's word is no longer applicable to us or that it loses its authority. When discouragement comes, we need to renew our faith.

3. When a good work is waiting to be done, the time to do it is now.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."
 - b. John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
 - c. Ephesians 5:16: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
4. The basis of all successful preaching is "thus saith the Lord." More than a score of times, this little 38-verse book gives the expression *thus saith the Lord* (or its equivalent).
 - a. Acts 20:32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
 - b. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
 - d. Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - e. James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
5. Indifference is contagious. Sinful attitudes and practices seem to spread faster than those of a holy nature. A healthy man cannot spread health by simply touching someone, but a sick man can thus spread his communicable disease.

E. Outline of Haggai.

1. The first message: 1:1-15.
2. The second message: 2:1-9.
3. The third message: 2:10-19.
4. The fourth message: 2:20-23.

HAGGAI 1

A. Haggai 1:1-6: The Prophet Rebukes Israel on Account of their Apathy and Selfishness.

1. Verse 1: "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying."
 - a. Haggai introduces himself as a prophet, and dates his message in the second year of the reign of Darius. The sixth month (Elul) is equivalent to the last half of September and the first half of October; the second year of Darius would be 520 B.C. Darius I reigned from 522-486 B.C. and was the son of Hystaspes (Hailey, p.302). A remnant of the Jews, numbering about 50,000, had returned to Palestine in 536 B.C. under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia.
 - b. Zerubbabel was the leader of this expedition, and became governor when they came into the land. Joshua the son of Josedech was the high priest, although he had no temple in which to operate. The word of God came to Haggai, and was directed to these two leaders of the civil and religious affairs of the tiny nation. Since these two men had not taken the matter in hand to see that the temple was completed, God took action to get it done.
 - c. Zerubbabel apparently is also called Sheshbazzar, with the former being his Hebrew name and the latter being his name in Chaldean. In Ezra 5:16, Sheshbazzar is said to have laid the foundation of the temple; in Zechariah 5:9, that work is attributed to Zerubbabel.
2. Verse 2: "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built."
 - a. This first part of the message is directed to the two leaders, and states the idea advanced by the people. They said that the time was not ripe for the rebuilding of the temple.
 - b. Hailey suggests that the people may have been using Jeremiah's statement (25:11-12; 29:10) that their captivity would be for seventy years, and since the temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and the present year was only 520 B.C., then they must wait another four years before rebuilding it. As it turned out, it was another four years before the rebuilding was finished, and that would account for seventy years.
 - c. However, the seventy years applied to the time they would spend in captivity, not to the length of time the temple would be in ruins. The first contingent of Jewish captives was taken away in 606 B.C. and the first contingent of returnees was in 536 B.C., fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy [606-536=70].
 - 1) Jeremiah 25:11-12: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations."
 - 2) Jeremiah 29:10: "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."
 - d. Haggai pointed out later in the message that the time was now ripe for the work on the temple to be pursued. The people were more interested in their own comfort and pleasure, and took little interest in the Lord's affairs.
3. Verses 3-4: "Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"
 - a. ASV: "Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?"
 - b. The Lord directed the prophet to deliver a pertinent statement to expose the erroneous view of the people and to spur their leaders to action.
 - c. He asked whether it was time for them (the people) to reside in their ceiled houses while God's house lay in ruins. *Ceiled houses* suggest comfort and luxury.
 - d. By erecting comfortable houses for themselves and ignoring the temple, they showed where their real interests were! Their problem was one of selfishness. This same sinful disposition continues to plague mankind, and lies at the root of most sinful conduct. In the long view, selfishness deprives us of blessings which God could have given. As some wise person said, "What we spend, we use; what we save, we lose; what we give, we have."
4. Verse 5: "Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways."
 - a. "Consider your ways." This called on them to take a close, personal, and open view of their own hearts. Compare: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

- b. They were responsible for their own actions; the Lord is telling them that all is not well with them, despite the fact that their conscience was clear. A man can be in the most serious spiritual trouble and not even be aware of it! In effect, our job as Christians is to get people to take a good look at themselves, with the word of God being the mirror.
- 1) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
 - 4) James 1:21-25: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
- c. This was a negative message. Many of our brethren today reject negative preaching. Many modern preachers will not present a message that is considered negative; they understand that people will be upset, and some will leave, if the preaching exposes their sins. It is better to obey God than to please man! (Acts 4:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 3:16-17; Acts 2:23, 36-41). Liberal and modernistic preachers do not address the subject of the final Judgment.
5. Verse 6: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes."
- a. They had sufficient capital to erect their fine houses, at least the richer ones did, but they did not seem to be able to accumulate anything afterwards.
 - b. The land did not produce all they needed, their clothing would not keep them warm, and their money seemed to be slipping through their purses as if they were filled with holes!
 - c. Hailey thought that their lost wealth was due to inflation; Coffman thought the poverty was spiritual. But it seems more likely that it was real financial trouble which was caused by their lack of spiritual maturity.
 - d. God was able to provide for Israel during their forty years in the wilderness; Christ was able to multiply the loaves and fish so as to feed thousands of hungry people.
 - 1) These were miraculous actions, but God's providential care and keeping is no less marvelous, even though no supernatural work is involved. How is God able to so guide nature that it produces precipitation, sunshine, and temperature for the growing of crops?
 - 2) Although the fields of a wicked man may produce as much as, or even more than, those of a godly man, yet in the long run, the righteous person has all of his needs furnished; he does not starve. The other man may encounter many serious problems, while the godly man may be wonderfully blessed (Matt. 6:33; Heb. 6:10; Phil. 4:19).

B. Haggai 1:7-11: The Prophet Charges the People to be About the Lord's Work.

1. Verses 7-8: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD."
 - a. Again, he demands that they consider their ways, obviously implying that there was something about their present condition that needed changing.
 - b. He addressed them in the plainest way. Go to the mountain; bring wood; build the house (the temple). The mountain range is unspecified, but likely was Lebanon, where the mighty cedars were found (cf. Ezra 3:7).
 - c. If you do so, God will be pleased by your obedience; he will be glorified thereby. Although unstated here, he implies that God would then bless them.
2. Verse 9: "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."

- a. The Jews were much like everyone else. We expect to reach a state of happiness when we attain a certain position or plateau in life; we may not be very happy at this time, but we feel sure that unparalleled bliss will descend upon us when we reach the goal we have in mind.
 - b. The Jews doubtless expected to encounter nothing but happiness and success once they got back in Canaan. Everything would be beautiful; there would be no cloud on the horizon; problems would disappear. Such was not so to be!
 - c. Only by God's help had they been able to return; he had blessed their venture with safety and success for a time. When they showed more interest in building their own houses and getting their own situation firmly established, God began to withdraw certain blessings.
 - d. They thought, as men usually do, that their success was brought about by their own intelligence, skill, and hard work. They soon found out that was wrong. We owe our success, intelligence, skill and opportunities to God (James 1:17; Acts 14:17).
 - e. God stated very plainly why they were having problems. They forgot about God, and acted selfishly. They did not take their obligations toward God seriously; they were not grateful for what he had done; they thought that all they needed in order to have success was to be diligent in their work.
 - f. But when they ignored their obligation to rebuild the temple, God took away from them what they had been receiving from him; they worked hard, but to no gain.
3. Verses 10-11: "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."
- a. Their obedience was essential in order to continue to receive God's material blessings. Because they had shunned their duty in rebuilding the temple, God withdrew his bounties, which they had taken for granted.
 - b. He held back the dew on which the crops of Palestine heavily depended. There are two primary rainy seasons: in the fall and spring. Between these seasons of rain, the crops depend on the heavy dew for moisture. By withholding the dew, the crops suffered; and without the crops, they faced famine.

"Back of the loaf is the flour; and back of the flour is the mill;
and back of the mill is the wheat that waveth on yonder hill.
And back of the hill is the sun, and the rain, and the Father's will."

- c. Apparently God also held back the rains, for a drought came. With drought, the troubles of mankind are multiplied. God was able to bring famines in times past, including the one predicted in Acts 11:28. He can do so today.
- d. When men leave God out of their plans, their plans will ultimately fail, and they will be condemned to many and diverse hardships which could have been avoided by seeking God and his kingdom.
- e. "Such an uncontrollable and unpredictable thing as a shift in the jet stream that roars through the earth's atmosphere at vast altitudes could wipe out a whole civilization. A sudden increase of the earth's temperature in the south polar region could increase the depths of the oceans by more than a hundred feet, wiping out most of the cities of the whole world. The chairman of the Rockefeller Medical Foundation once said that over four thousand viruses, capable of bringing death to multiplied millions, are already identified and awaiting only some propitious moment to spread death and devastation all over the earth. One such unpredictable outbreak in the 14th century destroyed the majority of mankind! 'Oh, it cannot happen now!' The wisest men on earth know it can happen now and they have not failed to warn us. If men would continue to enjoy the blessings of God, may they never neglect to honor the God of all blessing and to obey his will" (Coffman, p.194).
- f. The God of heaven is still in control of his universe. He has given man free moral agency, but requires an accounting. Although he gives man plenty of time to do right, yet his patience is not without end.
 - 1) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - 2) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 3) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

- 4) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
- 5) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
- 6) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
- 7) Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
- 8) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

C. Haggai 1:12-15. The People Respond to the Rebuke and Warning.

1. Verse 12: "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD."
 - a. The message fell on receptive ears. What they needed was a reprimand and a warning. They knew of God's wonderful blessings of the past, and they had learned the awesome lesson that God means what he says.
 - b. Their fathers, and even some of them who were now present, had seen the wrath of God in vivid demonstration! They could look around them in Jerusalem and still see many evidences of the tremendous destruction wrought by the savage Babylonians. And they knew that God sent that devastation upon them because of rebellion against God.
 - c. Hence, they were willing to receive instruction. Many today are also willing to be taught, but their number in our country is small indeed!
 - d. Our countrymen, and even a great many in the Lord's church, take their blessings for granted, not believing those blessings carry with them a burden of responsibility. We may work diligently to provide a good living for our families, but in the final analysis, it is God who gives us our prosperity. We may survive for a time when we rebel against him, but it is a foregone conclusion that we will have a most grievous price to pay for that rebellion! Unless we repent.
 - e. Those Jews rekindled their fear for Jehovah. America, if it is to continue, must regain its reverence for God, and turn from the unholy paths she is presently traveling.
2. Verse 13: "Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD."
 - a. When the people showed their willingness to follow the Lord, the prophet was moved by the Lord to tell them that God was with them. There is no greater advantage that one can have in this life than to have God with him. If God is with us, no one can be against us to our eternal hurt (Rom. 8:31; Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4-9).
 - b. If God is with us, we will never be in want of any blessing or opportunity that we really need (Matt. 6:19-34; Heb. 13:5-6; Phil. 4:19).
 - c. If God is with us here, we will be with him in eternity (Matt. 25:31-46).
 - d. If we want God with us here and to be with him in eternity, we must be with him in the here and now. The only way we can have that fellowship is through loving obedience to his will (Eccl. 12:13-14; Matt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9; Rev. 14:13; 22:14).
3. Verse 14: "And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God."
 - a. God stirred up the spirit of the leaders and the people so that they did the required work on the Lord's house. The verse simply states the facts of the case, and does not say plainly how God stirred them up.
 - b. However, the very case at hand shows us the means that God used. He gave a message to Haggai (and Zechariah); the prophet delivered the message to the people; the people received, believed, and followed the instructions given. The message Haggai presented revealed the problem; it promised a blessing if it was obeyed; it offered a strong warning if it went unheeded. They heard, believed and obeyed the message they were given.

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- c. The same format is followed today. God has a message (the gospel); it is intended for all the world (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47); it requires belief (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6); it requires obedience (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Matt. 10:22); it contains many promised blessings to the obedient (Eph. 1:3); it offers warnings to those who do not obey (Matt. 7:21-23; Rom. 2:1-11). Compare: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).
 4. Verse 15: "In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king."
 - a. The prophet dates these events to the second year of the reign of Darius, in the sixth month, between the first day and the twenty-fourth day of the month.
 - b. "The first admonition had been made on the first day of this month; the three intervening weeks had doubtless been spent in planning and preparing materials, and obtaining workmen from the neighbouring villages. The note of time is introduced to show how prompt was their obedience, and the exact time when 'they came and did work in the house of the Lord' (ver. 14)" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

HAGGAI 2

A. Haggai 2:1-9: The Second Message.

1. Verses 1-2: "In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying."
 - a. The second message came to the prophet on the twenty-first day of the seventh month (520 B.C.). The people had already been stirred up (1:3-11); the civil and religious leaders needed to be motivated, also. This oracle was directed to these two leaders as well as to the "residue of the people."
 - b. The seventh month was Teshri, which corresponds to our October and November (the last part of October and the first part of November). This date was the occasion of a major feast, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:39ff; see Hailey, p.307).
2. Verse 3: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"
 - a. The prophet calls their attention to the temple Solomon built which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. He asks which of them remembered the former glorious temple.
 - b. Josephus indicates that Solomon's temple was 120 cubits in height, and the rebuilt temple was only 60 cubits tall. Six hundred talents of gold (perhaps ten million dollars) were spent in ornamenting the holy of holies in Solomon's edifice; no such funds were available for the new structure (see Coffman, pp.200f).
 - c. It may be that these older people, knowing the majestic grandeur and richness of Solomon's temple, and knowing they would be unable to construct anything nearly as elaborate, were thus discouraged to complete the project of rebuilding.
 - d. Fifteen years earlier, when the foundation of the new structure was laid, some of them shouted with joy (Ezra 3:12). The younger ones who had never seen the former temple, and others who were more spiritually aware, would see the new temple as a great blessing for Israel; it would furnish them the means by which they could worship God fully, in keeping with the Mosaic Law.
3. Verse 4: "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the people are given words of encouragement to be strong and work.
 - b. The motivation given for this change in attitude is the fact that the Lord was with them. God has never done for man what man can do for himself; and he never required man to do what was impossible. Man has a job to accomplish and God has his part. In the present case, he would do what they could not do, but they had to do what they could do.
 - c. He did not specify what he would do in *being with them*, but obviously there were important matters that he bound himself to accomplish. No enemy would overwhelm them while they did the work; they would have the necessary material with which to construct the edifice. God had already provided the means, by raising up Cyrus who financed at least a major part of the enterprise.
 - d. To be strong includes the willingness to see that the job is finished, to commit themselves to the work, and to trust God to provide what they could not supply. This is still true in any scriptural venture undertaken by one or more saints now. Our strength derives from God's word and from mutual encouragement. First, we must be convinced of the worthwhile nature and wisdom of the project. We must take our guidance from God's word in formulating plans for the endeavor; we must trust his providence to help us; and we must be committed to completing the work. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).
 - e. The spiritual growth of the local church can be done. If the necessary information is imparted from God's word to people who have a willingness to listen, learn, and apply, individual saints will grow and the church will be strengthened.
 - f. Numerical growth in the local church can be accomplished. If the members are all walking in the light of the gospel; if the gospel is proclaimed in the public gatherings of the church; if the members are active in private circles in speaking the words of truth and soberness; if there are people in the community who are willing to hear and learn; then and only then can the church experience numeric growth. We must also have the right motive for growth; if our desire for growth is for personal glory, rather than to bring glory to God and salvation to the lost, our efforts are not going to be blessed by Jehovah.
4. Verse 5: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."

- a. Provided the people would heed God's command to be strong and work, he would be with them just as he had promised to be with their forebears when they came out of Egypt.
 - b. As long as that earlier generation followed God's will, he gave them protection, provisions, and leadership. There was no other way they could have survived in the wilderness. Absolute trust in God was essential.
 - c. But trust in God on our part is also essential if we are to make it to heaven. We might be able to provide for ourselves during times of prosperity and plenty, but the time comes when our own efforts may be meaningless, and certainly that is true when we face the end of our earthly journey.
 - d. God would continue to have his spirit to be with them. The means by which this was done was by sending them inspired prophets to guide them to new revelations from God.
 - 1) Numbers 11:17: "And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone."
 - 2) Numbers 11:25: "And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."
 - 3) Numbers 27:18: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;"
 - 4) 1 Samuel 10:6: "And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man."
 - 5) 1 Samuel 10:10: "And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."
 - 6) 1 Samuel 16:13: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."
 - 7) Nehemiah 9:20,30: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.... Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands."
 - e. In view of God's special guidance through the inspired prophets and because of his providential care of them, they had no reason to fear.
5. Verse 6-7: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts."
- a. The Lord speaks of future earth-shaking events. The passage (vv. 6-9) is difficult. Some scholars use many pages of commentary in discussing its meaning. On the face of these words lies a depiction of the end of time when the earth and the entire universe will be shaken and destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-13). But the meaning might be of a different nature.
 - b. There may be a more immediate application, with the events portrayed being descriptive of the overthrow of nations and the shaking of earthly governments. Similar terminology is used in the Bible to describe the destruction of nations and cities (Isa. 13; Matt. 24:29-31).
 - c. "The shaking within the natural world and of the nations seems to point to the divinely decreed rise and fall of nations from that time to the coming of the Messiah. There would be warfare and constant disturbances among them which would begin soon, in 'a little while.' The Medo-Persian empire was shaken and so was Alexander's empire, as well as were Syria, Egypt, and finally Rome. This interpretation is further confirmed by Haggai's fourth speech (2:20-23)" (Hailey, p.310).
 - d. Daniel 2:37-45: "Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things*: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people,

but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

- e. The *desire of all nations* (KJV) is translated *the precious things of all nations* in the ASV. The reference is to those things which are highly prized and desired by the nations; these desired and desirable things would be brought into the Lord's house (the temple), to add to its glory.
 - 1) Perhaps Haggai is speaking about the nations giving financial aid in rebuilding the temple. God had stirred up Darius to offer such assistance (Ezra 6:6-15); and Artaxerxes had supplied gifts to Ezra (Ezra 7:12-26). This interpretation may be too limited.
 - 2) "The church of the New Testament is the house of God, filled with the glory of God to a far larger degree than ever was the house of Solomon, Zerubbabel, or Herod. The application of the passage made by the writer of Hebrews (12:26) confirms this view. As God shook the heaven and earth at the giving of the law at Sinai, so he shook the heathen nations, removing them; and now he has shaken and removed the Jewish economy that man could receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). It was this removing of the old order and the founding of a new one that was before Isaiah's mind when he wrote of old things being forgotten and the creation of new heavens and a new earth (65:16-17)" (Hailey, pp.310f).
6. Verses 8-9: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The gold and silver, and everything else, is God's by right of creation. So whatever went into the construction of the temple was already God's. If such things are necessary for this new temple's construction, God will furnish them.
 - b. Since the passage has an apparent reference to the New Testament church (God's present house, 1 Tim. 3:15), then the precious things of the nations describes the wealth the Gentiles would bring into the church. Each one who obeys the gospel and is added by the Lord to his church, brings usable talents and skills and other important abilities which can offer much to the advancement of Christ's kingdom.
 - c. The glory of the latter house would outshine that of the former. It is clear that the rebuilt temple did not even equal Solomon's temple; it certainly did not surpass it in glory. Thus, the *latter house* must have reference to the church.
 - d. Before the Lord's church could be established, the temple of the Old Testament era must be rebuilt; the nation of Israel must continue as a separate and special entity, which required the continuation of the temple and its services (Gen. 49:10; Gal. 4:4-5; Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 16:13-19). Judaism would continue until the Lord's death, and then Judaism was removed as God's operative system.
 - e. The temple would remain in outward operation, but God had already replaced it with the Gospel System. The temple and the Jewish system would soon vanish away: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:12-13).
 - f. Because all the spiritual blessings of God are offered in the Lord's church (Eph. 1:3,7; Col. 1:13-14; Acts 2:36-47; Eph. 5:23-27), it far outshines even Solomon's resplendent temple.
 - 1) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."
 - 2) Peace is a prominent blessing of the Lord's church (Eph. 2:11ff). [i.e., peace within ourselves, peace with other people in the church, and peace with God. The gospel also gives us the means to be at peace with others around us in the world.
 - 3) Actual forgiveness of each individual's sins, which the Mosaic Law had no power to pardon: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).
 - g. Some have thought that since Solomon's temple was elaborate and expensive, that we have the right and obligation (to the extent of our ability) to build elaborate and expensive church meeting houses. But that misses the true parallel between the temple and the church; the church is not the building; the church is the people who comprise it, together with its God-given law, organization, work, worship, and many blessings.

B. Haggai 2:10-19: The Third Message.

1. Verses 10-11: "In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying."
 - a. During the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, Haggai received another revelation. This month was Chisleu, which is our November and December.
 - b. The oracle was directed toward the priests, and concerned the law.
2. Verses 12-14: "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean."
 - a. The prophet is moved to ask the priests two questions, and based on the correct answer from them, a strong point is made regarding the spiritual condition of the nation as a whole. The priests were required to be knowledgeable about things which were clean and things which were unclean, and to teach these distinctions to the general population (Lev. 10:8-10; Deut. 17:8-13; Mal.2:7).
 - b. If a priest who is carrying holy flesh, and his garment touches the flesh (or bread, pottage, wine, or oil), does that contact with his garment make the item holy? They answered that it does not. The garment could not pass along the condition of holiness to something else (cf. Lev. 6:27). The holy flesh was flesh that had been offered in sacrifice.
 - c. If a person who is unclean because of having touched a dead body should touch one of the items named in verse 12, would that item become unclean? The priests correctly answered that it would be made unclean. Leviticus 21:1,11; Numbers 6:6-8; 19:11-13, 22.
 - d. Haggai points out in verse 14 that God regards the nation as unclean; and their works are likewise unclean, as are those things they offer unto Jehovah.
 - e. "Neither the land to which they had returned nor the altar they had erected imparted holiness; they were yet unclean....In whatever way the people had defiled themselves, they had communicated their uncleanness to the products of the land so that what they offered in sacrifice on the altar had been unclean. They were looking for Jehovah's blessings prematurely; they must first cleanse themselves of their defilement, and then they could expect his presence among them and his blessings on them" (Hailey, pp.312f).
 - f. A rotten potato will communicate its defilement to the other potatoes in the sack; but a hundred sound potatoes cannot communicate their soundness to a single rotten potato. A sick man can communicate his disease to healthy people by direct contact with them, but a hundred healthy people cannot communicate their good health to one who is ill. The same is true of those who are spiritually impure and those who are spiritually pure.
3. Verses 15-17: "And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD."
 - a. Haggai asks them to look back to the time when they returned from Babylon, before they had laid the first stone in the rebuilding process. He is about to point out to them that their efforts had not been blessed because of the condition stated in verse fourteen.
 - b. When they expected to obtain twenty measures (of grain), they were able to get only ten measures. And when they figured to get fifty measures of winefat, they found only twenty measures.
 - c. Why was this so? God had not blessed their efforts; rather, he had cursed them by withholding the bounty of the land. A nation that has a reasonable percentage of God-fearing citizens will be blessed, as the case of America amply illustrates. By way of contrast, consider the plight of Russia, of China, of Africa, of South America.
 - d. The purpose of the hardships God had directed toward Israel was to produce a change of heart in them. We punish our children to keep them away from hurtful activities and to promote proper conduct on their part. But Israel had not heeded the lesson of their chastisement (cf. I Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 15:4).
4. Verses 18-19: "Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you."
 - a. The prophet asks them to consider their situation from that very day backward in time to the day when the foundation of the temple was first laid in the rebuilding operation.

- b. Have you filled your barns with seed? Have your vineyards and orchards produced as you expected? The answer was an obvious *no*.
- c. But from that present day forward in time, God would bless them. That promise was based on the condition that they would complete the work at hand—the rebuilding of the temple. Compare: "Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Hag. 2:4).

C. Haggai 2:20-23: The Fourth Message.

1. Verses 20-21: "And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth."
 - a. This final message was received on the same day, and was directed to the governor, Zerubbabel. It began with another reference to the shaking of the heavens and earth.
 - b. Shaking the heavens and earth, of course, is to be understood as a figure of speech.
2. Verse 22: "And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother."
 - a. The previous statement is applied to the overthrow of kingdoms. This seems to define the meaning of the second speech (2:6). These pagan nations would fight among themselves, bringing destruction to each other.
 - b. The Assyrians had been destroyed by the Babylonians; the Medes and Persians had overwhelmed the Babylonians. Within two centuries, the Greeks would subdue the Persians, and would in time be overcome by the Romans; and the Romans would later fall. And it has continued thusly with many other nations. Undoubtedly, the same fate awaits America unless it comes back to its sure foundation.
 - c. Why does God give this information to Zerubbabel? Evidently, to encourage him and his people as they faced an uncertain future.
3. Verse 23: "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. A singular honor was promised to Zerubbabel. God would make him as a signet. A signet was a ring, worn on the finger or on a cord around the neck. It bore a special engraving which enabled the owner to impress the image on a clay tablet or in the wax used to seal papyrus documents. The signet, therefore, was a symbol of power and authority.
 - b. The promise made to David (2 Sam. 7:11-14) is here renewed through Zerubbabel, who was a descendant of David through Coniah. "And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (2 Sam. 7:11-14).
 - c. "The people are now back in their homeland and Jehovah has assured them of temporal blessings, of the overthrow of the heathen, and of the fulfillment of the spiritual promise through Zerubbabel. The honor bestowed on Zerubbabel was not realized in him as a person, but in his office and lineage. Matthew confirms the fulfillment of this promise as he points out that Jesus is the heir to the throne of David through Coniah and Zerubbabel (1:12,16)" (Hailey, p.315).
 - d. "Zerubbabel's significance lies in the fact of his being the only visible heir and successor to David that was known in that age; and the inclusion of the Babylonian governor of Israel in the prophecy meant that God's ancient promise to David of one to sit upon his throne was yet valid, that it still stood, and that 'in that day,' practically always are references to the 'last times,' makes it impossible to refer the words here to the Zerubbabel known to Haggai. Of course, Zerubbabel was an excellent type of Christ. He led the people out of slavery; Christ leads men out of sin; he built a temple; Christ built the greater temple of his Church; etc." (Coffman, p.221).

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH

A. Zechariah, the Prophet.

1. This prophet's name means *He Whom Jehovah Remembers*. His was a popular name, since about twenty-seven men wore this name in the Old Testament. He may be the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles 24:20: "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you."
2. Zechariah is listed as one of the priests who returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel (see Neh. 12:6).
3. He was one of three post-exile prophets, with Haggai and Malachi being the other two. A contemporary of Haggai, his work preceded Malachi's work by about 80 years (520 B.C. for Zechariah; 440 B.C. for Malachi).
4. He began his work two months later than Haggai, and continued his activity for two years, beginning in the second year of the reign of Darius.
 - a. In November, 520 B.C., he issued a call for Israel to repent: 1:1-6.
 - b. In February, 519 B.C., he encountered certain night visions: 1:7—6:8.
 - c. In December, 518 B.C., he offered responses to certain questions about fastings: Chapters 7-8.

B. The historical background to Zachariah's work (See Ezra 1-6).

1. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In 536 B.C., Zerubbabel led about 50,000 Jews back from Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1-2) and to reestablish the nation in the promised land.
2. After the return of this first contingent of Jews, there was a delay in starting the work, but finally the foundation of the temple was laid. It was at this point that the enemies of Israel put forth efforts to stop the work (See Ezra 3,4; 5:16).
3. After about fifteen years of delay, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to complete the work (Ezra 5:1-2).
4. Haggai had stirred up the people to resume rebuilding the temple, but their zeal had slackened. Zechariah urged the people to complete the great work. As a result of their preaching, the temple was completed in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

C. The Book of Zechariah (Adapted from Jack Lewis, *The Minor Prophets*).

1. Section I.
 - a. Call to repentance: 1:1-6.
 - 1) He reminds them to learn the lesson of history.
 - 2) God had been angry with their fathers; he calls on them to return to God.
 - b. The night visions: 1:7—6:8.
 - 1) The rider on the red horse with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him (1:7-17). The prophet assured them that Jerusalem would be rebuilt after 70 years of captivity (Jer. 25:11; 29:10).
 - 2) The four horns and the four smiths: 1:18-21. Horns in the Bible are used as symbols of power. There would be no longer any opposition to the building of the Lord's house.
 - 3) The vision of the man with the measuring line: 2:1-13. The city envisioned was to have no walls; the city was to be inhabited without this standard protection.
 - 4) Joshua, a "brand plucked out of the burning" from the priesthood, in filthy garments, is accused by Satan as one might be accused before a court. He was unsuited in this condition to offer acceptable sacrifices: 3:1-10.
 - 5) The golden candlestick with seven lamps and two olive trees: 4:1-14.
 - 6) The flying scroll: 5:1-4. The vision answers the question, "How can crime be removed from the land?"
 - 7) The woman sitting in an ephah: 5:5-11.
 - 8) The four chariots from between the copper mountains go forth to patrol the earth: 6:1-8.
 - c. A coronation is pictured: 6:9-15. The returnees from Babylon bring gold which is made into crowns and put on the head of Joshua.
 - d. Questions about fasting are raised: 7:1-7.
 - 1) The prophet makes it clear that it is not fasting, but obedience, justice, and kindness that is significant.
 - 2) The scattering of Judah was brought about by her disobedience: 7:8-14.

- e. Ten short oracles of encouragement are introduced by *Thus saith the Lord*: 8:1-23.
 - 1) These oracles assure that the Lord will dwell in Zion and that prosperity is sure to come.
 - 2) "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zech. 8:4-5).
 2. Section II. This division contains three sections not clearly related to the problems of rebuilding the temple; the historical standpoint is different.
 - a. The Lord will signal and bring home the exiles with signs comparable to those at the time of the coming out of Egypt: 9:1—10:12.
 - b. The good and foolish shepherds: 11:1-17.
 - c. Chapters 12-14 are made up of two sections, each dealing with final events treated in an apocalyptic manner.
 - 1) An attack by enemies upon Jerusalem results in victory for Judah through the Lord's aid.
 - 2) The second section announces the approach of the day of the Lord with an assault on Zion, the intervention of Jehovah, and the men fleeing from an earthquake.
- D. Lessons and teachings of the book of Zechariah.
1. Satan is pictured as the accuser who brings the failings of men to the attention of God (Zech. 3:1-2; cf. 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:7ff; 2:1ff).
 2. The (oral) law of the priests is discussed (Zech. 7:2-3).
 3. The Lord will be King over all the earth, and his name would be one. The religion of the Messiah would be worldwide (Zech. 2:11; 6:15; 8:23; 14:16).
 4. The book shows how weakening faith may be revived by sincere, scriptural preaching of God's word.
 5. The former prophets are appealed to as authentic and authoritative. Those who are urging a new hermeneutic today need to take heed.
 6. Israel's real enemy was Satan, not the pagan nations around her. The enemy of the Lord's church today is the same unholy foe (1 Peter 5:8-9).
 7. It teaches that God's people are to maintain hope, even when there seems to be no real basis for hope.
 8. He shows that those who rebel against God will soon have reason to mourn. No one can raise an insurrection against Jehovah with impunity.
 9. The book points out that neither fasting nor feasting has any special powers of themselves (cf. Gal. 5:6).
 10. The contest between good and evil would eventually end in a glorious day for Israel: Zechariah 14:7. The same encouraging truth pertains to God's people today.
- E. Zechariah and the New Testament.
1. More than any of the other Minor Prophets, Zechariah gives us a definite picture of the Messiah.
 - a. He pointed to the *Branch* (Zech. 3:8; 6:12).
 - b. Zechariah speaks of the King who rides upon the ass (Zech. 9:9; cf. Matt. 21:4-5; John 12:15).
 - c. He pictured the betrayal of Christ (Zech. 11:12-13; cf. Matt. 26:15; 27:9).
 - d. The pierced body of Christ is depicted (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7).
 - e. He predicted the scattering of the disciples (Zech. 13:7; cf. Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).
 - f. The prophet spoke of the King who reigns from sea to sea (Zech. 9:10; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30-31).
 - g. He described the fountain that was opened for cleansing (Zech. 13:1).
 2. Zechariah exercised other influences on the New Testament.
 - a. His demand that everyone speak the truth to his neighbor is echoed by Paul.
 - 1) Zechariah 8:16: "These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:"
 - 2) Ephesians 4:25: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."
 - b. Certain figures used by Zechariah are also employed by John in Revelation.
 - 1) The four horsemen: Zechariah 6; Revelation 6.
 - 2) The two olive trees: Zechariah 4:3ff; Revelation 11:4.
 - 3) The candlestick and seven eyes: Zechariah 4:2-10; Revelation 1:12-13.

ZECHARIAH 1

A. Zechariah 1:1-6: A Call to Repentance.

1. Verse 1: "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying."
 - a. Zechariah is identified as the son of Berechiah who was the son of Iddo; he is further said to be a prophet of God.
 - b. "Darius was Darius the Great, grandson of Cyrus the Great who issued the decree for the end of the captivity. His second year is identified as 520 B.C. This was only about two months after Haggai issued his prophecy" (Coffman).
 - c. Zechariah received a revelation from God in the eighth month of the second year of the reign of Darius. Haggai received his revelation beginning in the sixth month of the same year (Hag. 1:1). The year was 520 B.C. Human productions which claim to be inspired use vague and uncertain terms.
 - d. The style of Zachariah is different from that of Haggai. Haggai used blistering speech in decrying the apathy of Israel in completing the temple; Zechariah, who sought to resolve the same problem, encouraged Israel to complete the work, using good reasoning in the process.
2. Verse 2: "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers."
 - a. He plainly states that God had been sorely displeased with their forebears. To be *sore displeased* is a very strong emotion, but it accurately depicts the attitude God had toward those earlier Israelites.
 - b. The reference is to the rebellion of Judah and Israel which led to the Assyrian Captivity for Israel (721 B.C.) and to the Babylonian Captivity for Judah (606 B.C.).
 - c. He is, in this statement, teaching them to learn from history. It is still true that those who do not learn from the mistakes of those who went before, are condemned to make the same mistakes of earlier generations.
3. Verse 3: "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The term *Lord of hosts* is frequently used in the Old Testament; it involves a reference to the power and supremacy of God. A *host* was an army.
 - b. In this verse, God bluntly states the proposition: if they would turn back to him, he would turn back to them. The estrangement was caused by their move away from God; he did not move; if they desired to be reconciled, it is they who must make a change. "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you" (2 Chron. 24:20).
 - c. So it is today (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 3:4). If fallen man wants reconciliation with God, he must heed the arrangements God has made to that end (John 3:16; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Rev. 22:14,17).
4. Verses 4-5: "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"
 - a. God calls on them to be of a different mind from the corrupt disposition their ancestors had manifested. God sent prophets to those earlier generations, demanding that they turn quickly from their wicked ways. Those rebels refused the appeals, even though they were amply shown that it was to their benefit to do so, and to their hurt if they continued their rebellion.
 - b. Zechariah asks this present generation where those rebels are now. The implied answer is that they were gone from the earth.
 - c. He asks where the prophets are who warned those previous generations. They were also gone from the earth, although the inspired records they left behind continued to expose the sins of the ancient Israelites and to reveal the offers of mercy from a loving God.
 - d. A simple, but marvelous and awesome, lesson is thus taught. One generation follows another upon the earth; in each are to be found a few who seek to serve Jehovah; in each the majority follows ways of their own choosing (cf. Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever" (Eccl. 1:4).
 - 1) While men march on through time into eternity, with most of them dying unprepared to face the Judgment, God's word remains unchanged and awaits us all.
 - 2) A man may ignore and even oppose God's word throughout his earthly life, but he must face the unchanged and immutable word of God when he comes before the Judge of us all.

