



Minor Prophets

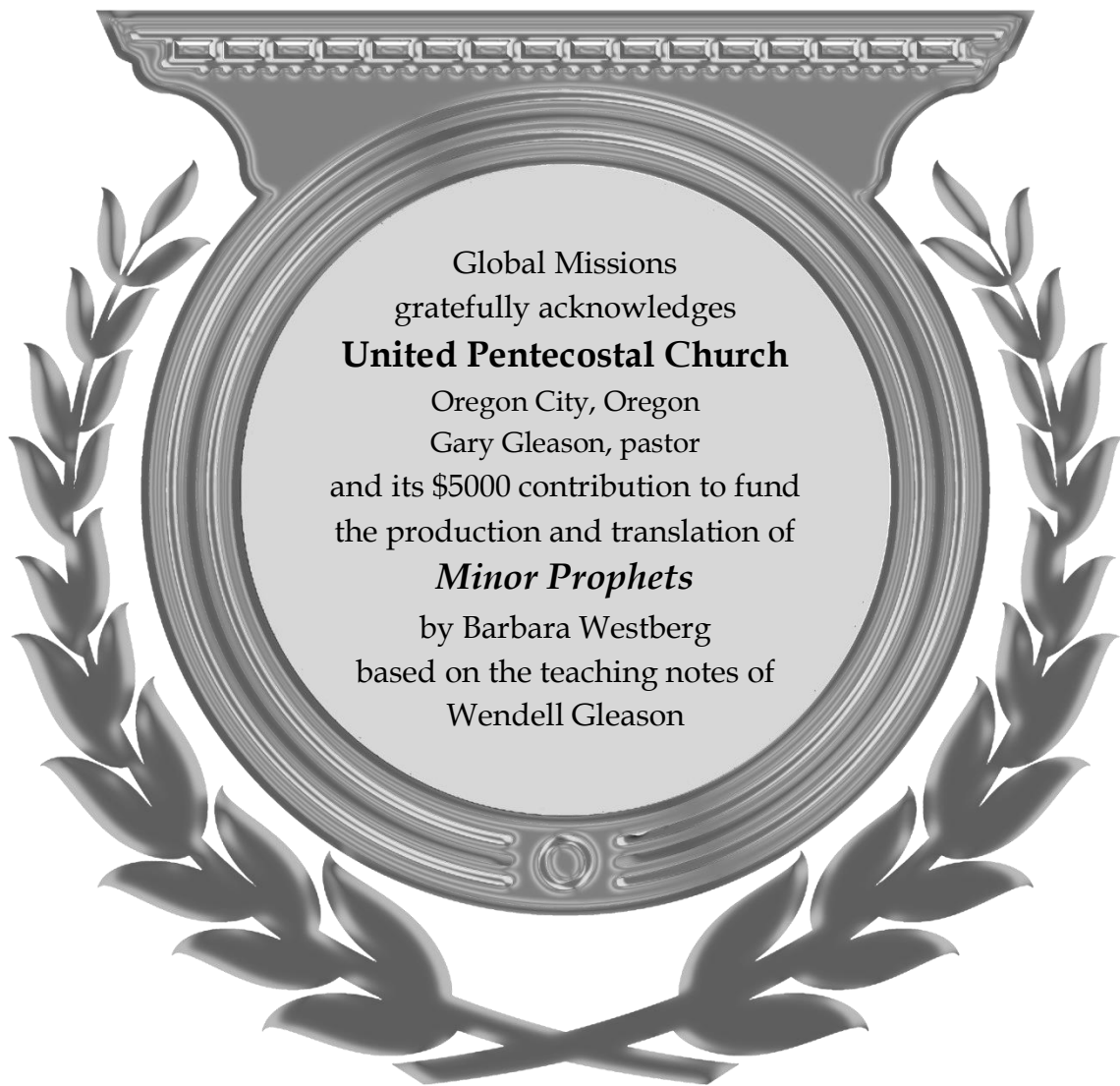
Barbara Westberg
based on teaching notes of
Wendell Gleason

A

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This book is dedicated to the memory of the Reverend Wendell Gleason.

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CHART OF THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

Showing timeline with Major Prophets

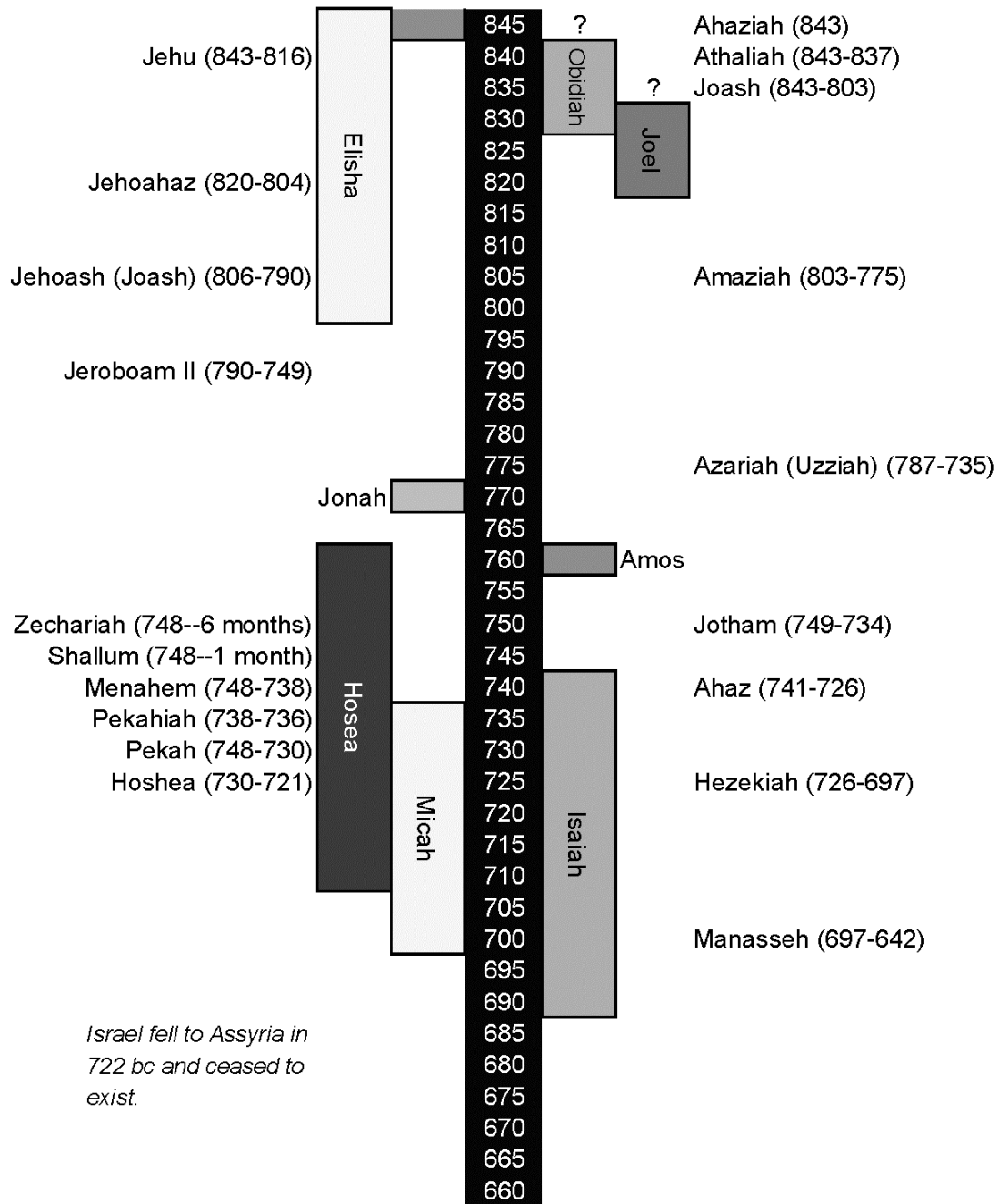
Prepared by Darline Royer - using dates from *Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, Norman Geisler
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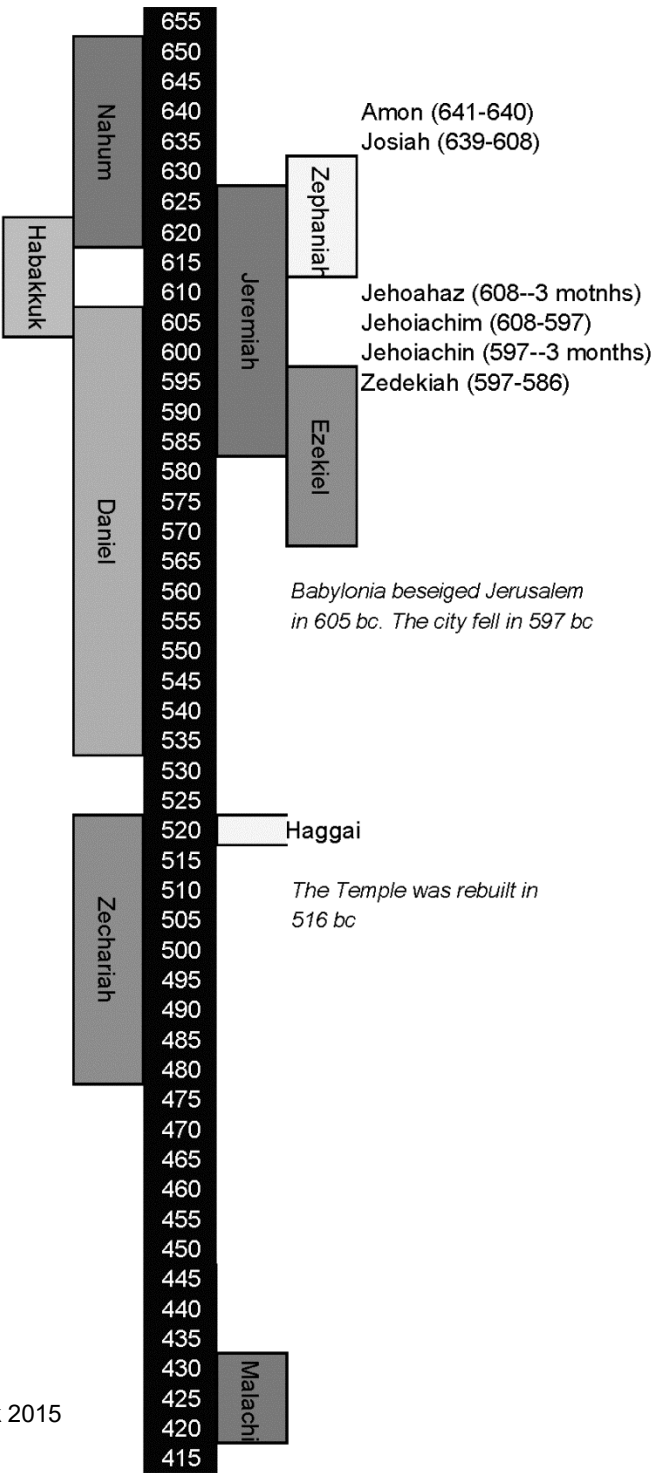
	BIBLICAL ORDER	CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER with Major Prophets Included	SCRIPTURE Reference
	MAJOR PROPHETS		
	Isaiah		
	Jeremiah - Lamentations		
	Ezekiel		
	Daniel		
Pre- Exilic	MINOR PROPHETS		
1	Hosea	Obadiah (840-830) ?	II Kings 8-12
2	Joel	Joel (830-820) ?	II Kings 12
3	Amos	Jonah (780-760)	II Kings 14
4	Obadiah	Amos (755-750)	II Kings 14
5	Jonah	Hosea (760-710)	II Kings 14-17
6	Micah	Isaiah (740-690)	II Kings 15-21
		Micah (735-700)	II Kings 15-20
	ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY	722 BC	
7	Nahum	Nahum (650-620)	II Kings 21-23
8	Habbakuk	Zephaniah (630-620)	II Kings 22-24
9	Zephaniah	Habbakuk (620-605)	II Kings 22-23
		Jeremiah (625-585)	II Kings 22-25
	BABYLONIAN EXILE Temple Destroyed	586 BC	
Exilic		Lamentations (585-580)	II Kings 25
		Ezekiel (593-570)	II Kings 24-25

		Daniel (606-530)	II Kings 23-25
Post-Exilic	RETURN FROM EXILE		Ezra 1-4
10	Haggai	Haggai (520 - ?)	Ezra 5-6
11	Zechariah	Zechariah (520-480)	Ezra 5-6
	TEMPLE REBUILT Seventy years after its destruction	(516 BC) Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10	
12	Malachi	Malachi (430-420)	Nehemiah

Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah

Kings of Israel	BC	Kings of Judah
Saul (1051-1011)	1050	
	1045	
	1040	
	1035	
	1030	
	1025	
	1020	
	1015	
David (1011-971)	1010	
	1005	
	1000	
	995	
	990	
	985	
	980	
	975	
Solomon (971-931)	970	
	965	
	960	
	955	
	950	
	945	
	940	
DIVIDED KINGDOM	935	DIVIDED KINGDOM
Jeroboam (933-911)	930	Rehoboam (931-913)
	925	
	920	
Nadab (911-910)	915	Abijam (915-913)
Baasha (910-887)	910	Asa (912-872)
	905	
	900	
	895	
Elah (887-886)	890	
Zimri (886--7 days)	885	
Omri (886-875)	880	
Ahab (875-854)	875	Jehoshaphat (874-850)
	870	
	865	
	860	
Ahaziah (855-854)	855	
Jehoram (Joram) (854-843)	850	Jehoram (850-843)





Personal Study Notes

Notes to the Instructor

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

In each lesson, space is provided for the students to write their responses as they study. This provides material for class discussion. Students may add additional comments during the discussion.

Student Assignments

After each lesson the student's homework includes writing a synopsis on "The Prophet's Message to Me" using the following format:

- Title: (A title that relates to the prophet's message to your life.)
- My Verse: (The verse in the prophet's writing that spoke the loudest to you.)
- Personal Application Gems: One to three short paragraphs that describe how the message of the prophet applies to you.

After each lesson the student is asked to read the next Minor Prophet book to prepare for the next lesson.

Lesson 1

Use this simple exercise to get your students up and moving when they need a mental break. Work together to memorize the books of the Minor Prophets. Before class make two sets of flashcards. On each card print the name of one book. With loops of tape mount each scrambled set on a wall. Challenge two volunteers to be the first to put his or her set in the correct

order. Repeat several times with different students until the class is familiar with the order of the books.

Lesson 2—Hosea

Enlarge the illustration on Appendix 1, page 175, and display it.

Answers to the Dig Deeper exercises:

Judgment versus Mercy

JUDGMENT	MERCY
1:2-9	1:10-11
2:2-13	2:14-3:5
4:1-5:14	5:15-6:3
6:4-11:7	11:8-11
11:12-13:16	14:1-9

God's three "I wills": "I will heal," "I will love," and "I will be as the dew."

Lesson 3—Joel

In Appendix 2 on page 177 is a simple but powerful object lesson. It explains Joel 2:28, focusing on the difference in God's Spirit being poured out *upon* all flesh and being filled with the Spirit.

Lesson 4—Amos

Use "Amos: Shepherd of Tekoa" (Appendix 3, page 179) as a read-through drama to give the students a humorous overview of the Book of Amos. Assign the parts to the students. Choose a creative student to do the sound effects. The class makes up the crowd. Allow a little time for each student to find his or her lines and mark them; then the actors read the drama aloud. Consider recording the reading.

Lesson 5—Obadiah

At the beginning of the lesson students are asked to draw from their Bible knowledge, listing the characteristics of Jacob and Esau. Later in the lesson they are asked to think about how these characteristics were passed on to their descendants. This is good discussion material.

Lesson 6—Jonah

Ask the students to use their imaginations to explore Jonah's mind. What was he thinking at each step in his downward spiral? This should produce some interesting comments.

In Dig Deeper they closely examine the words of Jonah's prayer to better understand his emotions.

Consider asking an artistic student to illustrate God's object lesson for the class as they discuss the scenes in the Book of Jonah.

Lesson 7—Micah

Students are expected to memorize Micah 6:8 and 7:8. Invest a few minutes of your class time working with them to do this. Make this a fun exercise. Print words/phrases on flashcards. Scatter them on the wall. Challenge the volunteers to "beat the clock" by putting the verses in order before the timer goes off. Consider making two sets of flashcards, and making this a competition between students. Get your students moving and thinking and laughing, as they memorize God's Word.

Lesson 8—Nahum

Students are asked to complete a chart, filling in how nature reacts when God is angry. They are also asked to list ways in which the Ninevites reaped what they sowed. These exercises should incite interesting discussions.

Lesson 9—Habakkuk

In the Appendix 4, page 189, is a drama based on the writings of Habakkuk. Studying the Minor Prophets tends to get heavy. This drama adds a touch of humor and emphasizes that these men of God were human just like us. It also focuses on the importance of believing what we write/teach/preach, for we never know whom our words will impact.

Here are suggestions using it:

- (1) Assign it as homework to be read by the students and discussed during class.
- (2) In class do a read through, assigning parts to volunteers.
- (3) As a drama performed for the school/church at the end of this series.

Lesson 10—Zephaniah

Under Review/Discussion Questions, students are challenged to imagine evangelist Zephaniah preaching a revival in their city. They choose his text, three main points, and title his sermon. This will take some time and thought, so allow sufficient time for the students to do this exercise and share their “sermons” with the class.

Lesson 11—Haggai

Haggai was a practical, get-to-work prophet. He mixed his words with sweat. No doubt, there are students in your class who do the same. This would be a good time to honor those hands-on students. Consider designing certificates on your computer recognizing those who have played a major role in constructing church buildings. Present the certificates during this session.

Lesson 12—Zechariah

Divide the students into eight teams. Assign each team one of Zechariah’s visions. Teammates work together to write a sermon outline based on that vision. One member of the team shares his team’s outline with the class.

The fourteenth wrap-up session focuses on class participation, with each student doing a short monologue based on the writings of his favorite prophet.

To prepare for that session, choose a student to present the monologue “Haggai, the Working Prophet” (Appendix 5, page 207) at the end of lesson 13. This will provide an example to the other students for writing their own monologues. Elaborate biblical costumes are not needed. A piece of fabric can become a robe, a turban, and/or belt.

Lesson 13—Malachi

Have a testimony service, allowing students to share a time when they gave sacrificially and God poured out a blessing on them.

Allow time at the end of the session for the monologue, “Haggai, the Working Prophet.” (See page 207.)

Preparation for lesson 14 wrap-up class. Ask each student to choose his favorite prophet and develop a monologue based on that prophet’s ministry. Encourage the student to put himself in the prophet’s place. Would he plead or threaten or both? Would he shout or whisper? Does he pace back and forth or stand still? Is he kind or angry? Set a time limit for each.

Lesson 14—Review

This is a review wrap-up session. Students present their minor prophet monologues.

Suggestions for wrapping up this series.

- (1) Students present their monologues.
- (2) Who Am I? Choose a student to be It. He stands facing the class. Stand behind him and hold up a flashcard with the name of one of the minor prophets. The class gives the It hints as to the identity of the prophet. Encourage the class to start with hard clues first.
- (3) Guess My Name. Divide the class into two teams. Write the name of each minor prophet on a slip of paper. Distribute these to six students on each side. Allow a few minutes for each student to write down three main points about the prophet he has been assigned. The first student gives his clues, one by one, to the opposing team. The team is allowed only one guess per clue. So they need to work together before shouting out an answer. Give 30 points to the team if they get the answer on the

first clue, 20 points for a correct answer on the second clue, and 10 points if they get it on the third clue. Rotate from team to team.

Writing the review test for this series is the responsibility of the instructor.

Note: Special thanks to Darline Royer, GATS teacher/writer/editor, for so generously sharing her notes and ideas on the Minor Prophets. Also, thanks to Dorsey Burk for preparing maps and charts for Minor Prophets.

Lesson 1

Introducing the Minor Prophets

Books of Hosea through Malachi

Key Scripture

“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” (II Peter 1:21).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

God called prophets from all walks of life. True men of God deliver God’s messages without fear or favor, as they are moved by the Holy Ghost.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Name and spell the minor prophetic books in biblical order.
- Give a brief overview of the times of the Minor Prophets.
- Describe the difference between a priest and a prophet.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Dynamic Dozen
 - A. The Minor Prophets
 - B. Their Times
- II. God's Men
 - A. Priests
 - B. Prophets
- III. Their Messages
 - A. Judgment
 - B. Hope

THE DYNAMIC DOZEN

The Minor Prophets

The minor prophets were God's flagmen standing at the intersection of history shouting, "Bridge out! Turn around! Go back!" But, like drunken drivers, nations zoomed past flashing lights intent on going their own way. They raced over speed bumps (humps), around roadblocks, and through barricades.

Nothing stopped them—not Hosea's illustrated sermon, not Zephaniah's fiery messages, not Micah's straight talk. Granted Jonah's short, loud proclamation did cause Nineveh to put on the brakes, but only for a brief rest stop. On the nations raced, until they plunged into the raging river of God's judgment.

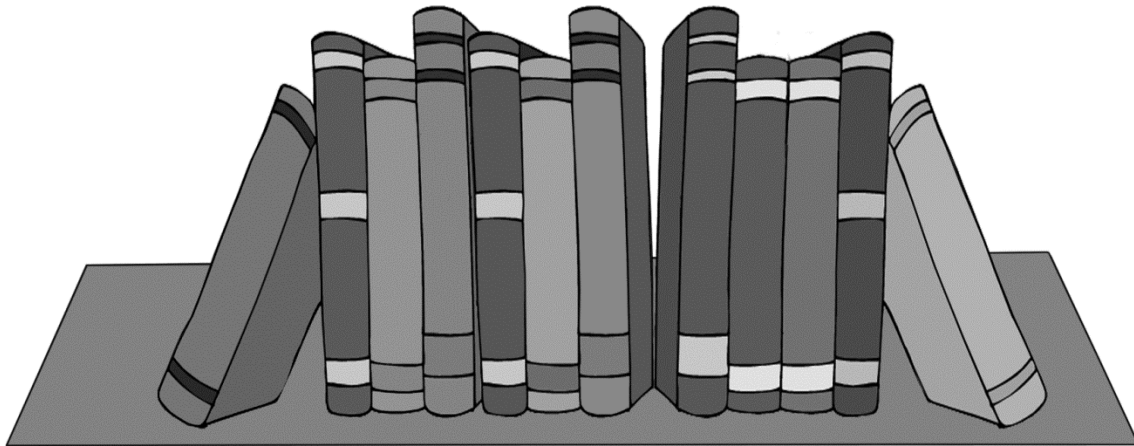
In these lessons, you will meet twelve fearless men of God, who dared to stand up in the face of kings, priests, and paupers, and boldly proclaim, "Thus saith the LORD God." These men came from farms, palaces, and the streets. Some stepped out of nowhere onto the stage of history, waved their flags, shouted their warnings, and disappeared as quickly as they came.

Habakkuk was a thinker, who dared to ask God "Why?" Zachariah was a visionary, who saw things others could not see nor understand. Haggai was a worker, preaching as he labored alongside the people. Hosea's dysfunctional marriage and family was an illustrated sermon. These men suffered rejection and ridicule. They spoke truth when it hurt.

In the fourth century, Jerome called these twelve books the Minor Prophets because they were smaller than Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the Major Prophets. The Minor Prophets are not minor as in less important. Neither were they all written later than the Major Prophets. (See the timeline of the Kings and Prophets on page 9.) Notice how the Major and Minor Prophets overlap.

These twelve books were originally grouped together in the Hebrew Bible on one scroll called “The Twelve.”

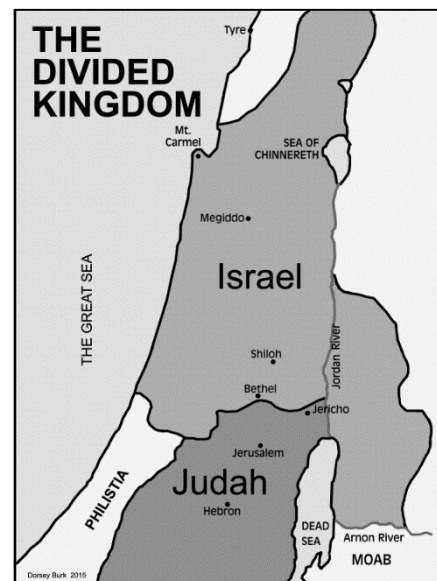
Instructions: On the spines of the books below, write in biblical order the names of the twelve Minor Prophets.



Their Times

The Minor Prophets’ prophecies cover a span of between three and four hundred years. (When comparing the Chart of the Twelve Minor Prophets on page 7 and the timeline of the Kings and Prophets (page 9), notice that the dates of Obadiah’s and Joel’s prophecies are questionable.)

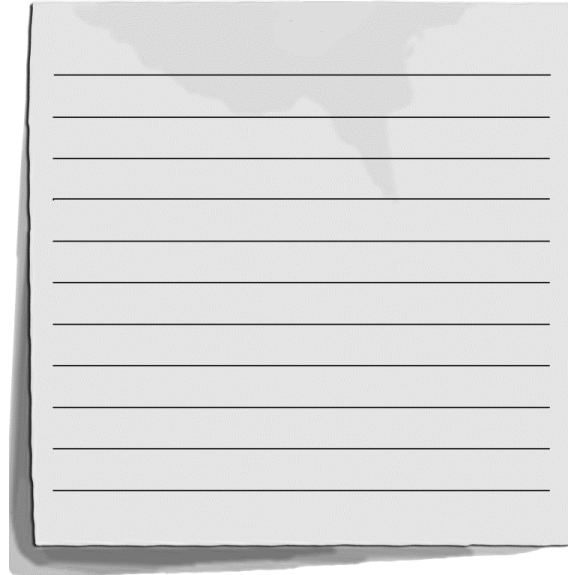
After King Solomon, a civil war divided Israel into two kingdoms, ten tribes in the north called Israel and two tribes in the south called Judah (931 BC).



The northern kingdom did not have one good king. King Jeroboam, their first king, set the stage for his nation's downfall. He established his headquarters in Shechem. Then considering their proximity to Judah, he got nervous. "What if the people go back to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple? I will lose control. What can I do to prevent that?"

DIG DEEPER: Read I King 12:25-33. List Jeroboam's actions that led Israel away from God.

From King Jeroboam's reign on, it was downhill for Israel. God sent prophet after prophet to warn them to turn from their iniquity. But God's words landed on deaf ears. Judgment fell when the Assyria army swept into Israel and took them captive in 722 BC (II Kings 17:23).



The two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, called Judah, survived almost one hundred fifty years longer than Israel. Periods of revival postponed God's judgment. Kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah, motivated by the prophets, turned the people away from idolatry. But dispersed between these good kings, bad kings led the nation into idolatry.

After three assaults (609-586 BC), King Nebuchadnezzar subdued Judah and destroyed Jerusalem. In 586 BC, he carried the final band of leading citizens captive to Babylon where they remained for seventy years, just as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold. (Read Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10.)

Nine of the minor prophets prophesied before the exile. They mainly direct their messages to four countries—Judah, Israel, Edom, and Assyria (Nineveh). Hosea and Amos prophesied messages to Israel. Joel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah focused on Judah. Micah preached in the capitals of both kingdoms—Jerusalem (Judah) and Samaria (Israel). Obadiah prophesied to Edom; Jonah and Nahum to Nineveh.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ministered to the Jews who returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem.

GOD'S MEN

Priests

Aaron was first a prophet (Moses' spokesman). Then he became Israel's first high priest. (Read Exodus 7:1, 28:1.) To be a priest, one had to be born into Aaron's family.

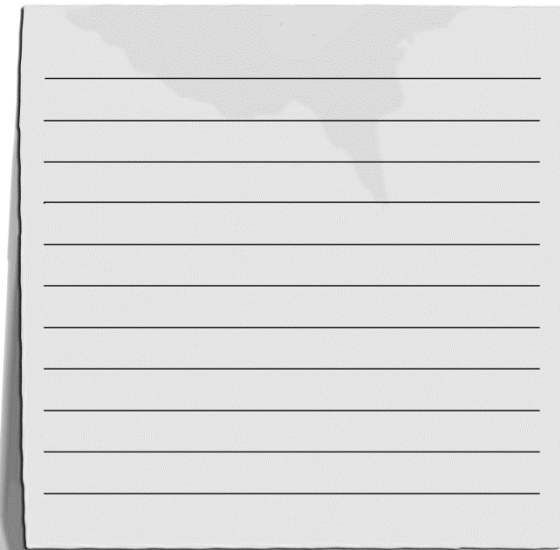
God ordained the priests to teach His law (Deuteronomy 24:8). They were the mediators between God and man. The Urim and Thummim were entrusted to the priest's care (Exodus 28:30). The priests were responsible for keeping the ceremonial law — offering sacrifices.

Over the years the priests developed an above-the-law mentality. "The law is for *them*, not us. Because of our position, we can change the law as we please." Eli's sons were prime examples. (Read I Samuel 2:12-17.) Overall, the priesthood degenerated into a dress parade and ceremonial show. They developed an indifferent mentality toward their obligations. Ritualism reduced the ceremonies to "just another service." The people brought deformed, polluted sacrifices (Malachi 1:7-8). The priests shrugged and went through the ritual of offering them to God. They ignored the rising tide of sin and corruption.

THINK ABOUT IT: What warnings do you see for today's ministers in the spiritual decline of the priesthood?

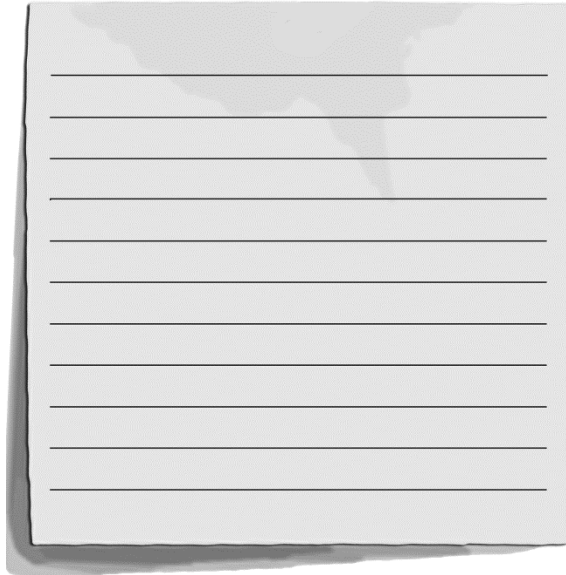
Prophets

God needed spokesmen whose voices would ring out in palaces and on the streets. Unlike priests who inherited their position, these men would be called of God. No royal bloodline required. No diplomas hanging on their walls.



No contacts in high places. No strings attached. They were God's agents. They would answer only to Him.

The word *prophet* comes from the Hebrew word *nabi*, which means, "to bubble forth as a fountain." The Greek word *pro-phemi* means, "to speak forth truths for another."



DIG DEEPER: Use your concordance to find the first prophet in the Bible. Does your finding surprise you? Why or why not?

Prophets looked through God's eyes. They spoke God's words. They were fired by a divine unction. They could not "not speak."

"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart

as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9).

True prophets were lonely, solitary men. They were not afraid to denounce kings and rebuke the mighty. The prophet Nathan confronted David with his sin (II Samuel 12:1-14). The prophet Elijah rebuked King Ahab (I Kings 18:18-19). When Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" several prophets were named, but not one priest (Mark 8:27-28).

The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah in minute detail, as the Holy Ghost moved them. (See II Peter 1:21.) However, prophets were human. They did not have 24/7 inerrant inspiration. When David inquired about the possibility of building a temple, Nathan encouraged him to do so, a clear-cut case of "thus saith Nathan." That night God corrected Nathan. (Read II Samuel 7:1-13.) Nathan returned to David with another message—one beginning "thus saith the LORD."



DIG DEEPER: What was the test for judging between a false prophet and a true one? (Read Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:17-22.) Does this test hold true today? Explain.

The minor prophets were both near- and far-sighted. Their messages turned God's search light on their times, exposing the deeds of men and nations. Their prophecies reach into our day and beyond, giving glimpses of things yet to come.

THEIR MESSAGES

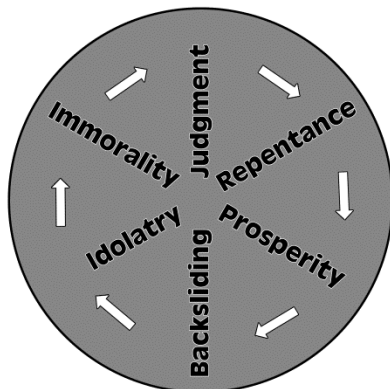
Judgment

Studying Israel's history reveals a cycle.

When Israel repented, they prospered. After a time of prosperity, they became comfortable and developed an "I-deserve-this" mentality. They felt that they did not need God and scoffed at His laws. In simple terms, they backslid.

In Romans, the apostle Paul described not only his day and our day, but the times of the minor prophets.

Israel's Cycle of Sin



"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:21-23).

A longing in man compels him to worship. When he ceases to worship God, he finds something or someone to worship. Whether man bows to graven images, possessions, power, other men, or self, it is idolatry.

DIG DEEPER: The twelve tribes failed to destroy the Canaanites as God commanded. Read Numbers 33:55; Judges 1:19, 21, 27-34; 2:13. What were the results of Israel's failure to rid Canaan of idol-worshippers?

Idolatry is contagious. Unless every idol-worship germ is destroyed, it can infiltrate a whole nation.

Idolatry led Israel into immorality. God commanded the Hebrews to destroy the Canaanites to

rid the land of their immorality that sickened Him.

THINK ABOUT IT: What affect does immorality have upon the "land"? (Consider Numbers 35:33; Psalm 106:34-38; and II Chronicles 7:14.)

Immorality led to judgment. Many times judgment brought Israel to their knees in repentance, and the cycle began again. This is evident in the Books of Judges, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles.

Thus, the need for prophets. God never sends judgment without first giving warning and allowing man time to repent. The minor prophets did not tiptoe around sin. They pointed their fingers in the face of the kings, priests, and paupers, calling sin "sin." They focused the spotlight of God's Word on dark corners and behind locked doors. Sin can only be eradicated after it is exposed.

We can read the books of the Minor Prophets in one setting, but they were spread over several generations. As generations passed, people developed an immunity to the exhortations of the men of God, just as men have today. (Compare Ecclesiastes 8:11 with II Peter 3:3-4.) Judgment does not always come quickly, but it surely comes.

As the prophets foretold, judgment fell upon Israel when the ten northern tribes were dispersed abroad by the Assyrians (722 BC) and the two southern tribes were carried into captivity in Babylon (586 BC).

Hope

God's Word is always balanced, offering both admonition and encouragement. The prophets' messages warned of judgment, but they also offered hope of restoration. Because of God's covenants with Abraham and David, Israel was not totally wiped out.

From the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) until the last book in the Old Testament, prophetic utterances in God's Word placed signs along the way pointing toward the One who would bring hope to a sin-driven world.

- Hosea prophesied that God would call His Son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1).
- Joel promised that God would pour His Spirit out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29).
- Amos foretold that God would raise up the tabernacle of David, and plant the Jews again in their homeland (Amos 9:11, 15).
- Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish was a type of the gospel – Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Jonah 1-4; Matthew 12:40).
- Micah pinpointed the place of Jesus' birth (Micah 5:2).
- Zephaniah dropped a hint about the Day of Pentecost when people would worship God with a pure language (Zephaniah 3:9).
- Haggai foretold the day when the "desire of all nations" would come and fill God's house with glory (Haggai 2:7).
- Zechariah prophesied more about the coming Messiah than any other minor prophet. (See Zechariah 3:8; 9:9; 12:8; 11:12-13; 12:10; 13:1.)
- Malachi anticipated the coming of one who would prepare the way for the Messiah (Malachi 3:1; 4:5).

So while God's flagmen stood at the intersection of history shouting, "Bridge out! Turn around! Go back!" They also promised, "The Messiah is

coming! The LORD will be the hope of His people. Of His kingdom there shall be no end.” (See Isaiah 9:7; Joel 3:16.)

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where on the cycle of Israel’s history is your nation? Where are you?