- 3) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). "He that rejected me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).
5. Verse 6: "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us."
- The former Israelites had rejected God's word, but they had to suffer the consequences of their rebellion by being carried into captivity.
 - Some of those who were present to hear Zechariah had been in Jerusalem when the Babylonians came in 586 B.C. They all knew, either from first-hand experience or from the information their parents and others had told them while in Babylon, about the tragic events which befell Israel.
 - The inspired writings of certain prophets had been preserved to that day, so they could consult that written word and learn the truth of what went on in those former days.
 - By learning what had happened to their forefathers, they could see that God's word had overtaken (see margin) them, and they had to suffer the penalty for their sins. Those who survived the Babylonian invasion learned that God meant what he said.
 - Those Israelites learned the lesson too late to avoid punishment; Zechariah is trying to get his people to learn it in plenty of time to repent. One of the most elementary truths of human experience is to learn from the mistakes of those who preceded us, but it is most often ignored by the majority.

B. Zechariah 1:7-17: The First Vision.

- Verse 7: "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying."
 - The prophet states the date of the vision; he received it on the 24th day of the 11th month of the 2nd year of the reign of Darius. The month is identified as *Sebat*.
 - Again, he affirms that the source of the information is the Lord; he also identifies himself by naming his father and grandfather. Dreams occurred during sleep; a vision could take place at other times.
- Verses 8-9: "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be."
 - In this vision of the night, Zechariah saw a man riding on a red horse; he was standing (as he sat on his mount) among a grove of myrtle trees in a bottom. Myrtle trees are large flowering bushes which still grow in Palestine; the bottom was a low place, perhaps a shady valley or hollow.
 - There were other horses (with riders) behind him; these horses were red, speckled (grizzled; dappled; the ASV has sorrel), and white. There is likely something represented by the colors of these horses. White may symbolize victory; red may be emblematic of blood and war; and speckled may have reference to pestilence. The true significance of these colors is not stated in the text, however.
 - The man on the red horse is identified as "the angel of the Lord" in verse ten. He makes a statement in verse ten to which the riders of the other horses respond, addressing "the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees." Some writers believe that this angel was the Second Person of the Godhead (cf. Gen. 22:11,15-16; 48:15ff; Ex. 13:21; 14:19; 23:20ff; Josh. 5:14; Isaiah 63:9; 1 Cor. 10:1-11).
 - In the vision, Zechariah asks the rider of the red horse the meaning of the scene he was beholding. The man, who is called an "angel" in verse nine, replied that he would tell him.
- Verses 10-11: "And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."
 - The man said that these were those whom the Lord had sent to walk to and fro through the earth. The riders on those other horses confirmed this by saying that they had walked throughout the earth, and that the earth sat still and was at rest.
 - Keep in mind the immediate mission of Zechariah; he worked in conjunction with the prophet Haggai to get the Israelites to complete the rebuilding of the temple.
 - When the riders said that the earth was still and at rest, that statement had a bearing on Zechariah's mission. Since the earth was presently enjoying a period of peace, there would be no significant

- outward oppression or opposition to preclude the rebuilding of the temple. The earth likely had trouble and turmoil at the time (in other localities), but none of these would interfere with their work.
- d. Therefore, Israel had a favorable time to accomplish this God-given work. The work had started about sixteen years earlier, but had languished; Haggai had gotten them on the job again about five months earlier, but again the effort had slackened. What Zechariah saw would have an encouraging effect on the workers when he told them about it.
4. Verse 12: "Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"
 - a. For seventy years, God had not shown pleasure in the land. The angel cries to the Lord asking, in effect, whether it was time now to grant mercy to replace the indignation which had for so long been upon Jerusalem and Judah.
 - b. The angel's plea is an intercession in behalf of the people and their land. He perceived their need for respite and renewal.
 - c. The span of seventy years fits two related time frames. From the time of the first deportation to Babylon (606 B.C.) to the time of the first return (536 B.C.) was seventy years. From the time of the destruction of the temple (586 B.C.) to the time when it was rebuilt (516 B.C.) was seventy years.
 - d. The first period had been completed; the second was only four years short of its culmination. The angel declares that the time for mercy was present after so long a time of indignation.
 5. Verse 13: "And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words."
 - a. The angel received a reply from the Lord which was comprised of good and comforting words. This message was to be relayed on to the prophet and thence to the people.
 - b. "The Angel of Jehovah is thus called as the representative of God, whether we regard him as the Logos or a created angel empowered by God (see note on ver. 11). This personage is often seemingly identified with Jehovah (comp. Zech 3:2; Gen 18:1,2,13,17,22; Josh 5:14,15; 6:2). He gives the answer to the interpreting angel, which the latter is to convey to the prophet, which he, in turn, was to announce to the people. Good words, promising blessing and salvation (1 Kings 12:7); and these are comfortable words (Isa 57:18), a message calculated to bring comfort to the people's desponding hearts. What the message is is given in the following verses (14-17)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - 1) Genesis 18:1-2: "And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground."
 - 2) Genesis 18:13: "And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?"
 - 3) Genesis 18:22: "And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD."
 - 4) Joshua 5:14-15: "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."
 6. Verses 14-16: "So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction."
 - a. The angel told Zechariah to deliver these words to the people, which would clearly be a source of encouragement for them to complete the work by reminding them of God's power and authority.
 - b. God had not changed; he was still the same majestic being that gave the Law to them through Moses. The Israelites who came to Sinai were fully impressed with the awesome nature of God's power; they did not want him to speak to them directly.
 - c. In the decalogue, God stated that he was jealous. He does not have the pettiness of spirit that often characterizes mankind, but God will not share our devotion with any other *god* (Ex. 20:1-6).
 - d. God will not condone man's rebellion against his will. He is longsuffering, but his patience has a limit. He became sorely displeased with the rebellious heathen. He had been only moderately displeased with them, until they encouraged the progress of affliction (cruelty).
 - 1) The meaning perhaps is this: God had intended to use the heathen as the means of punishing his rebellious people; but these pagans had exceeded their license to punish, and had been excessively

- cruel; because of that, God was now sorely displeased with them. The implication is that they would be punished to a much higher degree of severity.
- 2) Another interpretation is this: God was sorely displeased with the heathen; he did not sanction their sinful ways, but he used them to punish the Israelites. He was only a little displeased with Israel, but the heathen punished them too severely.
 - 3) "I was but a little displeased. God had been angry with his people, it is true, but only in measure, chastising them, like a parent, for their good. Others take 'a little' ('for a little time') in allusion to the seventy years' captivity. And they helped forward the affliction...('helped for evil.')...They exceeded their part as mere instruments in God's hands, and wished to destroy Israel altogether, or to oppress them beyond the purposed period of their chastisement. A similar complaint is made against the Assyrians (Isa 10:5, etc.) and the Babylonians (Isa 47:6)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
7. Verse 16: "Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."
 - a. The heathen had sought the extermination of God's people, but God was now back in Jerusalem with manifold mercy. He would see that his house was rebuilt and that Jerusalem would also be revived.
 - b. God will bless them with the opportunity and the means to reconstruct his temple. Whereas his wrath had been unleashed upon his rebellious people, now he would again bless them with prosperity and peace. This would be a plain declaration from God to the people that he was behind the work, and that the work would be successful. Hence, they would derive the necessary impetus to complete the temple.
 - c. A line was used in measuring for the purpose of building or destroying. In this case, the measuring was to be done for the purpose of building.
 - d. Is there a reference in the passage to the establishment of the Lord's church? In the book of Zechariah, there are many direct references to the Messiah and his work. What is stated in this verse could certainly describe the church, for in it the mercies (the blessings) of God are manifested in the Christian Dispensation: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ" (Eph. 1:3; cf. Col. 1:13-14).
 8. Verse 17: "Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."
 - a. The Lord calls on Zechariah to tell the people that the cities would again overflow with prosperity; that they again would be chosen by the Lord, but they were expected to complete the temple.
 - b. When God blesses someone for their faith, it is always when they demonstrate their faith by obedience. God gave Israel the city of Jericho by his grace, but they could not take possession of it until their faith led them to follow the directions he set forth for the taking of it: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 11:30; cf. Josh. 6).
 - c. Today, we are saved by God's grace through our faith; but our faith includes our meeting the conditions God has established as prerequisites (Eph. 2:8-9; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2:38; James 2:17-26; cf. Heb. 11).
- C. Zechariah 1:18-21: The Second Vision.
1. Verse 18: "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns."
 - a. In this vision, the prophet saw four horns. Horns are often used in the Bible to represent power or strength (cf. Amos 6:13; Dan. 7:7-8,24).
 - b. The number four may be representative of completeness, since in nature we have 4 winds and 4 *corners* of the earth.
 2. Verse 19: "And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."
 - a. Naturally, Zechariah inquired about these horns; he was told that these were the horns which scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.
 - b. The literal nations whose armies did this harsh work were Assyria and Babylonia. There were other nations such as Egypt and Persia which were enemies to Israel. But rather than having reference to definite nations, this figurative representation may simply allude to the entire unbelieving world.
 - c. By virtue of their evil ways, the heathen nations operated in opposition to God; since they were against God, they were against God's faithful people.
 3. Verse 20: "And the LORD shewed me four carpenters."
 - a. In the same setting, the Lord showed Zechariah four carpenters. The ASV has *smiths* instead of carpenters.
 - b. At any rate, these were craftsmen, men who built in lieu of destroying.

4. Verse 21: "Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it."
 - a. Again, the prophet inquires as to the meaning of these four craftsmen. In answering, the Lord referred again to the four horns which scattered the people. When they were about their evil work, everyone was filled with terror of them; no one would expose himself unnecessarily to their harshness.
 - b. The Lord then indicated the four carpenters as having come to cast out the horns of the Gentiles. As the invaders had destroyed and terrorized all in their path, so these four carpenters were being sent to overthrow the four horns.
 - c. "The powers would be destroyed by instruments raised by Jehovah for this purpose. The power of their own destruction rests in the nations that destroy. This vision clearly teaches that Jehovah is the Judge of all and that every nation meets its match in Him" (Hailey, p.329).
 - d. The Lord gave this vision to the prophet for the purpose of offering to the people a hope for the future; it could be a source of encouragement and comfort to them as they faced a future which no doubt seemed very dim and uncertain.
 - e. Certainly to be found in the vision is a strong indication that all those individuals and nations which rise up in opposition to God and his people are fighting a losing battle in the end. While they might overwhelm us for the time, yet their eventual defeat is assured, and the victory of the faithful is certain.

ZECHARIAH 2

A. Zechariah 2:1-5: The Third Vision.

1. Verse 1: "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand."
 - a. In words introducing another vision, Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line in his hand. Measuring devices such as lines were used then as they are used now, to determine length and size.
 - b. In prophetic language, the figure of taking measurements is used for the purpose of announcing punishment or blessing (tearing down or building up). The chapter shows that it is the latter that is here intended.
2. Verse 2: "Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof."
 - a. Jerusalem is to be measured; its breadth and length are to be determined. But is this literal or spiritual Jerusalem? It is apparent, since no distances are given and in view of what later verses say, that spiritual Jerusalem is meant.
 - b. Lying in the foreground, of course, is God's intention that the Jews rebuild the temple, and go on to establish Jerusalem as the center of the nation of Israel. But it is new Jerusalem (the church) that is the primary subject of this vision.
3. Verses 3-4a: "And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying...."
 - a. Much discussion has been set forth by many writers trying to identify the individuals spoken of in this passage.
 - b. The simple explanation seems to be the right one. Zechariah was speaking with one angel; another angel comes into the scene; the newly-arrived angel appears to have greater authority for he tells the first angel to run and speak to "this young man" (the man with the measuring line).
 - c. Coffman and others think that the young man was Zechariah. Mormons foolishly say that the young man was Joseph Smith!
4. Verses 4b-5: "...Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."
 - a. The message to be given to the young man concerns the walls of the city. This Jerusalem will be inhabited even though it is to have no walls to protect it.
 - b. The city will be protected, not by material walls, but by the Lord; the Lord would be as a wall of fire about it, and his glory would be in its midst. The real and only protection that literal Jerusalem ever had was that which God provided. But it always had walls about it, except for that period of time after Babylon destroyed the walls until Nehemiah rebuilt them.
 - c. New Jerusalem, the Lord's church, never has any material walls protecting it; only the Lord is its shield.
 - d. Although cattle are said to be within it, and no animals are in New Jerusalem, this is still a reference to the church. The picture is one taken from the real affairs of life, but has a spiritual fulfillment. As a normal inhabited earthly city of the time would have both men and animals, so spiritual Jerusalem would have all that is necessary to make it complete.

B. Zechariah 2:6-13: The Lord Calls on His People to Take Up Residence in the City.

1. Verse 6: "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD."
 - a. The thought of the vision continues to be the subject of this information. The restoration of literal Jerusalem is in the foreground, but descriptions concerning spiritual Jerusalem are intermingled.
 - b. The words *ho ho* do not suggest laughter, but were an attention-getting device. In our culture and language, we often get attention by using our word *hey*.
 - c. The prophet calls on God's people who have been scattered to the four winds to flee from the land of the north. The land where they were in captivity was to the northeast of Canaan, but the logical route of travel was along the *fertile crescent* which entered the land from the north.
 - d. There were many Jews who remained in the land of their captivity; these are being urged to return to the land of promise. "Build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them" (Jer. 29:5).
 - e. With the broader view of the context in mind, the verse may carry an invitation to all of those who are lost in sin to enter spiritual Jerusalem, and receive help.

2. Verse 7: "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon."
 - a. The prophet calls on those who remain in Babylon to deliver themselves therefrom. The possibility of leaving Babylon existed or else they would not have been told to leave that corrupted land.
 - b. If Babylon is understood as a figure representing the state of sin, then the statement could be applied to the gospel age: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40).
3. Verse 8: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."
 - a. Zechariah writes that he (apparently the angel) has been sent to obtain glory for God from the nations which had spoiled Israel.
 - b. When God brought both Assyria and Babylon to their knees following their conquering of the whole nation of Israel, he obtained glory. Assyria had vanquished the ten northern tribes (Israel) in 722 B.C., and Babylon had done the same for the two southern tribes (Judah) in 606-586 B.C. Babylon overwhelmed Assyria (612-606 B.C), and were themselves overcome by the Medes and Persians (539 B.C.).
 - c. Those who were perceptive about what was going on in the world could see the hand of the Almighty at work behind the scenes, and would give him credit for it.
 - d. God had great plans for Israel, and would not ignore the trouble which the heathen nations heaped upon them. Those who touched Israel, touched the apple of God's eye (cf. Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8; Prov. 7:2).
 - 1) The apple of the eye is: "The pupil, or aperture, through which rays pass to the retina, is the tenderest part of the eye; the member which we most sedulously guard from hurt, as being the dearest of our members; the one which feels most acutely the slightest injury..." JFB, p.665).
 - 2) The apple of God's eye is the choicest part of humanity. It is encouraging to know that God knows our pain; in a way, he suffers with us. Those who despise and abuse God's child, despise and abuse that child's father.
4. Verse 9: "For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me."
 - a. NLK: "For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me."
 - b. The description of God shaking his hand over a nation symbolizes the approach of his wrath upon them.
 - 1) Isaiah 11:15: "And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dryshod."
 - 2) Isaiah 19:16: "In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it."
 - c. "The waving or shaking of the hand indicates the ease with which Jehovah can and will destroy the enemy; he can do this simply by a wave of his hand..." (Hailey, p.331).
 - d. The result of God waving his hand over these enemies would be their becoming the spoil of their servants. The Assyrians had held Babylon in submission, but these erstwhile servants rebelled; the Babylonians held the Medes and Persians in submission, but were overcome by these servants; the same held true with those who replaced them (the Grecians and the Romans).
 - e. When men saw God's hand in these affairs, they would give God the glory. Glorifying God is man's greatest duty: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).
5. Verses 10-11: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee."
 - a. There was reason for Israel to rejoice. God had brought about their release from captivity; they could return to the land of promise, and could be established once more in that place. God would be in their midst. This is the foreground of the prophecy.
 - b. Verse eleven shows that more is included in the statement than physical Israel's immediate future. *In that day* is a phrase which alludes to the Messianic Age. It is only during this gospel age that many nations will be joined to the Lord. There was no time during Israel's 1500-year history that such was true.

- c. But under Christ, the gospel is to be published among all nations, with every individual of every nation being given the opportunity to become God's child (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-35; Col. 1:6,23; Rom. 10:18).
 - d. In the gospel system, God truly dwells with his people (2 Cor. 6:14-18; cf. Heb. 13:5-6), in spiritual Jerusalem, the city without walls.
 - e. When men see these events unfold, they will know that God is the source of them.
6. Verse 12: "And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."
- a. NKJ: "And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem."
 - b. *Judah* shall be God's portion *in the holy land*. Judah was God's people during the Old Testament era in which they were separated from the ten tribes. When they returned from their Babylonian Captivity, they were God's people.
 - c. Christians can be called Jews, thus all Christians could be called spiritual Judah. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). The word *Jew* has reference to one who is "praiseworthy" (from God's viewpoint).
 - d. The *holy land* is a common modern reference to Palestine. Deluded religionists see Palestine as the perpetually holy land, but it is anything but holy. More wars have been fought in that 12,000 square mile area of land than on any other comparable place on earth. For most of its history, it has been inhabited by idolatrous, wicked, unbelieving, rebellious people.
 - e. The only sense that it could be called *holy* is because of heaven's connection with it in the ancient days. Any place where God is, that is holy ground (Ex. 3:3-6; Josh. 5:15). Jerusalem was a holy city because God manifested his presence there in the temple.
 - 1) Exodus 3:3-6: "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."
 - 2) Joshua 5:15: "And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so."
 - f. This is the only place in the Bible where Palestine is called *the holy land*, and even in this place, the expression is not to be taken literally. In a sense, when Israel occupied the land and was faithful to God, it could be called the holy land. But only in a limited sense.
 - g. The chapter deals only in part with fleshly Israel, with the other part being given in reference to spiritual Jerusalem and spiritual Israel.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 2) Galatians 4:26: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."
 - 3) Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."
 - 4) 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."
 - 5) 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
 - 6) Hebrews 12:22-24: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits

- of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."
- h. Christians comprise God's holy nation, his holy and royal priesthood, his elect and chosen generation, and a people that are peculiarly his (1 Pet. 2:5,9). And we must show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into light.
7. Verse 13: "Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation."
- a. The thought of this verse is like that of Habakkuk 2:20; both call on earth's inhabitants to be reverent in the presence of Jehovah, who is able to do all that he has done. "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).
 - b. In this verse, a direct connection is made between the reason the land is holy and God whose presence makes it holy.
 - c. It should not be thought that the Creator sleeps and wakes; this is a figure given to introduce God's forthcoming activities. "The heathen nations would be judged, Jehovah would build and inhabit the new Zion, and he would fulfill his promises concerning Jerusalem. This is Jehovah's answer to the Jews who could not see beyond the immediate physical temple and city and to those indifferent to his purpose" (Hailey, p.332).

ZECHARIAH 3

A. Zechariah 3:1-5: The Fourth Vision.

1. Verse 1: "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."
 - a. In this vision, the scene depicts Joshua the high priest standing before the angel; Satan was standing at Joshua's right hand as his adversary.
 - b. This is not Joshua the son of Nun, but Joshua who was the religious leader of those who had returned to Jerusalem under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel (Hag. 1:1). Joshua, as high priest in Israel at the time, represents the entire priesthood.
 - c. *Satan* means "adversary." *Devil* means "slanderer, accuser." Satan is a real person whose evil work is to oppose each of us; he slanders and accuses us before God, seeking our destruction. Concerning his origin, we are not given much information in the Scriptures; concerning his work, the Bible provides us sufficient detail to arm us against him (Jas. 4:7; 2 Cor. 2:11; Matt. 4:1-11).
 - d. Satan was standing at Joshua's side before the angel of the Lord; his purpose was to resist Joshua (cf. Job 1:6-12).
 - 1) The gathering in which Satan accused Job before the Lord was real; we are not given enough information to say much more than this. Where did the meeting take place? The text does not plainly say.
 - 2) Does Satan make similar accusations against you and me? We may assume that he does, since he did oppose Job and is depicted in the present vision as resisting Joshua. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9).
2. Verse 2: "And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"
 - a. Zechariah does not provide us with the details of the accusation Satan made against Joshua. If Satan could cause Joshua's destruction by the charges he raised, God's purposes through Israel would have been severely damaged, if not altogether ruined.
 - b. The next verse says that Joshua was clothed in filthy garments, which indicates that his "skirts were unclean," that is, he was guilty of sinful activity. The prophets had exposed the many sins of the priesthood and the people; evidently, this high priest was not what he ought to have been spiritually. God does not need Satan's accusation in order to know of a man's sins (Heb. 4:13; Prov. 15:3).
 - c. "Jehovah's rebuke of any opponent silences him and sweeps him away. Satan may have felt confident in his charge against Joshua; for whatever the present accusation may have been, the priesthood had been guilty of making no distinction between the holy and the common and between the clean and the unclean (Ezek. 22:26). To a degree they had been responsible for the ignorance of the nation (Hos. 4:6) and had fed on the sins of the people (Hos. 4:8); they had taught for hire (Mic. 3:11) and had been further polluted by having been in an unclean land. But Satan misjudged the grace of God; he could not fathom a love that could and would forgive" (Hailey, p.333).
 - d. In Jude 9, we have another statement describing the same or a similar situation: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Such a statement could drive Satan from the battlefield.
 - e. Israel was the "brand plucked out of the fire." Many of the nation had been slain in the attacks made on it by the Assyrians and Babylonians; a few had been left in the land when the Babylonians carried the remainder into captivity. God in his mercy and by his power was able to provide for their release from bondage in 536 B.C., but only a remnant of the original had continued—only a brand which God had snatched from the conflagration which consumed the others. Compare: "And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).
3. Verse 3: "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel."
 - a. The filthy garments which Joshua wore depicts his (and the priesthood's) tainted condition. Instead of the beautiful, pure garments of the priestly office, he was clothed with garments which were soiled.
 - b. The description is a graphic one, given in a vision. The filthy garments represented their sinful condition. On this point Satan's accusation was accurate, but God was willing to show mercy in order for his great plan to be eventually fulfilled.
 - 1) Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- 2) Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
 - 3) Hebrews 2:18: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."
 - 4) 1 John 3:8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."
 - c. The atonement sacrifice of the Mosaic Law could roll the sins of Israel, and its high priest, forward for another year (Heb. 10:1-4; Lev. 16; Heb. 7:27-28).
 4. Verse 4: "And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."
 - a. In the vision, the order is issued (from God, through the angel) for those standing nearby to remove the filthy clothing from Joshua. These others are not identified in the text, but their identity is unimportant.
 - b. The removal of Joshua's filthy garments symbolizes the taking away of his guilt. In fact, the verse plainly affirms that God would cause his "iniquity to pass from thee."
 - c. In causing his iniquity to pass away, God would clothe him with other raiment; that is, clean and pure garments would replace the filthy clothes.
 5. Verse 5: "And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by."
 - a. The prophet spoke up in response to what he was seeing in the vision, calling for Joshua to have a fair (clean) mitre placed on his head. The mitre was the headdress of the high priest (cf. Ex. 28:36-38).
 - b. The mitre was given and proper garments were put upon Joshua. This symbolized the restoring to the priesthood the purity they needed in order to conduct the affairs of their office (Ex. 19:6).
 - c. The angel of the Lord stood by during this procedure, directing and condoning what was transpiring. Compare: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2).
- B. Zechariah 3:6-10: Joshua is Given a Charge.
1. Verses 6-7: "And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by."
 - a. NKJ: Then the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house, And likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk Among these who stand here.'"
 - b. The *protest* indicated here is a solemn charge concerning Joshua's conduct in his priestly office. To be suitable to the task, Joshua must be personally pure and must be faithful in the discharge of his priestly calling.
 - c. He is given a three-fold promise: he would be given the privilege of judging God's house (Israel); he would keep God's courts (protecting them from unauthorized intrusions and corruptions); and he would have a place of access (ASV) to the Lord in behalf of the people (See Hailey, pp.335f).
 - d. The angels were those who stood by God's throne and were present in the vision; to have access to the place where these angels were standing was to have access to God. Thus, through the cleansed priesthood, Joshua and the people of Israel would have access to God, with all the blessings and advantages involved.
 - e. In this scene is to be found motivation for Israel to complete the rebuilding of the temple. The priesthood has been readied for the resumption of their full, God-given functions as ordained in the Law; but before they could discharge those duties, they must have the facilities required.
 - f. In the New Testament system, we have access to God by Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:18; 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 3:1-11; Heb. 1:1-4).
 2. Verse 8: "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men that are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch" (ASV).
 - a. In this remarkable verse, the prophet connects Joshua and the other priests, and points out that they were a sign (ASV) of the Branch, the servant God was planning to send forth.
 - b. The fact that Joshua and his priestly co-workers were a sign, indicates the typical nature of Old Testament features. The Old Testament high priest was a type of the real High Priest, Jesus Christ

- (Heb. 8:1-4; 10:1; Col. 2:17). The Hebrew name *Joshua* is equivalent to the New Testament name *Jesus*, with both meaning *Savior*.
- c. The servant of God called The Branch is none other than Christ, God's Son.
 - 1) Isaiah 4:2: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."
 - 2) Isaiah 11:1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."
 - 3) Jeremiah 23:5-6: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."
 - 4) Jeremiah 33:15: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land."
 - 5) Zechariah 6:12-13: "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
 - d. A branch is a shoot or sprout; the Branch the prophets described would grow out of the stem or roots of Jesse, the father of David. Jesus was the descendant of Jesse, through David.
3. Verse 9: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."
 - a. Attention is directed to the stone which the Lord has laid before Joshua; this one stone is said to have seven eyes.
 - b. Inasmuch as *seven* is the number of perfection in Scripture, and *eyes* suggest watching and seeing, it appears that the reference is to perfect knowledge or oversight.
 - c. Since the subject of this verse is closely connected to that of verse eight, it is apparent that the stone refers to Christ, as did the Branch (vs. 8). Peter spoke of Christ being the living and precious stone and chief cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:1-9).
 - 1) Matthew 21:42: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"
 - 2) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - 3) Romans 9:32-33: "Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."
 - 4) Ephesians 2:11-22: "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."
 - d. In direct connection with this stone, on which Jehovah would provide the engraving (that is, he would determine the function of this living stone), the removal of iniquity in one day would be made possible. This seems an undeniable reference to the death of Christ.
 - 1) Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

- 2) Hebrews 2:9-10: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
- 3) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
4. Verse 10: "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree."
 - a. During the time being described in the context, those involved will be able to speak of all others as his neighbor. "In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree" (ASV).
 - b. To be under the vine or fig tree symbolized a place of peace and safety.
 - 1) 1 Kings 4:24-25: "For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."
 - 2) Isaiah 36:16: "Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern."
 - 3) Micah 4:4: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*."
 - c. In the kingdom of Christ, peace and safety prevail for the souls of those involved; and each saint cordially invites his neighbor to partake of that state of blessing.
5. Pointing with an unwavering finger to the Messianic reign, God furnishes the Jews with strong motivation for the completion of the temple, and hope for the future!

ZECHARIAH 4

A. Zechariah 4:1-10: The Fifth Vision.

1. Verse 1: "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep."
 - a. The angel that talked with Zechariah in the vision came to him again, and aroused the prophet as though from a deep sleep.
 - b. The word *again* may suggest that he had been thus aroused before by the angel. Compare: "But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him" (Luke 9:32).
2. Verses 2-3: "And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof."
 - a. NKJ: And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."
 - b. The angel asked him what he now saw in the vision. The prophet said he saw a golden candlestick, having a bowl at its top, and seven lamps having seven pipes on the lamps. He also saw two olive trees, one on each side of the candlestick.
 - c. It appears that the bowl on top was a tank holding the oil which fed the lamps through the pipes. The olive trees would represent the source of the oil being burned in the lamps on the stand.
 - d. This candlestick (lampstand) was different from the one placed in the tabernacle. No bowl (reservoir) or pipes was on the one Moses made. There were ten branches on the candlestick placed in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7:4); it was looted by the Babylonians: "And the basins, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away" (Jer. 52:19).
3. Verses 4-5: "So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord."
 - a. Zechariah inquired of the angel about the significance of this vision. The angel's initial response indicates that the answer should have been obvious.
 - b. A lamp stand (or candlestick) is used to give light to the surrounding area.
4. Verse 6: "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The lampstand, the angel reported, represented the word of God which was given to Zerubbabel. There are several types and analogies in the tabernacle which correspond to the Lord's church. The lampstand represented the word of God; the table of showbread corresponds to the Lord's Supper; the laver represents baptism.
 - b. Having plainly stated that the lampstand represented God's word which had been given to Zerubbabel, the angel announced that the success Zerubbabel (and his people) would enjoy would not be accomplished by human might or power, but by the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit).
 - 1) Nehemiah 9:20: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst."
 - 2) Nehemiah 9:30: "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands."
 - c. Notice the connection between the word of God and the Spirit of God, that these two expressions are used interchangeably. The job at hand would be executed, but not by mere human effort; God would provide guidance and motivation through the Spirit-given word of God; following the directions of that inspired message, the governor and his people would accomplish the rebuilding of the temple.
 - d. The vision was obviously intended to give Zerubbabel and the people the necessary encouragement to disdain the oppositions and complications, and complete the work.
5. Verse 7: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."
 - a. NKJ: Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

- b. Illustrating the point at hand, God had made it possible for Zerubbabel to level mountains, turning them into level plains. The conspicuous meaning is that he would have no insurmountable obstacles to prevent his completing the temple.
 - c. The headstone (the topstone) of the temple would be brought forth with rejoicing, which indicates the end of the rebuilding work. The foundation of the temple had been laid several years earlier; the foundation contained the cornerstone, so the crowning stone (the finishing stone, the topstone) is meant here.
 - d. The angel shows that the success of the work could not be claimed by men, even though their efforts were directly related to the successful conclusion of the project. But God was the power behind the success, and to him belongs the praise.
 - e. Their cry of, "grace, grace unto it," would be a call for God's grace to continue to abide on the temple, blessing it for the purposes it was to accomplish.
6. Verses 8-9: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you."
- a. Explicitly stating the proposition, the angel says that Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple, and he would also complete the rest of the work.
 - b. In other words, the temple would be rebuilt during the lifetime of Zerubbabel and under his leadership. Compare: "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:23).
 - c. The lesson to be learned from this announcement from the angel was that God was behind the message, and thus was the sponsor of the work.
7. Verse 10: "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."
- a. When the foundation had been laid soon after the return of the first contingent of Jews from captivity, those who had seen the magnificence and size of the former temple, sobbed tears of regret over the comparative size and grandeur of the rebuilt temple.
 - b. The Lord's point has direct reference to the despite some of the older Jews had toward the new temple. He asked, "Who has despised the day of small things?" In other words, "Who are you to belittle this temple because it does not measure up to your demands?"
 - c. Man's wisdom is often at odds with God's wisdom (1Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-5; Isa. 55:8-9; Josh.6; 2 Kings 5; John 9; Isaiah 53). Conceited and unbelieving men despise the methods of God, but in the end, his way is the only way.
 - d. God never has taken an unnecessary step, planned an inconsequential activity, or done or said anything that was unimportant. Everything he ever did or said during the Old Testament eras was significant, in one way or another, to the Messianic mission.
 - e. "Those seven" will rejoice when they see the plummet (plumbob) in Zerubbabel's hand, as he completes the project. The *seven* were the "eyes" of the Lord.
 - 1) Zechariah 3:9: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."
 - 3) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 - 4) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
- B. Zechariah 4:11-14: The Prophet Asks About the Olive Trees.
1. Verses 11-12: "Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?"
 - a. The angel has shown Zechariah the meaning of all the items in the vision except the olive trees. The prophet inquires about them, and about the two branches which transfer their oil to the lampstand through two golden pipes.

- b. Nothing has been said to this point about the two branches of the trees, the two golden pipes, or the golden oil. Although unstated in the passage, the golden oil from the trees flows into the bowl (the reservoir) at the top of the lampstand.
2. Verses 13-14: "And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."
 - a. The angel asks Zechariah if he really does not understand their significance; the prophet admits he does not know. The angel reports that these two trees represent the "two anointed ones" who stand by him who is the Lord of the whole earth.
 - b. "Under the Old Covenant there were two offices held by men who were anointed, thereby being set apart as holy to the Lord, specially appointed to serve his purpose: these were the office of high priest (Exod. 30:30; Lev. 8:30; 21:10) and king (I Sam. 10:1; II Kings 9:1-6). These two offices represented the religious or spiritual, and civil or temporal powers of the theocracy" (Hailey, p.342).
 - c. It appears that Joshua (who held the office of High Priest at the time) and Zerubbabel (who was the governor, or civil ruler in Israel) could be the two anointed ones indicated. "The two offices would be ultimately united in the Messiah, the Priest-King to come..." (Hailey, p.343). "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:12-14).
 - d. But Coffman sees a connection between this passage and Revelation 11:3-4, and thence makes the application that the two olive trees represent the Old and New Testaments.
 - e. The angel does not reveal the identity of these two anointed ones. Brother Coffman has an interpretation with merit, but Hailey's view appears to be the more obvious application.

ZECHARIAH 5

A. Zechariah 5:1-4: The Sixth Vision.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits."
 - a. The prophet turned and looked, and beheld a flying roll (scroll). Answering the angel's question again, Zechariah reported what he saw, and said the roll was 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide.
 - b. Taking a cubit as 18 inches, it would be 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. We are not told how the prophet knew the dimensions.
2. Verse 3: "Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it."
 - a. The angel stated to Zechariah that this roll was the curse that would extend to all of the earth, cutting off those who steal and those who swear; one side of the roll affected the thief and the other side of the roll affected the oath-taker.
 - b. The old type of book was a parchment which was carried or stored in a rolled-up configuration. The typical scroll was rolled from one spindle to another as the reader progressed through the written message. This roll was likely a parchment on which words were written on both sides.
 - c. To be *cut off* in Old Testament terminology was to shut out of Israel, to lose one's blessings and advantages of citizenship. To be cut off in the eternal scheme of things is to be cast into hell.
 - d. Stealing violated the commandment against taking what belonged to another; it also often included a violation of the command against coveting. Swearing was to take the name of God in vain or use it profanely. The kind of swearing in this context was false swearing (verse 4).
 - 1) Leviticus 19:12: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD."
 - 2) Nehemiah 13:17: "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?"
3. Verse 4: "I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof."
 - a. Those who became guilty of these sinful activities would have to suffer the prescribed penalty. This implies, of course, that the guilty party did not repent (cf. Ezek. 18:31-32). A curse accompanies sin:
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:20-23: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?"
 - 2) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 3) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - b. Because of sin, both Israel and Judah were sent into captivity. Although God is not contemplating any other such penalty for the fledgling nation now getting started again in Palestine, yet sin still bears personal damages. Even those who do not even claim any connection with God are held accountable for their actions. The Jew or the Gentile, whether under the Law of Moses or not, committed sin when he stole or profaned the holy name of God. But these two items were not the only ways by which one could transgress the will of God; they are used representatively, possibly because they were being commonly practiced at the time.
 - c. Jehovah reveals here that the guilt of stealing or swearing (or of any other sinful act) would remain within the individual's house, and would consume the timber and stones with which the dwelling had been constructed. This is a figure of speech which teaches that guilt would attach itself to those who sinned; it cannot be ignored; a penalty must be faced sooner or later. And since God does not bless those who live in sin, they could expect most any kind of trouble, and should not expect the Lord to bless their secular endeavors.