2. How do you see the balance of judgment and hope portrayed in the gospel?

3. What is the meaning of the word *prophet*?

4. Tell about a time when you felt God’s message “bubble forth as a fountain” out of your lips?

5. Because a man is a prophet, does that mean that everything he says is right? Explain.

ASSIGNMENT

- Read the Book of Hosea, a romance story. Title the book and each chapter.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 2

Hosea, the Prophet of Love

Book of Hosea

Key Scripture

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:4).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

Hosea’s marriage was a living parable. Gomer’s adulterous actions depicted Israel’s spiritual adultery, while Hosea’s love for his unfaithful wife portrayed God’s love for humanity. True love is tough—a balance of mercy and discipline.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

1. Tell the story of Hosea and Gomer from the viewpoint of Hosea, Gomer, one of the children, or an unknown Israelite.
2. List three ways in which the relationship between Hosea and Gomer parallels God’s relationship with Israel.
3. List the seven steps to backsliding.
4. Give a present day example of tough love.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Marriage
 - A. Hosea and Gomer's Love Story
 - B. God and Israel's Love Story
- II. The Message
 - A. Seven Steps to Backsliding
 - B. Mercy Versus Judgment
- III. The Fulfillment
 - A. Israel's Decision
 - B. God's Response

BOOK OF HOSEA

QUICK LOOK	14 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Hosea?	Son of Beeri	Married to an unfaithful wife	Three children
Meaning of his name	"Salvation"		
Time of his prophecy	760-710 BC. During the decline and fall of the northern kingdom of Israel	Hosea began prophesying during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel.	Hosea possibly continued his prophetic ministry until Jerusalem's fall in 722 BC.
Historical background	II Kings 14-16	II Chronicles 26-32	
To whom addressed	Northern Kingdom identified as "Ephraim"	(1:1) In the days of Jeroboam II	(5:1) <i>"Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel"</i>
Why written	To illustrate God's love for unfaithful Israel	To identify Israel's sins and apostasy and call them to repentance (6:1)	To express God's compassion and promise of restoration (11:4; 14:4)

Key verses	(3:1) <i>“Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend . . . according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods”</i>	(6:1) <i>“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.”</i>	(11:1) <i>“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”</i>
Jesus seen in Hosea	Matthew 2:13-18 quotes Hosea 11:1— <i>“Out of Egypt I have called my son”</i> (2:15).	(13:4) The only Savior of His people (13:14) Redeemer	Redemption from sin and death came through Jesus (the Savior and Redeemer)
Themes in Hosea	Israel’s unfaithfulness to the Lord	God’s judgment	God’s love with the hope of restoration
A LOOK AT MAIN TOPICS	Chapters 1-3	Chapters 4-14	
Focus	Faithful Husband and Adulterous Wife	Faithful Lord and Adulterous Israel	
Topic	Marriage of Hosea	Message of Hosea	
	1. Hosea’s family story (1)	1. Israel’s unfaithfulness (4-8)	
	2. Hosea’s unfaithful wife (2)	2. God’s judgment predicted (9-10)	
	3. Hosea’s love in buying back his wife (3)	3. God’s love for Israel (11:1-11)	
	Hosea’s story illustrates God’s love for unfaithful Israel.	4. God’s anger against Israel’s sin (11:12-13:16)	
		5. Prediction of Israel’s restoration (14)	

THE MARRIAGE

Hosea and Gomer’s Love Story

“You want me to what?” Hosea was shocked. “You want me, a man of God, to marry a prostitute? But why?”

God's answer was firm. "To give Israel a picture of their unfaithfulness to Me." This was not the typical wedding blessing.

Hosea's mind whirled with anxiety and questions. Yet in obedience to God's command, he chose Gomer for his wife. In return God planted in Hosea's heart the same love for Gomer that He had for Israel.

For the first months, maybe even a few years, after the wedding, life was good. Hosea worked hard and provided well for his bride. They had a son whom God named *Jezreel*, meaning "God scatters."

Discontentment nibbled at Gomer. She longed for more—more riches, more attention, more freedom. How many nights did Hosea plead with her to count her blessings? How many tears did he shed pouring out his heart to God for his failing marriage? When did he realize that his wife was having an affair?

When Gomer's second child was born, Hosea knew it was not his child. God said, "Call her name Loruhamah [no mercy or compassion]: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away" (Hosea 1:6, brackets the author's).

Still Gomer remained in Hosea's house under his protection and provision. Anger. Tension. Strife. No doubt the children fussed and whined, reflecting their mother's irritation.

When the third child was born, God said, "Call his name Loammi [no kin of mine]: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God" (Hosea 1:9, brackets the author's).

Hosea used numerous descriptive images in his writing:

- "I will break the bow of Israel" (1:5).
- "The valley of Achor for a door of hope" (2:15)
- "A backsliding heifer" (4:16)
- "I will be unto Ephraim as a moth" (5:12).
- "Your goodness is as a morning cloud" (6:4).
- "Ephraim is a cake not turned" (7:8).
- "They have sown the wind" (8:7).
- "Like grapes in the wilderness" (9:10)
- "King is cut off as the foam upon the water" (10:7).
- "[God] is a merchant" (12:7).
- "As the early dew . . . as the chaff . . . as the smoke" (13:3)
- "I am like a green fir tree" (14:8).

Hosea's patience reached its limits. He had had enough. "I will hedge up thy ways with thorns, and make a wall" (2:6). Exasperated with his wife's unfaithfulness, Hosea drew lines and set boundaries. He warned her that she was headed for a life of shame and suffering. Yet Gomer refused to change.

The last thread holding their marriage together broke. Gomer's heart hardened. Hosea's heart shattered. Gomer left, seeking fulfillment in the beds of other men. Their family scattered.

The prophet's private life was a public scandal. Everyone knew. They pointed. They whispered. They shook their heads. Oh the humiliation!

Then one day Hosea received some shocking news. Gomer's fantasies had crumbled. Her indebtedness was more than she could pay. She was for sale to the highest bidder. God said, "Go, Hosea, and redeem your adulteress wife."

Hosea, moved by deep love, scraped together fifteen pieces of silver (the price of a slave) and one and one-half homers of barley (129 gallons/568.23 liters) and redeemed his wife. Again he took her under his protection, with the stipulation that she was to live as a widow in a secluded place until he decided to take her back to his bed.

Gomer's unfaithfulness battered and bruised Hosea's heart until he could take no more. Tough love dictated that Gomer prove herself faithful. Hosea's love for Gomer opened a door of hope in the valley of trouble (2:15).

God and Israel's Love Story

Israel, while you are gossiping about your prophet and his marriage, look in the mirror. See the message his marriage is portraying. In Gomer can you not see yourself? Reflected in Hosea's sad eyes can you not see God? Turn from your sins, Israel, and look in the mirror.

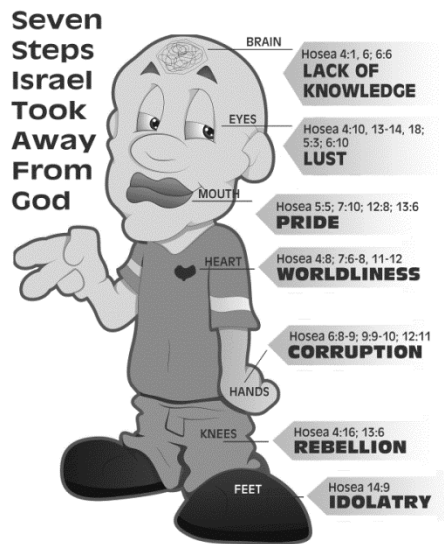
"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD" (5:4).

Their marriage was a living portrait of God's relationship with Israel, His bride. The question is: Why didn't Israel get the picture?

THE MESSAGE

Seven Steps to Backsliding

Let's look at the steps to Israel's downfall. They did not necessarily take these steps in numerical order, but each step was part of their backsliding.



1. Brain: Lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1, 6; 6:6)

The people were ignorant of God's laws because they rejected knowledge.

Israel said, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10). How dangerous. To reject knowledge is to invite judgment.

A grandmother was explaining to her grandson about tithing. The little boy put his hands over his ears and said, "Oh, Grandma, don't teach me that!" Like that little boy,

Israel did not want to hear the truth.

2. Eyes: Lust (Hosea 4:10, 13-14, 18; 5:3; 6:10)

Lust is a strong desire or craving for sex, power, or pleasure.

The heathen's immoral worship seduced Israel. They saw and they lusted. They built altars where they offered their children as burnt offerings. They engaged in prostitution and sodomy, and indulged their flesh in every immoral act imaginable. Soon they were addicted. Lust, like any addiction, is never satisfied. (See Proverbs 27:20.)

3. Mouth: Pride (II Kings 14:23-27; Hosea 5:5; 7:10; 12:8; 13:6)

Note what Ephraim (another name for the ten tribes of Israel) said in 12:8. Compare this to Revelation 3:14-18. Israel gloried in their shame. They delighted in iniquity.

4. Heart: Worldliness (Hosea 4:8; 7:6-8, 11-12)

When Ephraim mixed with the world, they became like a pancake not turned – half raw on one side and burned on the other, fit only to be fed to swine.

God also compared Ephraim to a silly dove caught in a net, because they sought alliances with Egypt and Assyria. They were foolish enough to think that Egypt and Assyria could save them from God's judgment. Even in those alliances, Israel was deceptive, working one nation against the other. Because of their desire to align with the world, they lost their land, honor, and God's favor.

5. Hands: Corruption (Hosea 6:8-9; 9:9-10; 12:11)

Violence filled the land. Blood covered the hands of the people and the priests—the blood of their children sacrificed to Baal and the blood of the innocent murdered by gangs of priests. “By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood” (4:2). Through and through the Israelites were corrupted.

6. Knees: Rebellion (Hosea 4:16; 13:16)

A backsliding heifer refers to a calf that digs its hooves into the ground and refuses to be led. Rebellion begins with stiffening of the knees, refusing to bow in submission to authority. So Israel pulled against God's leading.

His plan for the twelve tribes of Israel was for King David's family to rule. The ten northern tribes rebelled against God's plan. “They have set up kings, but not by me” (8:4). They sowed the wind. They reaped the whirlwind (8:7).

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (I Samuel 15:23).

Rebellion always leads to judgment.

7. Feet: Idolatry (Hosea 14:9)

The feet are the foundation of the body. When Israel turned their feet to walk in the ways of Jeroboam I, they lost their balance. (See I Kings 16:19.) Every time Israel called on the name of an idol, they rejected the authority and

protection of their groom, Jehovah God. Every time they bowed at the altar of a heathen god, they committed spiritual adultery.

THINK ABOUT IT: Of the seven steps to backsliding, which one do you think is usually the first?

Mercy Versus Judgment

God always balances judgment with mercy. In Hosea's writing note the warnings of judgment followed by promises of mercy.

DIG DEEPER: Read each passage given under judgment. Keep reading until you find mercy. Insert that Scripture reference in the mercy column.

JUDGMENT	MERCY
1:2-9	
2:2-13	
4:1-5:14	
6:4-11:7	
11:12-13:16	

God's "I wills" to Israel were conditional. If Israel would return to the Lord (14:1) and repent (14:2), if they would realize man could not help them and cease to worship idols (14:3), they would find mercy.

DIG DEEPER: List here God's three "I wills" (14:4-5).

Can you hear the anguish in God's voice?

"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" (Psalm 81:13).

THE FULFILLMENT

Israel's Decision

Now, Israel, turn from looking in the mirror to stand at the window. Look into the distance and see the consequences of unfaithfulness. As surely as mercy was shown you through many generations, judgment is coming.

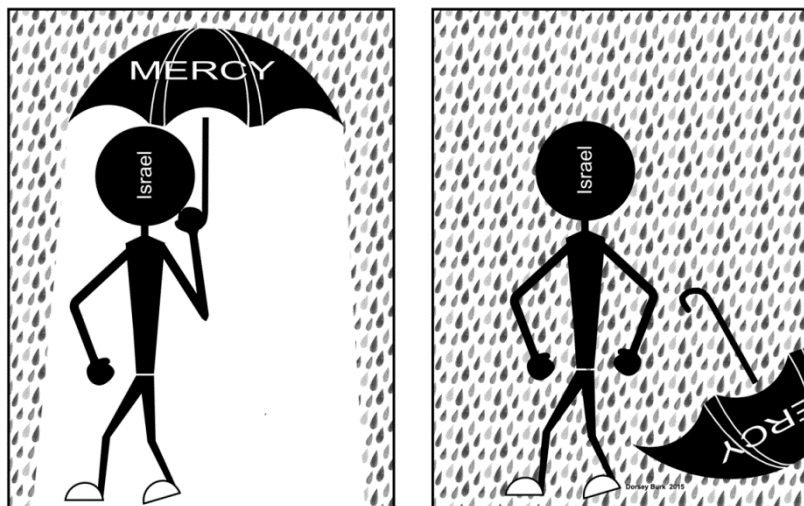
As long as Israel walked according to God's laws, they were protected by His mercy. When they cast off that which was good, they forsook their own mercies. God's love dictated that they be chastened. (Read Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:5-11.)

In 722 BC the ten northern tribes were carried off into exile in Assyria; since then they have wandered among the nations. (See Hosea 9:17.) True love is tough. It was tough on Israel to pay for their sins. It was tough on God to chasten His people.

God's Response

But, because of His covenant with His friend Abraham and His servant David, God had not forgotten His people. Just as Hosea bought back Gomer, so God promised to redeem the nation of Israel.

GOD'S JUDGMENT



Over and over Israel was unfaithful to her husband, the LORD God. Yet God never stopped loving her. Love endures all things; it is tough. God's love was so strong that He sent His only begotten Son (His flesh and blood) to Calvary to redeem humankind.

Hosea's warnings ring in our ears. "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" (Hosea 10:12).

Unlike Gomer and Israel, may we heed God's words: "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" (Hosea 12:6).

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In one sentence describe Hosea.

2. Describe Gomer in one sentence.

3. Why did God tell Hosea to marry a prostitute?

4. Being in the will of God brought Hosea much pain. Name other biblical characters who also suffered while obeying God.

5. Why did God keep extending mercy to Israel?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Hosea said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Joel, marking the verses that speak the loudest to you.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 3

Joel, the Prophet of Pentecost

Book of Joel

Key Scripture

“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” (Joel 2:28-29).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

When God’s people refused to heed His word, even the land suffered. When the people repented, God restored the land to its fruitfulness. When people groups or individuals disregard God’s laws, they reap sin’s consequences, but with repentance they experience restoration.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

1. Explain how repentance is connected to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
2. Connect restoration of the Jews to a right relationship with God to the restoration of the land.
3. List both good and bad things that the Day of the Lord will bring to pass.

Lesson Outline

- I. A Time of Judgment (Joel 1:1-2:10)
 - A. A Time of Trouble
 - B. Time to Repent
- II. The Promise of Pentecost (Joel 2:12-32)
 - A. After Repentance, Pentecost
 - B. Upon All Flesh
- III. The Day of the Lord (Joel 3:1-21)
 - A. A Time of Judgment
 - B. A Time of Restoration

BOOK OF JOEL

QUICK LOOK	3 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Joel?	Son of Pethuel (1:1)	No other information	
Meaning of his name	"Yahweh is God"		
Time of his prophecy	830-820 BC. (<i>N. Geisler</i>) Exact date unknown (<i>varied dates suggested</i>)	One view: pre-exilic (<i>early as 830 BC. or just before the exile</i>)	Another view: post-exilic (<i>as early as 515 BC or as late as 350 BC</i>)
Historical background	II Kings 12 (Biblical reference listed by Geisler)		
To whom addressed	Judah and Jerusalem	Reference to the priests (1:9,13-14) and the Temple (2:15)	Joel 2—Reference to Assyrian invasion implied?
Why written	Warning about impending judgment	Bad news: Judah's sinfulness will be punished	Good News: Promise of future blessing for the faithful
Key verses	(1:15) " <i>Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand . . .</i> "	(2:12-13) " <i>Turn you even to me with all your heart . . . for he is gracious.</i> "	(2:28-29) " <i>I will pour out my spirit upon on all flesh.</i> "

Themes in Joel	Day of the LORD: Punishment for transgression	Promise of God's Spirit	Promise of forgiveness and restoration
Jesus seen in Joel	Joel's prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21).	<i>To him (Jesus) give all the prophets witness. . . (Acts 10:43).</i>	Another account of His Spirit being poured out (Acts 10:44-48).
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Chapter 1	Invasion of Locusts	The destructive Day of the Lord (1:15)	Call to repentance with fasting (1:14)
Chapter 2:1-27	Army of Locusts from the North	The great and terrible Day of the Lord (2:11)	Call to repentance “ <i>with fasting and with weeping . . . for he is gracious and merciful</i> ” (2:12-14).
Chapter 2:28-32	Promise of God's Spirit Bringing Salvation (2:28, 32)	The redemptive Day of the Lord (2:28)	“ <i>And it shall come to pass . . .</i> ” (2:28). This verse shifts from the near view to the far view of Joel's prophecy.
Chapter 3	Judgment on the Nations	Call to prepare for the Battle of Armageddon (3:9-15)	<i>The climax of the Lord's salvation for Judah and Jerusalem (3:16-21)</i>

TIME OF JUDGMENT

(Joel 1-2:10)

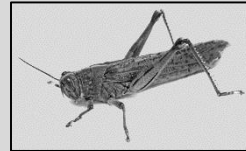
A Time of Trouble

A loud whirring filled the air! A thick black cloud blotted out the sun. Farmers in the fields watched in horror! Mother screamed for their children to get in the house “right now!” Millions of locust invaded the land, chewing, swarming, crawling, and consuming. Soon they stripped every green plant bare. Vineyards, wheat and barley fields, olive and fruit trees withered. They wiped out the harvest.

In the midst of the devastation a man of God stood tall. “Listen, you old men! Look around you! Have you ever seen anything like this? Did your fathers see anything like this?”

Gray heads shook. No one had seen such destruction wrought by insects. Dimly they remembered their forefathers telling about the plagues that hit Egypt. But they were never quite sure if those stories were fact or fiction, or a mix.

When fully developed a locust is 2½ inches (.0065 meter) long and has a head like a horse. A locust travels approximately twelve miles (7.45 km) an hour.



The prophet Joel raised his voice. “‘Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.’ Don’t ever forget this!”

Then came the drought. Streams and rivers dried up. Wild fires raged. Dust storms choked men and beasts. The barns were empty. Animals shrunk to skeletons. Children wailed with hunger. The altars were bare. No grains or animals were available for sacrifices.

“Joy [was] withered away from the sons of men” (1:12). The house of worship was as desolate as the land.

Joel shouted, “Blow the trumpet! Sound the alarm! The Day of the Lord is nigh.” He warned the people of Jerusalem and Judah that the plague of locusts was only a foreshadowing of an even greater coming invasion—a massive military invasion.

Time to Repent

He ordered the priests:

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children. . . . Weep between the porch and the altar” (2:15-17).

In the midst of his dire warnings, Joel dropped words of encouragement. All hope was not lost. There was yet a chance. If the people would repent, God would “repent and leave a blessing behind him.” (Read 2:12-15, 18-27.)

When the people were cursed, the land was cursed. When the people broke up the fallow ground of their hearts and softened it with tears of repentance, God rained His blessings down upon the land. As the people, so the land.

Would God's people ever learn?

Joel, like all true prophets, was both far- and near-sighted. He focused the peoples' attention on what God was doing around them. Then he raised their eyes and gave them a glimpse of what God was going to do – the present and the future.

Joel's message in a capsule was

- the invasion of the locusts,
- the promise of Pentecost, and
- the restoration of the Jews.

Joel (meaning "Jehovah is God") prophesied to Judah, the southern kingdom. He did not mention idols, kings, Assyria, or Babylon in his writing, but he did name the Philistines, Edom, and Egypt. He referenced his day, as well as the yet-to-come Great Tribulation and Millennial. The exact date of his writing is unknown. His message is timeless. (See the chart of Kings and Prophets, page 9.)

In Deuteronomy 28, God pronounced blessings and curses upon His people. (Read Deuteronomy 28:15, 24, 38-42.) They failed to heed the warnings, so judgment swept down upon them. Locusts plagued the land. The heavens were shut up, and the rain ceased.