B. Zechariah 5:5-11: The Seventh Vision.

1. Verse 5: "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth."
 - a. Once more, the angel who talked with Zechariah asked the prophet to look and tell what he saw.
 - b. The prophet was to use his own senses to see what was presented in the vision, and to report what it was he beheld.
2. Verse 6: "And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth."
 - a. Zechariah beheld but did not comprehend what he saw. The angel said that the vision depicted an ephah going forth. An ephah was a measure, with the name of the measure being used here to describe the container; the basket or barrel was the size to contain an ephah. An ephah is said to be equal to 38.86 American quarts (Hailey, p.345). The container is used in the vision to carry a woman. A bushel basket would be roughly the equivalent to the ephah of this passage.
 - b. "This is their resemblance through all the earth" (KJV). "This is their appearance in all the land (ASV)." The ephah (and what it contained) was representative of the wickedness of the people of the land, or perhaps of the wicked people of the land.
 - c. "What is it? The prophet did not clearly discern the object, or his question may mean, 'What does it signify?' An ephah; the ephah, as 'the curse' (ver. 3). The ephah was the largest of the dry measures in use among the Jews, and was equal to six or seven gallons. It was, of course, too small to contain a woman. The LXX. calls it simply 'the measure;' the Vulgate, *amphora*; and it must be considered as an imaginary vessel of huge size. It may have a tacit reference to dishonest dealings (comp. Amos 8:5; Mic 6:10). This is their resemblance; literally, this is their eye. The Authorized Version explains the meaning accurately. 'Eye' is often used for that which is seen, as in Lev 13:55, where the Authorized Version has 'colour;' and Num 11:7, where in reference to the manna we read, 'The eye thereof was as the eye of bdellium' (comp. Ezek 1:4,16). So here the meaning is: This ephah and this whole vision represent the wicked in the land" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
3. Verse 7: "And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah."
 - a. NKJ: "Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket."
 - b. The container was covered by a lid of lead weighing a talent. The word *talent* was not used to designate the weight of anything but gold and silver, and may here be used in the sense of shape (round), not weight.
 - c. Inside the basket was a woman. Two possibilities exist in view of the fact that an ephah-size basket would not be large enough to hold a full-grown woman. The woman was tiny or the basket was larger than usual.
 - d. If the basket was not actually an ephah in size, the term *ephah* is used only to denote the type or shape of the basket, and not its real capacity. If the woman was so tiny as to fit in an ephah container, she may have been merely a figurine, or idol. There were many popular goddesses at the time.
 - e. It was necessary for the angel to tell Zechariah that what he saw in the basket was a woman; this suggests that the woman may not have been a real person, but only a figure or idol.
4. Verse 8: "And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof."
 - a. This woman was representative of wickedness. Other prophets used the figure of an immoral woman to depict the sins of Israel (Isa. 1:21; Hos. 2:5; Ezek. 23). The wickedness represented included more than the stealing and swearing of the previous vision, but all of the sins common to the people of the time.
 - b. He cast *it* into the ephah; the ASV says he cast *her* into the ephah. The angel also threw the weight (lid) of lead upon the mouth of the ephah, thus shutting up the woman again.
5. Verse 9: "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven."
 - a. Zechariah's attention is drawn to two other women who appeared in the vision. These women are unlike others; they were equipped with wings, strong as the wings of a stork.
 - b. Taking up the ephah basket between them, they lifted it up from the earth, and bore it away.
6. Verses 10-11: "Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."

- a. NKJ: So I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they carrying the basket?" And he said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base."
- b. The prophet inquires of the angel where these two winged women were taking the container. The answer: they bore the woman in the basket to Shinar, and there to build her a house. Shinar was the location where Nimrod built his rebellious kingdom. Compare: "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah" (Gen. 10:8-11).
- c. Rather than referring here to an exact place, likely the reference is symbolic of Satan's kingdom, where God's will is renounced and opposed, and where sin is enthroned.
- d. "The vision signifies the complete removal of wickedness from Jehovah's land to a kingdom of this world, suited for it; it symbolized a complete separation of the two. This is further symbolized in the Book of Revelation by the 'harlot' and the 'bride,' by the 'great city' and the 'holy city,' and by the beast out of the sea and the one hundred forty-four thousand on 'the mount Zion.' Wickedness must be completely removed from God's kingdom and his people, and the complete separateness must be maintained throughout time" (Hailey, pp.346f).
- e. Another, more limited, interpretation of the vision has the woman represent the primary sin of ancient Israel and the pagan nations: Idolatry. Following their return to Palestine from their captivity, Israel did not get enmeshed in idolatry again. The taking of the woman (perhaps a female idol) to *Shinar* would denote the removal of idolatry from the nation.

ZECHARIAH 6

A. Zechariah 6:1-8: The Eighth Vision.

1. Verse 1: "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass."
 - a. Every time the prophet lifted up his eyes or turned around, another vision was unfolded before him. This time he saw four chariots emerging from between two brass mountains. *Brass* may have reference to copper or bronze.
 - b. The fact that there were four chariots may depict the completeness of God's power (verse 5), as the "four winds" includes all the possible directions.
 - c. No particular geographical location is intended or else some definite mention would have been suggested.
2. Verses 2-3: "In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses."
 - a. NKJ: "With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses — strong steeds."
 - b. Associated with each chariot were two or more horses. The text says they were in the chariots, but logically it appears they pulled the chariots for horses do not ride in such vehicles.
 - c. The colors may be significant, perhaps bearing similar meanings to those of Revelation 6. Red can be symbolic of war and bloodshed; black is connected with famine; white can represent victory; and the fourth category may be indicative of pestilence.
 - d. Ezekiel 14:21 and 5:16-17 speak of God's punishment in the form of famine, pestilence, evil beasts, and blood.
 - 1) Ezekiel 5:16-17: "When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their* destruction, *and* which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread: So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken *it*."
 - 2) Ezekiel 14:21: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?"
 - e. The fourth group of horses are identified in the KJV as grisled and bay, but in the ASV they are grizzled strong horses. The KJV gives *strong* as the marginal alternative rendering of *bay*.
3. Verses 4-5: "Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth."
 - a. Zechariah failed to understand the significance of this vision, and asks the angel to tell him the meaning. The angel says that the four groups of horses and chariots are the spirits of the heavens which go forth from the Lord's presence. It is clear that God sends them out on divine missions.
 - b. The ASV has *winds* in place of *spirits* (KJV). *Spirits* may be the better rendering, however God used the four winds to symbolize divine judgments on other occasions:
 - 1) Psalms 104:4: "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:"
 - 2) Jeremiah 49:36: "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come."
 - 3) Jeremiah 51:1: "Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind."
 - 4) Daniel 7:2: "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."
4. Verse 6: "The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country."
 - a. The black horses went toward the north country (where Babylon was located); the white horses followed the black horses. The grisled horses went toward the south country.
 - b. Babylon had been overthrown by the Medes and Persians, but their cruelty, imbibed by the Persians, had not been fully punished. The Babylonians had gone too far in the cruelty of punishment they brought upon Judah (Zech. 1:15-16), so God had become sorely displeased with them on this account.

- 1) Isaiah 14:6: "He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none hindereth."
 - 2) Isaiah 47:6: "I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke."
 - 3) Zechariah 1:15-16: "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."
 - c. God would send his black horses into that territory over which the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians ruled in succession, each bringing their own brand of oppression and cruelty upon the civilized world. The black horses apparently represent the devastation God would bring upon them, and the white horses depicting the triumph the black horses would accomplish.
 - d. The grisled horses would be sent into the south country, in which direction Egypt, another harsh foe of Israel, dwelled. Some form of punishment was in store for these idolaters and enemies of God.
 - e. The Mediterranean Sea lay to the west of Palestine; the great desert was toward the east; the only proper or normal entry and exit points of Canaan were to the north and south. Hence, the horses are pictured as going in these directions, fulfilling all the missions on which they were sent.
 5. Verse 7: "And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth."
 - a. The red horses are not mentioned after verse two, which may imply that they are held in reserve for possible future action. The *bay* horses (or *the strong*—ASV) went forth, following their instruction to walk to and fro through the earth. The term may be a summary word including all the horses, all of which were strong.
 - b. "The most reasonable conclusion is that the chariot that went through the earth is the fourth chariot which went to the south country. This conclusion is justified by their (the strong) having 'sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth.' They seemed to be eager to go not only to the south country, but to render a larger service by going through the whole earth" (Hailey, p.350).
 - c. Coffman suggests that the eagerness on the part of the powers represented by the horses and chariots to do God's will indicates that God exercises a restraining hold on the powers that are poised to execute wrath upon the wicked. "In this connection, it should be remembered that the human race was sentenced to death in Eden, that the sentence was never repealed; and that, in time, it will be summarily executed. God, however, will not suffer the frustration of his purpose of redeeming the full harvest of the saved from this earth; and, therefore, the great destructive forces that are always ready to execute men are by the Father's gracious love and longsuffering restrained" (Coffman, p.90).
 6. Verse 8: "Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country."
 - a. God's wrath had been satisfied by the mission of the two chariots in the north country. "In the vindication of Jehovah's righteousness through judgment is his Spirit quieted (cf. Ezek. 5:13; 16:42; 24:13). What has been achieved in the north country surely can be said of the others sent forth; all accomplished the mission on which they were sent" (Hailey, p.350).
 - b. God has seen to it that the evil empires of Assyria and Babylonia have been punished to the full measure of their guilt. The black horses followed by the white horses were dispatched into the north country, which symbolized the defeat of these enemies of God, and his victory over them.
 - c. Those enemies had been devastated by God's hand, and those who succeeded them in domination of the earth would likewise be overthrown when they ventured into open rebellion against God.
 - d. God knew that it was only a matter of time until the ensuing world powers would be corrupted and need punishing. Compare: "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations..." (Hag. 2:6-7). The empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome followed the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, and in their own turn, tasted the judgment of God's cavalry.
 7. "The visions had begun with the condition of the heathen; all was quiet. The second through the seventh dealt with the fortunes of Judah, God's people....It is altogether fitting that the concluding vision would deal with the heathen and his being shaken, completing a circle of visions dealing with the heathen and with Jehovah's own" (Hailey, pp.350f).
- B. Zechariah 6:9-15: The Coronation Scene.
1. Verses 9-10: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah."

- a. NKJ: Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: "Receive the gift from the captives — from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon — and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah."
 - b. The eight visions are now over, and the prophet turns to pure prophesying. He states that the word of the Lord came to him, delivering the message which he now relates. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1.). The prophet was instructed by the Lord to select certain men who had come out of captivity, and to take them with him into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah.
 - c. The three men to be taken were Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah. The ASV indicates that the prophet was to obtain gold and silver from these men who were staying at the house of Josiah; the KJV seems to say that he was to take these men and go into Josiah's house.
 - d. It may be that these three men had recently come from Babylon, and had brought gold and silver with them.
2. Verse 11: "Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest."
 - a. Zechariah was to take the silver and gold, and make crowns which he was to set on Joshua's head. Joshua was the son of Josedech, and served as high priest.
 - b. It seems he was to make a plurality of crowns, probably one of silver and one of gold. However, Hailey suggests that only one crown was made, a "double-tiered crown which would signify the double office of priest and king" (p.352).
 - c. The crowns were to be placed on the head of Joshua the high priest. Some critics of the Bible try to read Zerubbabel into the passage, and have Zechariah place a crown on him and another on Joshua. But Zerubbabel was not a king.
 - d. Joshua was high priest. Although the high priest did not wear a kingly crown, but a mitre, Joshua was crowned here as a symbolic act, the meaning of which appears in the next two verses.
 3. Verses 12-13: "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
 - a. NKJ: Then speak to him, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.
 - b. Zechariah was instructed to speak a message of words as he placed the crown on Joshua's head; the message would show the significance of the act. "Behold the man..." The person described would be a man (not a woman). Christ was as much a man as was Adam (1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45). When Pilate brought Christ out to the people after the scourging, he introduced him with these words: "Behold the man" (John 19:5). He was the seed of woman.
 - 1) Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
 - 2) Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."
 - c. "Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH." *Branch* means "shoot or sprout." Christ was to be a "shoot" out of the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1); unto him the nations would turn (Isa. 11:10). "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land" (Jer. 33:15).
 - d. "He shall grow up out of his place." "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground..." (Isa. 53:2). In the most unlikely of circumstances, the Messiah would arise. He was born in the little village of Bethlehem in a stable; he was reared in the despised village of Nazareth; his parents were poor; he had little if any schooling or social advantage; his nation was under the domination of Rome.
 - e. "He shall build the temple of the Lord."
 - 1) Amos 9:11: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." James quoted this passage in Acts 15:13-18.

- 2) Zerubbabel led the people in rebuilding Solomon's temple, but the Branch (Christ) would build God's real temple, the church (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 1:20-23; 2:11-22; 5:23-27; Matt. 16:16-19; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:1-12).
- f. "He shall bear the glory." Because of his identity, what he did, and what he does, he has been given a glorious position and awesome authority (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18,24; Heb. 12:1-2). Thus, Christ was not merely a man; he is Deity (Heb. 1).
- 1) Ephesians 1:20-23: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - 2) Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."
 - 3) Colossians 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."
 - 4) Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
- g. "And shall sit and rule upon his throne." The Messiah was destined to be king, according to the promise God gave him. He is now on the throne, having ascended to it after his ascension (Acts 2).
- 1) 2 Samuel 7:11-14: "And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."
 - 2) Psalms 2:6-7: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee."
 - 3) Psalms 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."
 - 4) Isaiah 9:6-7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."
 - 5) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 6) Acts 2:29-36: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
- h. "And he shall be a priest upon his throne." He would serve the dual role of king and priest simultaneously as he sits on the throne of his glory. That he is now serving as King is abundantly taught in the New Testament; that he is currently doing his duty at High Priest is likewise taught clearly (Heb. 7, 9; 1 Tim. 2:5).

- i. "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." The Father and the Branch share in the great work of effecting peace.
 - 1) The purpose of the gospel was to make it possible for men to be at peace with God and with each other (Eph. 2:11ff). He is called the "prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6-7), his gospel is the "gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15), and one of his many spiritual blessings is peace (Rom. 5:1).
 - 2) Both his work as king and his work as high priest are concerned with peace. He wants his kingdom to be at peace, and he wants to give peace to all those whom he serves as high priest.
4. Verse 14: "And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD."
 - a. With this verse, Zechariah comes back to the time then present. The crowns that he was instructed to make were to be for the men named, evidently the same men identified in verse ten, with a fourth man included (Hen the son of Zephaniah). It is possible that Hen could have a meaning other than a proper name.
 - b. The ASV alternative rendering gives, "for the kindness of the son of Zephaniah." In this case, only three men are named here, as in verse ten. The first name on both lists, although spelled differently, still refers to the same person; it is common for Bible characters to have more than one name.
 - c. Joshua the high priest entered the picture with reference to the crown only as a symbol; he did not wear the crown, except momentarily. The crown was intended to be a memorial to the temple. It would be stored in the temple, and would be an enduring symbol of the coming of the Messiah's kingdom in which he would serve both as king and High Priest.
5. Verse 15: "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."
 - a. "They that are far off" is a reference to the Gentiles who would later become part of the kingdom of Christ (Acts 10-11).
 - 1) Amos 9:11: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."
 - 2) Acts 2:38-39: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call."
 - 3) Acts 15:12-17: "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."
 - 4) Ephesians 2:11-16: "Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"
 - b. "Once more the angel of Jehovah points to the accomplishing of his promise as evidence that Jehovah had sent him (cf. 2:9,11; 4:9). There is no greater evidence to the divine origin of the word, nor to the integrity of his messengers, than the fulfilled word which they spoke" (Hailey, pp.290f).
 - c. "The fulfilling of God's word is not conditioned on their obedience but on their participation in that which he promises is conditioned; they must accept and obey his word of truth. The New Covenant clearly reveals that this is what the prophet means" (Hailey, p.291).

ZECHARIAH 7

A. Zechariah 7:1-7: The Question About Fasting in the Fifth Month.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu."
 - a. Zechariah received another revelation from God during the fourth year of the reign of Darius, on the fourth day of the ninth month (Chisleu).
 - b. The first revelation came during the second year of Darius, in the eighth month (1:1). The visions came to him in the second year of Darius, on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month.
 - c. The ancient Jewish calendar bore the following names, and corresponded to our monthly divisions of the year in a unique way (their months began about the middle of one of our months and ran to about the middle of the next). [See Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*, p.101; *International Bible Dictionary*, p.290].

MONTH	PASSAGE	CORRESPONDS
Abib or Nisan	Ex. 12:2,18; 23:4; Esth. 3:7	March—April
Zif	1 Kings 6:1	April—May
Sivan	Esther 8:9	May—June
Tammuz	Ezekiel 8:14	June—July
Ab	-	July—August
Elul	Nehemiah 6:15	August—September
Tishri	1 Kings 8:2	September—October
Bul	1 Kings 6:38	October—November
Chisleu	Zechariah 7:1	November—December
Tebeth	Esther 2:16	December—January
Shebat	Zechariah 1:7	January—February
Adar	Esther 3:7	February—March

2. Verse 2: "When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD." "Now they of Beth-el had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to entreat the favor of Jehovah" (ASV).
 - a. The verse as given in the KJV says that certain men were sent to the house of God; the ASV renders the phrase "house of God" as the proper name, *Bethel* which means "house of God."
 - b. The difference depends on whether the men were sent from (Bethel) or sent to (the house of God). The difference has no serious bearing on understanding the passage, where the emphasis is on what happened, and not on where the men came from or went to. The ASV may be more accurate for the temple had not been completed at the time these men came to Zechariah and the priests. The ASV also makes better sense in that it identifies those who sent the men as the people of Bethel.
 - c. The men sent on this mission were Sharezer and Regemmelech, and their men. The city of Bethel and Ai at the time numbered only about 223 men (Ezra 2:28; cf. Neh. 7:32). Bethel was one of the places where Jeroboam had set up the calves for the people to worship (1 Kings 12:25-33). The altar there was cursed by a man of God (1 Kings 13), and was polluted by Josiah (2 Kings 23).
 - d. The purpose of their mission was, in part, to pray to the Lord regarding the matter brought up in the next verse. It was to Jerusalem that these men came, for this was the operating base for the priests and Zechariah, and where the temple was under construction.

3. Verse 3: "And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?"
 - a. These men were sent to speak to the priests and the prophets, seeking an answer to this question: "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these seventy years?"
 - b. The weeping and separation had to do with a certain fast the Jews had initiated in memory of the disaster that befell Jerusalem and the temple at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:8ff; Jeremiah 52:12).
 - c. Through their exile in Babylon, the Jews had fasted and mourned on this day; at the time, they had been observing this practice for 70 years (KJV), many years (ASV).
 - d. The practice was of their own invention, therefore it was an imposition of their own will on the Mosaic System (cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Matt. 15:7-9; Luke 18:12).
 - e. These Jews had a problem: the rebuilding of the temple was nearing completion; they had returned to the land of promise; should we continue to fast and mourn on the tenth day of the fifth month?
4. Verses 4-5: "Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"
 - a. In response to their question, God pointed out several things, although he did not answer the question directly:
 - 1) He rebuked the people for hypocrisy, in that they observed the fast only as a form; they did not sincerely engage in it. So, what good was it doing anyhow? (Zech. 7:4-7).
 - 2) He provided the attributes of true fasting (Zech. 7:8-14).
 - 3) He reminded them that when they obeyed his voice, he would cause them to prosper (Zech. 8).
 - 4) He discussed the blessings that would come if they were humble and obedient (Zech. 8:18-23).
 - b. Zechariah received a revelation from God which called on him to speak to the people, giving the reply that God supplied.
 - c. He replies to their question with another question: During the years in which they had fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months, did they do it unto God?
 - d. Were they sincere in fasting and mourning? Was their practice in these matters a genuine appeal to God for mercy, and did it express their heart-felt sorrow for the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and their nation? Were they ready to admit that the reason for the destruction and exile was the rebellion of the nation as a whole?
 - e. "Jehovah had authorized only one fast in all the law, that of the Day of Atonement, a day in which they should afflict their souls. This fast of atonement was to be observed in the seventh month (Lev. 23:27), but the fast of the atonement is not the one now being kept. The one referred to by the prophet was in commemoration of the death of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 41:1ff). Other fasts kept by the Jews were in the fourth month, when a breach had been made in the walls of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:6-7), and in the tenth month, when the siege against Jerusalem had begun (II Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4; cf. Zech. 8:18-10). These fasts had not been authorized by Jehovah, but had grown out of their own self-pity rather than from a consciousness of sin" (Hailey, p.356).
5. Verse 6: "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"
 - a. God asks another rhetorical question of the people and the priests: When you ate and drank, did you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? The Lord is affirming by the questions that they fasted for themselves and when they ate and drank it was for themselves.
 - b. One does not obtain the favor of God by doing his own will. What may seem proper and right to our human thinking, may very well be an abomination to God.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) Luke 16:15: "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."
 - c. One can obey God only by following the directions and heeding the warnings which God has issued in his inspired word; we must do the thing required, and do it for the purpose God intended; and we must do it because God requires it, not because we agree with him on the rightness of the action involved.

6. Verse 7: "Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?"
 - a. God reminds them that if they had only listened to his warnings and heeded his instructions in the past, the Babylonians would not have been able or would not have had the right to invade their territory, destroy their cities, kill many of their citizens, and take others into exile.
 - b. God's way is always the best way; we do ourselves a great service, and our children and mankind in general, when we heed God's word! Although sometimes obedience may bring about troubles and deprivations, yet these are for our enrichment; they will doubtless redound to even greater blessings (Rom. 8:18; Heb. 12; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).
 - c. "Had their fathers listened to Jehovah's word when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, there would have been no occasion to fast now; for the city would never have been destroyed. The prophet includes both Jerusalem and the cities round about; he also includes the Negeb, the southern semiarid land of ancient Simeon, and the 'lowland' or Shephelah, the rolling hill country between the hills of Judah and the plain of Philistia. All would have continued if the people had listened to the word of Jehovah sent to them by his servants, the prophets" (Hailey, p.357).

B. Zechariah 7:8-14: The Rebellion of the People in the Past, Led to Their Destruction.

1. Verses 8-10: "And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart."
 - a. Another revelation is given to Zechariah in which the Lord addresses the sinful conduct of the earlier Israelites. The ASV gives verse nine in the past tense: "Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken...." (Cf. verses 12-14).
 - b. God, through the former prophets, had called on Israel and Judah to execute true judgment.
 - 1) Jeremiah 7:5: "For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour."
 - 2) Ezekiel 18:8-9: "He *that* hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD."
 - 3) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - c. He reminds the present generation of what he had said, and subsequently done, in former times. God takes notice when men practice injustice. Justice is not the ordinary practice on earth. Even in our country, where justice has been exercised more perfectly than in any other nation, it is imperfect, and seems to be getting less perfect year-by-year.
 - d. Through the former prophets, God called on his people to show mercy and compassion. This he demanded of every one of his people toward all the rest (Micah 6:8; Hosea 6:6; John 8:1-11; Matt. 5:7; Eph. 4:32; Mark 12:31; Matt. 7:12; Deut. 30:3).
 - e. God forbade them to oppress the widow, the sojourner, or the poor (Jer. 7:6; Isa. 32:7; Micah 2:1). If the first two injunctions were followed, all oppression would be eliminated. God will not condone any mistreatment of others.
 - f. God also prohibited their imagining (devising) evil in their hearts against other people (cf. 1 Tim. 6:4). They were to have no malice in their hearts toward their fellowman (1 Peter 2:1-2).
2. Verse 11: "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear."
 - a. Those former generations had refused to hear and heed God's instructions and warnings. The history of Israel is more characterized by rebellion than by obedience! "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*" (Acts 7:51-53).
 - b. The *pulled away their shoulder*. This is similar in expression and meaning to our figure of giving someone a *cold shoulder*. This may also be akin to our expression of *putting the shoulder to the wheel* (or pulling it away). The Lord's point is clearly a rebuke; they gave no heed to the will of God, and he denounced them for their rebellion.

- c. They stopped up their ears lest they should hear what God said. How tragically descriptive this is of many in our generation! It was true of the majority in the Lord's generation (Matt. 13:14-15; Acts 7:54-57; Luke 10:16).
3. Verse 12: "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts."
- a. Giving further graphic descriptions of those ancient sinners, God says they made their hearts as hard as an adamant stone.
- b. Their hearts were so inflexible and determined in rebelling against God's word that they could be depicted as hard as stone. We have just such an expression in our language. Their hearts were as hard as flint.
- c. They determined to have hard hearts so that they would not be influenced by God's word. In our hearts, there is the natural sense to recognize that God's word is good for us, and a native softness that wants to receive it. The human heart must be hardened lest it receive it! A heart becomes hard by an inward desire; it does not have that hardness naturally. Only the individual can be blamed for having a hard heart. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15).
- d. The method by which God's Spirit operated is delineated here. The Israelites had rejected the word which God gave to them by his Spirit in the former prophets. The Holy Spirit did not whisper God's word into their ears in the dark of the night, and he did not communicate with them by means of inner feelings and intuitions. The Spirit spoke through the prophets, giving them the message and guiding them by the process of inspiration to deliver it (orally or in written form) in errantly (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 1:16; Neh. 9:20,30).
- e. Because of their hardness of heart, they would not receive and follow God's word; God's sense of justice demanded that they be punished; the generation then present in Zechariah's day could well attest to the reality and severity of God's wrath. They knew full well that God meant what he said!
4. Verse 13: "Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts."
- a. With their recent history before him, God states that he had cried unto them by the former prophets and had had his message to fall on deaf ears; when they were in the throes of the agony and loss sent on them by God's wrath because of their rejection of his word, they had cried unto him, but their pleas had gone unanswered.
- b. They reaped what they had sown! They had sown to the wind, and had reaped the whirlwind. The evil rich man of Luke 16 found out too late that God's word is to be respected and obeyed; if it is not, there is an awful penalty that must be paid.
- c. In reporting the news item in the newspaper on January 26, 1993 about the cancellation of the Sears Mail-Order Catalog service, the AP writer stated: "Traditionists can take heart that the Bible is still in print. On Monday, the Sears catalog was consigned to history" (*Vero Beach Press Journal*, p.1A).
- 1) The reporter's view of God's word considers the Bible to be mere tradition. Perhaps the ancient Israelites thought the same; maybe the rich man of Luke 16 thought the Law of Moses was only man-made tradition. They lived to rue the day they first rejected God's word!
- 2) The people of our nation are better blessed with educational opportunities than at any other time in our history; information is easily accessible to all to help us learn about nearly any subject. The Bible is available to all, and there are a good many people (in the Lord's church) who are able to help people learn the truth.
- d. Evidence proving the Bible to be what it claims to be is at hand. Discoveries made in the past few hundred years establish beyond doubt to the open-minded person that the Bible is truly inspired of God! One who will not open his mind to learn the truth in the Bible, is living in a dream world, a world that will crash down upon him! God now calls to men from the pages of his written word, but the great majority ignores his pleas.
- e. If one will not seek the Lord after due order (1 Chron. 3:27) and while the opportunity exists (Isa. 55:6; 2 Cor. 6:2; John 9:4), the time will come when his cries to God for mercy will be utterly ignored!
- 1) Isaiah 1:15: "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."
- 2) Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear."

- 3) Jeremiah 7:16: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."
 - 4) Jeremiah 11:14: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble."
 - 5) Ezekiel 8:18: "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them."
5. Verse 14: "But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate."
- a. God had warned Israel from the beginning of their history what would happen when they rejected his word (Deut. 4:26; 28:64). The present generation had the unique opportunity to have seen first-hand the destruction of Jerusalem (the older ones) and captivity in a pagan land.
 - b. When Zechariah stated that God had scattered them by a whirlwind among the pagan nations, they could well-appreciate the awesome nature of that penalty. They had suffered in a most personal way from that punishment.
 - c. God had separated the nation from the land of promise. The land was made desolate by his wrath, and his wrath was brought on them because of their own hardness of heart.
 - d. During the long captivity in Babylonia, they could only dream of returning to their homeland. The Babylonian army had laid waste to the cities and countryside. The land that God earlier described as *flowing with milk and honey*, was desolated by the invading hordes; whereas it had been a pleasant land, now it was a very bleak and forlorn land.

ZECHARIAH 8

A. Zechariah 8:1-8: God Has Returned to Zion.

1. Verses 1-2: "Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury."
 - a. Another revelation is given to the prophet. God states in this inspired message that he has been jealous for Zion with a great jealousy and a great wrath.
 - b. God will not allow his people to share their devotion and service with anyone or anything else. God is not being petty. What right-thinking husband or wife would want their spouse to share their love with another mate? What right thinking employer would want to pay a worker who spends a part of the time that was supposed to be spent in serving the employer, serving another?
 - c. As a wife or husband can rightfully expect to have the full measure of their mate's devotion, so God has the right to demand and expect the full measure of service his people are able to deliver. And as an employer has the right to demand and expect the full service of those whom he employs, so God has the right to demand and expect the undivided service of his servants.
 - d. Because the ancient Israelites had short-changed God in their devotion, so God had brought a great fury of punishment upon them. But God was not being a tyrant in demanding their loyalty and punishing them when they were disloyal. His demands of them were for their good! He was trying to get them to serve him faithfully, so as to prepare for the glorious honor of gaining eternal rewards!
2. Verse 3: "Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain."
 - a. In the foreground of this prophetic statement is God's intention for Israel to be so faithful to his word that Jerusalem could be called *the city of truth*, and that they would be so pure in life that Zion could be known as God's holy mountain.
 - b. But such ideals were never maintained by the Jews. The history of their nation, from its beginning to its end in 70 A.D., is one that is spotted by rebellion.
 - 1) The picture given of them in the book of Judges is typical of their entire history. Although there were a good many generations that sought after the Lord, and some in each generation, yet they are most often characterized by ungodliness. The prophetic picture of this verse hardly fits fleshly Israel.
 - 2) But God had purged the nation by the fiery punishment he had sent upon them; they were now purified from their idolatrous practices. They were now ready to follow the Lord—for a time. God had written his name in Jerusalem (in the holy of holies), and would abide there until their ultimate rejection of him, and his rejection of them (Matt. 23:38-39; 24:1-35).
 - c. The primary fulfillment of this verse is probably in the spiritual kingdom Christ established.
 - 1) The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15); the word which brought about the establishment of the church was originally preached at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-12; Isa. 2:2-3).
 - 2) The picture better fits spiritual Jerusalem (the church) than it fits literal Jerusalem from the time of Zechariah to the first coming of Christ.
3. Verses 4-5: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."
 - a. There is a beautiful picture presented in these two verses of men and women growing to old age safely and children happily playing in the streets. The portrait is one of peace, safety, and happiness. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isaiah 65:17-20).
 - b. In contrast to the stark reality of the destroyed city which greeted the eyes of the Jews who returned from Babylon, the city would be rebuilt, and they would again be established therein, having the opportunity to live safely and happily.
 - 1) They were able to settle again in Jerusalem and in the rest of Palestine. God so greatly blessed them that they obtained these bounties. To some degree, therefore, the prophetic painting of a peaceful and happy Jerusalem was given to symbolize the great blessings and benefits God had in store for the faithful in the future.

- 2) However, as is always the case, God's blessings are granted on the condition of continued obedience to his will (Deut. 4:40; 30:15-20; Jer. 18:7-10). When Israel fell into sinful ways again, God withdrew some of his blessings; and he allowed the enemies to punish them in a variety of ways during the 400-year interval between Malachi and Matthew.
- c. Premillennialists assert that the depiction given here (and in Isa. 65:17-20) is a literal description of the millennial kingdom of Christ.
- 1) However, it can easily be established that the kingdom Christ came to establish, he did establish.
 - a) Matthew 3:2: "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - b) Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - c) Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - d) Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
 - e) Mark 9:1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
 - f) Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - g) Acts 1:1-8: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - h) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - i) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
 - 2) The millennial kingdom over which Christ is to reign in Jerusalem for 1000 years is a figment of the imagination of deceived people!
- d. The imagery of Isaiah 65:17-20, and kindred passages, are figurative descriptions of the spiritual kingdom Christ established. Our present text finds its ultimate fulfillment in the church (Christ's spiritual kingdom).
- 1) In the spiritual kingdom, there will be contentedness and safety. No faithful citizen has any real cause to live in terror; God has promised to supply all of our physical needs (Matt. 6:33); our enemies may be able to destroy our bodies, but they can do nothing against our souls (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4-5); and our eternal salvation is secure if we walk in the light of the gospel (1 John 1:7; Mark 10:29-30; Heb. 13:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8; Rev. 2:10).
 - 2) Our Savior died in hope (Luke 23:46; Heb. 12:1-3); Stephen could suffer death at the hands of a hate-filled mob with hope (Acts 7:54-60); Paul could be contented even while in prison (Phil. 4:11-13; 2 Cor. 12:7-10); and we can be happy when we face hardships brought on because of our faith (Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:18).
 - 3) A faithful Christian has had the guilt of his past sins removed (Rev. 1:5); he has the continual cleansing from Christ's blood (1 John 1:7); he is assured that his present needs will be supplied (Matt. 6:33); he is promised that with each temptation, God will provide a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13); he has the Lord's promise that his future needs will be met; and his eternal destiny is secure as long as he remains faithful.

- 4) With these thoughts in mind, we perceive clearly that the prophetic portrait given by Zechariah is fulfilled gloriously in the church of our Lord.
4. Verse 6: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. In those days, if a nation was defeated by a more powerful nation, and its people deported to become slaves of the conquerors, there was no expectation that the conquered would ever regain their freedom and return home. The prospect that the Israelites would ever return to their homeland was beyond all precedent and impossible without the assistance of God. The word *marvelous* means hard or difficult (margin).
 - b. They may have considered it to be an impossibility to return to Jerusalem, but that was no reason for God to consider it to be insurmountable. They should not have thought, since no human power could obtain their release and give them freedom to return to Palestine, that God could not accomplish that amazing feat.
 - c. The word *marvelous* is sometimes associated with miraculous acts. Micah 7:15; Psalm 78:12; Isaiah 29:14. With the Messianic element running through the passage, it is doubtless included in this verse. God's ability to bring to pass the things which are involved in the establishment of his kingdom included marvelous actions; there were many miraculous works and many wondrous teachings and blessings unfolded.
 5. Verses 7-8: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."
 - a. The statement connects the return of the Jews from captivity with the salvation of many others under the Messiah. That is, as God had brought the Jews from the land of their captivity, so he would bring many from the east and west countries into the salvation he depicts here.
 - b. The pronouncement is that God *will* save his people from the east and the west. The salvation meant is in the future. A portion of the Jews had already returned from captivity at the time of Zechariah; others would return in the future. But more is meant than the return of Israel to Palestine in those ancient days.
 - c. The people alluded to would be saved, and would be brought from the east country and the west country.
 - 1) The direction in which the people returned from Babylon was from the north, but these would come from the east and the west. The whole world is contemplated in the expression.
 - 2) In Matthew 8:11, Jesus spoke of many coming from the east and the west to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the eternal phase of God's kingdom (in heaven). By *east and west*, the Lord included the whole world, for those who are saved in the church come from the world over. This passage speaks of Heaven; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were never members of the Lord's church.
 - a) The figure of sitting down with Abraham and others is an allusion to the ancient Eastern mode of eating a feast.
 - b) A fuller discussion of the statement of this verse is given in Luke 13:23-30: "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."
 - 3) These saved individuals would be brought into Jerusalem, where they would be God's people and he would be their God (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 - 4) Spiritual Jerusalem is the location of their abode, where they would serve God in truth and righteousness (Jer. 4:2).
 - 5) The captivity from which these would be saved is the bondage of sin (John 8:34, 32; 17:17; Acts 2:36-40).
 - d. "This promise further confirms the conclusion suggested in the comments on verse 3 that the Jerusalem under discussion looks beyond the literal city in Palestine to a greater fulfillment. The ultimate realization would be in the spiritual Jerusalem under the Messiah (cf. Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26)" (Hailey, p.361).

B. Zechariah 8:9-13: God Promises to Bless the Returnees.

1. Verses 9: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built."
 - a. God admonishes the people to be strong and to hear the words which he spoke to them in the days when the foundation of the temple was laid.
 - b. The prophets God used were Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1). These prophets were still on the scene, and their words were to be heeded.
 - c. They had returned to Jerusalem in 536 B.C., and had soon laid the foundation of the temple. But the work languished for many years until the people were stirred up to return to the work.
 - d. It had now been 2 years since the work had been restarted, and words of encouragement were needed to keep them active. The Lord supplies such a message here.
2. Verse 10: "For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour."
 - a. Before the present time, they were in desperate economic circumstances. They had allowed their interest to wane, and God had withdrawn some of his blessings from them.
 - b. Their crops had been poor (Hag. 1:6,10-11; 2:15-19). They had suffered from this lack, and were at a loss to explain it. But God had not blessed them because of their apathy and disobedience.
 - c. In this passage, Zechariah shows that there had been few jobs to be had: no wages to be earned by man or beast. It was a time of economic depression. But not only were there economic worries, there was much strife among the people. In a society of selfish people, when the economy turns sour, dissension and friction soon arise.
 - d. God claims responsibility for the difficulties they were experiencing, obviously to show them that if they straightened up their spiritual lives, they could obtain an improved material situation.
 - e. Some of them had been concerned about keeping the fast their fathers had invented in regards to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians (Zech. 7:1-3).
 - 1) In that context, God showed them that their fasting had not been genuine penitence over their sinfulness which led to the Babylonian invasion, but rather grew out of self-pity.
 - 2) They needed to forget their man-made fast days and pay attention to what God was telling them to do by the prophets. They must be concerned about completing the temple, and should forget their misguided fasting.
3. Verses 11-12: "But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."
 - a. In the time period described in verse ten, during the time they ignored the rebuilding of the temple, God had withheld his blessings from them. But now he gives them the promise that he will bless them.
 - b. He had made this promise also in Haggai 2:19: "Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you."
 - c. Instead of limited crops, God would give them all the bounties the ground was able to produce. Their vineyards would produce plentifully, as would the fields. There would be sufficient rain and dew for these successful seasons. The margin and the ASV have *peace* in the place of *prosperous* as the KJV text reads. The Lord thus offers them the promise of peace and economic prosperity, if the conditions of verse nine are kept.
 - d. There may be more to the promise than that which pertained to that generation of Jews. Perhaps an allusion is included in the prophetic utterance of the spiritual blessings in Christ. The remnant of the people would inherit "all these things." A remnant of the nation returned from Babylonia; a remnant of their descendants obeyed the gospel of Christ; hence, the fulfillment of the promises could be intended for those who would live under the Messiah's reign.
 - 1) The immediate future of that generation was doubtless blessed with bountiful harvests and prosperity and peace, but those blessings were not constant because the Jews were not constant in their obedience. Eighty years later, when Malachi came on the scene, his depiction of them was one of selfishness and sin.
 - 2) A study of the secular, uninspired record of their history between the close of Malachi and the coming of John the Baptizer shows how sinful and cursed the nation became. They were ruled by outsiders, and suffered immensely.
 - 3) The historical record of those four hundred years does not correspond to the prophetic picture of this passage.
4. Verse 13: "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."
 - a. God promises in this verse to make them a blessing to the world, whereas in former days they had been a curse. God intended for Israel to be an example to the heathen world. In order for them to be what God required, they had to keep themselves separated from the heathen, and refuse to be contaminated by their idolatrous practices and other sinful ways.

- 1) When the nations saw the prosperity and strength of Israel, they would be impressed by the power and greatness of Israel's God. But Israel deliberately sought to become like the nations around them, and were horribly punished for their waywardness.
 - 2) Instead of being a blessing for the heathen nations, they encouraged the pagans to plunge even deeper into degradation and depravity. They were a curse to the nations and to their own children by their rebellion against God.
 - b. Israel was cursed as they mingled with the heathen nations, and especially when they were carried off into captivity by the pagan hordes of Assyria and Babylonia. "And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them" (Jer. 24:9; cf. Deut. 28; Lev. 26).
 - c. God would cause them to become as much a blessing as they had been a curse (and personally cursed). They were greatly blessed when God brought them back from their captivity. If they let their hands be strong, they would become a source of blessing for others.
 - 1) The returnees were not a significant source of blessing to any other people from that time (518 B.C.) to the close of Old Testament history. The meaning must have another application.
 - 2) Notice that the promise is made to the *house of Judah* and the *house of Israel*. God had promised in Jeremiah 33:31-34 that he would make a new covenant with the combined house of Judah and Israel. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been destroyed as a separate nation when they were conquered by Assyria, but when Judah returned from Babylon, individuals from the other ten tribes also chose to accompany them.
 - 3) God had promised Abraham that in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16). This promise was fulfilled (and is still being fulfilled) in Christ, the preeminent descendant of Abraham.
 - 4) Because the Messiah would arise from their nation, with healing in his wings for everyone on earth (Heb. 2:9; Mark 16:15-16), the nation would be a blessing to the family of man.
 - d. The Jews misunderstood the nature of the Messiah and his kingdom, thinking that he would be a military ruler who would conquer the enemies of Israel.
 - 1) Modern millennialists make the same kind of error when they assert that Christ will set up a literal kingdom, and rule the world from a material throne in Jerusalem.
 - 2) Any such concept of the Messiah is mistaken; such was never contemplated by the God of heaven. The blessings which God intended was the blessing of salvation: salvation from sin and salvation in heaven (2 Tim. 2:10; Mark 16:15-16; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2 Pet. 1:1-11).
 - e. The generation of Jews with which God was then dealing had a part to play in God's overall plan. They had returned from captivity, and they must take up the mission God gave them through the Law of Moses.
 - 1) Part of that plan involved the temple and its services. If the Messiah was to be able to fulfill his eternal purposes, it was essential that the Jewish system continue until he took it out of the way when he died on the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-15; Luke 24:44-49; Eph. 3:1-11).
 - 2) Twice in this passage (Zech. 8:9-13) God called on them to let their hands be strong so as to complete the rebuilding of the temple.
- C. Zechariah 8:14-17: As God Had Punished, So Now He Will Bless.
1. Verses 14-15: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not."
 - a. In former times when Israel had provoked God to anger by their rebellion, God resolved to punish them. He brought severe penalties upon them, but only after he had issued many warnings and given them ample time to repent. He did not turn from his resolve when they continued in their backward ways.
 - b. He had demonstrated to that former generation that he meant what he said; even some of those present could attest to that fact for they had been present to see their beloved city and temple destroyed by the Babylonians, and had spent many years in servitude to those idolatrous people. They should have feared his word.
 - c. But now he had resolved to do well to the people of Israel. As he meant what he said when he threatened punishment, so he meant what he said when he promised to bless them. There was no reason to fear, but much reason to have hope.
 2. Verses 16-17: "These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD." His blessings were dependent upon certain conditions. Their part included these requirements:
 - a. Each one was to speak truth to his neighbor. Bearing false witness was to be strictly avoided; telling the truth was required in all civil and private matters. God hates a lying tongue and bearing false witness (Prov. 6:16-19).
 - b. They were to execute judgment of truth and peace in their gates. At the gates of the cities those who served as judges performed their offices. In these courts of the land, their dealings were to be according to truth and productive of peace. God takes note when injustice is practice in the court systems.
 - c. None of them were to imagine (devise) evil in their hearts against their neighbor (cf. Micah 2:1-3; Hos. 4:1-3; Gen. 6:5; 1 Tim. 6:4).

- d. Love not the taking of a false oath. Some would tell a "tall tale" and try to establish its veracity by swearing an oath. Some would affirm a falsehood in a court of law to get something or hurt someone else. Their hearts were to be so structured as to hate the prospect of a false oath.
 - e. These things are among those practices and dispositions which God hates (Prov. 6:6-19; Psalm 119:104,128).
- D. Zechariah 8:18-23: The Question Concerning Fasting is Addressed.
1. Verses 18-19: "And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace."
 - a. The fasts of the 4th month, the 5th month, the 7th month, and the 10th month were to be turned into times of joyful feasts. The fasts were to be transformed into festive occasions.
 - b. These fasts were set up ostensibly to mourn the coming of the Babylonian army (10th month), the breach made in the wall (4th month), the burning of the temple (5th month), and the killing of Gedaliah (7th month).
 - c. These fasts were begun by human judgment, not by divine decree. The Lord showed in chapter seven that they had mourned during those fasts, not out of genuine penitence over their sinfulness which led to the Babylonian invasion, but in self-pity. The fasts were unauthorized (Deut. 4:2), and were improperly observed.
 - d. In view of what the Lord proposed to do in the future, by blessing Israel with prosperity and peace, and in the distant future, by bringing the Messiah into the world through the lineage of Abraham, the emphasis ought to be placed on rejoicing, not mourning.
 2. Verses 20-21: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also."
 - a. The joyfulness of their blessed situation would generate the desire on the part of the inhabitants in many cities to serve the Lord. Verse twenty-two shows that Gentile nations are prominently featured in this strong movement.
 - b. This did not occur during the days of the Mosaic Age; it has taken place during the Christian Age (Acts 2; 8:1-12; Col. 1:23; Rom. 10:13-18).
 - c. The passage is akin to:
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 2) Micah 4:1-2: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 3. Verse 22: "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD."
 - a. In this prophetic portrait of the Messiah's kingdom, God describes the happy response to the gospel on the part of many from even the strong nations of earth.
 - b. They would gladly bow before the God of heaven in spiritual Jerusalem (the church).
 4. Verse 23: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."
 - a. In this graphic depiction of the gospel age, Gentiles are shown to take hold of the garments of Jewish people, earnestly desiring to obtain the blessings of the God of Israel.
 - b. When the gospel was revealed, the first preachers and converts were from the ranks of Israel. The message was universal in its scope, however, and before long, the gospel was being carried into Gentile lands far removed from Palestine. Its spread continued through the centuries, bringing salvation and happiness to countless precious souls on every continent.
 - c. As the gospel was spread, those who were disenchanted with their human religions quickly saw the glorious truths of the gospel, and wanted to obey them. In the vision Paul had at Troas, he beheld a man from Macedonia pleading, "Come over into Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9-10).
 - d. The picture God drew in our text shows that there would be many who would gladly receive the gospel (cf. Acts 2:41). The nature of the gospel is such that before it can do anyone's soul any good, it must be sincerely desired.
 - 1) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 2) Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

- 3) Matt. 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
- 4) Matthew 5:6: "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS 9-13

Zechariah 9-11. "In the first part of this third division (chs. 9-11), the prophet deals with the fall of the heathen nations and the coming of the King who would rule in peace. But when he would come, he would be rejected as a shepherd despised and cast away, to be sold for the paltry price of a wounded slave" (Hailey, p.366).

Zechariah 12-14. "The second part (chs. 12-14) presents in further detail the rejection of the shepherd and the victory of the kingdom of God in spite of his having been refused. Zechariah points to the passing of the antiquated order, typified in the ancient city of Jerusalem, and to the holiness of all that would pertain to the new. Everything will be holiness to the Lord" (Hailey, p.366).

ZECHARIAH 9

A. Zechariah 9:1-7: Verdicts Are Pronounced Against the Heathen.

1. Verse 1: "The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD."
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) "The burden of the word of Jehovah upon the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be its resting-place (for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Jehovah)" (ASV).
 - 2) "The burden of the word of the Lord Against the land of Hadrach, And Damascus its resting place (For the eyes of men And all the tribes of Israel Are on the Lord)" (NKJV).
 - b. The burden (verdict or announcement of punishment) which the Lord was directing against the Syrians is addressed in this verse.
 - c. Although the location of Hadrach has not been absolutely determined, some think it is to be identified with the place known as *Hatarikka* to the Assyrians, which is situated north of Lebanon (Hailey, p.367).
 - d. Hadrach and Damascus are classed together in the pronouncement of woe. It may be that Hadrach is a reference to the whole of Syria, the capital of which was Damascus. When the tribes of Israel turn toward the Lord, these places will fall under the divine *burden*. After visiting Hadrach, God's verdict would then rest upon Damascus.
 - e. The "eyes of man" and those "of all the tribes of Israel" would at that time be upon the Lord. The ASV marginal reading of this part of the verse says, "Jehovah hath an eye upon men and upon all the tribes of Israel." If this is taken as the point, the Lord is saying that he takes note of the situation with all nations, and will deal with each according to the need.
 - 1) This would make the verse easier to grasp, since it might be stretching reality to say that the eyes of the tribes of Israel were on God during the time that Syria was overrun.
 - 2) However, it might be that the Jews and others nations in the area would be watching the situation very closely when the Syrians were being invaded; to watch the disaster they faced, was to see God in action, for it was he who punished these idolaters who were long-time enemies of Israel.
 - f. "When the eyes of man, etc.; literally, for to Jehovah (is, or will be) the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel. This gives the reason why Hadrach and Damascus are thus united. Because Jehovah has his eye on men and on Israel.... We may then translate, 'For to Jehovah is an eye over man,' etc. He sees their evil doings and their oppression of Israel, and therefore the judgment falls upon them (comp. Jer 32:19). The Authorized Version intimates a conversion of the Gentiles, of which, however, the context says nothing: and there is no sense in saying that judgment shall fall upon a particular nation when, or because, the eyes of all men look to the Lord. Wright explains thus: When the wrath of God falls on Damascus, the eyes of the heathen, as well as those of Israel, will look to the Lord, and they will marvel at the judgment and the close fulfilment of the prediction. This would be a very sound and probable exposition of the passage if the expression, 'the eye of man being towards Jehovah,' can mean that man marvels at his doings. All the tribes of Israel. God watches

- over them to guard them from evil (Deut 11:12; Ezra 5:5; Ps 33:18)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
2. Verse 2: "And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise."
 - a. Hamath was located to the north of Palestine, and lay along the route by which entrance was made into Israel. Tyre and Zidon (or Sidon) were Phoenician cities lying north of Judah, on the Mediterranean Sea.
 - b. These Phoenicians were corrupt people, whose judgment would certainly come.
 3. Verse 3: "And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets."
 - a. The people of Tyre had build up marvelous wealth, the extent of which is very graphically depicted here in strong figurative language. They had heaped up silver as the dust of the ground, and fine gold as the mire of the street.
 - b. They were far more interested in gaining wealth, by whatever means they chose, than they were in recognizing their responsibility to justice and morality.
 4. Verse 4: "Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire."
 - a. Tyre had gained her great wealth by her sea-going fleets; she would lose her power in the sea; she would be devoured with fire.
 - b. The early city had been destroyed by the Babylonians at an earlier time, but she had been rebuilt on an island about a half-mile off the coast.
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Tyre was predicted in Ezekiel 26:1-21. The prophet Ezekiel dates back to about 592 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's army came against Tyre just as the prophet had foretold, but the destruction of Ezekiel 26:4 and Ezekiel 26:14 were not done until about 332 B.C., when Alexander the Great conquered them. The Lord even predicted the survival of Tyre following the Babylonians' destruction of the original city (Isa. 23:15-17). After seventy years, they regained their strength, and returned to their old sinful ways.
 - 1) Ezekiel 26:2,14: "And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock....And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD."
 - 2) The Grecian army took up the rubble and dust remaining from the ruins of the former city of Tyre, used this debris to build a causeway from the shore to the island on which new Tyre had been built, and after a battle, they captured and destroyed the new city. Ezekiel's prophecy was minutely fulfilled!
 - 3) Ezekiel 27 depicts Tyre as a beautiful ship constructed from the finest material available, then shows the demise of the city under the imagery of the ship being sunk in the sea.
 5. Verses 5-6: "Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines" (KJV). "Ashkelon shall see it and fear; Gaza also shall be very sorrowful; And Ekron, for He dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines" (NKJV).
 - a. The fate of the two great cities of Tyre and Sidon having been shown, the prophet next turns to the Philistine cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashkelon.
 - b. These idolatrous people, who had long been a thorn in Israel's side, would see the demise of these powerful cities and states to the north, and be sorrowful (*fear*, ASV). The destruction that befell their neighbors would be their own fate. Their hopes would all be dashed.
 - c. The king would perish from their midst, thus any who remained would no longer be able to have their own rulers, but would be suppressed by the conqueror.
 - d. The word translated "bastard" is found only here and in Deuteronomy 23:2. It refers to a stranger or an illegitimate person (born out of wedlock). It may also describe low-grade people, a rabble. The New King James has "mixed race."
 - e. The proud Philistines would be replaced by such men. The pride of the Philistines would be cut off. Their great cities would be overthrown and their culture destroyed; they would lose their property, their wealth, and their place. Where are the Philistines today? Where are the descendants of Tyre and Sidon?
 - f. Coffman gives the following quote from Clinton Gill which furnishes some details of the demise of Gaza: "When Gaza fell, following a two months siege, ten thousand of its inhabitants were killed; and the rest were sold to the slave merchants who followed in the wake of Alexander's armies. Their 'king' was tied with two thongs through his feet to Alexander's chariot and dragged through the city in one of the young conqueror's characteristic fits of revenge against one who resisted his forward march" (p.134).
 6. Verse 7: "And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite."
 - a. God would destroy the idolatrous practices of the Philistines. The atrocious doings of idolaters are pictured as blood in the mouth and abominations between the teeth.
 - b. God had from the time of Noah prohibited mankind from consuming blood: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. 9:4).

- c. Idolatry, with all its abominable practices, was hated and forbidden. By the judgments he would bring against these people, their idolatry would be destroyed.
 - d. Those who remained would, at some time and in some way, turn to God. They would become as a chieftain (ASV) in Judah, and Ekron would become as a Jebusite. These statements are dark, but not beyond deciphering.
 - 1) The Jebusites were the inhabitants of Jerusalem when David captured the city (2 Sam. 5). They were not destroyed, but were absorbed by the Israelites. Araunah was a Jebusite; he became a faithful citizen in Israel (2 Sam. 24:23ff). The prophecy of Zechariah points to the common lot the descendants of the remaining Philistines would share with the future Israelites.
 - 2) Did the descendants of the Philistines ever turn to God? There seems to be no historical record of such from Old Testament or secular sources. However, Philip the evangelist spent some time in Azotos (Ashdod), where he would of course have preached the gospel (Acts 8:40). Some of the descendants of the Philistines may have obeyed the gospel then, but even if they did not, they and the Jews, as well as all the rest of humanity, stand on the same common level before God: we all need the gospel, and have the right to it (Rom. 1:16-17).
 - e. This is the last reference in the Old Testament to the Philistines; our name for Palestine is derived from the name for their country (Philistia).
7. "Alexander the Great provided the fulfillment of the prophecy here regarding those Palestinian nations which were traditional enemies of God's people. It was this great world ruler who made the Greek language the official vehicle of communication for the whole ancient world. Because of this, the NT was written in Greek. The providence of God is surely seen in this. Significantly, Alexander himself claimed that by means of a dream the God of the Jews had commanded him to launch his world conquest. See Josephus, Ant. XI, viii, 3. The relationship of these verses to the Messianic kingdom is therefore quite pronounced" (Coffman, p.128).
- B. Zechariah 9:8-10: God Will Establish His Kingdom and Crown the King.
- 1. Verse 8: "And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes."
 - a. In the process of God bringing the judgment he promised upon the heathen people in and around Palestine, he would be sure to protect his people.
 - b. In 333 B.C., the Grecian army defeated the Persian army, and conquered the land of the east. As the invaders made their way to the south toward Philistia, Jerusalem lay in their path, and logically should be taken. But in his passage God promised to deliver them from the army and him that passes by, and stated plainly that no oppressor would pass through them any more.
 - c. Josephus (see Ant. 11.8) provides some insight into the background of this development.
 - 1) While pressing the siege of Tyre, Alexander sent messages to several places, including Judah, requisitioning supplies. Jaddus, the Jewish high priest, refused. Alexander determined to destroy Jerusalem as soon as Tyre was conquered.
 - 2) When the Greeks marched on Jerusalem, Josephus says the Jewish priests met Alexander, dressed in their fine robes, with the city's gates left wide open. They showed the commander a copy of the scroll which contained the writings of Daniel, in which Daniel had prophesied that the king of Grecia should destroy the empire of the Persians (Dan. 7:6; 8:3-8, 20-22; 11:3). Alexander was deeply impressed, and believed the Jewish prophet was describing him, thus he did not attack Jerusalem.
 - a) Daniel 7:6: "After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it."
 - b) Daniel 8:3-8: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither *was there any* that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had *two* horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven."
 - c) Daniel 8:20-22: "The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."
 - d) Daniel 11:3: "And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will."
 - d. God kept his promise that Judah need have no fear of him who would conquer Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, and the cities of the Philistines!

2. Verse 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."
 - a. A shift in the subject takes place at this point. The first seven verses discussed the punishment God would bring upon the cities and nations named. Verse seven seems to make an indirect reference to some of the descendants of the Philistines becoming citizens in the Messiah's kingdom. Here, a very definite reference is made to the Messiah.
 - b. The inhabitants (the daughter) of Jerusalem are told to rejoice because their king had arrived; he is a humble king, who would make his entrance riding on a donkey.
 - c. This king would have something worthwhile to offer his subjects—salvation. There are several kinds of salvation one might obtain: salvation from disease, accident, punishment, or death; salvation from the guilt of sin; salvation from hell. This king would offer salvation from sin and hell, and help regarding the other kinds.
 - d. When Christ made his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, the inspired historians cited this passage as being fulfilled by the Lord. "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. 21:1-5; cf. Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:12-19).
 - e. Here is a very definite and clear prophecy of an event which occurred about 550 years after the oracle was delivered (518 B.C. to 33 A.D.).
 - f. The King is described as *just* (righteous). In the personal life of Jesus, he was sinless (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-22). The nature of his rule would likewise be just; every citizen in his kingdom could expect justice from him (cf. 2 Sam. 23:5-6; Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16). His law would be able to make men to be righteous (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3). Of course, mercy accompanies all of his operations with his people.
3. Verse 10: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."
 - a. This verse describes the peaceful nature of the reign of this King. The chariot would be cut off from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. Using the ancient parts of Old Testament Israel to depict the realm of this new King, the prophet shows that peace would prevail throughout the kingdom; war would not be present. This is parallel to similar prophecies of the peaceful nature of the Messiah's kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3; cf. Eph. 2:1-16).
 - b. Zechariah also affirms that the battle bow would be cut off, again predicting the peace that would prevail in the Lord's kingdom. He also shows that the message of this King would be one of peace. Christ is said to be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7); the gospel is the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15); and God is the God of Peace (Rom. 16:20). Christ does not operate by means of carnal weapons (2 Cor. 10:4-5), but by the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), which is the word of God.
 - c. The prophet describes the dominion of the King as extending from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. His territory would be universal.
 - 1) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
 - 2) Isaiah 9:6-7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

C. Zechariah 9:11-17: Israel Will Gain a Place of Great Honor.

1. Verse 11: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."
 - a. The prisoners among the "daughter of Zion" had been set free by the King. Their captivity is described as the pit in which there was no water.
 - b. Joseph had been imprisoned temporarily in a dry pit (Gen. 37:22), and Jeremiah had been put into a pit which had no water in it, but had mire (Jer. 38:6). These pits were cisterns, shaped in the form of a bottle, having a small mouth. One thrown into one of these would be unable to get out on his own.
 - c. Those prisoners Zechariah has in mind are those who are captivated by sin, and of course, they would be unable to deliver themselves. If they are not saved by someone else, they would certainly perish, for there is no water (no sustenance) in the pit (Rom. 3:23; 1:16-17; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
 - d. The covenant by which the King will operate is one established by blood, his own.

- 1) Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - 2) Hebrews 9:7-12: "But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*."
 - 3) Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:18-25: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - 5) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
2. Verse 12: "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee."
 - a. The prophet speaks with urgency to the prisoners of hope to turn (return) to the stronghold (haven of protection and safety).
 - b. The prisoners are those under the bondage of sin; there is hope for them, but they must make the choice (John 8:34; Matt. 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 22:17).
 - c. The hope they had is the hope of the gospel. The hope of Israel is the gospel; it is the only hope that they have; it is the only hope that anyone has, Jew or Gentile. "For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20; cf. 26:6-7).
 - d. They (we all) are promised a double reward. The interpretation of this expression is difficult, but some good suggestions can be made.
 - 1) Hailey thinks that the reference is probably to a balancing of the scales; as one in sin has suffered shame and pain due to sin, so he would receive salvation in the kingdom. "A pound on one side of the scale is balanced by a pound on the other, making the double" (p.373). "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. 18:6-7).
 - 2) Another possibility: That the blessings would be double the amount of punishment and shame they had acquired due to sin.
 - a) Isaiah 40:2: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."
 - b) Isaiah 61:7: "For your shame *ye shall have* double; and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them."
 - 3) Another possibility: Those who are translated into the Messiah's kingdom (Col. 1:13-14) receive full pardon for their past sins, and have the hope of entering heaven at the end (2 Pet. 1:5-11). This is preferable to this writer.
 3. Verse 13: "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man."
 - a. NKJ: "For I have bent Judah, My *bow*, Fitted the bow with Ephraim, And raised up your sons, O Zion, Against your sons, O Greece, And made you like the sword of a mighty man."
 - b. The Lord describes himself as using Judah and Ephraim as a weapon; Judah is pictured as a bow and Ephraim as the arrow. Zechariah connects the bow and arrow to God's people, and identifies those against whom the weapon was to be used as the Grecians.
 - c. As the bow and arrow are united for a common purpose, so Judah and Ephraim (the northern ten tribes of Israel) would be one in the purpose God has in mind for them.

- d. "It seems clear that Jehovah here speaks of the Grecian invasion under Alexander and the conditions that followed in the days of the Maccabees and even in the time of the Messiah. Alexander was a devoted apostle of Greek culture and philosophy, and his zeal left an indelible impression on all the countries of his invasion and an impression of special significance on the Jews. Many younger Jews left the orthodox faith for Hellenism or for a compromise with it. God would stir up the sons of Zion 'as the sword of a mighty man' against the sons of Greece. This religious, cultural, and social difference broke out in violent conflict under the Seleucids of Syria and the Maccabees of Judea. It is a conflict of ideologies and religion" (Hailey, p.373).
4. Verses 14-15: "And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar."
- a. It will be clear to the perceptive mind that the Lord is over his people during the described conflict. He will loose the arrow, sound the trumpet, and go forth with whirlwinds from the south. The figures of warfare are mingled with one of violent weather, which form a picture of strong opposition God's people will be able to wage against the foe.
- b. The picture of victory continues in verse fifteen where God is affirmed to be the defender of his people, enabling them to devour the enemy and subdue him with sling stones (another weapon).
- c. "They would, in a figure, drink the blood of the slain; and in their exuberance of victory they would shout as men stimulated by wine. As the bowls of the altar were filled with the blood of the sacrificed animal, to be splashed (sprinkled) against the sides of the altar, so they would be filled with the blood of victory" (Hailey, p.374).
5. Verse 16: "And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land."
- a. God would provide salvation for his people. It was essential that God bring the Jews through the years separating the Old and New Testaments so that Israel would be intact and in place when the Messiah arrived.
- b. He enabled them to survive the terrible persecutions and conflicts that arose during that dark time of their history, but his aid was not primarily for their good. He had in mind the long-range view in which his Son would come, establish his kingdom, and offer salvation to the world.
- c. His people would be as a flock of sheep: gathered together in unity and protected and guided by the shepherd. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).
- d. His people are also described as precious stones in a valuable crown, which would be lifted up high over the land.
6. Verse 17: "For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."
- a. The beauty and greatness of the Lord's blessings are presented, emphasizing the glorious state of his people under the arrangement he describes.
- b. The fulfillment of this picture is found in the kingdom of Christ.
- 1) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 2) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
 - 3) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
 - 4) Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."
- c. Using corn (grain) and wine symbolically, the Lord depicts the great blessings and beauties pertaining to those who are in the Messiah's kingdom.

ZECHARIAH 10

A. Zechariah 10:1-7: God is the Source of All True Blessings.

1. Verse 1: "Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."
 - a. NKJ: "Ask the Lord for rain In the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone."
 - b. The Lord gives some additional information which expands on the thought he introduced in the previous two verses. During the time of the corn and wine (symbolic of the blessings God would bestow upon his people), they could pray for the Lord to give the latter rain, and he would hear and answer.
 - c. The latter rain was the spring rainy season that came in time for the grain crops to be brought to full ear. The early rain (in the fall) gave the planted seed the moisture to germinate and produce the plant.
 - d. The two seasons were essential for the crops, and usually came on schedule. But God used drought as a means of punishing his people, to bring them to repentance. In the situation contemplated, they could ask for the latter rains and would not be disappointed, for God would hear them.
 - e. Although God gives man his daily sustenance, he requires that we ask him for it. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas. 4:2-3). If we did not pray for our daily bread, we might (or might not) receive it, however it is for our good that we make the request, for sincere prayers in which petitions are made unto God will express our dependency upon God and develop greater reliance upon him, and will lead to genuine gratitude on our part for what he had given us.
 - f. The bright clouds (translated "lightnings" in the ASV) were symbolic of the rains they produced. God sends his rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous. Just because the majority of humanity does not know God, does not cause him to withhold the bounties of the natural world from them. God is the Savior of all men in that he provides for the health and welfare of all his offspring (1 Tim. 4:10; Acts 14:17). God is the provider of these material necessities.
2. Verse 2: "For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd."
 - a. The idols are not living beings; they have no life, no power, no will; they can do nothing for or against anyone. The idols (*teraphim*, ASV) speaking vanity is an accommodated statement. The idols, being nonentities, could say nothing. However, the misguided zealots who served the idols had much to say, but what they said was empty and meaningless.
 - 1) Perhaps the chief power attributed to idols was the power to punish, but even in cases where blessing and comfort were sought, these were no more apt to appear than the punishment they were said to threaten (cf. 1 Kings 18).
 - 2) The teraphim are thought to be household gods; some were small enough to be carried about (Gen. 31:19,34); some were the size of a man (1 Sam. 19:13).
 - b. The *diviners* (those who claimed to foresee the future) had manufactured a lie; their dreams were utterly false; the comfort they offered the followers was in vain. These diviners were unable to offer any help or hope to anyone.
 - c. Earlier generations of the Israelites had followed both the idols and the diviners. Instead of bringing them blessings and protection, the curses of God came upon them.
 - 1) The demolition of the northern kingdom occurred because of idolatry, and other rejections of God's word; the same was true with Judah's exile.
 - 2) Rebellion against God's word seems to offer many pleasant advantages, but these are momentary at best, and eventually brings sure penalties.
 - 3) Neither idols nor diviners were able to give guidance or protection to Israel—nor to us.
3. Verse 3: "Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle."
 - a. The only true Shepherd Israel had was God. When they stampeded away from him, they deprived themselves of the only hope they had.
 - b. The erstwhile shepherds, including the king, the crooked priests and prophets, and those who served idols and those who claimed to foresee the future, had received the full force of God's wrath. These

- were all gone; instead of leading the nation into peace and prosperity, they had misled them into sin and rebellion, and exile.
- c. Thus, continuing the figure of a shepherd and his flock, God states that he had been angered against their shepherds and had punished the goats. Those who led and those who followed suffered the penalty.
 - d. But God had now visited Judah and would make them as his good horse in the battle. He had earlier depicted his people as his bow and arrow which would be used against the Grecians; here he uses the figure of a mighty warhorse to describe them. Job 39:19-25 gives a splendid description of a warhorse: "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils *is* terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in *his* strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that *it is* the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."
4. Verse 4: "Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together."
- a. From the house of Judah would come the cornerstone, the nail, the battle bow, and every oppressor (ruler). This appears conclusively to be messianic.
 - b. Christ is the cornerstone of God's spiritual temple, the church (Eph. 2:11-22; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:1-8; Matt. 16:16-19). The cornerstone was used in the construction of masonry buildings to align and tie two walls together. The chief cornerstone was the first one laid; it determined the direction all the walls would take. The figure is very appropriate in describing our Lord.
 - c. The nail (or peg) is a substantial implement used to anchor a tent or install in a wall on which to hang things. It is a dependable tool. Christ is dependable; he is able to become an anchor for our lives during the storms of this world; and he has the necessary strength to hold our fears, doubts, and problems (Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).
 - d. The battle bow was an implement of war that was used extensively by many armies for many centuries; it was a fearsome weapon in the hands of one who was skilled in its use. The English longbow was renowned as a mighty weapon.
 - 1) If the previous figures are symbolic of Christ, so also is the bow. Christ said that his work would create serious problems between members of the same family, that the son would be against the father, etc. The meaning is that when only a part of a family obeyed the gospel, the unbelieving members would be moved with wrath against the believing members (cf. Matt. 10:34-37).
 - 2) It seems ironic that the Prince of Peace who came to preach the Gospel of Peace at the behest of the God of Peace, should be the one over whom much controversy would arise. He offers peace to the world, peace between each person, and peace between each person and God; but few desire that peace, and when they reject the gospel, they set themselves against the Lord, his cause, and his people. It is not Christ's fault that men reject the gospel; it is not the fault of God's people that they are hated and opposed in the world.
 - 3) Another figure of speech is used to describe the Lord's militant war against sin and error. He wields a sword (Rev. 1:16), and his word is a sword in our hands (Eph. 6:17).
 - e. The word *oppressor* is translated as *ruler* in the ASV. It is translated *exact* or *exactor* in other KJV passages: Isaiah 58:2-3; Deuteronomy 15:2-3; 2 Kings 23:35; Isaiah 60:17. If the other three parts of the verse refer to Christ, this reference ought also to describe him (prophetically). The Hebrew word means *ruler*; it is used in some cases to describe one who makes demands of others; in no sense could Christ be accurately called an oppressor [the word has a harsh connotation].
 - 1) All authority resides in Christ (Matt. 28:18); he will provide all the power and help necessary to withstand the enemy of his Cause. All authority that men in the civil government have is derived from heaven where he reigns (John 19:11).
 - 2) That Christ makes demands of men, is clearly taught in the Bible:
 - a) Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - b) Luke 12:4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."
 - c) Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

- d) Luke 14:26-27: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." [Hate is used in the sense of loving less].
- 3) That Christ will judge the world by an exacting standard, is plainly set forth in the Bible:
- a) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
- b) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
- c) Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
- d) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
5. Verse 5: "And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded."
- a. God's people, Judah and Ephraim, would be fully equipped to meet the enemy, and defeat him. In the foreground of the prophecy, perhaps reference is to literal Judah and Ephraim as they battle the Grecian influence (see 9:13), but in the longer view, spiritual Israel would successfully rout the enemy. Our brethren in the church of the first century were able to do this.
- b. Any success that God's people have in doing battle with the enemy depends on the power and means which God provides. We are able to fight because the Lord is with us. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5; cf. 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 6:10-18).
- c. The success of God's people is pictured as the "riders on horses shall be confounded."
- 1) Although the greater strength and equipment seems to be with the enemy, yet in the end no one can withstand the power of the Almighty.
- 2) The Lord's church in Jerusalem seemed so small and powerless in the face of their enemies, and later when the church had grown and spread, its enemies were even more powerful, but the Jewish and Roman foes were overwhelmed by God's awesome power exerted through the gospel.
- 3) During the nineteenth century in our country, men arose with nothing but the sword of the Spirit in their hands. They preached the gospel throughout the land, showing fear toward no man or organization, although they were greatly outnumbered. In countless debates, public and private, the truth won and the enemy took to his heels.
- 4) The church of our present generation in America is in the throes of apostasy. The greater part of the church will doubtless apostatize, taking with them the biggest congregations, and most of the property belonging to the Lord. This is what happened earlier in the twentieth century. But the apostates, having nothing to offer the world but their own watered-down version of the gospel, soon lost their great numbers, while the faithful few grew stronger and more numerous. If the loyal legions of the faithful today will commit themselves to the Lord, our victory will again be insured, and the apostates once again will be shown to be what they really are!
- a) 1 Corinthians 11:19: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."
- b) 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."
6. Verse 6: "And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them."