Seeing the devastation around him, Joel ordered the priests to sound a wake-up call. "Blow the trumpet. Sound the alarm." He called everyone, from the oldest to the youngest, to a solemn assembly. It was time for the priests to fall on their faces between the porch and the altar. It was time for them to lead the people back to the Lord with fasting, weeping, and mourning. It was time for the people "to rend their hearts and not their garments" (Joel 2:13).

THINK ABOUT IT: In the Old Testament, the Jews tore their garments to show grief, remorse, and repentance. Why did Joel tell the people not to rend their garments, but their hearts? Write your answer on the next page.

Repentance always moves the heart of God and stays His hand.

“For he [the Lord God] is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (2:13, brackets the author’s).

THINK ABOUT IT: God repented? What is meant in Joel 2:13-14 by “God repenteth”? Give one other incidence where God is said to have repented.

When Joel lifted up his eyes beyond the devastated fields around him, God showed him what would happen in Judah when the priests wept between the porch and the altar and the people tore their hearts (2:19-26).

- Their reproach would be taken away.
- The army from the north would be defeated.
- Fields and meadows would provide food for the animals.
- The former and latter rains would come.
- Barns and vats would be filled.
- What had been lost in the locust plague would be restored.
- Their empty stomachs would be filled.
- They would never be ashamed.

THE PROMISE OF PENTECOST

(Joel 2:12-32)

After Repentance, Pentecost

God gave Joel a glimpse of a coming glorious event—the Day of Pentecost. Surely what he saw put a song in his heart and a dance in his feet. Note that this vision of the outpouring of the Spirit came *after* the call for repentance. (Memorize Joel 2:28-29.)

First, repentance; then Pentecost.

THINK ABOUT IT: Why is repentance a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Ghost?

Upon All Flesh

In the Old Testament God's Spirit came temporarily upon an exclusive few, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Gideon, Samson, and others. God's Spirit moved upon the prophets as they wrote. (See II Peter 1:21.) But the message that God's Spirit would be poured out *upon all flesh* surprised and even shocked the prejudiced Jews.



The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob felt that they had a monopoly on the God of their forefathers. As God's "chosen people," they developed a mentality *we've-got-it-and-you-can't-have-it*. Instead of being God's priests and ministering to the world around them, they refused to share with other nations the truths God had given them.

At some time in his or her life, everyone is touched by the Spirit of God. (See Acts 10:34 and II Peter 3:9.) Whether a person is filled with the Spirit depends on whether he or she is willing to empty out self (repentance) and open to the infilling of the Holy Ghost.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter took as his text Joel 2:28-32. Brother, "this is that!" (See Acts 2:16-21.) Joel's prophesy came to pass as the Spirit of God was poured out *upon all flesh*. The Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the end time harvest. God continues to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh around the globe.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

(3:1-21)

A Time of Judgment

Joel was among the first to announce “the day of the LORD.” He described that day as . . .

- a destruction (1:15)
- night (2:1)
- Who can abide it? (2:11)
- great and terrible (2:31)
- near (3:14)

Joel’s vision reached far beyond Pentecost to a day that is yet to come — the great and terrible day of the LORD. No one likes to think about the day when God takes vengeance on the enemies of the Jews and those that “obey not the gospel.” (See II Thessalonians 1:7-9.) But that day is soon coming.

A Time of Restoration

While it will be a day of judgment, it will also be a time of restoration. Woven throughout Joel’s writing is this promise.

1. The devastated land will be restored to fruitfulness (2:21-26).
2. Mankind will be restored to a relationship with God (2:28-29).
3. The Jews will be restored to their land (3:1-2).

Jewish history includes numerous cycles where the people fell into idolatry, were oppressed by their enemies, cried out to God for deliverance, and were restored.

In 722 BC the Assyrians carried the northern ten tribes (Israel) into captivity. Because the two southern tribes (Judah) occasionally had a good king who led them to repentance, they survived as a nation over one hundred years longer than the northern kingdom. But eventually judgment fell on Judah as well. Between 606-586 BC King Nebuchadnezzar’s army invaded Judah and carried captives to Babylon, including Daniel and the three Hebrew children. For seventy years Judah remained in captivity; then they returned to rebuild

Jerusalem. They never again as a nation returned to idolatry. They had learned that lesson.

However, when Jesus Christ came, they rejected Him as their Messiah. Then in AD 70 the Romans invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that ninety-seven thousand Jews were carried captive and divided as slaves among the Romans. (Compare Joel 3:3-6 and Nahum 3:10.) The Jews have suffered incredible persecution, but God has not forsaken His people.

Joel prophesied of a great army that would come to fight for God's people in the great and terrible Day of the Lord (2:1-11). He described that army:

1. A great people and strong
2. No group like it in world history
3. Fire before and behind them
4. Appear, run, and sound like horses
5. Well organized
6. Indestructible as they are sealed
7. Going to Jerusalem
8. Under the command of the Lord

Joel further described this army and battle in chapter 3. (Also read John's description of this army in Revelation 7-9.) His prophecy called for repentance and promised restoration. It transcended his generation and echoed down the halls of time to us.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Quote Joel 2:28-29.

2. How did the sins of the people affect the land and the animals?

3. Agree or disagree: As the people, so the land. (Be prepared to defend your answer.)

4. Why were the priests commanded to weep between the altar and the porch?

5. What affect did Joel say it would have upon the land if the priests and people repented? How does this apply to your nation today?

6. On the Day of Pentecost where did Peter get his text?

7. Why were the Jews surprised when God poured out His Spirit upon all flesh?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Joel said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Amos, underlining a key word in each chapter.

Lesson 4

Amos, the Shepherd from Tekoa

Book of Amos

Key Scripture

“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. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate” (Amos 5:14-15).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

In any culture or time, prosperity without godliness will lead to greed and hypocrisy, resulting in God’s eventual judgment.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

1. Describe the moral and social climate in Israel in the time of Amos.
2. Relate one of Amos’s visions and apply it to Amos’s day and to ours.
3. Quote the key scripture – Amos 5:14-15.

Lesson Outline

- I. Judgment Pending: “For three transgressions . . . for four” (Amos 1-2).
- II. The Charges against Israel: “Hear this word” (Amos 3-6).
- III. Amos’s Visions: “Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed me” (Amos 7-9).

BOOK OF AMOS

QUICK LOOK	9 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Amos?	A herdman from Tekoa (1:1)	A small village about six miles from Jerusalem	Amos also gathered sycamore fruit [wild figs] (7:14-15).
Meaning of his name	“Burden Bearer”		
Time of his prophecy	755-750 BC (<i>Geisler timeline</i>)	During reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel	Approximately 32-38 years before Israel’s Assyrian captivity
Historical background	II Kings 14 (<i>according to Geisler</i>)	Jeroboam II (North)	
To whom addressed	Israel, the northern kingdom	Amos was from Judah, but he prophesied to Israel.	He spoke from Bethel, the king’s court (7:13).
Why written	To call the prosperous and idol worshipping northern tribes to repentance	Amos teaches God’s hatred of evil and the sanctity of His law. He refers often to the law of Moses.	Amos calls for social justice in caring for the poor, the widow and the weak (2:6-7; 5:11-12; 8:4-6).
Key verses	(5:14-15) “ <i>Seek good, and not evil</i> ”	(5:24) “ <i>Let judgment run down . . . and righteousness.</i> ”	
Themes in Amos	Judgment on sin and false worship	Evils of prosperity	Call for social justice
Jesus seen in Amos	Prophetically, the book reveals Christ as the rebuilders of the “tabernacle of David” (9:11)—See Acts 15:16-17	Jesus echoed Amos in His teaching to minister to the needy (Matthew 25:31-46).	

A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS	(adapted from N. Geisler)	
Chapters 1-2	Eight Oracles	Judgment on Neighbors: 1. Syria (1:3-5) 2. Philistia (1:6-8) 3. Phoenicia (1:9-10) 4. Edom (1:11-12) 5. Ammon (1:13-15) 6. Moab (2:1-3)	Judgment on Judah and Israel 7. Judah (2:4-5) 8. Israel (2:6-16)
Chapters 3-6	Three Sermons: Sin and Judgments	“Hear this word” begins each sermon.	C3—Reason for judgment C4—Result: destruction C5-6—Call for repentance
Chapters 7-9	Six Visions: Judgments and Restoration	“The Lord showed me” or “I saw” begins each vision. 1. Locusts (7:1-3) 2. Fire (7:4-6)	3. Plumbline (7:7-9) 4. Summer fruit (8:1-14) 5. Smitten temple (9:1-10) 6. Restoration (9:11-15)

JUDGMENT PENDING

(Amos 1-2)

“For three transgressions . . . and for four”

Amos (meaning “burden bearer”) was not a PK (prophet’s kid), but a simple shepherd and gatherer of sycamore fruit who lived in Judah, southeast of Jerusalem. He did not inherit his position as a prophet. He was called of God. His job description was not one to be desired. God chose this humble but strong man to deliver an unpopular message to Israel, the northern kingdom.

Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, a time of prosperity for both kingdoms. King Uzziah



The leaves of the sycamore are similar in shape to mulberry and the fruit looks very similar to the common fig, except it is smaller. The prophet Amos worked the most humble job in the society of the day. No one but the poorest cultivated sycamore figs, for it was hard labor.

Israel's national life has three eras:

1. **Wandering tribes**
(herdsmen) from the time of Abraham to Joshua.
2. **Farmers**
from the time of Joshua to Amos.
3. **Merchants**
(commercial) from the time of Amos to the present day.

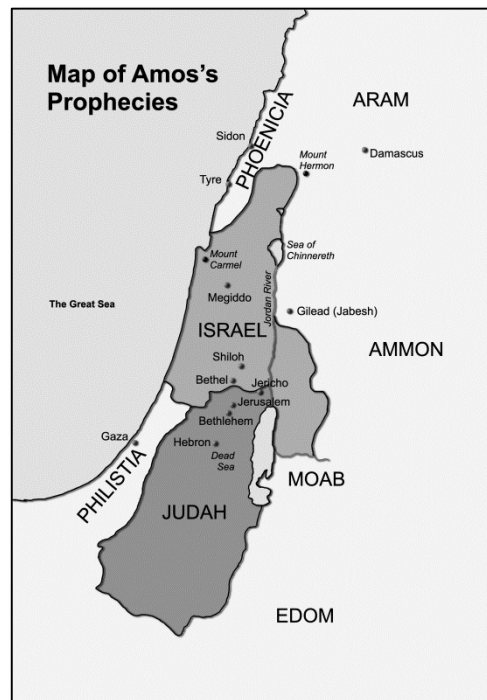
owned farms and vineyards, constructed water reservoirs, built fortified cities, and assembled a massive, powerful military. King Jeroboam II was a skillful, evil politician. During his reign Israel enjoyed economic prosperity and military peace. Externally the government and economy of Israel was stable. Business was flourishing.

Although it was a peaceful and prosperous era, internally Israel was rotten. Ease, luxury, and idleness led to open sin. Idolatry, injustice, greed, hypocrisy, oppression, and arrogance were commonplace. A wide gap separated the rich and the poor. The wealthy lived in luxury and drank wine in bowls, an example of gluttony. On the other hand the poor and needy were oppressed and crushed (5:11-12; 8:6). Illegal and immoral slavery thrived because of over-taxation and land grabbing.

Although many people had abandoned real faith in God, they still pretended to be religious. They engaged in superficial religious exercises. Their hollow, insincere worship was an insult to God's holiness.

Amos chapters 1 and 2 contain warnings to eight brutal, corrupt nations. God has His eyes on all people, not just the Jews. He will bring everyone to judgment.

- Damascus had thrashed Gilead with instruments of iron (1:3).
- Gaza and Tyrus (Tyre) held Judah captive and turned captives over to Edom (1:6). They broke their covenant with their brothers.
- Edom attacked Judah without pity (1:11). Ammon brutally murdered the innocent to enlarge their borders (1:13).
- Moab took vengeance in their own hands (2:1).
- Judah despised the law of God (2:4).



- Israel indulged in idolatry, immorality, social injustice, drunkenness, and ridiculed the prophets (2:6-12).

Notice the instructions to each of these judgments:

“For three transgressions, and for four.” [This] seems to say, Notice the instructions to each of these judgments: “For three transgressions, and for four.” [This] seems to say, “Three transgressions would have filled up your measure for the wrath of God to fall upon you. Had you committed no more than three, it would require punishment. However, you have exceeded that. Your crimes have reached a stage where there is no holding back of God’s judgment. Had there been only the three, God could have disciplined you and that would have been the end of it. There is now so much evidence against you that God will have to destroy you.” (*Word Aflame Adult Teacher*, 1983-1984. (Pentecostal Publishing House, Hazelwood, MO. © 1983) p. 9-10.

God had had enough!

THE CHARGES AGAINST ISRAEL

(Amos 3-6)

“Hear this word”

Chapters 3 through 6 contain three messages of doom, each beginning with “Hear this word” (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). Judgment was deserved and decreed.

Of all nations, Israel was most blessed, yet they refused to walk in God’s ways.

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities” (3:2).

Jehovah’s choice of Israel as His earthly family was conditional upon their obedience. While God’s mercy is “everlasting,” it has boundaries. Israel had crossed the line. Judgment was certain.

Amos 4 begins with a warning to the kine (cows) of Bashan—the fat, contented women of Samaria who oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. Throughout this chapter warnings resound. Israel would suffer . . .

- famine/cleanness of teeth (4:6),
- intermittent rain (4:7),
- scorched/mildewed crops (4:9),
- diseased produce and pestilences (4:10), and
- defeats in battle with cities destroyed (4:10-11).

Amos reminded the people of the powerful God that they would soon face.

“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” (4:13).

The words of the prophet from Tekoa echoed down the streets of Bethel and into the byways of Israel. “Prepare to meet thy God.” Yet the people refused to heed. Justice demanded judgment.

“But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (5:24).

Amos 5 and 6 is a lamentation over Israel. They had passed the point of no return. “The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise; she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up” (5:2).

Why did Israel fall?

1. She spurned righteousness (5:7).
2. She hated reproof (5:10).
3. She carelessly considered the day of reckoning (5:18-19).
4. She had formal and insincere worship (5:21-26).
5. She refused to seek Jehovah and live (5:4, 6, 14).

Amos’s words failed to penetrate the hearts of the comfortable, complacent people. “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion” (6:1). “It can’t happen to us” was the mindset of the day.

Israel was steeped in injustice, immorality, and idolatry. They felt secure in the natural fortification of the mountains of Samaria. They believed the mountains afforded them ample time to prepare for an attack. They shut their eyes to the calamities that had befallen Calnah, Hamath, and Gath at the hand of their enemies.

They lounged on their ivory beds, played their soothing music, and filled their bellies with meat and wine while the dark cloud of God's judgment hovered above their heads.

THINK ABOUT IT: In what ways does your nation resemble Israel?

AMOS'S VISIONS

(Amos 7-9)

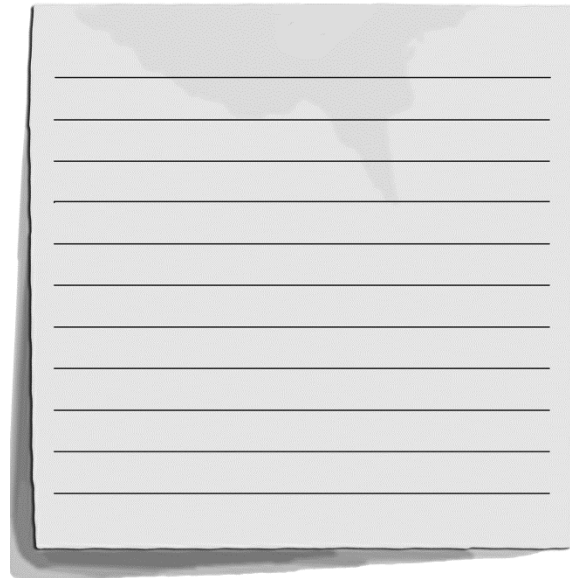
"Thus hath the Lord God shewed me."

In chapters 7 through 9, God gave Amos five visions of Israel's future:

1. Grasshoppers (7:1-3)
2. Fire (7:4-6)
3. Plumb line (7:7-9)
4. The basket of summer fruit (8:1-3)
5. The smitten sanctuary (9:1-4)

Materialism motivated the people. The Sabbath and other religious holidays inconvenienced them. "When will the new moon end? We need to get back to buying and selling. Will the Sabbath ever end so we can get back to business?" (See 8:4-7.)

God will not tolerate social injustice for long. Great sins bring great judgments. Amos prophesied that God's wrath would fall upon the main sanctuary of the northern kingdom in Bethel. Festive, hypocritical worshipers were going to be crushed beneath their false religion. There would be no escape.



No matter where the people fled, judgment would follow. (Read 9:1-6.) Israel was ripe for sifting.

“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” (Amos 8:11).

THINK ABOUT IT: What does this verse say to your nation? What are you doing to end the famine in your land?

Approximately 170 years before Amos’s message rang through the streets of Bethel, King Jeroboam I had started Israel on the downward path of idolatry when he set up a golden calf at Bethel and one at Dan. (Read I Kings 12:26-30.) Some thirty years after Amos’s prophecy, the Assyrian army brutally attack the northern kingdom. They led God’s chosen, but rebellious, people from their promised land with hooks in their noses. Eventually the ten tribes were scattered over the face of the earth.



Too late Israel realized that it was not far from Bethel, the house of God, to Bethavan, the house of vanities or emptiness. (See Hosea 10:5.)

Yet God remembered His covenants with Abraham and David and shewed mercy time and time again to the Israelites. Amos 9:13-15 is being fulfilled before our eyes as Jews from north, south, east, and west have returned to the land God gave their forefathers. Again they have become a nation.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Amos feel unqualified to be a prophet? Have you ever felt this way?

2. Why do you think God often chooses those who seem most unlikely to declare His word? _____

3. Name some of the sins of Israel.

4. How did the rich treat the poor?

5. What are the dangers of prosperity?

6. What current events are the fulfillment of Amos's prophecies?

7. Explain this statement: It is not far from Bethel, the house of God, to Bethavan, the house of vanities or emptiness.

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Amos said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Obadiah. Underline what you consider the key verse.

Lesson 5

Obadiah, the Prophet of Judah

Book of Obadiah

Key Scripture

“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” (Obadiah 1:3-4).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

God’s main charges against Edom were (1) pride, and (2) their mistreatment of Israel, their brothers. Because of these sins, Edom was destroyed. These sins still bring the judgment of God.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Connect the temperaments of Jacob and Esau to the nations of Israel and Edom.
- Write a short history of Edom.
- Relate God’s charges against Edom to His case against a lukewarm church.