- a. The hand of Judah would be strengthened and the house of Joseph (Ephraim; the northern kingdom) would be delivered.
 - b. In the literal application, God brought elements from the northern kingdom back to Palestine with the remnant of Judah. God blessed them and established them again in the land of promise. This was essential in order for him to work out all the details and background for the coming of the Messiah.
 - c. The primary fulfillment of this prophecy, however, is to be found in the Messiah's kingdom, which is spiritual Israel.
 - 1) Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."
 - 2) Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."
 - d. In bringing fleshly Israel back to Palestine from their captivity, God treated them as if they had never been cast off. In saving those who had been lost in sin, God justifies each one, treating the individual as if he had never been guilty of sin. In both cases, God's mercy enters into the picture, for without it, no one could be acceptable to God (Titus 2:11-14; 3:5; Eph. 2:8-10).
 - e. The result of this divine mission would be that his people would be able to call on his name with the assurance of being heard.
7. Verse 7: "And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD."
- a. The people of Ephraim would be powerful in God's army. Some from the 10 tribes returned from captivity. Anna was of the tribe of Ashur (Luke 2:36).
 - b. After the return from exile, the people of Israel faced strong opposition from many sources. To withstand the assaults, every citizen must contribute what he could for the good of the whole. Those of Ephraim would do their share.
 - c. But the real fulfillment of this prophecy is again to be found in the Christian Age. *They of Ephraim* may be the Gentiles who would obey the gospel, or perhaps he is simply saying that even those citizens in the kingdom from lowly sources would be able to contribute to the strength and faithfulness of the whole.
 - d. As the returnees from the land of captivity rejoiced when they arrived home, and continued to rejoice as they met with success in their future struggles, so the people of the Messiah's kingdom would have ample cause and occasion to rejoice.
 - e. The rejoicing would be *as* that of one under the influence of wine. The children would see the gladness of heart the parents had, and they also would be made glad.
- B. Zechariah 10:8-12: The Scattered People Will Return.
1. Verse 8: "I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased."
 - a. God would call his people forth from their state of bondage; he would redeem them and cause them to increase as he had done in the past.
 - b. Again, in the foreground, the reference is to the return of Israel from captivity. God is depicted as issuing a *hiss* (a whistle or an attention-getting sound); the people would hear and hearken to his call. The picture is one of God whistling or making a hissing sound to get the attention of his people so that he could beckon for them to return to the land.
 - c. But, once again, the real fulfillment is to be found under Christ. God issues a call to those who are lost in sin; his appeal is for them to come to him and be redeemed; he would increase them (in numeric and spiritual strength).
 - 1) The call is issued as the gospel is preached to every creature (Mark 16:15; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; Rom. 10:13-18; Col. 1:23).
 - 2) The call is answered when individuals hear, believe and obey the gospel (Acts 18:8; Acts 2:21,36-41; Rom. 10:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:6-9).
 2. Verse 9: "And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again."
 - a. ASV: "And I will sow them among the peoples; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and shall return."
 - b. The people of God would be sown *unto Jehovah*. "And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos. 2:23; cf. Rom. 9:24-30).

- c. Only in a limited way could this passage apply to the returning Israelites as they came back to Palestine. Certainly, they remembered God while in the land of exile, and did return; God sowed them back to himself, in his own field, in the process of bringing them back home and re-establishing them.
 - d. The real fulfillment is to be found in Christianity. Those who would be willing to obey the gospel would be from among all the nations of earth. The gospel was intended to be carried to every accountable individual in every part of our world. Those who obey, the Lord adds to his church.
 - 1) As individuals obeyed the gospel, they were sown among the people of earth. Although they (and we) live among the citizens of this world, we are not part of them (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 12:1-2).
 - 2) God's name will be known and remembered among all nations where men preach and where the gospel is obeyed.
 - 3) A picture of peace and happiness is given in the latter part of the verse when the Lord speaks of his people living with their children, having returned to their Creator.
3. Verse 10: "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them."
- a. In looking to bring his people from the lands of their exile, God would find them in Egypt and in Assyria. When the Babylonians invaded Palestine, many of the Jews fled into Egypt; many others were carried as captives into Babylonia, which occupied the territory formerly held by the Assyrian Empire. The people who returned, came forth from these locations, and again settled in their old places; and so many would return, that space would be in great demand. There were three different returns to Palestine—in 536, 457, 444 B.C. Possibly, there were smaller groups which may have returned after the three main parties.
 - b. The primary application is to be found in the New Testament setting. Egypt is often used in the Scriptures to represent the state of sin. Assyria is to be understood as parallel in thought to this use of Egypt. As men and women hear the gospel call, they leave spiritual Egypt and Assyria, and return to the Lord. This can be called a *return* because they were innocent and pure when they came into this world, and remained so until they wandered into sin.
 - c. In returning to the Lord, those who obey the gospel are settled in spiritual Gilead and spiritual Lebanon. Gilead was the name of an area of Palestine where a healing balm was made (Gen. 37:25; Jer. 8:22; 46:11), and Lebanon was the area where the great cedars grew (Isa. 2:13). Thus, spiritually speaking, Christians dwell in those places where the healing balm of God's grace is found, a place where beauty and grandeur predominate (Eph. 1:3).
4. Verse 11: "And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away."
- a. God had once led his people through the Red Sea, to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt and from the Egyptian army which followed closely on their heels.
 - b. In a small measure, the prophecy describes the return of Israel from their years of bondage in Babylonia. There was a period of affliction associated with their return, after they re-entered Canaan; there was a long period of tribulations and problems which they faced as they passed through the next few hundred years.
 - c. But again, as before, the primary fulfillment has to be in the Lord's church.
 - 1) As God ultimately defeated Israel's enemies in the same process by which he delivered Israel from Egypt, so he defeated the enemies of the church in the same process by which he established the church and brought it to be firmly situated upon the earth.
 - 2) In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Paul draws a parallel between Israel's passage through the Red Sea with a penitent believer's passage through the waters of baptism. One who repents goes through a period of soul-searching and remorse over his past sins, for he now realizes how he has offended the God of heaven.
5. Verse 12: "And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD."
- a. God would strengthen his people; they would be able to walk up and down in his name, operating by his authority, not fearing the enemies which had now been subdued.
 - b. Their future would be as strong and reliable as the strength of him who upholds them!

ZECHARIAH 11

A. Zechariah 11:1-3: A Lamentation.

1. Verse 1: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars."
 - a. Lebanon, situated as it was to the north of Israel's land, was the doorway by which the enemies of Israel entered their territory from that quarter.
 - b. The great cedar trees of Lebanon were the most noted feature of that country. These trees furnished the timber that went into the construction of Solomon's temple, and other such structures and houses (2 Sam. 7:1-2; 1 Kings 7:1-12).
 - c. Lebanon is called on in this majestic prophetic figure to open her doors that her cedars might be devoured with fire. Clearly, a destructive force is being depicted which would in some way bring ruin to those great trees, or the timber produced from those trees.
 - d. An invading enemy army would fit the picture Zechariah describes prophetically. The destruction the Roman army visited upon Palestine in general, and on Jerusalem in particular, certainly fits the portrait the prophet sketches, especially since verses ten through thirteen define the time factor as the first century.
 - e. The destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D., together with their overthrow of the whole Jewish establishment in the same operation, is the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy of this chapter.
2. Verse 2: "Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down."
 - a. With the demise of the great cedars of Lebanon, would come the figurative wailing of the fir trees and the oak trees of Bashan. The vintage (strong—ASV) forest of cedars would fall, and these lesser trees are called on to mourn their passing.
 - b. Verse three will show that this verse is figurative, with the wailing being that of the leaders of Israel when their power and prestige were violently taken from them.
3. Verse 3: "There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled."
 - a. Lebanon was known for its great cedars, and Bashan was known for its lush pasture lands. The "pride of Jordan" was the "thickets or reeds which grew luxuriantly on the east and west sides of the Jordan south of Galilee. Lions, no longer found in the Jordan valley, inhabited these thickets in seemingly great numbers in ancient times" (Hailey, p.380). These thickets would be spoiled and the lions would roar for being displaced.
 - b. From Lebanon in the north, to Bashan, and to the Jordan, the land would be spoiled. By depicting these as devastated, the Lord represents the destruction of the Jewish state, which would naturally result in the howling of those who had the most to lose by the invasion of the Roman legions.
 - c. God had earlier revealed through Zechariah that he would send for his servant, the Branch (3:8-10), who is Christ (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:1-9; Matt. 21:42; Rom. 9:32-33; Eph. 2:11-12; Acts 4:11-12).
 - d. The Branch is shown to be sitting on the throne, ruling as king and serving as priest at the same time (Zech. 6:12-13). Christ is filling both of these noble roles at present.
 - 1) The King (Christ, otherwise known in Zechariah as the Branch) would come unto his people in the lowliest of manners, riding upon a donkey (Zech. 9:9). Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem at the end of his earthly mission is plainly said to be the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (Matt. 21:4-11).
 - 2) In our present chapter, verses 10-13 give an astonishing statement which describes Judas' betrayal of Christ (Matt. 26:14-16; 27:3-10).
 - 3) The piercing of Christ is prophetically described in Zechariah 12:10 (see John 19:33-37).
 - e. With all of these explicit references to Christ in the context of this chapter, and with the statements of the chapter itself considered, there can be little doubt that the destruction envisioned by the prophet was the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans in 70 A.D.

B. Zechariah 11:4-14: The Rejected Shepherd.

1. Verses 4-5: "Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not."
 - a. Someone, unidentified by name, is instructed to feed the flock of slaughter. It is assumed that Zechariah is the one who is given this charge.

- 1) The flock is Israel; they are called "the flock of slaughter" because they often devoted themselves to such a way of life as to bring disaster and destruction upon their own heads. When they rejected God's word and refused to hear the warnings and pleas God issued to them through the ancient prophets, they brought upon themselves the destruction that Babylon wreaked upon them, plus many other harsh experiences. Compare: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16).
- 2) Christ met with the same rebellious dispositions when he sought to turn the people of Israel back to God (Matt. 23:37; Acts 4:11; John 1:11-12). What befell that generation and their children was truly horrible. Jesus called on them to weep for themselves and for their children (Luke 23:27-31).
- 3) Zechariah fed the flock by his work, but his work was representative of the much greater work of the Good Shepherd. Christ diligently and tearfully taught the Israelites the will of God, but the majority refused to heed his words, dooming themselves to *slaughter*.
- b. Those who exert control over the flock of slaughter are depicted by three titles: those who possess them, those who sell them, and their own shepherds.
 - 1) These three groups most likely refer to the rulers of the nation during the time of Christ: the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees; or perhaps the division could be listed as the scribes, elders, and chief priests. The Good Shepherd was in continual conflict with them throughout his ministry (John 8,10; Matt. 22,23).
 - 2) These are most likely to be the "three shepherds" of Zechariah 11:8. They possess the flock in that they held sway over the people, and considered themselves to be without any guilt for the way they made merchandise of them. Those that sold them asserted that the Lord was with them in their evil work. These shepherds *fleeced the flock*, having no compassion for the plight of the people.
 - 3) These leaders of the flock were those who led the nation into deeper rebellion against God, which resulted in the nation's demise at the hand of the pagans from Rome, who acted as God's agents of punishment.
 - 4) Hailey thinks that the shepherds of the flock were their foreign rulers (p.381).
2. Verse 6: "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them."
 - a. The Lord is delivering a very dire prediction regarding the fate of the people of the land—the children of Israel. The people had allowed their leaders to mislead them; they did not examine what they were taught by God's word; they must face the dreadful consequences of their failure to find the truth and keep it.
 - b. During the time of Christ's earthly ministry, Israel was sorely divided into warring camps, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Zealots. The division and confusion could only worsen.
 - c. Open rebellion erupted against their Roman overlords, which brought the Roman army into Palestine to put down this insurrection. Before the fighting was over, Jerusalem was laid waste and the temple was destroyed, hundreds of thousands of Jews had been slain (Josephus put the number at 1.1 million in and around Jerusalem), and thousands were carried into slavery, and the rest of the population was scattered. Christ gave a prophetic picture of these events in Matthew 24:4-35.
 - d. Zechariah describes these events, saying that God would have no pity on the evil people of Israel (the great majority), and that he would deliver them into the hands of another, to be treated as the *king* wished.
 - 1) In John 19:15, the Jews proclaimed that they had no king but Caesar, but this was merely a ploy to compel Pilate to sentence Jesus to death; God saw to it that their foolish and rash claim was fulfilled!
 - 2) Their land would be devastated and those taken captive would not be set free. They had foolishly agreed to accept the full responsibility for the murder of Christ upon their own and upon their children's heads: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:24-25). They received far more than they could have known!
3. Verse 7: "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock."
 - a. God is still the speaker. He will feed the flock of slaughter; he did this through the work of his Son, and continued it through the disciples of the Lord.
 - b. The work Christ did bore its primary fruit among the poor and rejected among the nation (Mark 12:37; Luke 6:20). He was severely criticized for having anything to do with the "publicans and sinners," but

- rebuked his opponents by saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:12-13).
- c. God took two staves (shepherd staffs), one he called *Beauty* and the other *Bands*. Both Hailey and Coffman think that the one taking this action was Zechariah; but if so, the speaker is Zechariah in verses 8-10, which would have the prophet to be the other principal partner in the covenant with Israel (verse 10). Understanding God to be the speaker in this verse fits the context better. It may be that the prophet demonstrates the action being described.
 - d. The different names given the two staves suggest each having its own distinctive function. *Beauty* carries the idea of "graciousness" or "favor." *Bands* gives the idea of binding something together (cf. 11:14). The marginal rendering of this word is "binders."
 - 1) The verse describes the action of feeding the poor of the flock, evidently a reference to the remnant among Israel who would follow Christ.
 - 2) The staff of Beauty would supply grace and blessings to these faithful ones, and the staff of Bands would bind them together.
 - e. Elements of both Judah and Israel would be incorporated into the Lord's church; further, elements from the Gentile nations would be also included.
 - 1) John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."
 - 2) Ephesians 2:11-22: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh... That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."
 - f. "And I took unto me two staves. Executing in vision his commission of feeding the flock, the prophet, as the representative of the Shepherd, took two shepherd's staves. The two staves intimate the manifold care of God for his flock from the earliest days, and the two blessings which he designed to bestow (as the names of the staves show), favour and unity. Beauty...['Graciousness', (Revised Version margin). It probably means the favour and grace of God, as in Ps 90:17. Bands; literally, Those that bind.... The name is meant to express the union of all the members of the flock, especially that between Israel and Judah (see ver. 14). These make one flock under one shepherd. I fed the flock. This repetition emphasizes the beginning of the verse, and expresses God's ears in time past and in time to come also" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc.].
4. Verse 8: "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me."
 - a. Someone has counted forty or more explanations that have been given to this verse, so obviously there is a measure of difficulty in grasping its meaning. The surface statement of the verse is not difficult, however. The speaker is saying that within the space of one month, he will cut off three shepherds; he states also that his soul loathed them and their soul abhorred him.
 - b. The primary difficulty, of course, is in identifying the three shepherds. Coffman suggests that these three were the religious and civil leaders of Israel during the first century: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians (p.165).
 - 1) The division could be altered to the scribes, elders, and chief priests, but the significance would be the same: those who exerted the greatest influence on the greatest numbers of the Israelites. It was the Jewish Sanhedrin Court which issued the final decree that Jesus should be put to death. This court was comprised of chief priests, elders, and Herodians, and was presided over by the high priest. The Jewish religious sects were made up of men from these three classes.
 - 2) Jesus characterized the leaders of the Jews as blind, and stated emphatically, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt.

- 15:14). He sternly warned that his people were to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6).
- c. That the three shepherds should be cut off in one month is more likely intended to simply represent a relatively short period of time.
 - 1) The war that ensued when Roman legions marched into Palestine was short and bloody, ending in the devastation of the Jewish system. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, chief priests, and even the whole priestly system, disappeared. No Jew today has the means of determining his tribal identity; the warring sects vanished. The three shepherds were cut off!
 - 2) When Jesus made his last visit to Jerusalem, in a very short period of time, a matter of days, he met and defeated the debaters from the opposition (Matt. 22). His piercing logic destroyed their sophistry and false argumentation. After his fearless confrontation with them, the Bible could say: "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22:46).
 - d. God does not hate any man's soul, but he does hate every false way, and he is disgusted with those who invent or promote false doctrines, or who live in sin or who lead others into sin.
 - 1) God and his Son were firmly opposed to the religious and civil rulers in Israel. Christ exposed and opposed their sinful teachings and practices.
 - 2) It is certain that those same leaders hated and opposed the efforts of Christ. They stooped to lying and every other method at their disposal to lessen his influence, and ultimately connived to have him executed.
5. Verse 9: "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another."
- a. When man shows that he will not turn from his wicked way, God gives up on him, and sends the proper punishment.
 - 1) This he did in Genesis 6-9; and again in Genesis 18-19. He punished Israel time and again during the age of the judges. After giving the Amorites sufficient time to change their ways, God punished them when they plunged deeper into sin (cf. Gen. 15:16). Other Gentile nations were handled the same way (Rom. 1:18-32).
 - 2) Thus, "That which dieth, let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let them that are left eat every one the flesh of another" (ASV).
 - 3) God's patience has its limitation; he gives sinful man sufficient time to alter his way (2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4), but punishment for the wicked is certain to come sooner or later (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20).
 - 4) Romans 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."
 - b. God gave up on rebellious Israel. When they resolutely rejected Christ, their house was left unto them desolate (Matt. 23:38). God rejected them when they rejected his Son, and left them to their own horrible fate.
6. Verses 10-11: "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD."
- a. If it was the prophet who took the two staves (verse 7), then in a symbolic action, he broke the staff of Beauty. This would represent the breaking of the covenant which God had made with Israel.
 - 1) Whether Zechariah broke a staff before the Jews or God only verbally described the breaking of the staff, the point is the same: it symbolized the breaking of the covenant (the Law of Moses) with which God had governed Israel for about 1500 years.
 - 2) When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). As he died on the cross, the Lord fulfilled the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:17), and replaced it with his own law (Heb. 9:15-17; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-16).
 - 3) The covenant with Israel was forever broken; never again will fleshly Israel be God's special people; never again will the Law of Moses be in effect as a law for God's people to follow.
 - b. The covenant was broken "in that day." When Christ died, God's covenant with old Israel was finished, ended for all time.
 - c. In place of that old covenant, God established in the same operation, the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8). The "poor of the flock" had given heed to the words of the Lord (Mark 12:37; Matt. 5:3). They recognized Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and heard his voice (John 10:1-32).
7. Verse 12: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

- a. The spokesman here is the Messiah. He asks the nation of Israel to give him his hire (his wages; to pay him according to his worth to them). Christ had served his people in his public ministry for three and a half years.
 - 1) His request is for them to place a value on their estimate of his services. What he wanted from them was their loving obedience, which was in their own best interest, but they defrauded him of this appropriate reward. In this respect, Israel treated the Messiah as Laban treated Jacob (Gen. 30:28-33; 31:42-43).
 - 2) The estimate of the religious and civil leaders of Christ was expressed in their utter rejection of him and their demand that he be crucified.
 - 3) Philippians 2:7-8: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 - b. He did not demand that they give him his proper wages; he made the request that they decide what he was worth to them, and to pay accordingly. The reward, if any, was left to their judgment. No one is coerced to serve the Lord; the choice is given to each individual (Matt. 11:28-30; Luke 9:23; 13:24; Rev. 22:17).
 - c. They decided that his worth was merely 30 pieces of silver—a paltry sum! "If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned" (Ex. 21:32). They esteemed the Son of God to be worth no more than a common slave. This was an insult! A freeman was worth twice this price (JFB, p.698).
 - d. Matthew 26:14-16: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."
 - 1) Judas went to the chief priests with his unholy proposal. It appears, from the placement of the story of the feast in which Judas had exposed his avarice, that he was upset over the stinging rebuke the Lord had meted out.
 - 2) This appears to explain his evil act reported here, which could have also been motivated by his greed. At any rate, he knew about the desire of the chief priests to learn of the Lord's secret haunts (John 11:57: "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.") Thus, greed, wounded pride, and disappointment were involved in his betrayal. Judas asked how much they would give for the information he possessed.
 - 3) Luke's account (22:3-6) reports the gladness of the Jewish leaders on hearing from Judas. Luke also reports that Judas spoke with the chief priests and the captains. These captains were in charge of certain priests and Levites whose duty was to maintain control at the temple.
 - e. The pieces of silver were most likely the Jewish shekel; thirty pieces would amount to about \$15.00. He had no way of knowing that his secret covenant with the Lord's enemies would be made part of God's public record for all to see (cf. Heb. 4:13). The covenanted price was the rate for a common slave (Ex. 21:32).
 - f. How could these religious leaders, who supposedly knew the Old Testament intimately, have failed to see the connection between their wicked covenant and what Zechariah had predicted? The prophecy contains an amazing amount of details which were all present in the fulfillment. The sum was 30 pieces of silver; it was weighed out; it was cast unto the potter; it was thrown down ("cast"); the potter would get it; the recipient would do the casting; the transaction occurred in the temple (the house of the Lord). They "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver," which implies bargaining.
 - g. The Lord never actually entered into a literal discussion with the Jews over how much he was worth. The bargain indicated by Zechariah's prophecy was one which Judas reached with the chief priests, but in this agreement to pay him a bribe of 30 pieces of silver, they placed their value on Christ's worth. By rejecting his word, they had already shown their contempt for him.
8. Verse 13: "And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD."
 - a. So contemptible was the price, that God commanded that it be thrown to the potter. Hailey suggests that the idea of throwing something to the potter may have been a proverbial expression, showing the worthlessness of the item. We speak of throwing something we will not eat "to the dogs." By referring to the sum of money as "a goodly price that I was prised at of them," the Lord shows his disdain for their estimate of Christ the money represented.
 - b. The Messiah is pictured as casting the money to the potter in response to God's statement. God gave the instruction for the disposal of the blood money, but it was Judas who cast it down: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again

the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, *What is that* to us? see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day" (Matt. 27:3-8).

- c. The utter indifference of the religious leaders is shown in their response to the distraught Judas: "What is that to us? See thou to that." They had used Judas to accomplish part of their evil intent: to find and arrest Jesus on the sly. Now they had no further use for Judas. His remorse did not affect them. They were cruel and hypocritical; Judas said that Jesus was innocent; if they were interested in justice, they should have investigated his claim.
- d. Having the blood money refused by the priests and elders, and being filled with remorse, Judas threw the money down in the temple, and went out and hanged himself. His thirst for money disappeared; the thirty pieces of silver were of no importance to him now; the remorse he felt for what he had done overwhelmed him.

- 1) His casting the thirty pieces of silver down in the temple fulfilled Zechariah 11:12-13. We have no reason to believe that he knew he was fulfilling prophecy; his purpose for returning the money was to obtain a measure of relief from the horrible pangs of conscience. The conscience is a valuable tool to urge us to do right. Pity the poor wretch who so sears his conscience that its voice is stilled! Judas had not advanced into sin that far.

- 2) The priests and elders perceived that it would be unlawful to put the money into the treasury since it had been used as blood money. They consulted with each other and decided to use the money to buy the potter's field which could be used as a burying place for strangers who died at Jerusalem. The definite article *the* shows that a specific field is under consideration. The price paid suggests that it was not a valuable piece of property even though near to Jerusalem. It is spoken of as the potter's field because, likely, it had been depleted of so much clay by those making pottery that it was valueless for anything but a cemetery, thus of small value. At the time Matthew wrote (42—58 A.D.), this field was still known as "the field of blood." Acts 1:19 also tells of this common name for this field—Aceldema ("the field of blood").

- e. Matthew 27:9-10: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

- 1) The quotation is attributed to Jeremiah, but is found in Zechariah 11:12. Did Matthew make a mistake? Did some copyist mis-write the name? It is said that the Jews often abbreviated names and words; the difference between the abbreviated names of Jeremiah and Zechariah is only in one letter; thus, some scholars assert that a copyist made a mistake.

- 2) But there is another explanation which does no violence to the integrity of the text: "Anciently, according to the Jewish writers, *Jeremiah* was reckoned the first of the prophets, and was placed first in the Book of the Prophets, thus: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve minor prophets. Some have thought that Matthew, quoting this place, quoted the *Book of the Prophets* under the name of that which had the *first* place in the book, that is, Jeremiah: and though the words are those of Zechariah, yet they are quoted correctly as the words of the Book of the Prophets, the first of which was Jeremiah" (Barnes, *Barnes Notes on Matthew—Mark*, p.302).

- 3) Some have thought that Jeremiah 32:6-8 is alluded to by Matthew. Others allege that the quotation is from some statement given by Jeremiah, which had been handed down orally but had not been made part of the sacred written record.

9. Verse 14: "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."

- a. As a result of the insulting treatment on the part of Israel for the Messiah, God would cut off his other staff (*Bands*). This would shatter the unity that had existed between Israel and Judah since their return from exile.

- b. The Jews were sorely divided into warring religious sects at the time of Christ. This division increased markedly between the Lord's crucifixion and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

C. Zechariah 11:15-17: The Foolish Shepherd Takes Over.

1. Verse 15: "And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd."

- a. Zechariah is instructed to take upon himself the instruments of a foolish shepherd. The purpose in this is to make a change from discussing the Good Shepherd (the Messiah) to give a picture of Israel under a foolish leader.

- b. The reference to a *foolish shepherd* is not to identify any particular person, but any ruler who would lead the people astray. The leaders of Judah cried out their refusal to accept Jesus, and affirmed their allegiance to Caesar (John 19:14-15)—a foolish choice indeed!
2. Verse 16: "For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces."
 - a. There were a number of common duties that fell upon a shepherd which are referred to here: seek out those sheep which get lost; find the young lambs which need his special attention; doctor those sheep which are injured or sick; feed those which are sound (ASV); refrain from eating the healthy and fat sheep; so tend to the sheep that their hoofs will not be damaged.
 - b. God would raise up a shepherd who would not perform these duties, but would do the very opposite. Christ gave a description of the false and the Good Shepherds in John 10. The false shepherd God envisioned doubtless included the wicked rulers and overlords who controlled and afflicted Israel during the time from Malachi to Matthew and during the first century until the fall of Jerusalem. In some cases, the false shepherd were Gentiles, and in others, Jewish leaders.
3. Verse 17: "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened."
 - a. God pronounces a woe upon this idol (*worthless*—ASV) shepherd who has no concern over the flock.
 - b. The sword would be against the shepherd's arm, the arm that should have been used in feeding, guiding, and leading the flock, but was not thus employed. The sword would also fall upon the shepherd's right eye, that it should be blinded. The eye that did not oversee the flock would lose its sight; the arm that was not applied to tending to the flock, would be withered.

ZECHARIAH 12

A. Zechariah 12:1-4: The Conflict Between Jerusalem and the Nations.

1. Verse 1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - a. Jehovah pronounces a burden (a verdict) concerning Israel, but prior to the announcement of the burden, he describes himself by what he has done.
 - 1) The Lord stretched forth the heavens.
 - a) Psalms 104:2-4: "Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind...."
 - b) Isaiah 40:22: "*It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."
 - c) Isaiah 42:5: "Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."
 - d) Amos 4:13: "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, *is* his name."
 - e) Amos 5:8: "*Seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD *is* his name."
 - 2) He continues to uphold the original creation. If God had not taken the necessary steps, there would have been no universe, and if he did not continue to hold the universe together, it would collapse and disintegrate.
 - a) Colossians 1:17: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." "Cohere, in mutual dependence...Christ not only creates, but *maintains* in continuous stability and productiveness" (Vincent Word Studies]. Bread dough, mixed with the right amount of liquid, has a consistency—it holds together in one united body. So the universe and the world holds together by Heaven's power—it has a reliable consistency.
 - b) Hebrews 1:1-4: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."
 - b. The Lord laid the foundation of the earth.
 - 1) Job 38:4: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?..."
 - 2) Psalms 102:25: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands."
 - 3) Proverbs 8:29: "When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth."
 - 4) Isaiah 48:13: "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together."
 - 5) Isaiah 51:13: "And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where *is* the fury of the oppressor?"
 - 6) Isaiah 51:16: "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people."
 - 7) Jeremiah 31:37: "Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."
 - 8) Micah 6:2: "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."

- 9) Hebrews 1:10: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands."
- c. The Lord forms the spirit of man within him. The formation of the heavens and the laying of the earth's foundation were one-time acts, but the forming of the spirits of men is an on-going work.
- 1) There is more to a man than the physical body (Gen. 35:16-19; 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:22; Job 32:8; 1 Thess. 5:23).
 - 2) God is the father of our spirits. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9; cf. Num. 16:22).
 - 3) When does God form the spirit within us? The only logical time is the moment of conception; it is then that the body begins to form and life begins. When the spirit leaves the physical body, death results (Jas. 2:26); consequently, it is when the spirit joins the human body that life begins.
2. Verse 2: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem."
- a. "At that time Jerusalem was small and despised; but God would make it 'a cup of reeling,' as a large bowl of wine which the nations thought they could drink, gulp down, with ease. But instead, it would be a basin filled with the wrath of Jehovah, to which they would put their lips only to stagger back, reel, fall, and be no more (cf. Obad. 16; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; 51:39,57; Hab. 2:16)" (Hailey, p.387).
 - b. The church of Christ is represented by the references of Judah and Jerusalem. In the prophetic picture given, Zechariah sees the Lord's people besieged on every side by enemies, but their assault would fail. Why?
 - 1) Because of him who defends the church! The God who stretched forth the heavens, who laid the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within the individual, is our defender and protector!
 - 2) We may seem so powerless and weak in number in comparison to our enraged foes. Our enemies are many and powerful; they are without and within our ranks. The ones in the present apostasy are greater in number, wealth, and position than we. But as surely as God overthrew the enemies of ancient Israel, even though the enemy was far more powerful, just so may we be sure of our eventual victory. "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?" (Rom. 8:31).
3. Verse 3: "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."
- a. *In that day* indicates the Christian Age. The church in Jerusalem (Acts 2-12) was hated and feared, and opposed by the great powers of Judaism, but eventually the enemies were shattered and scattered, and the Lord's faithful went on to a great work.
 - b. The church is pictured here as a great stone, which all its enemies want to move and destroy. But those who assail it will be broken into pieces.
 - 1) Daniel 2:34-35: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."
 - 2) Matthew 21:42,44: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?....And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."
4. Verse 4: "In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness."
- a. The success of the Lord's people is illustrated by these figures of speech. As God had thrown the Egyptian horse and rider into the sea (Ex. 15:1), so those who would set themselves against the Lord's church in the future would be overthrown. These enemies would be smitten with astonishment and madness.
 - b. God would open his eyes upon the his people, and smite the enemies of his people with blindness. "For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

- c. These figures are graphic and powerful! No one has a ghost of a chance of defeating God's purposes. His people can take heart in this prophetic assurance.

B. Zechariah 12:5-9: God Defends Jerusalem.

1. Verse 5: "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God."
 - a. The governors (chieftains—ASV) here of Judah are the leaders in spiritual Israel (the church). See verse six.
 - b. "And the chieftains of Judah shall say in their heart, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Jehovah of hosts" (ASV).
 - c. God is the supreme source of strength for his people (See margin). Whatever the success God's people have, God is the one who provides the victory.
2. Verse 6: "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem."
 - a. Compare:
 - 1) Mark 16:15-20: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - 2) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 3) Colossians 1:5-6: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth."
 - 4) Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
 - b. The leaders of the church would be made like a hearth (pan—ASV) of fire among the wood; if the wood represents the enemies, then the church would consume them as the fire on the hearth consumes the wood. As a torch of fire is able to ignite and consume a sheaf of grain, so the Lord's people would overcome their enemies.
 - c. The second section of the verse states the proposition more directly, affirming that the governors of Judah would devour all the people around them (those who are said to besiege them, verse two). Spiritual Judah would be able to find a place to dwell, having overcome the great oppressors. This is a unique way of expressing the fact that the church would not be destroyed despite the strength of her enemies.
 - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
 - d. "All attacks of the enemy leave her unscathed; she will ever stand as the city of God in the midst of his people, unto whom all nations will come (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-5; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-23)" (Hailey, p.388).
3. Verse 7: "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah."
 - a. Those who dwell in tents (i.e., the lowliest in the kingdom of Christ) will not be beneath those who dwell in *Jerusalem* (i.e., the seemingly more prominent in the kingdom).
 - b. God's arrangement for the church is such that there is no room left for boasting on anyone's part. All are on the same spiritual level.
 - 1) Galatians 3:26-28: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

- 2) 1 Corinthians 1:31: "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."
- c. None has the right to exalt himself above anyone else.
4. Verse 8: "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them."
- a. The Lord will be the defender of spiritual Jerusalem *in that day*. That being the case, there is no reason for anyone to fear, as long as we have strong faith.
- b. When a company of people have a strong leader in whom they can safely put their trust, great courage often abides in the hearts of the followers. On the battle field, defeat has been turned into victory when one leader showed courage and strength, and rallied the troops.
- c. The Lord states that even those who are feeble will be as courageous as David. David knew he had the help of God, thus he did not fear the lion and the bear which attacked his sheep, or Goliath who challenged God's people (1 Sam. 17).
- d. The Son of God came into the world as a descendant of David, thus was of the house of David. As the angel of the Lord went before ancient Israel as she made her way through the wilderness, so the angel of the Lord (Christ) goes before his people today, as we make our way through life.
5. Verse 9: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."
- a. During the Messianic Age, those enemies which rise up against the Lord's kingdom will have God to face. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. 18:6-7).
- b. Judaism, under the leadership of ungodly men, sought to destroy the church, but were themselves destroyed as a separate nation. Since 70 A.D., they had been scattered among the nations. In 1948, a relatively small percentage of Jews were given a homeland in Palestine, but the great majority of them remain elsewhere. The Jews are not God's chosen people today; and they forfeited their rights to Palestine long ago. Americans pray for and offer support to the Israeli nation; they stand for many things for which we also stand.
- c. The cruel and powerful empire of Rome seriously tried to destroy the followers of Christ, but ultimately were themselves destroyed as an empire: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

C. Zechariah 12:10-14: Many People Are to be Brought to Repentance.

1. Verse 10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."
- a. Here is a promise of the coming of the age of divine grace. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:14-17).
- b. The grace of God is revealed by the gospel of Christ (Tit. 2:11-12). The Holy Spirit was the means by which God revealed and confirmed the gospel (John 16:13; Acts 1:5,8; 2:1ff; 1 Cor. 2:9-13).
- c. The grace of God was presented first to the Jews in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 2:1ff), but later was carried to all the world. God's grace made it possible for all people to supplicate the throne of God through Christ. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:4-5).
- d. Many of those who were responsible for piercing Christ would come to mourn over this dreadful deed (Acts 2:36-41; Matt. 5:4; 2 Cor. 7:10). Their mourning would be as sorrowful and bitter as that of one who mourns for his only son.
- e. John shows that the piercing mentioned was a prophetic reference to the pierced body of Christ. "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 10:33-37).

2. Verse 11: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."
 - a. Many battles were fought at Megiddo during the ancient days, and hence many men lost their lives there. As a result of these deaths, there would be a very great many people who would mourn over these losses.
 - b. Perhaps the case of the untimely death of Josiah at that place is in the author's mind: "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come* not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from *meddling with* God, who *is* with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of* the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they *are* written in the lamentations" (2 Chron. 35:20-25).
 - c. The prophet states that there would be great mourning in Jerusalem to rival that mourning which arose from Megiddo. The mourning in this future case would be the mourning that accompanies repentance (Cf. Acts 9:1ff; Matt. 26:75).
 - d. When the three thousand people repented on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:36-41), the fulfillment of this prophecy was well under way.
3. Verse 12: "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart."
 - a. There would be representatives of the family of David and of the family of Nathan who would take part in the mourning indicated. The mourning would be the godly sorrow that produces repentance.
 - b. Not only would there be men who mourned, but women also. Eleven times in verses 12-14 the word *apart* is used, indicating the individual nature of the mourning.
 - c. Godly sorrow produces repentance (which is a decision to make the change to do better); repentance is followed by a changed (reformed) life.
 - 1) Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"
 - 2) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
 - d. Nathan was the name of one of David's sons (1 Chron. 3:5; Luke 3:27,31). Both Zerubbabel and Jesus are descendants of David through Nathan. The house of David was the kingly line in Judah.
4. Verse 13: "The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart."
 - a. Representatives of the house of Levi and of the family of Shimei would be involved in the mourning. Shimei was the son of Gershon, the son of Levi (Num. 3:17-18).
 - b. The tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe in old Israel. A great company of priests obeyed the gospel (Acts 6:7).
5. Verse 14: "All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."
 - a. Reference is made in the previous two verses to the kingly and priestly tribes of Israel, with the attendant point that representatives from each of these tribes would mourn over the piercing of Christ.
 - b. This verse shows that there would be others from the rest of the nation who would also repent. Although there would be many who would repent and obey the gospel, yet their number is expressed in the New Testament as a mere *remnant* (Rom. 11).
 - c. "Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins and is pierced by them; and this engages them to look unto him, as those that are deeply concerned for him. This is the effect of their looking to Christ; it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified; when they heard it those who had had a hand in piercing him were pricked to the heart, and cried out, What shall we do? It is

fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ, and mourn for him, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them.

- 1) “Note, The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort. It is a great mourning. [1.] it is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one mourns for an only son....as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout all their land for the death of their first-born. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a first-born, is natural, sincere, unforced, and unaffected, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. [2.] It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wise and good prince.
- 2) “It shall be like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation (v. 11), and perhaps the greater because they were told that it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, The crown has fallen from our head. Woe unto us, for we have sinned! Lam 5:16. Christ is our King; our sins were his death, and, for that reason, ought to be our grief” [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].

ZECHARIAH 13

A. Zechariah 13:1-6: A Fountain for Sin and Uncleanness.

1. Verse 1: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."
 - a. The phrase *in that day* is used again, thus identifying the time of the prophecy to be the time of the Messiah. During that time, a fountain would be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
 - b. A fountain (a spring) gives forth a continuing supply of fresh, life-giving water. This fountain would send forth a life-giving substance—the soul-saving blood of Christ. It is accessible to every accountable soul; it is available to every generation of mankind.
 - c. That the foregoing conclusions are correct is demonstrated by the fact that the fountain is given *for sin and for uncleanness*. "Sin" is defined as "missing the mark." "Uncleanness" describes the condition of being defiled and tainted. When one commits sin, his spirit is contaminated. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4); sin is unrighteousness.
 - 1) 1 John 5:17: "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."
 - 2) Psalm 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness."
 - 3) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 4) Hebrews 9:22: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."
 - d. Sin can be cleansed only by blood (Heb. 9:22). Why? We may not be able to know why, but God has so-decreed it. The blood of animals does not have the capacity to remove sin (Heb. 9:12; 10:1-4). Only the blood of Christ can do so (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; Matt. 26:28; 1 John 1:7).
 - e. Under the gospel dispensation, God has given a system, based on the sacrificial death of his sinless Son, which is able to utterly remove the guilt of our sins:
 - 1) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - 2) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - 3) Acts 13:38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
 - 4) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - 5) 1 John 2:1-2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
 - 6) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - 7) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
 - f. The benefits of the fountain would be for all, but not everyone would want these blessings. Those to whom the blood of Christ would be applied are described as "the house of David" and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem"—spiritual Israel.
2. Verse 2: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."
 - a. In connection with the opening of the fountain, God would cause the names of the idols to be cut off from the land. *Land* refers to the realm of the Messiah's rule.

- 1) There would be no room in the kingdom of Christ for any idol; these would all cease to be followed by those who are citizens of his kingdom.
 - 2) Notice that the prophet does not say that the idols would be cut off from the earth; idols are still being worshipped by many today, but no faithful Christian worships an idol! The names of the idols would be removed; the "authority" of Baal, et al, would be destroyed. Even in the world, Baal is no longer served.
- b. In connection with the opening of the fountain, God would cause the prophets to pass out of the land. Again, *land* refers to the kingdom of Christ. There would be a need for the work of prophets for a period of time.
- 1) God sent prophets in the Old Testament era to correct and guide his people then; their work included many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:44; Jer. 31:31-34). This would not only prepare national Israel for the New Covenant, but it would also furnish proof of the Messiah's claims. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. For 400 years, between Malachi and John the Baptizer, there was no prophet.
 - 2) God gave prophets at the beginning of the New Testament era to receive and reveal the New Covenant (Eph. 3:1-11). The cessation of the giving of spiritual gifts, including that of prophecy, was foretold (1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4:12-16). But even in ancient prophecies of the Old Testament, the taking away of miraculous gifts of the New Testament age was predicted (Micah 7:15; Zech. 13:2). Since the time of the death of the last apostle and the last person on whom an apostle had laid hands, miraculous gifts (including that of prophecy) have ceased to be given.
 - 3) There have been no true prophets since the last genuine prophet of the first century passed from earthly scenes. There have been false prophets all through the centuries, however, with their number showing a great increase in our time (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Peter 2:1-3).
 - 4) Brother Coffman asserts that the prophets who were to be cut off were false prophets, but these false prophets have actually increased with the passing of time, even arising within the ranks of the church (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).
- c. In connection with the opening of the fountain, God would cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. During the first century, Satan was able to send evil spirits to afflict certain individuals. Although the subject is somewhat shrouded in mystery, some aspects are clear.
- 1) They were spiritual beings: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16).
 - 2) They were unclean beings, under Satan's control: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.... When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.... Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:25, 43, 45).
 - 3) They were intelligent beings: "Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
 - 4) They had volition and locomotion: "Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:44-45).
 - 5) They often brought illness, affliction, or special powers on the individual:
 - a) Dumbness—Matthew 9:32.
 - b) Blindness—Matthew 12:22.
 - c) Convulsions—Mark 9:18.
 - d) Epilepsy—Matthew 17:15.
 - e) Special knowledge—Acts 16:16-18; 19:15.
 - f) Great strength—Mark 5:4; Acts 19:16.
 - g) Demon possession often brought physical ailments, but this was a symptom or side-effect (Matt. 4:24; 8:16).
 - 6) Christ came to strip Satan of his power, including the power to afflict humanity with his demons (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:20-33; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:25-26). He was successful!

- 7) With the end of the age of miracles, demon-possession and the power to expel demons ended. There is no proof of demons taking over anyone today. The burden of proof is on one who claims that the problem still exists in the world. Zechariah (13:2) connected the end of unclean spirits with the opening of the fountain (verse 1) and the ending of prophets; since both of these others have occurred, the unclean spirits have been taken away.
3. Verse 3: "And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth."
- a. There would be false prophets who would come on the scene, following the passing of the true prophets. These prophets were not to be heeded or be allowed to do their evil work unopposed.
 - 1) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 2) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
 - b. Even the parents of a false prophet were to denounce and oppose him. A son or a daughter who advocates religious error is committing sin; they are to have their errors pointed out to them and if they refuse to repent, they must be exposed for what they are. Not all parents would be willing to do so.
 - c. Our love for the Lord and his truth is to be such that even those we love dearly are not to be allowed to interfere with our devotion (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26). If our son becomes guilty of false teaching, and is disciplined by the church, we as parents are to support the withdrawal (cf. 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).
4. Verse 4: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive."
- a. Every false prophet who utters a prediction will be defeated in his efforts. Only God can know the future, and since he does not reveal future events to us (except through what is in the written word), those who attempt to do so will fail.
 - b. Also, whatever the nature of their message, since it originated with them and was not given by the Lord, it is false and can come to nothing but shame.
 - c. In the Judgment, every religious doctrine and practice will be revealed for what it is. The errors of men will be fully exposed as false; the truth of God will be shown for what it is, and will stand (Eccl. 12:14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 24:35).
 - d. The true prophets of old sometimes lived in rough circumstances. John dwelled in the wilderness, wore rough clothing and subsisted on whatever kind of food that was at hand (Matt. 3:4; cf. 1 Kings 19:13,19; 2 Kings 1:8).
 - 1) A false prophet who sought to deceive men might put on a front of humility. Those who currently use television as their primary tool of deception make claims of sincerity and honesty and humility, but their dress and lifestyle, as well as their doctrine, expose their true nature! By their fruits we can know them (Matt. 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1).
 - 2) One who has been honestly deceived into accepting the doctrine and practices of a false teacher, and who himself has advocated the same, can be reclaimed if he is willing and able to study the Bible with an open mind, searching for truth—if he will accept the truth.
5. Verse 5: "But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth."
- a. "They will be unable to deceive any who will compare their teaching with divine revelation. When his teaching proves itself false, the lying prophet will endeavor to cover his error by denying that he was a prophet at all; he was a farmer, a slave of the soil from his youth" (Hailey, p.393).
 - b. A false teacher is not apt to admit his sinful practice, but will try to cover it up or explain it away. Once a person has accepted error, it is most difficult for him to renounce it. Those who are so deceived by premillennialists or Pentecostals that they begin to openly advocate that error, become so enamored by it that this false system is all they want to talk about or consider; the truth is lost to them.
6. Verse 6: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

- a. This is a difficult verse. Connected as it is in the context with the statement of verse seven, there appears to be a reference in it to the experiences of Christ. But in the immediate context is also the direct connection with the false teachers Zechariah is describing.
- b. Limiting this statement to the immediate preceding context, it is the false teacher who says that the wounds he has in his hands were received while in the house of his friends: "My friends did me this injury."
- c. The words themselves are easy to grasp, but their significance is not. "The reply apparently points to wounds he had received in the house of idols, as the false teacher may continue to wear the scars of his error through life. Some think the reply is an evasion and that the false prophet seeks to cover the real source of his wounds; but the first suggestion seems to be the correct interpretation" (Hailey, p.393).
- d. Understanding the verse depends on how the passage is divided.
 - 1) If the verse connects with verses 1-5, then the false prophet is the subject of the verse. But if the verse is connected with verses 7-9, then Christ is the subject, and the wounds in his hands refer to injuries he received in being crucified by those he had come to save, his fellow-countrymen (John 1:11-12). In this case, a similar statement is given in Psalm 41:9 and fulfilled in John 13:18 (cf. Acts 2:22-23).
 - a) Psalm 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."
 - b) John 13:18: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."
 - c) Acts 2:22-23: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."
 - 2) There does not appear to be any definite statement given in the New Testament which directly couples this verse with the wounding of Christ, but the words of the verse itself seem to describe the injuries of the Lord too well to be a mere coincidence. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:24-28).
- e. "But wounds of chastisement are not inflicted on the hands, and the punishment of false prophecy was not such wounds, but death. Wounds in the hands were no punishment, which parents would inflict. They were the special punishment of the cross....The most literal interpretation, then, of the wounds in the hands harmonizes with the piercing before, and the smiting of the Good Shepherd which follows, of whom David too prophesied, 'They pierced My Hands and My Feet' (Ps 22:16)" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].

B. Zechariah 13:7-9: The Shepherd is Smitten.

1. Verse 7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."
 - a. The sword is personified and addressed as a living person. It is instructed to smite the shepherd so that the sheep would be scattered. Only with God's approval could the sword be lifted up against his Son: "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:8-11).
 - b. The shepherd is connected with the spokesman; the Lord of hosts is the speaker, and the shepherd is said to be "My Fellow." Christ is the Son of God; he is a divine being just as the Father is (John 10:30; 1:1-3,14; Heb. 1).
 - c. We are not left to wonder about the meaning of this passage for the Lord himself gave the fulfillment. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Matt. 26:31; cf. Mark 14:27).

- When the mob came to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, being led there by Judas, the eleven disciples forsook him and fled (Matt. 26:47-56).
- d. The shepherd of the passage is Christ, the Good Shepherd (John 10); the sheep were his disciples. Although the sheep were scattered in that they forsook him and fled, yet the Good Shepherd lost none of these eleven (John 18:1-9).
2. Verses 8-9: "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God."
 - a. ASV: "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith Jehovah, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God."
 - b. The scope of the prophecy is broadened to include other disciples. Of these other disciples, two thirds of them would be cut off, while the remaining one third would remain loyal.
 - c. Zechariah speaks of the loyal ones successfully passing through the refining fire by which they were tried.
 - 1) 1 Peter 4:12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."
 - 2) Acts 14:22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-11).
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:6-7: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."
 - 5) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
 - 6) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
 - 7) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 8) 2 Peter 2:1-2: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."
 - 9) Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
 - d. Brother Coffman provides the following insightful comments:
 - 1) "Baldwin and others have supposed that this refers to the killing of two thirds of the Jewish population, as at the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans; and, of course, that literally occurred; but 'in that day' appears to focus the prophecy upon what will take place in God's spiritual Israel throughout history. If so, it is but a way of saying what Jesus said: 'Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it' (Matt. 7:13). This usage of 'one third' is also seen in Rev. 6. Inherent in the teaching of this verse is the fact that the company of the redeemed is but a 'remnant,' certainly nothing approaching a majority of the people...."
 - 2) "There is no better comment on this anywhere than in the writings of the apostle Peter who made this a description of the tribulations that shall test the Christians: 'Now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1:6,7). Inherent in this is the necessity that every

Christian's faith be tested through tribulations. 'It must needs be that offences come' (Matt. 18:7); and, 'Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22), etc. The faithful understanding of this principle is a source of countless blessings to the child of God. Whenever sorrows are multiplied and 'fiery trials' of the most violent and vicious kind descend upon him, he will remember that God is merely testing, finding out, if he really "believes" or not! And what is the result of the 'refining' process? It is stated in the concluding clauses: They will say Jehovah is my God; and God will say, It is my people! Wherever that relationship exists, the 'end and all' of living in this world has been accomplished."

e. Leupold left these observations on verses 7-9:

- 1) This passage applies to Christ in a very specific sense as His own words indicate (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27)...."My shepherd" (*ro 'i*—participle *ro 'eh* with suffix) is defined not only by what follows in the verse but by the passage 11:4–14 which was indubitably Messianic.
- 2) In our verse the parallel statement defines the one to be smitten as "the man that is My fellow""He whom God designates as His fellow cannot be a mere man, but only such a one who has part in the divine nature, yes, is of divine being." This fact alone rules out other interpretations as failing to meet the requirements of this term....
- 3) It seems strange that "the Lord of hosts" should command the sword to do such destructive work against one who stands so near to Him. But the mystery involved is the mystery of substitutionary atonement. Indeed, in one sense even the acts of men, wicked though they may be, are under the control of providence and so can in a sense be attributed to God. The thought is also expressed by Christ's word before Pilate, John 19:11, "Thou wouldest have no power over Me at all except it were given thee from above." Christ's citation of the word in the form, "I will smite," (Matt. 26:31), is, therefore, according to the sense and not literal.
- 4) The sword is first bidden "to awake," which seems beautifully rendered by *Luther: Mache dich auf*—"get busy." After it has come into play it is bidden to smite, *hakh*....The two successive steps in the action lend vividness to the figure. The immediate result of the smiting of the shepherd is that the sheep are scattered...If the shepherd is slain, the natural outcome is that the flock scatters. This is what the disciples did....
- 5) There is no reference here to any particular time or situation but a description of the degree of severity which God shall have to employ in purging His people that they may be made receptive for the help He has in store for them. But even this verse tells only of the first steps to be taken.

ZECHARIAH 14

A. Zechariah 14:1-8: The Nations Rise Against Jerusalem.

1. Verse 1: "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee."
 - a. "The refining and purging introduced by the prophet, in which the larger portion were cut off (13:8-9), is continued under the general picture of Jerusalem's assault" (Hailey, p.394). This chapter deals with the literal destruction of the actual city of Jerusalem.
 - b. Similar figures and descriptions are given in Isaiah 13 predicting the overthrow of the wicked city of Babylon. The prophetic picture given here of Jerusalem's destruction has to do with the 70 A.D. invasion of the Roman Army. What Zechariah depicts is not something that was in the past (B.C. 586); it has nothing to do with the second coming of Christ, for then the entire universe (including the earth) will be utterly destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-11).
 - c. Matthew 24:3-35 gives Christ's detailed description of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, a passage that parallels that of our present text.
2. Verse 2: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."
 - a. None of the things listed here could take place at the end of time when the Lord returns.
 - 1) There will be no time for the houses to be rifled and the women ravished. In an instant, all the dead will be raised and all the living will be changed (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Pet. 3:8-12; Matt. 24:36ff).
 - 2) If application is made to the assault against spiritual Jerusalem, how are the women ravished (raped)? Would male Christians suffer no affliction?
 - b. Zechariah's description of events in this verse accurately depicts what happened when the Roman Army besieged and conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 - 1) The army of Rome was comprised of soldiers from the subjugated nations of their vast empire.
 - 2) Great atrocities were wrought by the Roman soldiers against the citizens of Jerusalem. Josephus, the uninspired Jewish historian who was present at the siege and fall of the city, gave a close description of the tragic end of the city and nation.
 - 3) A large portion of the population was taken captive, some being enslaved to work in Egyptian mines, and many others were taken to Rome as slaves.
 - c. The following details of the tribulation associated with Jerusalem's fall is given by Josephus:
 - 1) 1,100,000 Jews died at Jerusalem during the siege and fighting, and another 97,000 were captured and placed in slavery. How foolish the Jewish bravado of Matthew 27:25: "His blood be on us, and on our children."
 - 2) Women ate their own babies, men broke into houses and stole food from children's mouths, and neighbor robbed neighbor for the food they had.
 - 3) Rich Jews swallowed gold, deserted to the Romans, hoping to get away with some of their wealth. When the soldiers discovered the scheme, they began killing those who surrendered, ripping open their bodies in search of the coins. Thousands died in this fashion, two thousand in only one night.
 - 4) Many were beaten and tortured by the Roman soldiers; thousands were crucified in various bodily positions as jests. This was done until all of the wood had been used as crosses, and even places to erect crosses were filled!
 - 5) By actual count, 115,880 bodies were carried through one gate in three months; there were 600,000 in all thus disposed of. When the bodies could no longer be thrown outside the city, they were stored in large houses within the city.
 - 6) Thousands of the captives were later forced to fight beasts and each other in arenas; this for the enjoyment of spectators.
 - 7) Jerusalem was overthrown and the temple was utterly destroyed; Matthew 24:2 was literally fulfilled. When the Romans broke into the city, Josephus said, "...They slew whomsoever they found, without distinction, and burned the houses and all the people who had fled into them; and when they entered for the sake of plunder, they found whole families of dead persons, and houses full of carcasses destroyed by famine, then they came out with their hands empty. And though they thus pitied the dead, they had not the same emotion for the living, but killed all they met, whereby they filled the lanes with dead bodies. The whole city ran with blood, insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood" (Wars, Book VI, chap. 8,5; chap. 9,3). He

- also reports that the city fell to the Romans on the same day that it had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C.
- d. Zechariah states that *the residue of the people* would not be cut off from the city.
 - 1) One likely interpretation of this expression is to apply it to those Christians who were present at Jerusalem at the approach of the Roman Army; guided by the warning the Lord had given in Matthew 24, they were able to flee from the city and escape the horrible fate that befell their unbelieving countrymen. Christians comprised only a remnant of the nation of Israel.
 - 2) Another possible meaning is that not all the Jews would be slain or captured; a remnant would be preserved. This would be in keeping with God's promise not to make a full end of their race (Jer. 30:11).
3. Verse 3: "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."
 - a. An individual or a nation reaps what it sows (Gal. 6:7-8). When Assyria subdued and humiliated ancient nations, and after God had used those wicked people to bring punishment upon idolatrous Israel, he brought about their own punishment.
 - b. As God had used Assyria, Babylon, and other ancient nations as his means of penalizing his rebellious people, and then punished those he used for that purpose, so he would bring the Roman legions against Jerusalem, and after their harsh work was done, God would wreak havoc upon the Romans.
 - c. Connected with this punishment of the Romans is the Roman persecution which they poured forth upon God's people, the church. God had promised in Daniel 2:44 that he would set up his kingdom during the days of the Roman kings, and that his kingdom would eventually subdue Rome.
 - d. Because of Rome's wickedness, manifested in a host of avenues, God would destroy her, giving his spiritual kingdom the opportunity to grow and spread. The truth of verse three would be fulfilled over a period of several centuries.
 4. Verse 4: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."
 - a. The sensationalists of our day try to make this passage a prediction of a literal event to take place in connection with their millennial timetable.
 - b. It is significant that the inspired prophet made a reference to the *mount of Olives*. On that very mount, the Lord delivered to the apostles his discourse regarding the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, and of the end of the world (Matt. 24).
 - 1) In keeping with the immediate context of Zechariah 14, the fulfillment must be sought in connection with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple which occupied the primary emphasis in the Lord's discourse in Matthew 24.
 - 2) The Mount of Olives would be cleft from the east and the west, dividing the mountain to the north and south. Christ was on this very mount when he gave the disciples the discourse depicting the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 3) The Roman general stood on this same mountain when Jerusalem was under siege. "The formations of the battle lines, entrenchments and redoubts, the circumvallations of the Romans, all enter into the graphic description and portrayal of the prophet that the mount should 'cleave in the midst'..." (Foy E. Wallace, *God's Prophetic Word*, p.247).
 - c. Homer Hailey views this passage as a prediction of the assaults made against spiritual Jerusalem (the church) by its enemies (p.395). The first view is more in keeping with the context.
 5. Verse 5: "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."
 - a. Again, this is not a reference to the second coming of Christ; at that time, there be no time or opportunity for anyone to flee. One moment those then on the earth will be in peace and safety; the next instant they will be in eternity, and the world will be in flames!
 - 1) Matthew 24:36-42: "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

- 2) 1 Corinthians 15:50-54: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:10-11: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness."
- b. This verse sheds light on the thought in verse two about the residue of the people not being cut off from the city. These references certainly fit the successful flight of the Christians from Jerusalem when the Roman Army came. Historical records show that the siege was suddenly lifted for a short time, permitting those saints still in the city to flee. Records also show that no Christian perished during the fall of Jerusalem.
- 1) "It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself master of it; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape.... This counsel was remembered and wisely followed by the Christians afterward. Eusebius and Epiphanius say, that at this juncture, after Cestius Gallus had raised the siege, and Vespasian was approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan; and so they all marvelously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished" (Adam Clark, Comments on Matthew 24).
 - 2) "But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men. But the number of calamities which everywhere fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected, the thousands of men, as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable,—all these things, as well as the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety, and finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at last the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, the temple which was now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire,— all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus." [Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 1, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.].
- c. The great earthquake that occurred during King Uzziah's reign is elicited as an example of fleeing from tragedy. This disaster is mentioned in the Scriptures only in Amos 1 and here.
- 1) Our information is very limited, therefore. Josephus recorded an uninspired description of it, and said it was divinely-sent as punishment for Uzziah's evil deeds: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God" (2 Chron. 26:16-18).
 - 2) "In the mean time a great earthquake shook the ground and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately. And before the city, at a place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and rolled itself four furlongs, and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king's gardens, were spoiled by the obstruction. Now, as soon as the priests saw that the king's face was infected with the leprosy, they told him of the calamity he was under, and commanded that he should go out of the city as a polluted person. Hereupon he was so confounded at the sad distemper, and sensible that he was not at liberty to contradict, that he did

as he was commanded, and underwent this miserable and terrible punishment for an intention beyond what befitted a man to have, and for that impiety against God which was implied therein. So he abode out of the city for some time, and lived a private life, while his son Jotham took the government; after which he died with grief and anxiety at what had happened to him, when he had lived sixty-eight years, and reigned of them fifty-two; and was buried by himself in his own gardens" [Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, PC Study Bible; Book IX, Ch. X, Section 4].

- d. "And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee." In connection with his prophecy concerning Jerusalem's demise in 70 A.D., Christ spoke of his coming and about the work of certain angels in gathering the elect: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-31).
 - 1) The context of this passage points to the *angels* (i.e., "messengers") being the apostles and other preachers and teachers of the gospel. They gathered the elect as they taught the truth to the lost, many of whom became Christians.
 - 2) Some scholars apply the Lord's words to events that will be accomplished at the second coming. But there is much evidence to conclude that he figuratively referred to a representative coming which was done when Jerusalem was destroyed. The figures employed are used extensively in the Old Testament to portray the overthrow of ancient cities and nations.
 - 3) The saints (*holy ones*—ASV) could be taken as angels. At his second coming, he will be accompanied by the holy angels (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; cf. Jude 14). But the context shows that the angels ("messengers") were those who presented the gospel.
 - 4) Compare: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:34-36).
 - 5) The coming of great events of Matthew 24:1-34 could be identified by the signs the Lord gave; these events would transpire during the life time of that generation. But the time of verse 36 is known only by the Father—no one can know when the end of time will be.
6. Verses 6-7: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."
 - a. Understanding this passage to fit the previous verses in the context of the chapter, we should expect the prophet to be describing events in connection with Jerusalem's fall in 70 A.D. In the figure used by Zechariah, the light would not be normal; the day would be partially light and partially dark, and it would be light at evening.
 - 1) Isaiah figuratively described the fall of Babylon as the removal of the light-giving heavenly bodies: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isa. 13:10).
 - 2) Christ portrayed the fall of Jerusalem in similar language: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. 24:29).
 - 3) The removal of these heavenly bodies is a symbolic depiction of the removal of various civil and religious figures.
 - b. Perhaps the realization of the prophecy is to be found in the fall of Jerusalem and in the subsequent spread of Christianity. Verse eight indeed does describe this latter element.
 - c. *Light* is used often in the Scriptures to depict righteousness, knowledge, and godliness; *darkness* is often used to portray sin, ignorance and evil in general.
 - 1) In connection with the demise of Judaism, there was a measure of understanding on the part of the Jews. They thought they were serving the will of God; their persecution of the church was done in part because they believed it was God's will for them to oppose this *innovation* (cf. John 16:2). That time could be described, therefore, as part light and part night.
 - 2) During the Christian age, there will be a continuation of light and night. This is due to the fact that many will not learn, or refuse to accept, the gospel. And there are always many who follow their own brand of Christianity (a perverted version) instead of the truth (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 2).

- d. At evening, when the day is over, there will be light. There are at least two good views of this thought.
 - 1) At the end of the gospel age, which will be reached at the end of time when the Lord returns, only the light will remain; all error and wickedness will be shown for what they are, and will be destroyed: there will be no night in heaven (see Rev. 21:25; 22:5).
 - 2) With the fall of Jerusalem, the gospel would no longer encounter organized persecution and opposition from the Jewish state; Judaism would be no more; the Lord's people could pursue the task of proclaiming of the gospel. The Gentiles would oppose their work, but the unbelieving world would not have the Jewish state confusing the issue, claiming to be the true followers of the True God, and undermining the efforts of the church by claiming these Christians were only perverters of the true way. Jeremiah 31:31-35.
7. Verse 8: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be."
 - a. In the day contemplated by the prophet, living waters would issue forth from the city of Jerusalem. If we can identify what the living waters are, we will have found the key to unlocking the prophecy.
 - 1) God describes himself as the fountain of living waters: Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13. God is the source of all spiritual and material blessings (Eph. 1:3; Jas. 1:17). The life-giving word of God brings salvation: Psalm 19:1-14; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:21.
 - 2) Christ describes himself as the fountain from which flows living water (John 4:10,11; cf. 14:6; Heb. 9:15).
 - b. Many prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to the coming of the Messiah and his new covenant (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4; Jer. 31:31-35). Christ spoke of his soul-saving and life-giving gospel in John 4:10-11. God is the ultimate Author of this message (John 12:48-50; 17:8).
 - c. When Zechariah spoke of the living waters going forth from Jerusalem, spreading eastward toward the Dead Sea and westward toward the Mediterranean Sea, he was figuratively describing the spread of the gospel. The gospel went forth from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1ff; 8:1-12).
 - 1) It was then that the gospel was spread to its farthest extent. The Lord himself described this rapid expansion of his kingdom: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14; cf. Matt. 13:31-33).
 - 2) During the first century, by the time Paul wrote the Colossians (about 62 A.D.), the gospel had been preached throughout the Roman Empire (Col. 1:6,23). But with the end of Jewish opposition, the believers were able to proceed unhindered from that quarter with the great work of preaching the gospel to the whole creation.

B. Zechariah 14:9-11: The King Reigns.

1. Verse 9: "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."
 - a. The reign of the Lord will extend to all the earth, over all of mankind. The rule of this verse grows out of the spread of the gospel described in the preceding verses.
 - b. If there is a king, there must be a kingdom. Is the prophet seeing a millennial reign of Christ on the earth? If so, the prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. If we can show that the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 has been established, we will have proved that this passage has been fulfilled.
 - 1) Daniel 2 predicted the establishment of God's kingdom during the reign of the kings of the Roman Empire; since the empire of Rome ceased to be by 476 A.D., the kingdom has been set up or God was untrue to his promises. Is anything too hard for God? (Cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27).
 - 2) Eighty-four preachers affirmed that the establishment of the kingdom was *at hand* (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9). God was behind this message. Was that promise fulfilled or did God err?
 - 3) Daniel prophesied that the kingdom would be established during the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2). John the Baptizer came preaching the coming of the kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2); Luke reports the names of the Roman rulers in connection with this announcement (Luke 3:1-6). If the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 is not meant, why did the inspired writings of Luke give these details?
 - 4) The Lord did not postpone the establishment of the kingdom because the Jews did not want him to reign over them. The fact is, a great company of Jews sought to forcibly place Jesus on the throne (John 6:15). He rejected their misguided efforts, showing that his kingdom was not an earthly monarchy.
 - 5) The Lord promised that his kingdom would come with the power he promised to send to the apostles (Luke 24:49; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:5,8). That power was to be given to them when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). Since the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Pentecost day of Acts 2 (see verses 1-4), then the kingdom came into existence on that same occasion.

- 6) Christ promised that there were some living at that time on the earth who would not die until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). If that kingdom has not come, since Christ is ever true to his word, there are some mighty old people still living on earth!
 - 7) Both Paul and John the apostle affirmed that they were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9). Since these men wrote by inspiration, their claims were true; and if their claims to be in the kingdom are true, then the kingdom has been set up!
 - c. As we have already seen from the writings of the prophet Zechariah, Christ was to rule on his throne as king and priest (6:13).
 - 1) He is serving as our great high priest today, during the Christian Age (Heb. 7). His work as priest is done as he operates to bring about the forgiveness of sin (this was akin to the work of Levitical high priests).
 - 2) Since he is serving as High Priest today, he is serving as King today. Since he is serving as King, his kingdom exists (cf. Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28-29).
 - d. The scope of his rule is universal. There is no place in all the universe where his authority does not extend. He plainly stated that only a fraction of mankind would serve him (Luke 13:24; Matt. 7:13-14; cf. 1 Kings 19:18). In the Judgment, however, every knee will bow to him (Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 2:10-11).
 - e. In that day (i.e., during the period of time in which the Lord reigns as king), there will be only one Lord, and his name will be one.
 - 1) He does not permit us to divide our loyalty between him and someone else (Matt. 6:24). He requires unity among all of those who follow him (John 17:20-21; Matt. 12:30).
 - 2) There will not be many lords to follow—only one. While the Godhead is comprised of three distinct personalities, they are fundamentally one; they are perfectly united in all that they say and do (John 17:20-22; 1:1-3). See also John 10:30; 3 John 7.
2. Verse 10: "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses."
 - a. The ASV gives this rendition: "All the land shall be made like the Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and she shall be lifted up, and shall dwell in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel unto the king's winepresses."
 - b. "The Arabah was the Jordan valley, a valley of varying widths which extended from the north of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. 'From Geba to Rimmon' would include the limits of Judah from Geba (1 Kings 15:22), six miles north of Jerusalem, to Rimmon, which seems to have been the southern boundary, near the wilderness (Josh. 15:32; 19:7). From having been beaten down as in the past, Jerusalem would be lifted up, occupying her rightful position" (Hailey, pp.397f).
 - 1) Hailey describes Benjamin's gate as in the north wall, and was the exit from the city those would take who were going into the land of Benjamin.
 - 2) The first gate and the corner gate may have been at the northeast and northwest corners of the city's walls; the tower of Hananel and the king's winepresses may have been in the northeast and southeast areas of the city walls (Hailey).
 - c. In keeping with the context of the verse, Zechariah describes the peaceful nature of the Lord's Monarchy. Within the body of Christ (the church or kingdom), peace and unity prevail (Eph. 2).
 - 1) Although the tempests of opposition from the wicked and the normal difficulties of life may assail her, those who are in the Lord are protected by the arm of their King and Savior (Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Peter 2:9; Matt. 6:19-34).
 - 2) Other Old Testament prophets likewise described the peaceful nature of the Lord's church in figures of speech. Isaiah 2:2-4 depicted it as a situation in which there would be no war. Micah 4:1-4 uses similar terms, and speaks of God's people dwelling safely under their vines.
 3. Verse 11: "And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."
 - a. The peaceful portrayal of the Lord's spiritual kingdom is continued in this verse. Their situation will not be like that of ancient Israel, who lived under the threat of invasion by heathen hordes.
 - b. Christ tempered this peaceful depiction somewhat when he warned that when we obeyed the truth and sought to teach it to others, there would be many, some even in our own family, who would oppose our efforts.
 - 1) But despite this opposition which might even develop into persecution, faithful Christians can live with a peace that men of the world cannot understand (Phil. 4:6-7).