Lesson Outline

- I. Introduction: The Relationship between Israel and Edom
- II. The Warning against Pride (Obadiah 1:1-9)
- III. The Warning against Mistreating the Jews (Obadiah 1:10-16)
- IV. The Final Victory of Israel (Obadiah 1:17-21)

BOOK OF OBADIAH

QUICK LOOK	Shortest Book of OT	Only one chapter	Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Obadiah?	Prophet of Judah	Obadiah 1-9 is cited in Jeremiah 49:7-22.	
Meaning of his name	"Worshiper or servant of Jehovah"		
Time of his prophecy	Time uncertain - 840-830 BC. (<i>Geisler</i>) Near 586 BC (<i>Bible Overview</i>)	Early date: during Jehoshaphat's time (9th century)	Late date: shortly after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians (6th century)
Historical background	The nation of Israel descended from Jacob. The nation of Edom descended from Esau.	Edom denied Israel passage through their land on their journey to Canaan.	Israel's kings faced frequent conflict with the Edomites.
To whom addressed	To Judah regarding Edom's destruction		
Why written	To pronounce judgment on Edom (Petra) for their treatment of the people of Judah	To predict the restoration of the land to Judah	
Key verses	(v. 3) " <i>The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.</i> "	(v. 10) " <i>For thy violence against thy brother Jacob . . . cut off for ever.</i> "	(v. 17) " <i>But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and . . . holiness.</i> "
Themes in Obadiah	Judgment against Edom	Deceitfulness of pride	Promise of Judah's restoration

Jesus seen in Obadiah	Picture of the Messiah as Savior and possessor of the kingdom (v. 21)	<i>"And saviors shall come up on mount Zion . . . and the kingdom shall be the LORD's" (verse 21).</i>	
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Verses 1-9	Edom's Destruction Predicted	Judgment pronounced on the descendants of Esau	
Verses 10-14	Reasons for Edom's Destruction	Violence and pride	
Verses 15-20	Israel's Restoration	Triumph over enemies Judah's treasures in possessing the land	
Verse 21	The Lord's Kingdom	God's ultimate purpose is to establish His eternal Kingdom.	

INTRODUCTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDAH AND EDM

Out of the unknown Obadiah (meaning, "worshiper or servant of Jehovah") stepped onto Judah's stage, prophesied doom against Edom, and disappeared behind the curtain. The spotlight was on his message, not his life or personality.

Edom means "red," possibly because of the color of Esau at birth or the red sandstone cliffs of Edom. The ancient city of Petra was carved from the sandstone cliffs.



"The Treasury,"
Petra, Jordan



When it was time for Isaac and Rebekah's twins to marry, Esau chose his wives from among the Canaanites. Thus, pledging his allegiance to an idolatrous culture.

THINK ABOUT IT: Under each column write characteristics of each man.

JACOB	ESAU

Seeing the direction Esau was heading, Isaac sent Jacob back to Haran to find a wife of his own people; thus, directing Jacob's allegiance to the God of his father Abraham. From Jacob's twelve sons came the nation of Israel (Genesis 32:28). From Esau's sons came the nation of Edom (36:1). Hebrews 12:6 called Esau "a fornicator and profane" man.

The sibling rivalry that brought turmoil and strife to Isaac and Rebekah's home planted seeds of bitterness, anger, and hatred that raged between these two nations for generations.

THE WARNING AGAINST PRIDE

(Obadiah 1:1-9)

Edom's pride centered on (1) their geographical stronghold, and (2) their wisdom. They were proud of their wealth, trade routes (including the king's highway), early knowledge of letters and astronomy, as well as their national security.

What was once Edom's fortress, Sela (now known as Petra), contains natural beauty, unique among the cities of the world. Located among the mountains of Seir, it is surrounded by richly colored rocks of matchless beauty and

grandeur, a wonder of the desert. The entrance to Petra is through a one-mile gorge, one of nature's most magnificent avenues. A tiny stream flows nearly its entire length. The chasm is deep and narrow, dark even at noon. The rocky sides are tinted with the colors of the rainbow. The city consists of one immense maze of mountains, cliffs, chasms, rocky shelves, and narrow valleys, gorges and plateaus, shady dells and sunny promontories. The inner city is one mile long and three-quarters of a mile wide. In Petra are the ruins of temples, tombs, dwellings, caves dug from mountain walls, and a theater tiered to seat three thousand people.

After a raid, the Edomites retreated to their seemingly indestructible fortress (verses 3-4).

- Edom was geographically protected.
- The Edomites lived in the great hollow basin between mountains and a high plateau.
- The only entrance to Sela (Petra) was through a narrow gorge.
- Edom harvested rich crops on the plateau.
- The slopes produced rich vineyards and farms.

The Edomites were proud and profane, having nothing to do with the God of their forefather Abraham.

"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" (verses 8-9).

Teman, a place in southern Idumea (Edom), was named after Esau's firstborn son's firstborn son, duke Teman, and was noted for the wisdom of its inhabitants. Perhaps it was comparable to a modern university city, proud of their academia. The Edomites gloried in their knowledge, but God was not impressed. (Read I Corinthians 3:19.)

God hates pride, whether it is in an individual or a nation. The wise man foretold the fate of those who walk in pride.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

This was a lesson Edom learned the hard way.

THE WARNING AGAINST MISTREATING THE JEWS

(Obadiah 1:10-16)

Some four hundred years after Jacob's death, God delivered his descendants from Egyptian slavery. As the Israelites packed up camp at Mt. Seir and moved on toward the Promised Land, God warned them not to meddle with their brothers, the Edomites. (Read Deuteronomy 2:2-6.) Moses sent a message to the king of Edom reminding him of their relationship: "Thus saith thy brother Israel" (Numbers 20:14). Then he requested permission to pass through their land on the main trade route. Moses promised . . .

"We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders" (Numbers 20:17).

Sadly, the seeds of bitterness planted by Esau had taken root and flourished in the Edomites. Their harsh reply to Moses's request was:

"Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. . . . And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border" (Numbers 20:18, 20-21).

God warned Israel not to abhor an Edomite, "for he is your brother" (Deuteronomy 23:7). Israel endeavored to honor this commandment and treated Edom respectfully. However, Edom disregarded God's command and aggressively carried on the animosity passed to them by their forefather.

Throughout Old Testament history, Edom and Israel remained bitter enemies. Kings Saul, David, and Solomon had conflicts with Edom. (See I Samuel 14:47; II Samuel 8:13-14, and I Kings 11:14-22.)

Obadiah declared that Edom would be judged for aiding Israel's enemies and rejoicing when Jerusalem was plundered. (Read verses 10-16.) The plundering of Jerusalem happened during the reigns of . . .

- Jehoram (II Chronicles 21:8, 16-17).
- Amaziah (II Chronicles 25:11-12, 23-24)
- Ahaz (II Chronicles 28:16-21)

- Zedekiah (II Chronicles 36:11-21)

Historians cannot pinpoint exactly which plundering Obadiah referred to, although his prophecy generally is assigned to the last one.

God's charges against Edom for their mistreatment of Israel were laid out by Obadiah.

- When Judah was wounded, invaded, and overthrown, Edom treated them violently (verse 10).
- They refused to help and took sides with the enemy (verse 11).
- They rejoiced over Judah in the day of the Jews' destruction (verse 12).
- They looted Judah's possessions (verse 13).
- They prevented the Jews from escaping from Nebuchadnezzar's army (verse 14).
- They actually delivered up some of the Jews as prisoners (verse 14).

Through the prophet Amos, God warned Edom:

"For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever" (Amos 1:11).

One might imagine that, because of all the trouble Israel and Judah have suffered at the hands of the Edomites down through history, Obadiah would have written his prophecy against Edom with great antagonism: "These are our enemies, and they deserve this!" This, however, does not seem to have been the case. A sadness seems to run through the book; there is a sense that Obadiah's poetry is a lament for an entire people caught in the act of rebellion against God. From time to time, his message takes on an imploring tone, suggesting an ephemeral hope that they – or at least some of them – will change. (*Forerunner Commentary*, <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/1517/Edomites.htm>. Accessed 10/5/2014).

THINK ABOUT IT: Holding a grudge can be deadly.

What current events are the result of biblical family feuds?	Is there a conflict between you and your natural or spiritual brothers?	What do you need to do to end that disagreement?
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Pledge to God and yourself right now to make peace with your brothers.

THE FINAL VICTORY OF ISRAEL

(Obadiah 1:17-21)

Obadiah reminded Edom of the law of sowing and reaping (verses 10, 15). As Edom had done to other countries, so it would be done unto them. Their cup of iniquity was full, and judgment was declared. The day was coming when Edom would be utterly destroyed, never to rise again.

Because of Edom's attitude and actions toward Israel, God promised Moses:

"Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly" (Numbers 24:18).

Judah was not sinless, and they were punished for their sins. Because of their idolatry, they were carried away into Babylonian captivity. For seventy years their land lay desolate. But through it all, God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the end Israel shall triumph! And those who pray for and love Israel will be blessed.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” (Psalm 122:6-7).

Obadiah prophesied that deliverance and holiness would return to the house of Jacob and they would possess their land, as well as the land of Edom (verse 17).

Within 4 years after Jerusalem was burned, Edom was raided and left desolate (582 B.C.) by the very same Babylonians whom they had aided against Jerusalem. Nabathaeans took over Edom. The few Edomites that were left were confined to a region in south Judea, where for four centuries they continued to exist, as active enemies of the Jews. In 126 B.C. they were subdued by John Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabean rulers, and were absorbed into the Jewish state. When Palestine was conquered by Romans (63 B.C.), the Herods, an Edomite (Idumean) family, were placed in control of Judah. This was the last of the Edomites. With the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), they disappeared from history. (Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Twenty-fourth Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965, p. 362)

Obadiah ended his prophecy on a note of victory. He declared, “The kingdom shall be the LORD’s” (verse 21). His pen wrote of more than Zerubbabel and Judas Maccabaeus, he spoke of the Savior of the world, the final Judge. The ultimate victory will be God’s.

THINK ABOUT IT: Refer to the chart created at the beginning of the lesson showing the characteristics of Jacob and Esau.

- How were the traits of each man passed down to his descendants—Jacob to Israel and Esau to Edom?



- Agree or disagree: As the founding father, so goes the nation. Defend your position
-

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were God's two main charges against Edom?

2. What were the two main sources of Edom's pride?

3. Read Revelation 3:14-19 and relate Edom to the lukewarm church of Laodicea.

4. Why did God tell Israel not to meddle with Edom?

5. What was Moses's request to the king of Edom?



6. What was the king's reply?

7. Why is it important that we treat our brothers respectfully?

8. What is God's promise to those who love the Jews?

9. How were the Edomites eventually wiped out?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Obadiah said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Jonah. Watch for Jonah's downward progression.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 6

Jonah, the Reluctant Missionary

Book of Jonah

Key Scripture

“I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil” (Jonah 4:2).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, whether a disobedient prophet or an entire heathen nation.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Explain how Jonah’s response to God’s call reflected his Jewish prejudices.
- Identify Jonah’s downward steps.
- Compare Jonah’s experience to Jesus’ burial and resurrection.
- Relate how Jonah’s message to the Assyrians was a preview of God’s plan to reach the Gentiles.

Lesson Outline

- I. Running from God (Jonah 1)
 - A. The Man and Call of God
 - B. The Consequences of Disobedience
- II. Running to God (Jonah 2)
 - A. Jonah's Prayer
 - B. God's Response
- III. Running with God (Jonah 3)
 - A. Jonah's Second Chance
 - B. Nineveh's Response
- IV. Running Ahead of God (Jonah 4)
 - A. Jonah's Response
 - B. God's Object

BOOK OF JONAH

QUICK LOOK	4 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Jonah?	A prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel	Son of Amittai (1:1) Jonah is mentioned in II Kings 14:25.	Testimony of Jesus (Matthew 12:40)
Meaning of his name	"Dove"		
Time of his prophecy	Around 780-760 BC	During the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel	Early pre-exilic prophet
Historical background	II Kings 14:25 identifies that Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II.	A prosperous time for Israel. Assyrian threat was present, but Israel seemed to feel protected.	At this time, Israel was already being taxed by the powerful Assyrian empire.
To whom addressed	Jonah wrote to his own countrymen, the Israelites, about his call to preach to the Ninevites.	God gave Jonah a message for Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire.	

Why written	To show God's mercy in offering repentance to Israel's adversary	To show Israel and Judah and all humanity the universal compassion and mercy of God	The book tells Jonah's personal story of his call from God. Only one verse (3:4) relates what he preached to the Ninevites.
Key verses	(2:2) <i>"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."</i>	(4:2b) <i>"For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of evil."</i>	(4:11) <i>"And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons."</i>
Themes in Jonah	God's compassion and mercy	God's universal love	God's purpose to make Himself known to humanity through preaching
Jesus seen in Jonah	Jesus referred to Jonah in speaking about His death (Matthew 12:40-41).	Jesus compared His time of death to Jonah's time in the whale's belly.	Jesus spoke of Jonah's preaching and the Ninevites' repentance.
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Chapter 1	Running from God Jonah's call, flight and three days in a fish	God called Jonah to preach repentance to a wicked city.	Jonah disobeyed and took a ship west to Tarshish.
Chapter 2	Running to God Jonah's prayer	Remembering God's hand on him, Jonah cried to the Lord.	God delivered Jonah from the belly of the fish.
Chapter 3	Running with God Jonah's obedience	Jonah obeyed God's second call and preached in Nineveh.	The Ninevites repented and God spared the city.
Chapter 4	Running Ahead of God Jonah's resentment <i>"Running" adapted from N. Geisler</i>	Jonah regretted that God spared the Ninevites, enemies of Israel.	God reminded the unhappy prophet of His desire to forgive and save.

RUNNING FROM GOD

(Jonah 1)

The Man and Call of God

Jonah (meaning “dove”) was a patriotic statesman, a man of influence in the government of the ten tribes. Under Jonah’s influence, King Jeroboam II led Israel to recover its lost territories. (See II Kings 14:25.)

Greatly used of God, Jonah was capable of rising to tremendous spiritual heights or sinking to new spiritual lows. Jonah has been called “the greatest of missionaries,” and yet he could lay his missionary calling on the shelf for personal or patriotic reasons when the occasion suited him. No Old Testament prophet preached with greater results, and yet no prophet showed greater reluctance in actually doing the revealed will of God. (*Word Aflame Adult Teacher* 1983-1984 Volume 4, (Word Aflame Publications, Pentecostal Publishing House, Hazelwood, MO. © 1983) Fall 1983, p. 13.)

He was from the little village of Gath-Hepher, approximately four miles north of Nazareth, future hometown of Jesus, of whom Jonah was a sign. His ministry began as Elisha’s ended.

The Book of Jonah is more biographical than prophetic, as it contains only one prophetic message. “Yet, forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). Most commentators believe that Jonah wrote the Book of Jonah.

The Call of God

God’s call to Jonah was clear.

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me” (1:2).

Jonah had no question about *what* God told him to do—deliver a message of mercy to his enemies, the brutal nation that threatened Israel’s existence.

But Jonah had questions about *why*. Wasn’t Israel God’s only chosen people? Why would God show mercy to the Assyrian heathens? Jonah had the typical Jewish mindset—Jehovah God belonged to Israel and Israel only; no one outside Jacob’s family deserved God’s mercy.

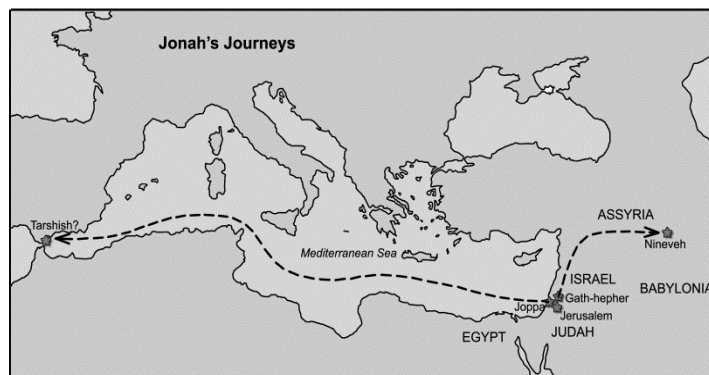
Over eight hundred years before Peter preached that “God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” Jonah was called to be a missionary to the Gentiles. (See Acts 11:18.) Giving the Assyrians any hope of salvation went against every fiber in Jonah’s being. He rebelled against delivering God’s message because . . .

- Assyria was a rising kingdom and Israel was a diminishing one. The two countries were bitter enemies.
- To give the enemy warning of God’s judgment seemed very unpatriotic to Jonah.
- Perhaps Jonah feared losing his reputation as a great Israelite. He could have been accused of being a traitor.
- The Assyrians were some of the most sadistic people in history. Jonah probably feared for his life.
- Nineveh was a Gentile city. As an Israelite, Jonah was a stranger there and would have to mix with uncircumcised heathens.
- Nineveh was a lengthy distance to travel. The journey would be long and hot.
- Jonah’s potential for success seemed nil. If they listened and repented, God would have mercy on them and withhold the destruction of an enemy. If they did not listen, it was a wasted effort. (*Word Aflame Adult Teacher* 1992-1993, Volume 3, (Word Aflame Publications, Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1992, Summer 1993, p. 63.)

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was situated on the Tigris River. For years Assyrian power had been oppressing the nations of the Mediterranean and with a heavy hand was bearing down on Israel. The atrocities of the Assyrian army included such horrors as tearing the tongues out of their captive victims, flaying them alive, or transfixing them on sharpened poles.

The Assyrians used the weapons of propaganda and intimidation. Their cruel tactics so terrorized their enemies that many raised the white flag of surrender without so much as lifting their swords, and paid tribute without Assyrian army occupation.

The Consequences of Disobedience



Rebelling against God's call and attempting to flee "from the presence of the Lord," Jonah went in the opposite direction of Nineveh, which was about five hundred miles northeast of Israel. At Joppa Jonah paid his fare and got on a ship bound for Tarshish, about two thousand miles to the west. He was willing to cross the Mediterranean Sea rather than extend mercy to the Assyrians. In so doing, he left behind his family, his country, and his position. The cost of running from God was much more than the price of his fare. Jonah was willing to lose everything rather than obey God.

The path of disobedience always leads down. When Jonah went down to Joppa, his down-ward spiral began. Once on board the ship, he went down into the ship, curled up in a ball, and went to sleep. Running from God was hard work. He was exhausted. But God had His finger on Jonah. He knew exactly where His reluctant missionary was. God targeted Jonah by sending a violent storm. As Jonah slept, the sailors struggled to keep the ship together. In desperation, they cried out to their gods and cast their freight into the sea. The storm affected everyone on board, not just the runaway prophet.

The path of disobedience always leads down. Consider Jonah's downward progression:

- ↓ down to Joppa (1:3),
 - ↓ down into the ship (1:3),
 - ↓ down into the sides of the ship (1:5),
 - ↓ down into the sea (1:15),
 - ↓ down into the fish's belly (1:17), and
 - ↓ down to the bottom of the mountains (2:6).