- 2) How can a worldly-minded man understand how a Christian can face the cruelest death without terror? How can such a person comprehend how one saint will offer to die in another's place? How can such a one fathom the joy a Christian has as he faces death?

C. Zechariah 14:12-15: The Curse is Upon Those Who Oppose Jerusalem.

1. Verse 12: "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."
 - a. Graphic figures of speech are used by the prophet to emphasize the awfulness of the destiny that awaits those who oppose the will of God. That these are figures must be admitted, for no such literal disintegration of human bodies has taken place in mankind's historical past and at the return of Christ all who are alive will be suddenly changed into spiritual bodies and the dead will be raised up (1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29).
 - b. Those who oppose Jerusalem (God's spiritual Israel, the church: Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28-29) will be smitten with a great plague which will consume them while they stand on their feet; their eyes will be consumed in their sockets; their tongues shall be consumed away in their mouths. The New Testament describes the eternal punishment of hell as being in a lake of fire and brimstone, outer darkness, and a place that resounds with the awful wails and gnashing of teeth of its denizens.
 - c. What is stated here is directed against those who oppose the Lord's cause during the Christian Age. They might receive a partial punishment even in this life, but the primary punishment of all the wicked will be in eternity.
2. Verse 13: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour."
 - a. In the time frame described by the prophet, God will cause his enemies to fight among themselves. As there is little honor or trust among thieves, likewise there is little mutual concern among the other wicked. If a man will rob or kill an honest man, he is not likely to have any qualms in doing so against a fellow criminal.
 - b. When a society or nation turns against God, resolving to follow their own way and repudiate God's will, they can only plunge increasingly deeper into degradation and rebellion, until they finally destroy themselves.
 - c. Coffman asserts that humanity will become horribly depraved as the end of time nears.
 - 1) "This verse describes what the 'plague' of verse 12 actually is. It is the ultimate appearance of the kind of society that inevitably results when God's will is almost totally rejected on earth....God will finally permit this rebellious humanity gone berserk against the will of God, and steering a collision course with disaster, to discover just what serving the devil actually means" (Coffman, p.215). He understands Revelation 16 and 18 to be descriptive of this time.
 - 2) Whether the time factor of our text has the time just prior to the second coming of Christ in mind is debatable, but the fact is clear that the depraved condition of rebellious mankind is being described by the prophet.
3. Verse 14: "And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance."
 - a. He is not saying that Judah will fight *against* Jerusalem, but *at* Jerusalem. In other words, the people of Judah (God's people) will defend the cause they uphold.
 - b. The prophecy sees God's people (Christians) as being united in their opposition to the forces which oppose them.
 - 1) Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), thus it does not participate in carnal warfare. Our weapons are mighty, even though they are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4-5).
 - 2) We fight the good fight of faith as we serve Christ wholeheartedly, living in harmony with the precepts of the gospel and earnestly contending for the faith (1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10-18; Jude 3).
 - c. The result of the great spiritual battle will be the enrichment of God's people at the expense of the unbelievers. "The glory of the nations' wealth will be at the disposal of Jerusalem and her children" (Hailey, p.399).
 - 1) This should not be taken as a literal statement; if it were, we would be encouraged to fight to take possession of the property of our enemies.
 - 2) When the dust settled following the great struggle between the heathen Roman Empire and the kingdom of Christ, during which time the church was severely persecuted, the pagan empire lay in ruins and the church was triumphant. In this way, Zechariah's prophecy may have been fulfilled.

- 3) In the parable of the talents, the faithful man ultimately received the talent of the unfaithful man (Matt. 25:28-29). Perhaps the best interpretation of our text is to understand it to refer to the final reward of the faithful, who will possess the glories in heaven that could have been also enjoyed by those who were unfaithful.
 - d. Coffman and others think this verse speaks of a battle that takes place between fleshly Israel and spiritual Israel, with the latter being victorious. This idea grows out of the rendering of the preposition *at* as *against*. However, the KJV and the ASV wording fits the theme of the passage better.
4. Verse 15: "And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague."
 - a. "Here is a strong rhetorical description of the victory of Jehovah's church and the defeat of all that would unite to fight against her. All the enemies of God's camp will go down in defeat" (Hailey, p.399).
 - b. The prophet extends the struggle to show that the plague would affect the beasts of the enemy. When the enemy met ultimate defeat, all that pertained to him would be affected.
 - c. The lesson of the verse is one giving hope to the faithful of God and a promise of utter devastation to those who oppose them.
- D. Zechariah 14:16-19: The Remnant of the Nations Turns to the Lord.
1. Verse 16: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."
 - a. The prophet envisions the time when the great struggle was over, that a remnant of the nations (Gentiles) would go to Jerusalem to worship.
 - b. "This can only mean that under the Messiah the converted Gentiles will be one with the converted Jews, and that both will worship the Lord according to his prescribed service" (Hailey, p.399).
 - c. The Jews had three great feasts:
 - 1) The feast of tabernacles (a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving). They celebrated their successful exit from the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. During this festival, they dwelled in tents or arbors, which would remind them of the great rigors that first generation of the nation endured in the wilderness; this would naturally engender gratitude in their hearts for having passed into a much better circumstance.
 - 2) The feast of the Passover was held to remind them of the tenth plague God brought upon the Egyptians.
 - 3) The feast of Pentecost is also called "the feast of weeks" because it was kept seven weeks after the Passover. In this feast, the Jews offered the firstfruits of their wheat harvest (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9-10; cf. Num. 28:26-31).
 - d. The feast of tabernacles "followed in the wake of the annual atonement, at which time all dwelt in booths in memory of Jehovah's deliverance from bondage and of his care for the people (Lev. 23:39-44). The use here of this festival indicates the rejoicing and thanksgiving of the combined remnants" (Hailey, p.399).
 - e. It is a foolish conclusion to say that this prophecy will have a literal fulfillment during the so-called millennial reign of Christ.
 - 1) This would require the reestablishment of old fleshly Israel, with its temple and carnal ordinances. God took these away, and they will never see the light of day again! (Heb. 8:1-13; 10:1ff; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14).
 - 2) This would mean that men would have to make three trips to Jerusalem annually to observe these feasts.
 - 3) This false interpretation denies the plain affirmations of the New Testament that the eternal kingdom of God has been established (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 3:1-2; Luke 3:1-3; Matt. 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9; Rev. 1:9; Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28-29; Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5,8; 2:1-4,47; Matt. 16:18-19).
 - f. "The Jewish wanderings were 'on the way to the promised land.' The Christian's wanderings are 'on the way to heaven.' What is said here must be applied totally to that 'Jerusalem which is above,' i.e., the church of Jesus Christ. The language is metaphorical and simply means that all nations of the earth shall yield a harvest of souls unto Jehovah, and that these shall accept Jesus Christ and dutifully observe the teachings and ordinances applicable under his supreme authority" (Coffman, p.217).
 2. Verse 17: "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

- a. Again, the language is figurative. Those who worship God in this final age of time do not need to journey to literal Jerusalem before their worship is accepted. One of the fundamental truths of the gospel age is that God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and that the physical location is unimportant: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21-24).
 - b. A prophetic curse is pronounced upon those who will not worship the King: they will receive no rain. The worship is spiritual; the blessing is spiritual; the curse is spiritual. *Rain* is a figurative reference to the spiritual blessings which God gives to those who are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
 - c. God sends his rain and sunshine upon those who are evil as well as upon those who are good (cf. Matt. 5:44; Acts 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:10). But only those who obey the gospel and are translated into Christ's kingdom (his church or body) receive the spiritual blessings of pardon, etc. (Eph. 1:3,7; Col. 1:13-14; Gal. 3:27).
3. Verse 18: "And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."
- a. This enlarges upon the statement of verse seventeen. *Egypt* is used in the Scriptures as a synonym for the spiritual bondage to sin. As Israel was held in bondage to the Egyptians prior to the deliverance God effected through Moses, so accountable men and women are held in bondage to sin until their deliverance is effected by Christ.
 - 1) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - 2) John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - 3) John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - 4) 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
 - b. If those who are under the bondage of Egypt (i.e., who live in sin) do not come up to spiritual Jerusalem to worship, they will partake of the plague earlier described in this chapter. They will not have the spiritual blessings offered by the King; but they will receive the heavy punishment intended for the disobedient.
 - c. The price of redemption has been paid (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 2:9); the invitation is daily extended to all those who need the benefits the King offers (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17; cf. Col. 1:23). It is strange indeed why the lost will not hear and heed the simple truths of the gospel! (1 Tim. 2:4-5; 2 Peter 3:9).
4. Verse 19: "This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."
- a. "Jehovah had promised that he would provide a highway out of Egypt and that she would be a third with Israel and Assyria; all would stand as equals before him (Isa. 19:23-25). If Egypt refused to go up there would be no rain upon it; instead, Jehovah would smite her with the plague pronounced upon the nations that reject his offer and go not up to the feasts" (Hailey, pp.399f)
 - b. Men are lost without the gospel (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1:16-17). The fate of unbelievers will be the same that it would have been if Christ had not come (John 3:14-18). He did not come into the world to condemn sinful man; sinful man had already placed himself under condemnation by his rebellion against God (Rom. 3:1-23; 1 John 3:4; 5:17).
 - c. This prophetic statement strongly affirms the lost condition of those who are yet under the bondage of *Egypt*, and who do not *keep the feast of tabernacles*. Those who are not in Christ (i.e., not members of his church) are lost and will receive the punishment their sins deserve.
 - d. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8-9).

E. Zechariah 14:20-21: Holiness Unto The Lord.

1. Verse 20: "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar."
 - a. Exodus 28:36-38: "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; and upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that

- Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."
- b. "In that day everything that pertains to the kingdom of God will be holy to him. The war horses will have been cut off from Jerusalem (9:10); therefore, the figure here is that instead of these being for war, they will be holy to the Lord, consecrated to a nobler service" (Hailey, p.400).
 - c. The Mosaic Law established a distinction between things holy and things unholy. Some distinctions were arbitrary, in that God placed the limitations to teach the Israelites a lesson of taking him at his word. There was nothing inherently evil with eating pork. The gospel has removed such distinctions.
 - d. God has expanded and altered certain distinctions.
 - 1) The extravagant clothing of the Levitical priesthood has given way to the godly garments of the Christian character (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Gal. 3:27).
 - 2) The Israelite temple was the only proper place where the services of the priests could be conducted, but under Christ the place is unimportant (John 4:21-24).
 - e. Whereas Aaron and his successors wore gorgeous robes, and had the literal words of this passage inscribed on the golden plate, but other items would be consecrated in the gospel system: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).
2. Verse 21: "Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."
 - a. "All distinctions between instruments and ministries of service would be abolished. Nor would there be a Canaanite, one who is unclean and thereby devoted to destruction, found in the house of Jehovah" (Hailey, p.400).
 - b. The Canaanites practiced all manner of vile and sinful ways, especially in their religious activities. No such corrupt person would be found in the Lord's spiritual house (Isa. 2:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 - c. The Lord adds no unsaved (unclean) person to his church (Acts 2:36-47; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 5:23-27), nor will he allow such people into Heaven (Rev. 21:27).
 3. "Verses 12 to 21 present the grand finale of the vision in the concourse of the redeemed...formed into a procession moving in mighty surge to the universal Jerusalem of all nations, the new Jerusalem—to worship the King. Under the blessings of the administration of the gospel, the evening shades of Judaism, described in verses 6 and 7, would turn into the sun-bright morning of Christianity. In this new Jerusalem no foreigner could find habitation. The refusal of acknowledgement of the King would be a barrier to his blessings—'upon them there shall be no rain'—verse 17. No spiritual alien could enter its portals and have residence, for 'there shall be no more the Canaanite'—verse 21. And the vision of Zechariah ends with the sublime description of the glorious dispensation of the gospel in which there is *one tabernacle, one name, one worship and one people*" (Wallace, p.544).

INTRODUCTION TO MALACHI

A. Introduction.

1. The name of the prophet means "My Messenger."
 - a. Nothing is known about the prophet other than what is revealed in the book. His name appears in the Bible only in the opening verse of the book that bears his name, but it is unnecessary for us to know the life story of a prophet in order to appreciate and profit from his inspired writings.
 - b. Some have doubted that *Malachi* is to be taken as a proper name, instead they opt for it being only a general reference to the author. Lewis says that the *Targum* (the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament) has the first verse saying, "My messenger whose name is Ezra the scribe." This tradition that it was written by Ezra was accepted by Jerome. There is no proof of these views.
 - c. The text still reads *Malachi*, and bespeaks of a real person. If the term is not to be taken as the real name of a real person, then the author of the book of Malachi is anonymous. None of the other Old Testament prophetic books is anonymous, making it extremely unlikely that Malachi is not a real person.
2. The background of the book of Malachi.
 - a. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had been captured by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. The Southern Kingdom fell to the Babylonians in 606 B.C. The return from captivity began in 536 when Zerubbabel led a group back to Canaan. The temple was rebuilt during 520-516 B.C. under the prophetic leadership of Haggai and Zechariah.
 - b. A second group returned from captivity under Ezra in 457 B.C. Nehemiah returned about 444 B.C. to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
 - c. Nehemiah recorded the last of the Old Testament history to be written; Malachi gave and recorded the last prophecy of the Old Testament. For a full picture of the conditions in Judah during the time of Malachi, Ezra 7-10 and the book of Nehemiah must be read.

B. The Book of Malachi.

1. The date of the book can be determined by the material contained in the book.
 - a. The temple had been rebuilt by the time of Malachi (1:7-10).
 - b. Spiritual abuses had developed. See Nehemiah 5:4; 13:10-13.
 - 1) The priests had become lax in their duties and lives (1:6; 2:1-9).
 - 2) Divorce was common (2:14-16).
 - 3) The people were intermarrying with the heathen (2:11-16; cf. Ezra 9-10).
 - 4) There was a problem with tithing (3:8-9; cf. Neh. 10:37-39).
 - c. The conditions among the returnees being as described by Malachi, it is clear that the time coincided with that of Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus the book was written about 440 B.C.
2. The style of writing followed by Malachi is distinctive among the prophets.
 - a. He offered an assertion or a charge; he stated an objection from the viewpoint of those addressed; and he presented a refutation of the objection which verified the initial assertion or charge.
 - b. Examples of the foregoing are to be found in these passages:
 - 1) I have loved you (1:2-3).
 - 2) You have despised my name (1:6-7).
 - 3) Judah has been faithless (2:10-16).
 - 4) You have wearied the Lord with your words (2:17).
 - 5) You have turned aside my statutes (3:7).
 - 6) You have robbed God (3:8-9).
 - 7) Your words have been stout against me (3:13).
3. The book exposes the true condition of the people of Judah.
 - a. The priests offered defective sacrifices (1:6-9).
 - b. The priests would not so much as close the doors of the temple without pay (1:10).
 - c. The heathen had greater esteem for God than his own people did (1:11).
 - d. Jewish wives were being put away so that their faithless husbands could marry the daughters of a strange god (2:11-16).
 - e. There was a spirit of doubt among the people in that they perceived God as either too weak or too indifferent to correct the evil that reigned.

- f. The rebellious attitude that had characterized their ancient forebears continued in that present generation. The apathy and selfishness Haggai and Zechariah had earlier exposed, still corrupted many in the nation.
 4. Several specific sins are condemned by Malachi:
 - a. The moral offenses of adultery, perjury, and oppression (3:5).
 - b. Divorce (2:16; cf. Mark 10:2-9).
 - c. Skepticism (3:14-15).
 - d. Corrupt priests (2:7-9).
 - e. Robbing God by withholding proper tithes (3:8-10).
 5. The lessons taught by Malachi are significant to our day.
 - a. He teaches that religious ceremony, while important, is not the end in itself.
 - b. He teaches that cheap religion is worthless.
 - c. He shows that intermarriage with unbelievers interfered with the purposes of God.
 6. Malachi in the New Testament.
 - a. Paul appealed to the statement of Malachi 1:2-3 in Romans 9:13.
 - b. The New Testament points back to Malachi's prediction of the messenger who was to pave the way for the Messiah (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10). [Mark 1:2 combines Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3].
 - c. The man styled *Elijah the prophet* (Mal. 4:5-6) is identified as John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14; Luke 7:27-28).
 - d. Malachi made references to the Messiah (Mal. 1:11; 4:2; 3:1).
- C. An Outline of Malachi.
1. Introduction: Malachi 1:1.
 2. The sinful priests are condemned: 1:2—2:9.
 - a. The Lord introduces the reproof by stating his love for Israel: 1:2-5.
 - 1) His love is stated: 1:2.
 - 2) His love has been clearly demonstrated: 1:3-5.
 - b. The unfaithful priests and people are rebuked: 1:6-14.
 - 1) The sacrifices they gave were worthless: 1:6-8.
 - 2) The priests would scarcely close the doors or build a fire on the altar without being paid: 1:9-10.
 - 3) The Gentiles would be more grateful to the Lord: 1:11.
 - 4) They had polluted the temple: 1:12-13
 - 5) God's curse upon them is stated: 1:14.
 - c. God's curse upon the corrupted priests delineated: 2:1-9.
 - 1) They must quickly change to avoid the penalty: 2:1-4.
 - 2) God's covenant with Levi and the ideal priest: 2:5-7.
 - 3) The degraded priests would be disgraced: 2:8-9.
 3. God condemns their divorces and mixed marriages: 2:10-16.
 - a. He affirms that all of Israel have the same father, yet they had dealt treacherously against each other: 2:10.
 - b. They had also dealt treacherously by marrying the daughters of a strange god, and God would deal harshly with the guilty: 2:11-12.
 - c. Their shameful dealings had caused many tears to fall upon the altar: 2:13.
 - d. God hates their practice of putting away the wives of their youth: 2:14-16.
 4. God condemns their religious indifference and doubt: 2:17—4:6.
 - a. They had wearied the Lord by claiming that a man could do as he pleased and God would be pleased with him, and by denying the fact of any judgment from God: 2:17.
 - b. The Lord's states his coming judgment: 3:1-6.
 - 1) His appearance would be as a refining fire: 3:1-2.
 - 2) The priests and the people would be purified: 3:3-5.
 - 3) God affirms his unchangeable nature: 3:6.
 - c. God denounces their withholding of the proper tithes and offerings: 3:7-12.
 - 1) The fickleness of the people and their selfish giving are stated: 3:7-9.
 - 2) The Lord promises to bless them bountifully if they will live up to their duty: 3:10-12.

- d. The Lord defends his justice: 3:13—4:3.
 - 1) They thought they had served God without reward, while the wicked had prospered: 3:13-15.
 - 2) The Lord would separate the wicked from the righteous: 3:16-18.
 - 3) The wicked would be utterly destroyed: 4:1.
 - 4) The righteous would be exalted and glorified: 4:2-3.
- e. The prophet's closing admonitions: 4:4-6.
 - 1) The faithful are exhorted to observe the Mosaic Law: 4:4.
 - 2) Elijah the prophet and his work of preparation are announced: 4:5-6

MALACHI 1

A. Malachi 1:1-5: The Lord Affirms His Love for Israel.

1. Verse 1: "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi."
 - a. The *burden* of the Lord is the oracle which he now directs toward Israel. It is a burden in that it offers a weight that they must bear if they wish to be pleasing to their God. But God's word is not grievous (1 John 5:3); it is a pleasure to learn its message and to obey its precepts.
 - b. If Israel had not been out of line, there would have been no need for this message. But since their return to the land from captivity, they had wandered from the paths of holiness, and had stumbled over the problems that arose.
 - c. One can easily appreciate their predicament. Returning to the land of promise, they doubtless thought that their problems were over, that God would now bless them gloriously, and that the Messiah might be coming before long.
 - 1) But their struggles must continue, despite having returned to the land of their fathers. God would supply what they could not provide for themselves, but there would be many hardships they must learn to bear, and many problems they must solve. Under the best of circumstances, God's people must learn to walk in faith, following God's way implicitly, and trusting him completely.
 - 2) There are many similarities between the situation of Israel following their exile, and our case today, following the restoration of the true church.
2. Verse 2: "I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob."
 - a. With their many problems and discouragements, the Israelites had become despondent and full of doubt. "If God loved us, why are we facing these difficulties? Why does he not remove them with a wave of his hand?"
 - b. At the first of this oracle, God reaffirms his love for Israel. Following the pattern used in the book, he states their objection to the affirmation, and then proceeds to answer their objection. Consistently throughout the Bible, God shows and declares his love for his people.
 - c. The objection placed in the mouths of the Jews is, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" When someone gets into trouble, it may appear to him that God has deserted him, that if the Lord had loved him, he would not be facing the difficulties before him. This was the view expressed by the Jews.
 - d. God's reply is: "Was not Esau the brother of Jacob? And yet I loved Jacob." God made a choice between these two twins as to which would be the forerunner of the nation he was to build from Abraham's descendants. He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. The fact is, that God loved both of these brothers. But he loved Jacob more in the sense that he chose him for the purposes he intended to fulfill.
 - 1) The manner in which the Bible expresses the difference between love and hate in some cases follows this pattern: Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah; the lesser love he had for Leah is described as *hate* (Gen. 29:30-31).
 - 2) Also, we are told to love the Lord more than we love our own family members; this lesser sentiment is called *hatred*: "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26; cf. Matt. 10:37).
3. Verse 3: "And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."
 - a. NKJ: But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness."
 - b. The statement of God's greater love for Jacob was made many centuries after these two men had passed from earthly scenes. The Lord had their descendants in mind, and not primarily the two individuals. The prophet points to the condition of the two nations that sprang from Jacob and Esau to establish his point that God had loved Jacob and *hated* Esau.
 - 1) Romans 9:10-14: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."
 - 2) Paul quoted from Malachi in making his point, and showed that the original choice was made between these two boys prior to their birth, and thus before either had done good or evil.

- c. Esau's descendants, known as Edom, set up their headquarters in the mountains of Palestine, where they seemed to occupy invulnerable strongholds. They even boasted of their impregnable cities.
- d. But God was able to bring their nation to ruin, as he predicted in the writings of Obadiah and others.
 - 1) Jeremiah 49:17-18: "Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it."
 - 2) Ezekiel 25:12-14: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD."
 - 3) Joel 3:19: "Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land."
 - 4) Amos 1:11-12: "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."
- e. As Malachi wrote, God had laid waste to the refuges of Edom, now a fit dwelling for jackals.
- 4. Verse 4: "Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever."
 - a. The remnants of the Edomites vowed to rebuild their strength, but God stated that their efforts would be wasted. Eventually, they were absorbed by the Nabataeans (Arabs), and by 100 A.D. had lost their identity as a separate people.
 - b. The history of Edom, with which the Israelites were doubtless familiar, showed conclusively that God had indeed loved Jacob (and his descendants).
 - c. God had decreed that Israel would continue as a separate nation, while other nations of those ancient times would cease to exist. "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).
- 5. Verse 5: "And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel."
 - a. The people of Israel would continue through history, and see the fulfillment of the things God decreed against Edom.
 - b. Those who were perceptive would come to magnify the God of heaven, and to see him magnified by uncounted millions among the Gentile nations (during the gospel age).
- B. Malachi 1:6-9: Israel's Ingratitude is Seen in Their Sacrifices.
 - 1. Verse 6: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"
 - a. The prophet gives the corrupt priests a scathing rebuke, accusing them of despising God. Throughout their history, Israel had been taught to honor their fathers. It was expected and demanded of servants that they honor their masters.
 - 1) One of the ten commandments required that children honor their fathers and mothers (Ex. 20:12). In extreme cases of rebellion on the part of the son against the parents, the death penalty was prescribed (Ex. 21:15,17; Deut. 21:18-21).
 - 2) But now even the priests, who were charged with offering sacrifices to God and teaching the Law to the people, were showing their contempt for God.
 - b. Anyone who will not obey the will of the Lord shows contempt for him. "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight...Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me..." (2 Sam. 12:9-10). When David disobeyed God's word, he showed despite for God. Compare:
 - 1) 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams."

- 2) Job 23:12: "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food*."
 - 3) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 - c. The priests' natural reply was to ask in what way had they despised God, implying by the question their denial of the charge. The Lord gives the specification of the charge in the next verse, which brings up another denial of another charge.
2. Verse 7: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible."
 - a. They had shown contempt for God by offering polluted bread upon his altar. This polluted bread was the improper sacrifice they offered.
 - 1) Leviticus 21:6: "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy." "In that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even* my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations" (Ezek. 44:7).
 - 2) When they offered the wrong kind of sacrifice or when they lived polluted lives, their sacrifices were polluted and unacceptable.
 - b. Their natural reply (which the Lord words for them) is to ask in what instance had they polluted him. The question implies that they *polluted* the Lord when they soiled his sacrifices.
 - c. The answer the Lord gave stated that they polluted his sacrifices when they said, "The table of the Lord is contemptible." His table was his altar upon which the sacrifices were burned.
 - 1) By offering upon his altar impure victims, they polluted his sacrifices and dishonored his name, and declared the altar to be contemptible.
 - 2) When anyone treats God's appointments as so unimportant that they can make changes to them, they are saying by their actions that those appointments may be treated with contempt, that they are subject to the whims of men.
 - d. When men today make unauthorized changes to God's revealed order in any way, they show their contempt for him who gave it.
 - 1) Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"
 - 2) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."
 - 3) Galatians 1:6-1: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - 4) Colossians 3:16-17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
 - 6) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

- 7) John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
3. Verse 8: "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts."
- a. The Lord specifically identified the sinful practice that polluted his altar. They offered animals that were blind, lame or sick.
 - 1) The Mosaic Law required that their sacrificial animals were to meet definite qualifications. The passover lamb, for example, was to be a male, one year old, and without blemish (Ex. 12:5).
 - 2) God has always required a measure of sacrifice on the part of those who would serve him with honor.
 - b. The Israelites were told to give a tenth of their income, and make various sacrifices through the year. One who would serve God acceptably must be willing to pay a price.
 - 1) David refused to offer a sacrifice to God that did not cost him something (2 Sam. 24:24).
 - 2) God does not want the left-overs; and he will not accept tainted offerings. The Israelites of Malachi's day sought to offer as sacrifices animals that were lame or sick, which were without value on the market.
 - c. God, speaking with irony, asks them whether the civil governor would be pleased to accept such a gift. They would not deign to give to some human dignitary such as they tried to give to the Lord!
 - d. Since God would not accept such sacrifices under the Law, we may be certain that similar maimed worship we might offer today is unacceptable to him. To do so is to offer polluted worship.
 - 1) When we pray, our hearts and minds must be in tune with our words.
 - 2) When we eat the Lord's Supper, our minds must be filled with remembrances of the Lord's death on the cross, and our hearts must be genuinely concerned with those thoughts.
 - 3) When we give of our means, our gift must be from the heart; we must give because we want to give.
 - 4) When we sing praise to the Lord, our minds must be cognizant of what our lips are singing, and our hearts must sincerely believe the sentiments we express in the words of the song.
 - 5) When God's word is read and presented, our minds must be focused on what is being presented, and our hearts must enter into this meditation sincerely.
 - e. To reason that God ought to be pleased with whatever is offered sincerely by man, is foolish thinking; it is to think presumptuously. This passage says that such is *evil*. It does make a difference how we worship God! (Cf. Gen. 4; Lev. 10:1-2; John 4:24; Col. 3:16-17).
4. Verse 9: "And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts."
- a. Other versions:
 - 1) "And now, I pray you, entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he accept any of your persons? saith Jehovah of hosts" (ASV).
 - 2) "But now entreat God's favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?" Says the Lord of hosts (NKJV).
 - b. Is this verse to be taken as a straightforward appeal for the Jews to repent and to ask for forgiveness? Or is it to be understood as a statement of irony? It seems to be irony, when verse ten is considered.
 - 1) The priests were the cause of these faulty offerings, for had they been true to their calling, they would have taught the people better, and would not have offered the defective animals.
 - 2) The prophet calls on them to pray that God might be gracious, and thus see if he would accept their prayers because of who they were (priests).
 - c. Coffman suggested that the thought of the verse would be this if it is taken as ironic: "Seeing that you have accepted and used all these worthless sacrifices and offered them upon God's altar, why don't you now pray for God's favor? You really must have impressed God with the type of offerings you have placed upon the altar!" (p.246).
 - d. God will not hear one who lives and worships according to his own desires, and does not heed the will of God. He will not accept and uphold anyone because that person is (or claims to be) a child of God.
 - 1) In our modern religious climate, men ridicule the idea that God has a law that must be heeded. Foolishly thinking that God's grace has outlawed God's law, they follow their own thinking and desires in worship and life.

- 2) Just because one offers in worship that which pleases himself and other men, does not mean that God is pleased with it. It might be loathsome to him! The only possible way we can know what God wants is to learn it in his revealed word, the Bible. Hence, we are sternly warned not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV; 2 John 9).

C. Malachi 1:10-14: The Contrast Between the Present Priests and the Gentiles of the Future.

1. Verse 10: "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand."
 - a. The ASV gives a different rendition: "Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire upon mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand." The context allows either rendering.
 - 1) The ASV expresses the thought that God would have the temple doors closed, so that no polluted offering might be presented. Better no offering at all than to have one that was defective. But there was not one among them who had the sufficient desire for truth and purity to shut the doors to prevent unscriptural worship.
 - 2) The KJV expresses another charge against the priesthood, describing them as so worldly-minded that they would do nothing in the Lord's service without pay—not even to close a door!
 - b. Addressing the issue directly, God affirms that the priests are so disinterested in God's way and so selfishly inclined to please themselves, that they would not even close the doors of the temple without being paid! Their dedication to the service of God was so weak that they would not even kindle the fire on the altar without being paid to do so.
 - c. God had no pleasure in them; their sinful conduct was such that he could not condone it. Thus, he would not accept an offering from them.
 - d. Just think of it. They were so far gone into sin that the Lord had to reject their worship!
 - 1) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*."
 - 2) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
 - 3) John 9:31: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."
 - e. Any worship that is offered insincerely, or which is polluted by human thinking, is rejected: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9).
2. Verse 11: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The condition described by this verse was not present during the day of Malachi. The statement pointed to a time in the future when many among the Gentiles would revere the name of the Almighty, and offer to him the kind of worship that he desired.
 - b. The Gentiles of the Old Testament era did not fulfill this description (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17:30-31). But during the Christian Age, this is what has happened. Our brethren of the first century carried the gospel to the Gentiles, who received it in countless places, and embraced the worship of God in spirit and in truth.
 - c. The Lord used Mosaic expressions to denote the worship of the Gentiles (and Jews) under Christ. The offering of incense and sacrifices (offerings) represents New Testament worship, and do not refer to the literal actions of burning incense and offering animal sacrifices.
 - 1) Revelation 5:8: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of the harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."
 - 2) Hebrews 13:15-6: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
 - 3) Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."
 - d. "The prophecy looks to that time when, under the Messiah, not in any one locality, but from one end of the earth to the other, God's name would be great among the Gentiles" (Hailey, p.410).

3. Verse 12: "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible."
 - a. The Lord expected the Jews to be an excellent example of a people who believed and served the Living God of Heaven. He expected them to observe the laws of morality and religion which he set forth in the Mosaic Covenant. By being the faithful and devoted people he intended, the Gentiles who came in contact with them would be duly influenced to follow lives of righteousness.
 - b. But the Jews did not live up to the high standard of expectation God had for them.
 - 1) Instead of influencing the Gentiles around them to become righteous, they were influenced by the paganism of the Gentiles.
 - 2) Instead of serving God with loyalty, they lived to please themselves. Their immoral conduct often equaled that of the pagans.
 - 3) Rather than offer to God the praise he deserved, and thus worship him according to his divine mandate, they sought to please themselves in worship.
 - 4) Even the priests were afflicted with the departure from God's standard, and in some instances, they led the people away from God's word. Thus, they offered only perfunctory worship, merely going through the outward motions. In other instances, they foolishly departed from the God-given *motions*.
 - c. By their actions, if not also by their words, they considered God's altar to be polluted and his sacrifices contemptible. They were guilty of profaning God's way, making it nothing more than a common, worldly arrangement. What an awful condition!
 - 1) "This lesson should be indelibly stamped upon worshipers of today who perfunctorily offer a meaningless religious service to God" (Hailey, p.410).
 - 2) "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:1-3).
4. Verse 13: "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD."
 - a. Not only had they profaned God's system and deplored it as contemptible, but they had considered it wearisome to follow it. They thought their priestly work to be a weariness. They took no pleasure in their godly calling, but deemed it as a burden hard to be borne. The right attitude is expressed in Psalm 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."
 - b. They had been perfectly willing to offer on the altar such animals as were brought to them by the people. An animal that had been torn by some wild beast, or one which was lame or sick, they heedlessly offered, although such was contrary to God's word.
 - c. They "snuffed at" God's work. Clarke described this action in this way: "It is a metaphor taken from cattle that do not like their fodder. They blow strongly through their nose upon it; and after this, neither they nor any other cattle will eat it" (p.800).
 - d. What a lesson for preachers, elders, deacons, teachers, and all Christians! Every item that God has included in his system is important, and nothing is to be treated as if it is negotiable.
 - 1) God is in heaven; we live on his footstool. God's word is universal in its application; we do not have the right to limit it. His will is all-inclusive; we have no right to exclude anything he included. His word applies to all time; there will never be a generation on earth over whom it does not have authority.
 - 2) We do not have the right to say whether we will do what God says, if we expect to be blessed by his grace. Our excuses do not set aside his requirements. It may appear to us that our labor is in vain, for few if any respond to our many efforts to lead them to Christ. But we must continue to "preach the word" and leave the increase to God's capable hands! "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).
 - 3) We might get the notion that serving God is meaningless, since we see little by way of visible manifestation of God's providence. But the only way we can serve God is by faith; and faith comes by hearing his word. We must leave the final results and consequences of our service in his hands, to be fulfilled in the ways and by the means and at the time he chooses.
5. Verse 14: "But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

- a. The Lord pronounces a curse on the deceiver who had the proper kind of animal to offer to God, but decides to offer a defective sacrifice instead, either claiming or implying that this is the best he can offer. We must make good our vows. We cannot make a vow in the warmth of the moment, and then when reality of day comes, try to divest ourselves of the responsibility of the vow by claiming we do not have the means to fulfill it. Such a person might be able to deceive some of his fellowmen, but nothing is hidden from the eye of God! Hebrews 4:13.
- b. There is a great lesson in this for us. A partial truth is a whole lie. We must not fall into the practice of deceiving others with half-truths. We must cultivate the disposition that everything we say or imply is truth, the whole truth, and only the truth:
 - 1) Ephesians 4:24-25: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."
 - 2) Colossians 2:8-9: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
 - 3) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
- c. God is a great King; he rules the entire universe; his authority extends to both the seen and the unseen realms of time and eternity. The name of God is feared by all who have seen or who have perceived his power.
 - 1) Those people in Bible times who saw some manifestation of God's glorious being or power in a miraculous demonstration, without exception, were so impressed that they knew they were nothing in comparison with him (Gen. 28; Ex. 3:1-6; Isa. 6; Dan. 5; Matt. 17:1-5; 28:1-4; Acts 9:1-6).
 - 2) When people grasp the great truth that God is all-powerful, and that he has created the universe and continues to sustain it, and who see God's hand of providence in action, they are subdued by his majestic power. Understanding the truth that God created all things, since there is no other logical way to explain the presence of the universe and life, and perceiving the complexities of nature, we are humbled by the awesome power God possesses. When we see the evidences and proofs that the Bible is truly God's inspired and inerrant word, and learning the requirements God has given to us in that revelation, we are greatly impressed with the awe-inspiring power of that truth.
- d. Like the foolish priests and people of Malachi's generation, many today scoff at the idea that there is a God in heaven, that Jesus is his Son, that the Bible is his inspired and authoritative word, that we must stand before Christ in Judgment, and that an awesome eternity awaits us all. How humbled and dejected and horror-stricken they will be when they enter the spirit-world and face the stark reality which the Bible reveals!
 - 1) "...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12).
 - 2) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33,36).