THINK ABOUT IT: Have you ever run away from God's calling? What were your reasons? What were the consequences to yourself? To others?

DIG DEEPER: Use your imagination and write one sentence what Jonah might have been thinking at each step in his downward spiral. Write your answers on the next page.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Skeptics label the story of Jonah's sojourn in the belly of a great fish an allegory or fiction. Jesus verified the authenticity of this account by comparing it to His burial and resurrection. (See Matthew 12:40 and Luke 11:29-32.)

RUNNING TO GOD

(Jonah 2)

Jonah's Prayer

When God's disobedient prophet entered the fish's belly, it instantly became a prayer room (2:2-8).

DIG DEEPER: In Jonah's prayer, find a word or phrase that he used . . .

- to describe where he was?

- to describe his emotional state?

- to show that he was repentant?

Dr. Harry Rimmer, President of the Research Science Bureau of L.A. said they found an account of an English sailor swallowed by a giant *Rhinodon* in the English Channel in the *Literary Digest*. Apparently they were trying to harpoon the giant sharks when this sailor fell overboard. Before he could be pulled back in the boat the shark turned around and swallowed him up. Forty-eight hours after the incident the shark was found and killed. When the shark was opened by the sailors they were amazed to find their friend alive and unconscious. They rushed him to the hospital where they found that he only suffered from shock. He was perfectly healthy and fit otherwise. In 1926 Dr. Rimmer met the man and said that his body was devoid of hair and patches of yellowish-brown color covered his entire skin. (Accessed January 19, 2015 at <https://considertheevidence.wordpress.com/2010/06/01/could-jonah-survive-3-days-in-a-fish/>.)

- to acknowledge God's omnipresence? _____
- to call upon God for mercy? _____
- that shows he had a glimmer of hope? _____
- to rededicate his life to God? _____

When Jonah could go no lower, he bowed down. His prayer blended repentance and worship. By submitting and praying, "I will pay that that I have vowed," Jonah acknowledged God's authority. True worship is always rooted in submission.

God's Response

God heard Jonah's prayer, just as He hears every sincere prayer.

"And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (2:10).

RUNNING WITH GOD

(Jonah 3)

Jonah's Second Chance

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time. . . " (3:1).

How much trouble Jonah could have saved himself if he had obeyed God's first call. But he didn't. So God prepared a storm and a great fish to get Jonah's attention. By bringing judgment in the form of the storm, God showed great mercy to this reluctant prophet. Thank God for second chances.

Nineveh's Response

In Nineveh Jonah preached one of the shortest, most effective evangelistic messages of all times: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4).

The city of Nineveh is described as a great city "of three days' journey" (Jonah 3:3). Most commentators interpret the phrase to mean the city was so large it would take three days to travel through it and see all the sights. Henry Halley in his noted *Halley's Bible Handbook* says that the city was three miles long and one and a half miles wide, and that Greater Nineveh was thirty miles long and ten miles wide. It was protected by five walls and three moats.

Other commentators believe that "three days' journey" indicated that it would take three days to travel around the perimeter of Nineveh.

All the inhabitants of Nineveh, from the king to the least, repented in sackcloth and ashes. The king proclaimed:

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. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? (3:8-9).

And that is exactly what God did. He repented and spared Nineveh.

RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD

(Jonah 4)

Jonah's Response

A mighty revival swept through Nineveh, touching everyone except the evangelist.

Jonah stalked out of the city, build a brush arbor, and sat down waiting for God's judgment to fall. When it did not happen, Jonah threw a temper tantrum. "I knew it, God. I knew You wouldn't follow through with this. You are too soft-hearted and merciful. My reputation is ruined. I might as well die."

It was all about Jonah! *What will people say about me? I've done what You told me to do. I've delivered Your message, and now You are not backing me up. Don't You remember what these people are threatening to do to me and my nation? Why aren't You fighting for us? I can't believe You would show mercy to our enemies!*

Jonah had a pity-party deluxe. He preferred judgment over mercy. But God in His mercy had not given up on his reluctant missionary.

God's Object Lesson

Part 1 of God's object lesson: God prepared a gourd to spring up and shade Jonah from the sun. *Ahhh, what a relief.* The shade brought Jonah comfort and eased his agitated mind.

Part 2: The next day God prepared a worm. It munched on the vine and the gourd withered. *What's going on? What happened to my shade?*

Part 3: God prepared a fierce east wind. The sun beat down on God's self-centered prophet. *It's so hot! I would be better off dead.* How quickly Jonah forgot his recent near-death experience.

God said, "Do you have a right to be angry because of the gourd?"

Jonah replied. "I sure do!"

God answered, "You didn't work for that gourd or make it grow. You are angry about the death of one gourd, which made your life a little more comfortable. Yet you would have Me destroy an entire city with one hundred twenty thousand inhabitants who are not even old enough to distinguish their right hand from their left."

Paradoxes associated with Jonah:

- Prophet of God, yet running from God.
- Prophet is drowned, yet alive.
- Prophet is a preacher of repentance, yet angered at the repentance his preaching produced.

Oh, Jonah, Jonah, you chose comfort over compassion. You loved mercy when it was meted out to you, but you despised it when it was given to your enemies.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn from Jonah (1) in a fix, (2) in a fish, (3) in a revival, and (4) in a rage? _____

2. Name the steps of Jonah's downward progression.

3. What does Jonah's reluctance to preach to the Assyrians tell you about his mindset? _____

4. How was Jonah a sign to the people of Jesus' day?

5. If Jonah wrote the Book of Jonah, as most commentators believe, what does that tell you about Jonah's character?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Jonah said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Micah. Title each chapter.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 7

Micah, the Prophet of the Oppressed

Book of Micah

Key Scripture

“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?” (Micah 6:8).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

God desires righteousness rather than ritualism. The acceptance of our worship by God depends on how we live and treat others.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Describe the Jews’ attitude toward the oppressed.
- Clearly define God’s requirements for His people.
- Quote Micah 6:8 and 7:8.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Prophet and His Times
 - A. The Prophet
 - B. His Times
- II. The Case against Israel (Micah 1-3)
 - A. The Witnesses and Charges
 - B. The Verdict and Sentence
- III. Pardon Promised (Micah 4-7)
 - A. The Coming King and His Kingdom
 - B. The Prophet's Creed and God's Mercy

BOOK OF MICAH

QUICK LOOK	7 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Micah	A prophet from Moresheth, southwest of Jerusalem	Jeremiah mentioned Micah (Jeremiah 26:18).	
Meaning of his name	"Who is like Jehovah"		
Time of his prophecy	735-700 BC (<i>Geisler Timeline</i>) A pre-exilic prophet	1:1—During the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (Kings of Judah)	Prophesied during Isaiah's time. His message is similar to Isaiah's.
Historical background	During this time Assyria began invading the North. In 722 BC Assyria conquered Israel and deported the residents to other nations.	Both Israel and Judah had become engrossed in idolatry and wickedness.	Judah revolted against Assyria, but the people were not taken captive. However, they were forced to pay tribute to Assyria.
To whom addressed	Micah spoke to both Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem).	While he prophesied to both kingdoms, he lived in the southern kingdom.	
Why written	To denounce Israel and Judah for their idolatry and wickedness and warn about the coming judgments	To prophesy against the false prophets and princes for their injustice and greed	To give promise of future forgiveness and redemption

Key verses	(3:8) <i>"I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD . . . to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."</i>	(5:2) <i>"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."</i>	(6:8) <i>"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee."</i>
Themes in Micah	God's hatred of idolatry, greed and injustice	God's punishment for disobedience	God's promise of the Messiah
Jesus seen in Micah	Ruler of Israel to be born in Bethlehem (5:2; see Mt. 2:6)	Micah reveals Christ as the "God of Jacob" (4:2).	Christ shown as the judge of nations (4:3)
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Micah 1:1-2:11	Judgments of the Lord	Against Israel and Judah	
Micah 2:12-13	Promise of Restoration	To the remnants of Israel	
Micah 3	Rebuke of Leaders and Prophets	For greed, injustice, and deception	
Micah 4, 5	Hope of Pardon and Redemption	The Lord's plan revealed	Messiah birthplace (5:2)
Micah 6:1-7:6	The Lord's Case Against Israel	Israel had forgotten the Lord's deliverance and laws.	(Micah 6:8) God's requirement for Israel and His people
Micah 7:7-20	Israel's Final Restoration	God portrayed as compassionate and forgiving	(Micah 7:18-19) A portrait of God

THE PROPHET AND HIS TIMES

The Prophet

Micah (meaning "who is like Jehovah") was a rustic from the obscure village of Moreshethgath in Judah, approximately twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Because of his background, he connected with the common people. Micah, a man of strong convictions and great courage, preached personal religion and social morality.

Micah revealed the secret of his power:

“But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8).

Micah burst from his tiny village fighting for the oppressed. Perhaps he was surprised by his own boldness, as are all men of God when “full of power by the Spirit.” His job was to draw both kingdoms of Israel back to God. While Isaiah boldly prophesied in the palace, Micah’s voice rang loud and clear in the streets of Jerusalem and Samaria.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Why does God send some men to palaces and other to the streets?

- Whom do you know that is ministering in high places?

- Whom do you know that is ministering in the street?

- What qualities do you see in each man/woman that prepared him/her for their field of ministry?

- Is one calling more important than another?

- Why or why not?

His Times

During Micah’s lifetime, he saw many political and national crises. His prophecy, probably from about 735 to 700 BC, was before and after the downfall of Samaria in 722 BC. He prophesied during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1).

King Jotham ruled in luxury. His palaces and fortresses cost the life of many peasants. During this sixteen-year era, the rich became richer and the poorer grew poorer.

King Ahaz worshiped Moloch, the god of Ammon, offered his sons as sacrifices, and erected altars to idols throughout the land. He replaced the altar in Jerusalem with one fashioned after the Assyrian altar in Damascus. He set up pagan gods in the Temple and eventually nailed the doors shut. During his reign, Judah paid heavy tribute to Assyria. The rich devoured the humbler class as “sheep crop grass.” Ahaz brought Judah low.

King Hezekiah’s reign began with a much needed reformation as he looked to his trusted advisor, Isaiah, for direction. He tore down the idols Ahaz had built reopened and cleansed the Temple. God was with him. He prospered and gained independence from Assyria. The wall around Jerusalem was strengthened, a conduit was built, bringing water into the city, and the military was fortified. Hezekiah’s good reign delayed God’s judgment on Judah.

In Hezekiah’s sixth year, the ten northern tribes fell to the Assyrians and were taken into captivity. Bloated with success Sennacherib, Assyria’s fearless leader, again threatened Judah. King Hezekiah bowed to Assyria’s demands and paid tribute. There was a definite shift in the political atmosphere.

THE CASE AGAINST ISRAEL

(Micah 1-3)

The Witnesses and Charges

God had a controversy with His people. But before raining judgment on Israel, He served them with a warrant. From His holy temple, He came striding across the mountains and hills. Under the weight of His feet, the mountains caved in and the valleys split. Giant boulders crumbled into gravel, and the river valleys leaked like sieves. (1:2-4) God’s destination—the courtroom where He took the witness stand.

“Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the LORD GOD be witness against you. . .” (Micah 1:2).

No transgression is hidden. Human eyes may not have seen the sin, but the inanimate earth sees.

- Abel's blood cried from the ground (Genesis 4:10).
- Moses called Heaven and earth as witness against Israel (Deuteronomy 4:26).
- Joshua placed a great stone as a witness (Joshua 24:27).
- The Lord hears the heavens, and the heavens hear the earth (Hosea 2:21).
- The stone in the wall cries and the beam answers it (Habakkuk 2:11).
- Jesus said that the stones would cry out if the people refused to praise Him (Luke 19:40).

When God takes the witness stand, no one dares to cross-examine Him. He speaks "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." What God and His creation witnessed in Judah and Israel could not be disputed.

In Micah 6:1-5 God presented His charges against Israel. "This is your chance to defend yourself. Stand up like men and speak up. Testify against Me, if you can."

The twelve tribes engaged in . . .

- idolatry (1:7; 5:13)
- evil plans and devices (2:1)
- covetousness, fraud, violence (2:2)
- stealing, dishonesty (2:8; 6:10-12)
- oppressing the fatherless and widows (2:9)
- hating good, loving evil (3:1-2)
- greed of princes, prophets, and priests (3:2-7).
- despising justice, distorting what was right (3:9)
- murder (3:10)
- witchcraft (5:12)
- universal corruption (7:2-4)
- treachery (7:5-6) (*Thompson Chain Reference Bible* (B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., Indianapolis, IN., © 1988) p. 1613.)

THINK ABOUT IT: Which of Israel's sins are prevalent in our world. Explain.

Hypocrisy was rampant. The people made a pompous show of publicly observing sacred days and seasons. They offered sacrifices, all the while privately living immoral lives and worshiping idols. They oppressed the poor and mocked God's prophets. Judges took bribes. Priests and false prophets served for filthy lucre. Yet the Israelites proudly proclaimed, "The Lord is among us. Nothing evil can happen to us." (See 3:11).

"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?" (Micah 1:5).

THINK ABOUT IT: Why do you think Micah pinpointed Samaria and Jerusalem as the focal points of Israel's sins? If you were to pinpoint the geographical center of your nation's sins, where would it be? Why?

The Verdict and Sentence

God moved from the witness stand to the judge's bench to pronounce the verdict—guilty as charged. It was too late to file an appeal.

The defense rested its case. Israel could not justify their actions.

The sentence against Israel was declared:

- As Israel had devised evil against others, God devised evil against them (2:3).
- As they had oppressed others, they would be oppressed (2:3).
- As they cast out the fatherless and widows, they would be cast out (2:9).
- They would eat, but never have enough (6:14).
- They would work, but have nothing to show for it (6:14).
- They would sow, but not reap (6:15).
- They would tread the olives, but not have any oil (6:15).
- They would tread the wine press, but not drink the wine (6:15).

God's protective covering had been lifted from the land. War was coming.

Micah summarized the destruction coming upon Samaria and Jerusalem.

"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" (1:6).

"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" (3:12).

Israel had chosen to live the decadent lifestyle of the house of Ahab (6:16). They had forsaken God to serve Jezebel's idols. Israel was spiritually, morally, and economically bankrupt. The righteous Judge declared the defendant "guilty." The sentence was announced. Judgment was coming. In 722 BC the ten northern tribes were marched into Assyrian captivity. Approximately 130 years later, the two southern tribes were forced into Babylonian captivity.

Our longsuffering and merciful God often delays judgment, but His Word is sure. Just as the prophets foretold, judgment came to both Israel and Judah. But that was not the end of the story.

PARDON PROMISED

(Micah 4-7)

The Coming King and His Kingdom

God never leaves His people without hope. Woven into the Judge's ruling was a thread of hope. God used Israel's enemies to thresh them like wheat. But He promised that one day the Ruler would come who would deliver them from their enemies. Micah dropped a bold clue into his prophecy identifying the coming King.

"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. . ." (Micah 5:2).

While Micah stood on street corners and walked dusty paths preaching, Isaiah's voice rang in the palace halls and courtyard. Their words were different. Their approach was different. Their message was the same.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his

The War Path. Topographically, Palestine consists of three areas: the maritime plain (seacoast), the shephelah (lowlands, valley), and the hill country. Micah's home in the shephelah was situated where he could view the Philistine plain or land bridge. This war path was used by marching armies for maneuverability.

Micah warned the villages along the war path of pending doom (1:10-16). The play on words for each town follows:

- "Declare it not in Gath." (tell-town) This proverb was first spoken by David in II Samuel 1:20. Gath was the Philistine city nearest the Hebrew territory. Israel feared that the Philistines would hear about their weakened condition and impending judgment.
- Aphrah (house of dust) "roll thyself in the dust" (1:10). This spoke of Israel's destiny; they would fall to the ground.
- Saphir (beauty-town/glittering) "having thy shame naked" (1:11). The people would be disgraced.
- Zaanen (march-town) "came not forth" (1:11). Micah pictures Israel cowering in fear, refusing to march into battle.
- Bethzeel (neighbor-town) "foundation swept away" (1:11). The picture was bleak with this city destroyed down to the foundation.
- Maroth (bitter-town) "waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord" (1:12) when judgment loomed over their heads.
- Lachish (horse-town) "bind the chariot to the swift beast" (1:13)
- Moreshethgath (possessions): The spoil of war would go to the enemy (1:14).
- Achzib (lie-town) "shall be a lie to the kings of Israel" (1:14). The promised help they relied on would not come.

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" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Micah and Isaiah's messages were for their day, for our day, and even beyond. Both wrote about the coming King and kingdom.

DIG INTO THE WORD. Read Micah 4:1-8 and compile a list of things that describe the Millennium. Compare Micah 4 with Isaiah 11 and 65:19-25.

The Prophet's Creed and God's Mercy

(Micah 6:8)

God was sick of Israel's hypocrisy. He had His fill of sacrifices. A thousand rams and rivers of oil would not appease His anger. God desired three things from His people:

(1) **Do justly.** To *do justly* refers to the judicial system, to administering unbiased judgments, and to the distribution of benefits according to need. The judges judged for reward. The priests taught for hire. The prophets prophesied for money. How God longed for His people to do justly. He hates injustice wherever it is found—the courtroom, the church, or the home. God's requirement is simple: do right!

(2) **Love mercy.** In the Old Testament God's presence hovered over the mercy seat. The mercy seat covered the stone tablets containing the law. Mercy did not change the law, but mercy covered it. The law was hard and unchanging. Mercy was soft and forgiving.

Jesus taught, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). "God delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). Men love mercy when it is extended to them. But not always when it is extended

to their enemies; Jonah is a good example of this. God's requirement is simple: love mercy!

(3) Walk humbly with thy God. To walk with God is to go His way. To *walk humbly* is to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." God hates pride, but He dwells "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

In a letter to a young minister, an older one wrote: "It does not matter what happens to us, but our reaction to what happens to us is of vital importance. I think you must expect more and more criticism, for with increasing responsibility this is inevitable. It causes one to walk humbly with God, and to take such action as He desires." (*Word Aflame Adult Teacher* 1997-1998 (Pentecostal Publishing House, Hazelwood, MO., © 1997) Summer 1998, p. 68.)

God's requirements are simple. Do justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with thy God.

THINK ABOUT IT: In which of God's three requirements are you the weakest? Write two steps you can take in this area this week to improve your relationship with God and with others.



What does God do with repented sins?

- "He subdues our iniquities" (Micah 7:19).
- He covers them (Psalm 32:1).
- He remembers them no more (Jeremiah 31:34).
- He removed them as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).
- He casts them behind His back (Isaiah 38:17).
- He blots them out (Isaiah 44:22).
- He casts them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).
- He pardons them (Jeremiah 33:8).
- He seeks and cannot find them (Jeremiah 50:20).

Despite Israel's continued rebellion, God's mercy reached out to them, and still does.

"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).

How blessed Israel was to serve a God who was not angry forever, showed compassion, and pardoned their iniquities. And how blessed we are. He casts our sins into the sea. He picks us up when we fall. When we are surrounded by darkness, He lights our way for He "delighted in mercy."

"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 7:8).

Through the prophet Micah, God served a warrant on both the northern and southern kingdoms. God laid out the charges, testified against Israel and Judah, declared them guilty, and decreed their sentence. All twelve tribes were marched in chains into captivity to serve their time. The picture was bleak, until mercy came on the scene. God delighteth in mercy and pardons iniquities (7:18).

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the hypocrisy that existed in Israel. Is it possible for our worship to become a hypocritical show? How can we avoid this?

2. Discuss how the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah affected the nation of Judah. Relate this to how the leaders of the church affect the spiritual condition of the congregation. How does this make you feel about your responsibility as a minister of the gospel?

3. How do you feel when you see God extending mercy to your enemies? How quick are you to extend mercy to those who offend you?

4. Why do you think God was so longsuffering and merciful to Israel and Judah? _____

5. Discuss how mercy covers the law. Share a time when mercy was extended to you. _____

6. Memorize Micah 7:8. Share a time when you fell and got up, or a time when you “sit in darkness and the Lord was a light” to you.

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Micah said to you, following the format on page 13.
- Read the Book of Nahum. Underline the key word in each chapter.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 8

Nahum, the Prophet of Comfort and Doom

Book of Nahum

Key Scripture

“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” (Nahum 1:3).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

As Nineveh sowed, so she reaped. The law of the harvest brings comfort or terror, depending upon the seeds sown.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Find Nineveh on a map and briefly describe its power and inhumane acts.
- Contrast Jonah’s message to Nineveh with Nahum’s.
- Compare what Nineveh sowed with what she reaped.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Goodness and Severity of God (Nahum 1; Romans 11:22)
 - A. God's Wrath
 - B. God's Promise
- II. Nineveh's Doom Described (Nahum 2)
 - A. Vast and Vile Nineveh
 - B. Nineveh Under Siege
- III. Nineveh's Doom Deserved (Nahum 3)
 - A. She Sowed; She Reaped
 - B. Judgment Is Sure

BOOK OF NAHUM

QUICK LOOK	3 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Nahum	Nahum—likely a prophet of Judah (1:15)	From Elkosh—town of Judah	NOTE: Location of Elkosh not certain
Meaning of his name	"Compassionate" or "The Lord comforts"		
Time of his prophecy	Between 650 and 620 BC. Fall of Thebes mentioned (663 BC)	Nahum predicted the fall of Nineveh, which took place in 612 BC.	During the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah (kings of Judah)
Historical background	II Kings 21-23 (<i>N. Geisler</i>) Judah experienced the brutal oppression of Assyria. NOTE: Nineveh was the capital of Assyria.	Judah had seen Israel oppressed and taken into Assyrian captivity (722 BC)	Judah endured a century of cruel treatment from Assyria. In 627 BC the Assyrian Empire began to decline and fell to the Babylonians and Medes (612 BC).
To whom addressed	The kingdom of Judah God's people	Nahum's prophecy was a comfort to Judah.	RECALL: Nineveh's response to Jonah's preaching had happened 150 years earlier.

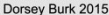
Why written	The book describes Nahum's vision about the events that would take place before the fall of Nineveh (612 BC).	Nahum relates God's promise to avenge his people and judge the wicked.	The book reveals both the justice of God in dealing with evil and His goodness manifested to the righteous.
Key verses	(1:3) <i>"The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked."</i>	(1:7) <i>"The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."</i>	(1:15) <i>"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts."</i>
Themes in Nahum	God's sure judgment of evil	God's compassion for His people	
Jesus seen in Nahum	God judges evil, but through the death of Jesus humanity is given mercy and pardon.	<i>"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).</i>	<i>"Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:10).</i>
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Nahum 1	The Sentence of Nineveh	God's justice and mercy	
Nahum 2	The Assault Upon Nineveh and Its Fall	Certainty of God's judgment	
Nahum 3	The Complete Ruin of Nineveh	The terrible woes of judgment	

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD

(Nahum 1)

God's Wrath

Jonah had brought Nineveh God's message of mercy: "Repent or perish."



One hundred fifty years had passed when Nahum, whose name means *comfort*, appeared on the scene. Nineveh had returned to their apostate ways.

again terrorized the world. The Almighty's power held in leash by His love and mercy was about to be released. Jehovah had had enough. Nineveh soon learned that when God's wrath is unleashed, all creation rages.

THINK ABOUT IT: Read chapter 1. In column 1 list the elements of creation named. In column 2 write the element's reaction to God's fury.

[illegible]

“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” (Nahum 1:6).

God set the day for Nineveh’s doom. Nothing could avert it. Nineveh, the terror of other nations, fell like straw in a raging forest fire. They could not survive when targeted by God’s fierce anger.

If the message and spirit of Jonah’s day had been passed down to the next generation, Nahum’s message would have not been needed.

THINK ABOUT IT: What do you think caused the people of Nineveh to return to their apostate ways?

God’s Promise

Unlike Jonah, Nahum did not go to Nineveh. He prophesied about Nineveh to Judah. The Assyrians may never have heard Nahum’s message of doom. If they had, mostly likely they would have scoffed and scorned Nahum as an ignorant, cowardly Israelite.

God promised to break the yoke of Assyrian oppression off of Judah’s neck. He had punished Judah, but now He would defend them. Good news, Judah! Celebrate! God is going fight for you. The Assyrians are past history.

THINK ABOUT IT: How can the same message bring life to one and death to another? What makes the difference? Consider your answer in the light of Romans 11:22.

NINEVEH'S DOOM DESCRIBED

(Chapter 2)

Vast and Vile Nineveh

Nineveh, like a hungry lion, prowled the earth looking for prey. Their lust for power was never satisfied. Nations trembled when the Assyrians threatened their borders.

In the British Museum are reliefs found in the ruins of Nineveh which illustrate the cruelty of the Assyrians. These reliefs depict people being flayed, decapitated, and impaled. One shows vultures plucking out a victim's eyes. Others show the Assyrians forcing people to grind the bones of their ancestors. <http://www.Biblearchaeology.org/> Accessed July 10, 2015.)

Often a captured king was taken to the capital and compelled to pull the royal chariot of triumph. Prisoners-of-war were lead into captivity by hooks in their lips or noses. Sometimes hands, feet, noses, and ears were cut off. Prisoners were blinded and their tongues torn from their mouths. Others were skinned alive and set on fire. Victims' skins were also hung near the enemy gates in order to collect tribute. (<http://www.bible-history.com/> Accessed July 10, 2015.)

No wonder Jonah drew back from God's call. Who would want mercy extended to such a merciless nation? Nahum declared Nineveh was to suffer the same treatment as they had meted out to others (3:14). How Jonah would have enjoying delivering Nahum's message.

Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire, was founded by Nimrod, shortly after the flood. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. They had carried the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity in 722 BC.

According to Henry Halley, Nineveh was the queen city of the earth at the time of Nahum's prophecy. Nahum called it "a den of ravaging lions" (2:11-13).

Nineveh referred to a complex of associated villages served by one irrigation system. Greater Nineveh was about 30 miles long and 10 miles wide (48 kilometers by 16). Five walls and three moats, built by foreign captives, surrounded the area. Jonah's mention of 120,000 babies (Jonah 4:11) suggests it might have had a population near one million.

The inner city of Nineveh, built at the junction of the Tigris and Khoser rivers, was about 3 miles long and 1½ miles wide (4.8 kilometers long by 2.4 wide). The wall was 100-feet high (30.48 meters), and wide enough for four chariots to be driven abreast. It was 8 (12.8 kilometers) miles in circumference. Halley, Henry. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI., © 1965) p. 369.

Nineveh under Siege

Man can never hold back the tide of God's wrath and judgment. God warned Assyria, "Get ready. Lay in supplies. Reinforce your troops. But it will all be in vain for I am going to fight for My people." (See 2:1-2.)

Halley's Bible Handbook tells us that twenty years after Nahum's prophecy, an army of Babylonians and Medes closed in on Nineveh. For two years they lay siege to the city. Then a flash flood washed away part of the walls. The waiting enemy swept into the city. (Halley, Henry. *Halley's Bible Handbook*. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI., ©1995) p. 370.)

- Besiegers approached in scarlet uniforms with steel-mounted chariots. Even the trees shook (verse 3).
- The chariots raged in street battles, flaming like torches, flashing like lightning (verse 4).
- Assyrian troops mustered, staggered and stumbled, running to the ramparts, too late! (verse 5)
- The wall crumbled; soldiers flooded the city. The palace was destroyed (verse 6).
- Panic swept through the palace (verse 7).
- Nineveh's panic-stricken troops fled, ignoring the call to defend the city (verse 8).
- The city was looted, emptied of its riches, and stripped of its glory (verse 9).
- Empty. Void. Waste. Hearts melted. Knees trembled. Pain paralyzed. Terror twisted every face (verse 10).
- The fierce lion had been defeated (verse 11).

Prancing horses, cracking whips, rattling wheels, bounding, raging chariots, flashing swords, great heaps of dead bodies (2:3-4; 3:1-7). It all came to pass exactly as Nahum had pictured it. (Ibid.) Nineveh's reign of terror ended.

Through Nahum the Lord of hosts warned Nineveh, "Behold I am against thee" (2:13; 3:5). Paul declared, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The opposite is just as true.

"If the Lord is against us our walls become cobwebs, but if the Lord is with us, even cobwebs become walls." – Ancient Christian poet

NINEVEH'S DOOM DESERVED

(Chapter 3)

She Sowed, She Reaped

Nahum's message was the same one that Paul wrote to the Galatians.

"God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man [or nation] sows so shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7, *brackets the author's*).

Nineveh's repentance at the preaching of Jonah delayed God's judgment, but within a few generations, Nineveh had returned to their acts of violence and vice. The cup of God's wrath overflowed. The city built on the blood of its enemies ran with the blood of its inhabitants. In the streets that had been decorated with its enemies' skulls, men stumbled over the corpses of its citizens. The city that had sown to the wind reaped the whirlwind.

DIG DEEPER: Read chapter 3, along with the comments below, and fill in the columns comparing what Nineveh sowed and what she reaped.

Sowed	Reaped

- Conquerors raged through the streets of Nineveh, leaving piles of dead in their wake (verses 2-3).
- The big reason for Nineveh's doom was moral decay. Her harlot-like lust had brought doom to many nations (verse 4).
- God exposed Nineveh's abominable inner workings. He stripped off the outer shell. Nineveh was exposed to the jibes and insults of the nations that she had oppressed (verses 5-6).
- Strongholds were shaken like a fig tree laden with fruit (verse 12).
- Gates opened wide for the enemy to enter (verse 13).
- Her effeminate defenders were ineffective (verse 13).

- Fire devoured the city (verse 15).
- King and captains were as weak as insects (verse 17).
- Her shepherds (keepers) slept (verse 18).
- Nobles hit the dust (verse 18).
- The people scattered upon the mountains (verse 18).
- There was no healing Nineveh's wound (verse 19).
- All who heard of Nineveh's destruction rejoiced (verse 19).

When Nahum prophesied, Nineveh was at the height of their glory. They had conquered their known world. But God is not mocked. As man (or nation) sows, so shall he (or they) reap.

Judgment Is Sure

The story is told of two boys who were sent by their father to plant maize. Row after row they planted. The sun was hot. The field was big. The boys were tired. They longed to go swimming.

One suggested, "Let's plant the rest of the seeds here at the end of this row."

The other agreed. "No one will ever know."

The deed was done. The boys went swimming.

All was well . . . until the seeds began to sprout. Their deed was revealed. Their judgment was sealed.

Wicked or righteous, men or nations, all will be judged. (Read II Corinthians 5:10 and Hebrews 9:27.) Judgment might be delayed, as it was when Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching or with the boys planting maize, but judgement is sure. It will come. (Read Ecclesiastes 8:11.)

Every act you perform is a seed to someone,
 For the influence will never die.
 Then be careful each day what you do, what you say,
 For you will meet it again, by and by.
 By Loudon Wainwright

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jonah was reluctant to offer Nineveh mercy. How do you think Nahum felt about pronouncing judgment on them?

2. How do you feel when you preach about the judgment of the wicked? What does this tell you about your passion for the lost?

3. Relate a sermon you preached (or heard) that brought both comfort and doom. What made the difference?

4. If God were to judge you today, what do you think He would say?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Nahum said to you, following the format under Student Assignments on page 13.
- Read the Book of Habbakuk. Underline Habbakuk's questions.

Lesson 9

Habakkuk, the Prophet of Faith

Book of Habakkuk

Key Scripture

“The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

Habakkuk’s journey from doubt to faith is one that every believer travels at some time. Faith in God supersedes logic and human reasoning.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Describe the world condition in Habakkuk’s day.
- Analyze Habakkuk’s questions and God’s responses.
- Relate Habakkuk’s faith to their own.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Prophet’s Perplexity (Habakkuk 1:1-2:1)
 - A. Introduction to Habakkuk
 - B. The Dialogue between God and Habakkuk

- II. The Prophet's Patience (Habakkuk 2:2-2:20)
 - A. Watch, Write, and Wait
 - B. Woes Pronounced against Babylon
- III. The Prophet's Praise (Habakkuk 3:1-19)
 - A. From a Sob to a Song
 - B. From a Minor Prophet Major Lessons

BOOK OF HABAKKUK

QUICK LOOK	3 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Habakkuk	Prophet of Judah	Lived during the time of Jeremiah	Possibly had a levitical (priestly) background
Meaning of his name	"Embraced"		
Time of his prophecy	620-605 BC (<i>N. Geissler</i>) 612-588 BC (<i>Life Application Bible</i>)	In Judah's final years before they were conquered by the Babylonians	After the fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians
Historical background	II Kings 22-24 During the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim in Judah	Jehoahaz followed his father Josiah. The Pharaoh of Egypt deported Jehoahaz to Egypt and made his brother Jehoiakim a vassal king.	During the two decades after King Josiah's death, the Babylonians conquered key nations and became a world power. In 586 BC they destroyed Judah and the Temple.
To whom addressed	The book is a dialogue between God and Habakkuk.	Habakkuk shared his dialogue with God for the benefit of Judah.	
Why written	Habakkuk recorded questions he asked God and the answers he received from God.	He felt troubled because God seemed to tolerating wickedness among His own people.	He felt perplexed about why God would allow a wicked nation to bring judgment on His own people.

Key verses	(1:5) <i>"Behold ye among the heathen . . . for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe."</i>	(2:4) <i>"But the just shall live by his faith."</i> Quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38	(3:18) <i>"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."</i>
Themes in Habakkuk	Questions about God's justice	Acknowledgement of God's sovereignty	Joyful confidence in God's salvation
Jesus seen in Habakkuk	God's ultimate salvation came by Jesus Christ. (See Habakkuk 3:13.)	Christ is described as the "Holy One" (1:12) and the One who justifies by faith (2:4).	Habakkuk described One who would fill the earth with "the knowledge of the glory of the LORD" (2:14).
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Habakkuk 1	Habakkuk's Complaint (1:2-4)	Why is evil unpunished?	Faith Tested (Geisler)
	God's Answer (1:5-11)	God will bring punishment to Judah by the Babylonians.	
Habakkuk 2	Habakkuk's Second Complaint (1:12-2:1)	How could God allow wicked Babylonians to punish His less wicked people?	Faith Taught (Geisler)
	God's Answer (2:2-20)	God will ultimately punish the wicked Babylonians.	
Habakkuk 3	Habakkuk's Prayer and Praise (See 3:1, 18-19.)		Faith Triumphant (Geisler)

THE PROPHET'S PERPLEXITY

(Habakkuk 1:1-2:1)

Introduction to Habakkuk

Habakkuk means "to embrace or cling to." Martin Luther said Habakkuk had the right name for his office for it means "he caresses the people and takes them in his arms, that is to say, he comforts and cheers them, as one caresses a poor, weeping child." The third chapter hints that Habakkuk might have been

part of the Levitical choir. (See 3:1, 19.) Nothing is known of him outside the book that bears his name.

Habakkuk was a prophet to Judah and a contemporary of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. He is sometimes referred to as “the questioning prophet,” the Thomas of the New Testament disciples. He was the free thinker among the prophets.

Definitions:

burden: (1:1) song of doom
thick clay: (2:6) stolen goods
Shigionoth: (3:1) set to the music of a psalm.

He asked God, “How long?” (1:2). “Why?” (1:3), and “Wherefore?” (1:13). The key word of his writing is “Why?” He could not square his belief in a good and righteous God with the facts of life as he saw them. He was troubled with the why. Yet, in all this mystery and perplexity, true to his name, he clung to God and poured out his questions to the Lord in prayer, waiting patiently for the divine explanation.

Most prophets are in-your-face assertive, not given to tact, not diplomatic, as they insist that we pay attention to God. But Habakkuk speaks our word *to God*. He gives voice to our bewilderment. [He] articulates our puzzled attempts to make sense of things. [He] faces God with our disappointment with God. He insists that God pay attention to us, and he insists with a prophet’s characteristic no-nonsense bluntness. . . . Habakkuk started out exactly where we start out with our puzzled complaints and God-accusations, but he didn’t stay there. He ended up in a world, along with us, where every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good. Peterson,

Eugene. (“Introduction to Habakkuk,” *The Message*. (NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO, © 2002) p. 1692.)

The Babylonian Empire began with the building of the Tower of Babel. The empire rose to its zenith of power as the Neo-Babylonian Empire during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylonia was the country; Babylon was the capital city. At times Babylonia is referred to as “the land of the Chaldeans.” Present day Babylon is located in Iraq, south of Baghdad.

Habakkuk foretold the downfall of the Babylonians, thus encouraging Judah. But he did not address Judah nor Babylon. He spoke to God alone. He was not concerned with a message to deliver, but a problem to be solved. The word *burden* set the stage for solemn words of impending judgment.

Assyria, a great world kingdom, was dying before the prophet's eyes. Egypt and Babylon were fighting to gain supremacy. Judah's revival under King Josiah had proven superficial. At the time of Habakkuk's writing, Israel had been taken captive by the Assyrians. Judah, who had refused to heed God's warnings, was standing on the threshold of a Babylonian invasion. The Temple was still standing (2:20).

The following comments indicated that tyranny, strife, and lawlessness were rife in Judah:

1. Men raised up strife and contentions (1:1).
2. Righteous people were oppressed (1:2, 13)
3. Open sin was everywhere (2:4-5, 15-16).
4. Idolatry prevailed (2:18-19).
5. The poor and defenseless were oppressed (1:4, 14).

The Dialogue between God and Habakkuk

This book is unique among the prophets in that two-thirds of it is in conversational form.