MALACHI 2

A. Malachi 2:1-4: The Priests Are Threatened Because of Their Neglect.

1. Verses 1-2: "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart."
 - a. Having clearly exposed the sinful ways of the priests and rebuked them severely in chapter one, the prophet reveals in this section the curse of God they are facing.
 - b. They are given another chance to do right. If they will hear God's commandment, and lay it to heart, and give glory to God's name by doing what he requires, they will avoid the curse. If they do not do so, the curse will descend in full fury. Verse three details the curse.
 - c. The curse will involve a reversal of their blessings. "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shall thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deut. 28:15-19).
 - d. God had already begun to bring the curse upon them: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that *is* waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands" (Haggai 1:6-11).
2. Verses 3-4: "Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. NKJ: "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants And spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it. Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue," Says the Lord of hosts.
 - b. The seed of the priest would be corrupted (*rebuked*—ASV). This likely refers to the crops which the rest of Israel raised for the benefit of those of their number who served as priests (Num. 18:21-32). God would not allow the harvests to be as plentiful as necessary for the priests to be properly fed.
 - c. The *dung* referred to is the refuse left from the sacrifices.
 - 1) The unused parts, including the head, legs, innards, etc., were to be taken out of the camp and burned (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11-12; 16:27). But God would cause it to be spread over their faces! Being thus polluted, these priests would not be allowed to perform their services.
 - 2) "To speak of spreading dung on the faces of the priests is strong language, indeed! It indicates an ignominious humiliation in which the priests are treated as dung, making them unfit for the service of the Lord, and fit only to be carried away without the camp from his presence. The priests will be swept away as dung" (Hailey, p.412).
 - d. The tribe of Levi was chosen as the priestly tribe; from their ranks came those who served as priests. No one else had that privilege under the Law, not even Christ: "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7:14).
 - 1) But even those Levites had to meet certain qualifications before they could be selected to serve (Num. 4). God had enforced these restrictions.
 - 2) Under the New Covenant, the entire separate priesthood would be eliminated. Now every Christian is a priest (1 Peter 2:5,9).
 - 3) These priests would learn that God meant what he said, and that he had sent the curse upon them, when they began to see it come to pass.

B. Malachi 2:5-9: The Ideal and the Real Are Contrasted.

1. Verse 5: "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name."

- a. The covenant mentioned is the one God made with the tribe of Levi; God respected the mandate that the priests of Israel would be chosen from Levi's descendants.
 - 1) *Levi* in the context stands for the priestly tribe. The man named Levi was one of Jacob's sons, and had been dead for many generations.
 - 2) Instructions are related in Numbers 25 (12ff) and Deuteronomy (33:8-11) to the priestly tribe. The covenant offered life and peace to them provided they fulfilled their duties properly.
- b. Those who served as priests were to fear God as Levi (the ideal priesthood) had feared him. This fear was one of reverence and awe that God's being demands, but not fear in the sense of abject terror.
- c. Compare: "And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping *before* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Num. 25:6-13).
- d. Those priests of Malachi's time did not reverence God for they did not discharge their priestly duties in accordance with God's will.
- e. The time would come when the entire Law, including its special priesthood, would be removed and replaced by the Law of the Gospel (Gal. 3:23; Heb. 7).
2. Verse 6: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity."
 - a. The Lord continues to use the example of Levi (the ideal priesthood of Mosaic days) as the standard by which the priests of Malachi's day should be measured. What God set up as the standard for the priesthood was what these priests should have noted.
 - b. *Levi* held to the law of truth; iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with God in peace and uprightness; he turned many from their sinful ways.
 - c. These things could not be said about the current generation of priests. They were little concerned with truth; they had little regard for turning men from iniquity.
3. Verse 7: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The priests who met God's standard had a working knowledge of God's word. Teaching his word was part of their obligations. In order to teach it, they had to study it. And if they did not follow it themselves, they would be poor teachers of it!
 - b. At the same time, the people should have a desire to learn God's word, and seek it from the priests. Before the truth can be taught, there must be students who have a willingness to hear, consider, and learn and practice.
 - c. The priests, in God's arrangement, were God's messengers. "Only here is a priest called a messenger or angel of Jehovah, as only in Haggai is the prophet designated as Jehovah's messenger or angel (1:13). Both priests and prophets were Jehovah's messengers" (Hailey, p.413).
4. Verse 8: "But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. Having brought to their attention the standard God intended for the Levitical priests to meet, the inspired prophet boldly states that those priests of his day had departed from God's way. This is a strong accusation!
 - b. But they had also caused many to stumble at God's law. Instead of teaching men to love and respect God's law, they had encouraged their refutation of that law. The law was not a means of strength and encouragement, but a cause for stumbling to them. Many in our day are being misled by false teachers among us, and instead of holding to the gospel as the source of salvation, strength, and hope, they rob it of its power in the teachings they deliver.
 - c. These priests had perverted the covenant. Instead of receiving the challenges and conditions of the covenant and giving their lives to fulfilling them, they had shown little regard for the covenant, and had shunned their obligations to it.

5. Verse 9: "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."
 - a. NKJ: "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law."
 - b. They had failed to live up to their part of the agreement (covenant), so God was not obligated to keep his part. As they had held the covenant as contemptible, so God would consider them likewise to be contemptible.
 - c. They would lose the respect the people formerly had for them. God said he would cause them to become contemptible and base before the people.
 - d. These priests had shown respect of persons in the administration of their duties, so they would find the disfavor of God.

C. Malachi 2:10-16: God Addresses the Problem of Divorce and Marriage With Heathen Women.

1. Verse 10: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"
 - a. God is the only Father of the Israelite nation. The Israelites were his sons and daughters, and hence were brothers and sisters to each other. Why, then, were they dealing treacherously with each other?
 - b. They dealt treacherously by profaning (making common) the covenant God had made with their forefathers. The corrupt priests had profaned the covenant by refusing to honor their obligations under the law; and in the following context, the Lord shows that others had profaned it by disregarding his law regarding marriage.
2. Verse 11: "Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."
 - a. The nation had been taken into captivity by their enemies. A portion of them had returned to the land of promise. These are addressed by three names: Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. *Judah* is the name for the nation; *Jerusalem* is their capital city; *Israel* is the holy name by which God calls them.
 - b. God charges them with a serious offense, an abomination. They should have been exalting God's holiness, but had profaned it "by marrying 'the daughter of a foreign god.' 'The daughter of a foreign god' is used of a woman who is an idolatress, the worshiper of a heathen deity. Intermarriage with these had been specifically forbidden in the covenant (Exod. 34:16). Solomon's violation of this law had opened the door for idolatry to enter into Judah (I Kings 11:1-2; Neh. 13:23-27). Will the same sin now lead to a new apostasy?" (Hailey, p.415).
3. Verse 12: "The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts."
 - a. NKJ: "May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!"
 - b. The individual who is guilty of this crime will be cut off by the Lord. It does not matter the standing of the man; if he was a scholar (student) or a master (teacher), he would be cut off.
 - c. The translation of the passage is said to be difficult; it may involve a proverbial statement that makes more sense in Hebrew than in English. But the basic thought of the verse is simple: those who violate this standard must suffer the penalty.
 - d. "A proverbial saying apparently, in which the two corresponding classes comprise the whole....Yet so, probably, that the one is the active agent; the other, the passive. The one as a 'watcher' goes his rounds, to see that nothing stirreth against that which he is to guard; the other 'answereth,' when roused. Together, they express the two opposite classes, active and passive sin; those who originate the sin, and those who adopt or retain it at the instigation of the inventor or active propagator of it. It will not exempt from punishment, that he was led into the sin.
 - 1) "[From the tabernacles of Jacob] Perhaps 'he chose the word, to remind them of their unsettled condition,' out of which God had brought them.
 - 2) "[And him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts]; i.e., him, who, doing these things, offereth an offering to God, to bribe Him, as it were, to connivance at his sin. In the same meaning, Isaiah says, that God hateth (Isa 1:13.) 'iniquity and the solemn meeting,' and (Isa 61:8), 'I hate robbery with burnt-offering;' or Solomon (Prov 15:8), 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Prov 28:9); he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.'
 - 3) "And God by Amos says...'I hate, I despise, your feast-days, and will not accept your solemn assemblies.' In one sense the sacrifice was an aggravation, in that the worship of God made the offence either a sin against light, or implied that God might be bribed into connivance in the

- breaking of His laws. The ancient discipline of removing from communion those guilty of grievous sin was founded on this principle" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft].
4. Verse 13: "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand."
 - a. The Lord brings up another charge against the many in Judah. The problem is that God finds their offerings unacceptable on account of the tears and crying out being done before the altar. The cause of the tears is indicated in the next three verses: Jewish husbands were putting away their wives, and marrying foreign women (see verse 11).
 - b. The altar was being covered with tears, weeping and crying out. "...The expression is a metaphor in which the rejected wives were covering the altar with their tears, weeping and sighing to such a degree that the fire was extinguished and the sacrifices were never received but rather rejected by Jehovah. The tears of these mistreated wives stood as an impenetrable barrier between the worshipers and Jehovah" (Hailey, p.416).
 5. Verse 14: "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."
 - a. The connection between this verse and verse thirteen is obvious, clearly marking the tears and crying described there to be those of the wives who had been put away by their selfish husbands.
 - b. The wife and husband had been bound together in a covenant, a covenant which God had noted, and which committed them to live together until death (cf. Rom. 7:1-2; 1 Cor. 7:1ff). But the husband had dealt treacherously with the wife of his youth, breaking his commitment with her for the company of a younger wife.
 - c. The demanding question which asserted denial of wrong-doing is thus answered by the Lord.
 6. Verse 15: "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."
 - a. NKJ: "But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."
 - b. The ASV gives this rendition: "And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."
 - c. This is a very difficult passage; there are nearly as many interpretations as there are commentators.
 - 1) Some have speculated that the reference in this verse is to what happened between Abraham and Hagar, which Sarah instigated; however, there is no proof that this connection pertains.
 - 2) Verse sixteen states God's plain position that he hates the human practice of divorce; this verse, therefore, has some connection with that attitude toward the dissolution of a marriage.
 - 3) "For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass" (Ezra 9:2). God wanted the Israelite lineage to be kept untainted by marriage with the pagans.
 - d. The verse may simply be stating God's plan for marriage, that he intended for there to be only one woman and one man to constitute one marriage. God did not make two or more wives for Adam; he only made Eve (Gen. 2:18-25).
 - 1) God had the means to have created many helpmeets for Adam; why then did he make only one? So that a godly seed could be produced. Perhaps the reference is to the Sinless One who eventually came to take away the sin of the world. Possibly the reference is to the godliness of any of the children produced by a marriage developed according to God's plan for marriage and the home (i.e., one husband and one wife).
 - 2) The warning is clear: take heed to your spirit lest you deal treacherously with the wife of your youth.
 - e. The Pulpit Commentary gives this explanation: "'The Hebrew may be translated more satisfactorily, Not any one has done so who has a remnant of the spirit (ruach).' No one acts as you have done who has in him any of that Divine life which God at first breathed into man; in other words, no man of conscience and virtue has ever thus divorced his wife....No one would divorce his lawful Hebrew wife,

and marry an idolatress, who wished to leave a holy posterity behind him” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

7. Verse 16: "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."
 - a. Plainly stating the proposition, God affirms his hatred of man's sinful practice of putting away (divorce).
 - 1) God hates it, but mankind often loves it. Only a few generations ago in America, the average person also hated divorce, but not so with our present generation.
 - 2) A common idea exists today in the thinking of many, that if a marriage does not work out, a divorce can easily be obtained. Hence, we have evolved a diabolical practice called "no-fault-divorce," in which a marriage can be dissolved if both parties desire it.
 - b. God also hates the practice of covering violence. One who puts away his wife, coldly ignoring the damage such an action produces and the tears it stirs, incurs the strong disapproval of the Almighty!
 - c. The verse closes by restating the strong warning with which the previous verse concluded. "Such a vigorous warning and exhortation from the Lord in a former decadent and permissive age should not be silenced; its principle should be heralded to the ends of the earth in our own time" (Hailey, p.417).

D. Malachi 2:17: The People Have Wearied the Lord.

1. Verse 17: "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"
 - a. A new subject is introduced by this verse. The prophet bluntly charged the Jews with having wearied God with their words. They had tried the patience of the Lord.
 - b. They made the same mistake that earlier generations in Israel had made, namely by confusing good and evil. "Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa. 5:20-21).
 - 1) When a man or a society of men conclude that they are able to determine what is good and what is evil, using their own subjective thinking to produce a system of beliefs that pleases their own hearts, they weary the Lord.
 - 2) In American society, the current generation has decided that it is able to know what is right and wrong. But at the same time, they deny that there is any real standard of right and wrong, that there is nothing which is always wrong. We are more highly-educated than any previous generation perhaps, but we lack one thing earlier generations possessed: a firm belief in the authority of the Bible.
 - c. What God said to these ancient Israelites is equally needed by many of our own time, even by many within the Lord's church.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
 - d. Another attitude they manifested is also a current problem. The Israelites had the disposition, and may have expressed it in words: "Where is the God of judgment."
 - 1) In other words, we hear much about the judgment of God, how he punishes sin; but why is he not now doing so? Why does he not bring judgment against us?
 - 2) In this life, oftentimes the wicked are as well-blessed with material prosperity and happiness as the righteous are; sometimes, even more blessed (seemingly) than the saints. But one must understand that God brings his judgments upon man in his own ways and according to his own timetable. Psalm 73.
2. This verse introduces the rest of the book.

MALACHI 3

A. Malachi 3:1-6: "The Day of Judgment is Coming.

1. Verse 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The question was raised by the Israelites in the previous verse concerning the whereabouts of the God of justice. The reply given by Malachi is found here. God promised that he would come; God's coming was in the person of Christ, who was preceded by his *messenger*, John the Baptizer.
 - b. The messenger is identified in Malachi 4:5 as Elijah the prophet, but this was not the literal Elijah, but John the Baptizer.
 - 1) Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."
 - 2) Matthew 3:3: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
 - 3) Mark 1:3: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
 - 4) Luke 3:4: "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
 - 5) John 1:23: "He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."
 - 6) Luke 1:17: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
 - 7) Matthew 11:10-14: "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."
 - c. The work of this messenger was to prepare the way for the Lord who would follow him. John recognized his relative inferiority to the Christ, and pointed the people to the Lord.
 - d. By speaking of the appearance of the Lord as being sudden, he did not mean his arrival would be immediate, but would be at a time when they were not looking for him; it would be unannounced to the general population.
 - 1) When Christ was born in Bethlehem, his situation was not one which suggested greatness. He was born in a stable, into a poor family.
 - 2) There was even some doubt in the minds of those who did not know the truth about the virtuousness of his mother. The city where he grew up was despised. He lived the life of a poor and homeless person who traveled much: "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).
2. Verse 2: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."
 - a. NKJ: "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap."
 - b. The expectations of the Jews concerning the Messiah were not what God intended. Their conception was that he would condemn and punish their Roman overlords; but in fact, he came to rebuke the Jews.
 - c. His work during his personal ministry included exposing the errors and sins of the people, especially the leaders in the nation. Thus, his work was intended to be like a refiner's fire and the fuller's soap. The refiner of gold and silver used a hot fire to burn away the dross, leaving behind the pure metal. The fuller was one who washes and tends to cloth, cleansing it of dirt by a strong lye soap.
 - d. The work the Messiah continues to do is ordered along the same lines, calling all men out of error and sin; he rebukes every sin and false doctrine; he promises punishment for every evil-doer, and hope for all who will believe him.
3. Verse 3: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

- a. "He will sit as a judge purifying and cleansing, but not necessarily as a destroyer. The special objects of his purifying and purging operation will be 'the sons of Levi,' the priests, who had been brought under such severe condemnation (1:6-2:9)" (Hailey, p.419).
 - b. The priesthood meant is not the priesthood of the Old Law, but that of the New Covenant.
 - 1) 1 Peter 2:5, 9: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ....But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
 - 2) Hebrews 13:15-16: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
 4. Verse 4: "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."
 - a. Following the work of the Messiah, when he had purified those indicated, these spiritual priests (Christians, the church) would be able to offer sacrifices that are as pleasing to the Lord as those of former days, when old Israel walked in the light of God's word.
 - b. The Lord did not suggest that Old Testament worship would be reinstated; rather, he was simply drawing a comparison between the acceptable worship which the faithful in Israel offered and the acceptable worship which would be offered under the New Covenant.
 5. Verse 5: "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. "The Lord now comes to the heart of his reply to their questions (2:17). Not only will he come in judgment against the priests, but he will come also against all the wicked among the people. From the beginning of their history the people had been plagued with sorcery and witchcraft, practices controlled by evil" (Hailey, p.420).
 - b. He specifies several categories of error and sin which must be purged from those who would be acceptable to the Lord: sorcery; adultery; false swearers; oppression; injustice; irreverence and disobedience (absence of fear for the Lord).
 - c. The problem lying behind the sins mentioned was their lack of fear for God. When men reach a point where they do not fear God, they have arrived at a disposition of heart that will permit them to do anything they please. We will be unsuccessful in turning sinful men from their wickedness unless we can instill in them a healthy fear and awe of Jehovah. To do otherwise, is merely to treat the symptoms of their problem, and not the problem itself.
 6. Verse 6: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."
 - a. God affirms his unchangeable nature in this passage, listing this as the reason why the Israelites were not immediately consumed.
 - b. God had made promises that he would fulfill through the descendants of Abraham. If he punished the wicked Israelites (the descendants through whom he planned to bless mankind) as was meet, he would have to change his plan; this he would not do; this he could not do. Why? Because he does not change! His purposes remain constant; he will live up to his commitments: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:8-9).
 - c. What is said in reference to God's Son in Hebrews 13:8, applies with equal force to God the Father: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).
 - d. The verse makes no promise of unconditional salvation for anyone; it plainly states that God will not change his eternal plan.
- B. Malachi 3:7-12: The People Have Robbed God.**
1. Verse 7: "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"
 - a. From the time of their formation as a nation, the character of the people continued unchanged: they consistently violated their covenant with God, turning aside from his will regularly. While there were many sincere and righteous people among the nation down through the centuries, yet the majority of the individuals and generations did not walk in the old paths: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the

- ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16).
- b. God's blessings and promises were always conditional (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). They had departed from God's way, so he commanded them to return. But instead of admitting their error and repenting, they denied they had gone anywhere.
2. Verse 8: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."
 - a. In response to their denial of having departed from God, the Lord asks them this question: "Will a man rob God?" He quickly charged them with having done so.
 - b. Stubborn and rebellious people are not equipped to confess wrong. These wicked ones demanded to know, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" Their question formed a denial of God's accusation, demanding that God prove his charge.
 - c. Of course, the Lord would not make an accusation if he were unable to substantiate the indictment. He states that they had robbed God in the matter of tithes and offerings, obviously meaning that they had short-changed him by failing to give as they were commanded.
 - d. "And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD'S: *it is* holy unto the LORD. And if a man will at all redeem *ought* of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth *part* thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, *even* of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed" (Lev. 27:30-33).
 - e. "Jehovah had laid claim to 'the heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein' (Deut. 10:14). Tithes and offerings freely given are acknowledgments of that ownership and of man's stewardship" (Hailey, p.421).
 3. Verse 9: "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."
 - a. God's charge was not against a few isolated people in Israel, but against them all. The whole generation, with perhaps isolated exceptions, was guilty of this sin.
 - b. God has a right to the portion that he required them to give to his cause; they would not starve if they did what he demanded. And the giving was beneficial to them, for it developed in them the kind of hearts that are permitted into heaven. It also opened the way for God to bring upon them even greater blessings.
 - c. By robbing God, they were robbing themselves. When they refused to obey the Lord in this matter, they brought upon themselves a great curse. To read their history for the 400 years between Malachi's time and the coming of Christ, is to see the truth in the Lord's promise of punishment. Although wicked men may suffer some tremendous hardships on earth, these are nothing in comparison to the horrors that await them in Gehenna.
 4. Verse 10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now here-with, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."
 - a. The Lord offers them the opportunity of putting him to the test. If they would bring all the tithes into the store-house, they would be able to see that God's ability to bless is boundless.
 - b. God would open the windows of heaven so as to pour out for them a blessings that they could scarcely have place to store.
 - c. One would be foolish indeed to turn down such an offer! Yet they maintained their adamant claim to be guiltless of wrongdoing.
 - d. God makes a similar requirement of us, that we give as we have been prospered. He has set no minimum amount which we are to give: that amount is determined by the degree of love, faith, and trust we have in the Lord. He promises that we will be given more and greater blessings.
 - e. 2 Corinthians 9:6-10: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness)."
 5. Verse 11: "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."

- a. God's offer here is built on the condition that they follow the requirements of the previous verse. If they would do that, not only would he open the windows of heaven for them, but he would rebuke the devourer for their sakes.
 - b. The *devourer* in a reference to the enemies of their crops, such as the locusts, the weather, the east wind, and mildew.
 - 1) Amos 4:9: "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured *them*: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD."
 - 2) Haggai 2:17: "I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD."
 - c. Obedience to God has many benefits! His providence can prevent many natural disasters and provide many spiritual blessings.
 - d. Mark 10:29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
6. Verse 12: "And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."
- a. When the surrounding nations saw the marvelous blessings which Israel was receiving, they would recognize the hand of God behind them, and would call them blessed. This was what God had planned to occur. They were not required to make converts to the Mosaic system, but by virtue of their obedience, which would result in their being wonderfully blessed, the heathen would be drawn to investigate.
 - b. The land of Palestine was wonderfully blessed with fertile soil, and other natural endowments. Compare: "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs" (Num. 13:23).
 - c. Not only would they possess a delightful land, but they would have God's added blessings! We are offered the promise of having all we need if we will follow the way of God: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

C. Malachi 3:13-15: The Faithless Murmur Against God.

1. Verse 13: "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?"
 - a. Again, the Lord brings a serious charge against them: They had spoken strong words against God. He was not going to bless a people who were so rebellious and hateful, and who would even express their hatred for God in words.
 - b. What they had said in private conversations, and what they had thought in their hearts, was not hidden from God's knowledge. But they again denied the charge by asking another question: "What have we spoken so much against thee?"
2. Verse 14: "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"
 - a. They made the mistake of judging God's ability to bless only in terms of earthly considerations. When they saw a man who was clearly wicked basking in the lap of luxury and happiness, while they themselves were in want, their shortsighted conclusion was that God is unable to bless them.
 - b. The Psalmist considered this problem, and thought that serving God was pointless since the wicked seem to have an easier life. But he changed his view when he thought about the full picture. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee" (Ps. 73:16-22).
 - c. These Jews contemplated the situation, and concluded that serving God was only in vain (empty; meaningless; unprofitable).
 - d. "It is as if they were serving the Lord for hire and as if he were indebted to them for their service. They had walked mournfully, 'in mourning apparel'" (margin ASV), in fasting before Jehovah. Whether their mourning disposition before Jehovah was sincere or feigned is not a point at issue; the

point is that they had put their confidence in the outward fasting which was of no worth before Jehovah. This question had been clearly settled by Zechariah (chs. 7-8)" (Hailey, p.422).

3. Verse 15: "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."
 - a. This continues the description of the way the Israelites thought. Their conception of their covenant with God was mercenary. They followed the outward demands of the Law, but did so without sincerity, with their primary goal being to get all they could out of the arrangement. When the demands were placed on their devotion, they showed their true nature, becoming carping critics of God. When God withheld certain blessings from them as a means of correcting them, they soured against him. If there were no difficulties to overcome and if God showered them with material prosperity, they were content.
 - b. They considered the arrogant man who followed his own way as a happy man, which made the humble servant of God seem unhappy and unblest.
 - c. Seeing that some wicked people seemed to be prosperous, they concluded that these evil ones were built up, while the righteous suffered. Therefore, they thought that wickedness paid more than righteousness.
 - d. Further, those who tempted God seemed to be delivered from judgments. So it paid, in their perverted thinking, to renounce God.
 - e. The three pictures given in the verse of those who rejected God fit the same person: one who was arrogant, was also wicked and tempted God in the same process.
 - f. Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

D. Malachi 3:16-18: The Faithful Few Fear God and Heed His Directions.

1. Verse 16: "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."
 - a. In studying the writings of the prophets, it is easy to get the idea that the whole nation, from the least to the greatest, was in rebellion.
 - 1) But even in the worst of times, there seems always to be a few who retain their faith in God. In Noah's day there were only eight faithful ones; in Elijah's time, 7,000 in Israel had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:13-18).
 - 2) This last decade of the 20th century is a time in America when the very great majority has renounced real faith in God and the Bible. Pagan forces have been working feverously behind the scenes to rob the younger generations of confidence in God and the Bible, supplanting that godly concept with a very strong appeal to the appetites of the flesh. Consequently, we have a growing number in our land who reject the truth. This is so even though some sectarian groups, those which specialize in entertainment and sensationalism, boast of great increases in membership. Even so, the truth is being disparaged and rejected—by them and by others.
 - b. There was a faithful few in Malachi's generation who still feared the Lord, and hearkened to his word.
 - 1) Though their names remain unknown to us, yet God acknowledged them as his own. These were men and women of whom the world was unworthy, who were too good for this world (Heb. 11:38).
 - 2) These faithful ones listened and learned from Malachi, and sought each other out, and spake often one to another. Implied in this observation, is doubtless the offering of encouraging words to one another. Such communion would produce strength and hope. Even in good times, when the gospel is popular, God's people need to encourage each other; in troublesome times, we certainly need encouragement.
 - 3) Christians can exhort and encourage each other in singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) and in other acts of worship (Heb. 10:23-25).
 - a) Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
 - b) Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
 - c) Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

- c. God was aware of the struggles of the faithful, and was touched by their faithful determination. He wrote a book of remembrance to record their faithfulness. Of course, the Almighty does not need a written record to retain memory of anything; this is a figure of speech, describing the action with a concept familiar to us all, which gives assurance to us.
- d. This book of remembrance is equivalent to the *book of Life* noted elsewhere in the Bible.
- 1) Exodus 32:32-33: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."
 - 2) Psalm 56:8: "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"
 - 3) Psalm 69:28: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."
 - 4) Psalm 86:6: "Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications."
 - 5) Psalm 139:16: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."
 - 6) Ezekiel 13:9: "And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD."
 - 7) Daniel 12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."
 - 8) Philippians 4:3: "And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."
 - 9) Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
- e. The point in the reference to the book of remembrance is to encourage the faithful with the knowledge that God knows them, he is aware of their struggles, and he will not forget them. Their faithfulness is duly noted by the Lord, and their reward is sure.
- 1) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
 - 3) Hebrews 6:10: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 4) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
 - 5) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
- f. These faithful saints *thought upon his name*. This is characteristic of all mature saints. God is never far from their consciousness; he is the focal point of their lives, their motives, and their deeds because he is the focus of their thoughts. Before considering an action in life, God's will is consulted; he is given the position of priority in all their affairs.
2. Verse 17: "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

- a. In a verse containing one of the most beautiful and expressive statements in the Bible, the Lord encourages the faithful of all ages. First he announces that they belong to him. They do not belong to this world; they do not belong in hell; they are God's and will be with him!
 - b. He affirms his intention to spare them *in that day*. There is a great day coming in which God will judge all man-kind (Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11).
 - 1) The righteous will be escorted into glory; the unrighteous will be dismissed into Gehenna (John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 1:6-9).
 - 2) The people that belong to God will be spared the horrors of the lost. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8-9).
 - 3) The majority of people live as if there will never be a day of accounting. The Judgment is even rejected and ridiculed by many scoffers. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4).
 - 4) While God will send the ungodly away from his presence, he will spare his own people this tragedy.
 - c. The blessing in store for God's redeemed is described as his making "up my jewels." The ASV gives this rendering: "And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, and in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."
 - d. The picture is one of God gathering together his possessions, those people who are dear to him, who are considered by him to be precious and desirable. The original word may not carry the idea of *jewels*, but the verse does describe God's people as special and beloved.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 14:2: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 26:18: "And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments."
 - 3) Titus 2:14: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
 - 4) 1 Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
3. Verse 18: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."
- a. During the days of the Mosaic Law, mankind was divided into two camps: Jews and Gentiles. But there is a more fundamental division in the ranks of accountable men: the just and the unjust; or the saved and the lost; or the good and the evil.
 - 1) Those who are perceptive, having been instructed by God's word and observant of the world around them, are able to note the difference between the two camps without difficulty; they can see that serving God is worthwhile. The people of ancient Israel should have been able to perceive this distinction, as all men today should observe it.
 - 2) In the final Judgment, there will be no room for doubt! It will be clear to all that serving God is worth the effort; the reward is beyond compare, and the penalty for not doing so is too horrible to contemplate!
 - b. The statement of the verse appears to be directed to the unfaithful of Malachi's time.
 - 1) If they do not repent, they will learn the truth to their own dismay, and too late to be profited by that knowledge.
 - 2) If they do repent, how happy they will be! Having formerly thought that serving God was pointless, they will have learned better.
 - c. "In the great day of the Lord, at least, if not long before, it will be fully discovered who have been the truly wise people; those who took up their cross and followed Christ; or those who satisfied the flesh, with its affections and desires, following a multitude to do evil" (Clarke, p.805).

MALACHI 4

A. Malachi 4:1-4: The Sun of Righteousness Will Arise.

1. Verse 1: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."
 - a. In graphic language, Malachi depicts the destruction that is intended for the wicked. The point of the verse is evident—evil men will be punished. But what is not as clear is: *to whom is the warning directed?*
 - b. Certainly, the description fits the eternal judgment to be meted out against all the ungodly, but the reference may have the rebellious Israelites of Malachi's generation particularly in mind.
 - c. The day of this judgment would be as an oven, in which all the proud and all that do wickedly will be as stubble; and using the figure of a tree that is consumed, the burning will be so complete that neither root nor branch will remain.
2. Verse 2: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."
 - a. NKJ: "But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves."
 - b. Most modern commentators seem united in denying the messianic content of this verse, saying that *righteousness* itself is the *sun* that was to rise. However, the translators of the KJV understood the passage to refer to Christ.
 - c. As the sun of our solar system gives life and light to our planet, so Christ gives life and light to those who believe in him. New Testament passages describe the Lord as the giver of life and light:
 - 1) Luke 1:78-79: "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."
 - 2) Ephesians 5:14: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."
 - 3) Matthew 4:16: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."
 - 4) Luke 2:32: "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."
 - 5) John 1:4,9: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men....That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John denied that he was the Light, but that he came to bear witness to the Light; that Light was Christ. Cf. John 5:35-36.
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 4:4: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
 - 7) 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
 - 8) 2 Peter 1:19: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."
 - d. If the commentators are correct, *righteousness* is personified, and is depicted as giving light to those who fear God. But the statement itself seems to clearly indicate a person, one who would have healing in his wings as he goes forth on his great mission of mercy.
 - e. The reference to those who fear God going forth to "grow up as calves of the stall" is "an agricultural metaphor from the care and feeding of livestock. Such carefully protected and cared-for animals exhibit a quality of playful happiness that appears most desirable" (Coffman, p.298). Instead of "grow up as calves of the stall" (KJV), the ASV has "gambol as calves of the stall." The figure portrays God's people as living happily in the Light.
3. Verse 3: "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - a. The ultimate victory of God's people is figuratively described as trampling the enemy under their feet. We garner not happiness in seeing the wicked suffer, but they deserve their fate. We do rejoice in the victory of the Cause of God and the eternal reward of the righteous.
 - b. This statement likely grows out of the attitude the Jews expressed in Malachi 3:14-15, that it was unprofitable to serve God since the wicked had things their way in this world. That may be the case

for the time being, but ultimately God's people will gain the greatest victory—Heaven! And they will avoid the greatest tragedy—an eternity in Gehenna!

4. Verse 4: "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."
 - a. Malachi disagrees with modern *scholarship* which has denied that Moses authored the Pentateuch; the prophet affirms the Mosaic authorship, and the inspiration of that great production.
 - b. The prophet, speaking God's word, instructed the Jews to remember the Law which God delivered to the nation of Israel through Moses.
 - c. The point: they were to obey all the statutes and judgments contained therein. All of the instructions and requirements were to be heeded, not merely the decalogue.
 - d. Why? To obtain the blessings God offers and to avoid the severe judgment which he promised to bring upon the disobedient.

B. Malachi 4:5-6: The Prophet Elijah.

1. Verse 5: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."
 - a. A great and terrible day of judgment was in the works, but before this tremendous event occurred, God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel. Some have supposed that Elijah the Tishbite, in person, would be sent; that since he did not actually die, God has held him in readiness through the centuries to be sent back to earth.
 - b. But, as noted under Malachi 3:1, the New Testament shows that John the Baptizer is the person meant, that John came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*.
 - 1) Luke 1:13: "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."
 - 2) Luke 1:17: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
 - 3) Matthew 11:7-14: "And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come."
 - c. The "great and dreadful day of the Lord" is a reference to some tragic occasion in which the wrath of God would be poured out upon the unrighteous. Such an occasion was the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The greatest of such occasions will be at the second coming of Christ. Peter used similar language (Acts 2:14-21) to describe what was transpiring on Pentecost Day, with perhaps the allusion pointing to the fall of Jerusalem or the second coming of Christ.
2. Verse 6: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
 - a. The work of John the Baptizer is described here. In the work that great man of God did, men and women and boys and girls were turned in the right direction.
 - b. "The mission of this Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, was to turn the affections of the people back to God and his divine law. He was to restore a right relation between parents and children and to turn the hearts of the children to the ancestral religion of their fathers. In this condition of heart they would be ready to receive the Messiah, for they would see in him the fulfillment of all God's wondrous promises and the glorious hope of their fathers" (Hailey, p.425).
 - c. If the work of John had not been successfully accomplished, it would have been necessary for God to smite the earth with a curse.
 - d. It is interesting and no doubt highly significant that the Old Testament closes with the word *curse*.
 - 1) This was the final statement to issue from heaven until the arrival of John; four hundred dreary, trouble-filled years lay ahead of Israel before the coming of the Messiah's forerunner.
 - 2) "All of God's prophets had done their work, but the people had rejected them all. There was no further word that God could send. The hardened and rebellious nation would continue to exist (according to God's holy purpose); but the precious fellowship of other days was gone for ever.

A hint of all this may be found in these final six verses....In the meanwhile, let the true followers of God keep the sacred Law and await the unfolding of the purpose of the Almighty" (Coffman, pp.305f).

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