***First Question:** (1:2-4) God, why do You allow wicked, lawless men to go unpunished? Why do You permit evil? Why do You ignore the sin that I see all around me?*

Can you recall a time when you asked God the same questions? You are in good company for Habakkuk's inquiry was echoed by Jeremiah and Job, as well as countless others. (Read Jeremiah 12:1; 20:8 and Job 19:7.)

Note: the prophet did not complain *about* God, but poured out his complaint *to* God.

Evidently Habakkuk had been engaged in long intercessory prayer for Judah and received no response from God. To the prophet it seemed that God had deliberately shut His ears. The reign of Jehoiakim was full of injustice and bloodshed. (Read Jeremiah 22:3, 13-17.) Men seemingly were getting by with their sins. (See Ecclesiastes 8:11.)

THINK ABOUT IT: Is there a difference in asking God questions and questioning God? If so, what? Is it wrong to ask God questions? To question God? Write your answer on the next page.

God's Answer: (1:5-11) I am not ignoring evil. The Babylonians were going to be My vehicle to bring judgment upon Judah.

These heathens were described as cruel, swift, bitter, hasty, terrible, dreadful, scoffers of kings, capturers of strongholds, and those who took cities and dared to deify their weapons and might. (Read II Chronicles 36:17-21.)

Next Question: (1:12-2:1) God, don't tell me that You are going to use the Babylonians to discipline Your people? Why they are much, much more wicked than Judah! How can You, a holy and righteous God, justify such an action?

To Habakkuk, the cure seemed worse than the malady. He was horrified to hear the means by which God was going to judge Judah. How could God reconcile the cruelties of Babylon with His own purity and holiness? How could God use such a cruel and barbarous nation to execute judgment on His chosen people?

Though Habakkuk began this conversation with a question, in verse 12 he expressed an affirmation of faith, "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One?" He found the solution to his problem when he climbed his watchtower of faith and waited for God's answer. (2:1)

THE PROPHET'S PATIENCE

(Habakkuk 2:2-20)

Watch, Write, and Wait

God's Answer: (2:2-5) Write what I am showing you. Make it plain so everyone can understand. What you are seeing will come to pass in My time, not yours. Wait for it.

God admitted the wickedness of the Chaldeans, but declared that they would perish by the explosive power of evil. He commanded Habakkuk to write the vision that would come to pass in God's time. Good would triumph over evil. God instructed Habakkuk to watch, write, and wait. The hard part was waiting. God assured him that the future belonged to the righteous, whereas those who were puffed up and arrogant had no future.

Woes Pronounced against Babylon

God had not overlooked the sins of Babylon. But before He judged them, He used them. In chapter two, five woes are pronounced against the Babylonians.

1. **Woe against fraud and deceitfulness** (2:6-8). Harvest was coming. Babylon had spoiled many nations without mercy. As they had sown, so they would reap. The plundered nations would retaliate. Habakkuk's words "bite thee," "vex thee," and "suddenly" all come to pass when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon in one night. (See Daniel 5.)

2. **Woe to the covetous** (2:9-11).

Covetousness is an excessive craving for power, possessions, and/or pleasure. The Chaldeans esteemed their fortress (house) an impregnable "nest on high." The Message paraphrases verses 10-11 like this: "You've engineered the ruin of your own house. In ruining others, you've ruined yourself. You've undermined your foundations, rotted out your own soul. The bricks of your house will speak up and accuse you. The woodwork will step forward with evidence."

The house built on covetousness is a haunted house, echoing the cries of the slaves who built them. Riches built on the blood and sweat

The very old accounts of [the Hanging Gardens of Babylon] (one of the Seven Wonders of the World) describe the structure to be a stairs like one. The Greek geographer Strabo, describes it as, "the garden consists of vaulted terraces raised on above another, and resting upon cube-shaped pillars. These are hollow and filled with earth to allow trees of the largest size to be planted. The pillars, the vaults, and terraces are constructed of baked brick and asphalt. The irrigation system was apparently the complex part built on this garden. This region had very scarce rains. Slaves were used to push the water upwards using some ancient method of irrigation. Of course, there must be some exploitation of slave labor to maintain one [place] among the Seven Wonders of the World. (<http://allwondersof-world.Blog-spot.com/2009/02/hanging-gardens-of-babylon.html>. Accessed April 10, 2015.)

of others will cry out against injustice and eventually crumble. Man cannot enjoy the fruit of covetousness.

3. **Woe to the unrighteous** (2:12-14). Babylon was founded on injustice and cruelty. They were unscrupulous oppressors. This empire and all others built by violence and cruelty have been or will be destroyed.

In verse 14 Habakkuk's prophecy pulled back the curtain of time to give a glimpse of the Millennial. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Like Habakkuk, God's people long for the day when all wrongs will be made right and the earth will be clothed with the glory of God.

4. **Woe to the self-indulgent** (2:15-17). God despises self-centered bullies, whether individuals or nations, who subjugate people in order to gloat over them. Drunkenness was Babylon's besetting sin. Not only did they glory in their drunkenness, they encouraged others to join them in their orgies.
5. **Woe to idolaters** (2:18-20). The Old Testament prophets were at their best exposing the delusion and senselessness of idol worship. (See Isaiah 44:9-10 and Jeremiah 2:11.) Idolatry is silly and irrational. Man, God's highest creation, stoops the lowest when he creates an idol to teach himself.

The summary of God's answer to Habakkuk is: "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4). Paul emphasized the importance of this truth to the New Testament saints. In his writings he quoted it three times – Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

Some one hundred years before Habakkuk, the prophet Isaiah caught a glimpse of God's sovereignty when he wrote:

"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" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

When all man's questions have been asked, God's final answer is "Trust Me."

THINK ABOUT IT: When your children question your decision by asking, "Why?" do you ever answer, "Because I am the parent and I know best" or "Because I said so"? How does this compare to God's answers to Habakkuk?



Share a time when you did not understand what God was doing, but you trusted and obeyed Him.

We live by faith or we do not live at all. Either we venture or we vegetate. If we venture, we do so by faith simply because we cannot know the end of anything at its beginning. We risk marriage on faith or we stay single. We prepare for a profession by faith or we give up before we start. By faith we move mountains of opposition or we are stopped by molehills.--(Harold Walker)

THE PROPHET'S PRAISE

(Habakkuk 3:1-19)

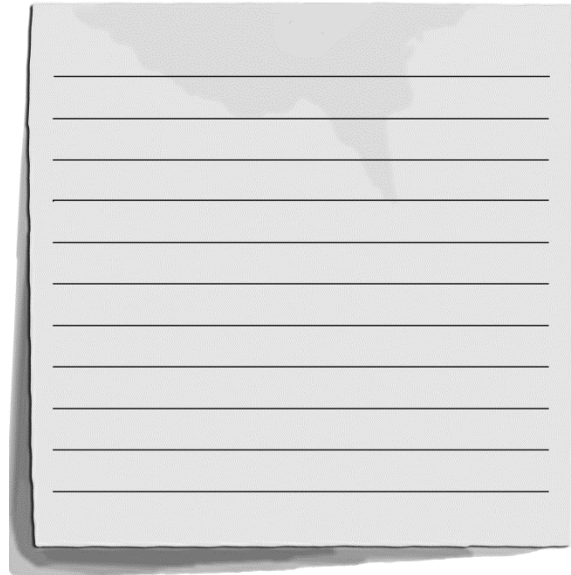
From a Sob to a Song

Habakkuk began his writing with a sob and ended it with a song as he moved from fear to faith. In chapter one he wrote of his perplexities. In chapter two his patience was tested. Chapter three concludes with a short prayer and a psalm of praise.

He started by writing, "I've heard about the miraculous things You did for our forefathers. Please, God, do it again. And, if you must bring judgment, remember to show mercy" [paraphrased by author]. Habakkuk's prophetic psalm paints a magnificent picture of God's awesome power. Imagine how the prophet felt as these anointed words of praise flowed from his pen.

THINK ABOUT IT: What scenes in Habakkuk grab you? If you are artistic, sketch one of these scenes. What words stood out in your mind? If you are a word smith, write a poem or praise chorus expanding on these words.

Area for sketch



What three words would you use to describe Habakkuk's emotions as he wrote this psalm? _____

Verses 17-18 give us a glimpse of the faith that filled Habakkuk's heart:

"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" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Consider what these verses said to the people of Judah in his day.

- Figs and grapes were a necessary food source and gave a sense of wellbeing and prosperity.
- Olives were used for hairdressing, fuel, medicine, and food.
- Cattle produced milk, butter, and cheese. The sheep produced wool and food.

The prophet faced the prospect of losing everything he possessed. Instead of complaining, he rejoiced in the God of His salvation. What a dynamic declaration!

DIG DEEPER: Write a paraphrase of Habakkuk 3:17-18 fitting it to your circumstances.



From a Minor Prophet Major Lessons

The minor prophet Habakkuk teaches us some major lessons.

- God never stifles sincere questions.
- Some problems cannot have direct answers.
- In every crisis, God can be trusted.
- Faith is the root of victorious living.
- In dealing with doubts, God invites us to talk to Him and wait for His answer.

If we, like Habakkuk, will watch and wait (perhaps even write), faith will fill our hearts with praise.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare your world to Habakkuk's.

2. Recall Habakkuk's questions and God's answers.

3. What is meant by "the just shall live by faith"?

4. If it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), is doubt a sin?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Habakkuk said to you, following the format under Student Assignment on page 13.
- Read the Book of Zephaniah. Underline or highlight the word *day*. In one sentence summarize Zephaniah's writing.

Lesson 10

Zephaniah, the Evangelistic Prophet

Book of Zephaniah

Key Scripture

“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” (Zephaniah 2:3).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

Zephaniah’s call to repentance was universal and timeless. Only national repentance can prevent national ruin.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Explain the role Zephaniah played in the revival during Josiah’s reign.
- Compare conditions in Zephaniah’s day to the present day.
- Describe the coming Day of the Lord.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Blackout (II Kings 21:1-18)
 - A. Zephaniah's Heritage
 - B. Zephaniah's Day
- II. Looking Within (Zephaniah 1:1-2:3)
 - A. A Dark Day
 - B. The Day of the Lord
- III. Looking Around (Zephaniah 2:4-3:8)
 - A. A Call to Repentance
 - B. A Warning of Judgment
- IV. Looking Beyond (Zephaniah 3:9-20)
 - A. A Time of Restoration
 - B. A Time to Rejoice

BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

QUICK LOOK	3 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Zephaniah?	1:1 identifies him as descended from Cushi, Gedaliah, Amariah and Hezekiah.	Lived during the time of Nahum and young Jeremiah	Possibly from the royal line of Hezekiah. Likely lived in Jerusalem. Would have known the royal courts.
Meaning of his name	"Hidden by Jehovah" or "Protected"		
Time of his prophecy	630-620 BC (<i>Geisler</i>) 641-628 BC (<i>Bible Overview</i>)	During the time when King Josiah's reforms began	Shortly before Habakkuk
Historical background	II Kings 22-23 II Chronicles 34-35 During the early years of King Josiah's rule	King Josiah (the last good king of Judah) instituted spiritual reforms. Two evil kings, Manasseh and Amon, preceded Josiah.	Judah's morals and religion had been influenced by the ungodly reigns of Manasseh and Amon.
To whom addressed	To Judah	A warning of God's coming judgment	

Why written	To warn the people of Judah about the judgment to come on them and on their neighbors	To call Judah to repentance before the coming “day of the LORD”—a day when God will pour out His wrath	To give assurance that a faithful remnant would be redeemed and restored (Note 3:17-20.)
Key verses	(1:14) <i>“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.”</i>	(2:3) <i>“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.”</i>	(3:17) <i>“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.”</i>
Themes in Zephaniah	The Day of the Lord (the time of God’s wrath) (1:7-8, 14-15, 18; 2:2)	God’s call to repentance	God’s promise of restoration
Jesus seen in Zephaniah	The Day of the Lord will come to judge all people.	Those who have found salvation in Jesus will be saved from God’s judgment.	<i>“But the day of the LORD will come as a thief in the night”</i> (II Peter 3:10).
A LOOK AT	MAIN TOPICS		
Zephaniah 1	The Day of Judgment	Zephaniah’s declaration of the “day of the LORD.”	Description of God’s wrath to be poured out on idolatrous Judah
Zephaniah 2	The Day of Judgment for the Nations	God’s call to Judah to repent in view of coming judgment (2:1-3)	Listing of heathen nations and judgments pronounced on them (2:4-15)
Zephaniah 3:1-7	The Day of Judgment for Jerusalem	The just Lord did not overlook the corruption in Jerusalem.	
Zephaniah 3:8-20	The Day of Hope for God’s people	After his message of judgment, Zephaniah spoke of future hope.	The prophet spoke of God in the midst of the people to gather them again (3:17-20).

THE BLACKOUT

(II Kings 21:1-18)

Zephaniah's Heritage

Zephaniah (meaning "God has hidden") was of royal ancestry. Probably what he knew about his great-great grandfather, King Hezekiah, was passed down to him. But no doubt he witnessed firsthand the evil atrocities of Hezekiah's son Manasseh and grandson Amon. Memories of scenes of mayhem and carnage added heat to his words. During Josiah's reign, Zephaniah was a fiery evangelist, preaching a strong message of judgment.

Zephaniah's Day

When Isaiah brought Hezekiah a set-your-house-in-order message, Hezekiah begged God to spare his life. (Read Isaiah 38:1-5.) God relented and gave him an additional fifteen years. Three years after his miraculous healing his son Manasseh was born.

Upon the death of Hezekiah, twelve-year-old Manasseh ascended to the throne.

DIG DEEPER: Read II Kings 21:1-18 and underline Manasseh's evil deeds.

THINK ABOUT IT: How would the history of Judah been different had Hezekiah died before Manasseh was born?

Manasseh's fifty-five year reign from 698-643 BC plunged Judah into a spiritual blackout.

THINK ABOUT IT: In Matthew 6:23 Jesus addressed spiritual darkness in an individual: "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"



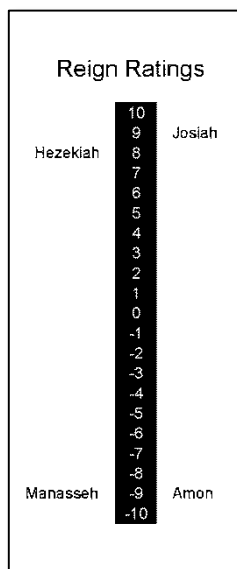
Apply this to the nation of Judah during Manasseh's reign.

Manasseh's son Amon followed in his father's footsteps. His short two-year reign ended when he was assassinated by his servants. At that time, his son Josiah was crowned king of Judah.

Josiah reigned from 641-610 BC. When Josiah heard the long lost book of the law read, his heart was moved deeply. (Read II Chronicles 34:14-19.)

He and his relative Zephaniah formed an evangelistic team calling Judah to repentance.

Zephaniah's blistering messages combined with Josiah's repentant heart brought revival to Judah. The people, warned by Zephaniah and directed by Josiah, broke down idols, cleaned out groves, opened the house of God, and taught the law. (See II Kings 23:25.) Only national repentance can prevent national ruin. (Read II Chronicles 7:14.) Revival did not bring great prosperity or purity to Judah, but it postponed judgment until 606 BC when Babylon invaded the land.



THINK ABOUT IT:
What does the Reign Ratings graph show you about the reigns of these kings? How did these kings' choice affect Judah?

LOOKING WITHIN

(Zephaniah 1:1-2:3)

A Dark Day

Definitions

- Chemarim (1:4): idolatrous priests
- host of heaven (1:5): sun and star worship; Assyrian idolatry
- Malcam (1:5) Milcom, or Moloch, the Ammonite god
- Cherethites: another name for Philistines

God furnished Zephaniah with spiritual night goggles that pierced through the darkness of Judah's blackout. He saw through time to the future "Day of the Lord"—a time God would reveal Himself to the whole world, judging evildoers and rewarding the righteous.

Zephaniah's admonitions rang in the palace at Jerusalem and echoed in the streets and byways of the land. None would escape

God's wrath—not man, beast, fowl, or fish. He denounced the priests and shrines of Baal. He showed utter contempt for the hypocrites who sneaked up onto their housetops at night to worship the heavens, then in the light of day pretended to worship Jehovah. This fiery prophet declared that utter desolation was coming upon the backsliders and the indifferent.

"Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off" (Zephaniah 1:11)

Maktesh was a place in or near Jerusalem inhabited by silver merchants. It has been conjectured that it was the "Phoenician quarter" of the city, where the traders of that nation resided, after the Oriental custom. <http://www.biblestudy-tools.com/dictionary/maktesh/> Accessed April 15, 2015.

Zephaniah pronounced doom on the gods of silver and gold and those who worshiped them. (Compare James 5:1-6 with Zephaniah 1:11.) The greedy men of Judah sacrificed principles and morals in their pursuit of riches. Covetousness blinded them to the coming day of reckoning. The mad rush for silver and gold escalated. Men focused on the economy—building houses and planting vineyards. Zephaniah pointed his finger at the money-hungry and warned them that their reckless race to prosperity would soon grind to a halt. They would not live in the houses they had built nor eat of the vineyards they had planted. Their silver and gold would be worthless.

PARAPHRASE the following: “The Baal of our day lies in the lap of commerce.”

THINK ABOUT IT: Read I Timothy 6:6. Give an example of someone you know who is truly content. What make this person content?

“And it shall come to pass at that time, 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” (Zephaniah 1:12).

Dregs or “lees” left in wine spoiled the flavor. Wine was poured from vessel to vessel so it would not take on the dreg’s bitter flavor. (See Jeremiah 48:11 and Psalm 55:19.) Amos warned those who were at ease in Zion. Moab had the taste and scent of lees in it. The self-centered people of Judah were stagnate and bitter. They were indifferent, almost atheists. Within twenty years of Zephaniah’s prophecy, God used the Babylonian army to punish those who had settled on their lees.



The Day of the Lord

Facts about the Day of the Lord:

- It will be a day of total destruction (1:2).
- It is at hand (1:7, 14).
- The Lord has prepared a sacrifice (1:7).
- Guest are invited (1:7). According to Revelation 19:17, the guests are the fowls of the air.
- Royalty (leaders) and those who wear strange apparel will be destroyed (1:8).
- It will cause mighty men to weep bitterly (1:14).

- It will be a day of trouble, distress, waste, desolation, thick darkness, and gloom (1:15).
- It will be a day of trumpets and alarms (1:16). Sirens will wail.
- Men will stumble like blind men (1:17; also Deuteronomy 28:29).
- It will be a day of great bloodshed (1:17).
- Corpses will be dung (1:17).
- The land will be devoured by fire (1:18).

While judgment fell upon Judah and the nations surrounding her within two decades of Zephaniah's prophecy, the Great Day of the Lord is yet to come during the Great Tribulation. God's judgment is imminent, dreadful, destructive, and unavoidable.

"Those who wore strange apparel" is thought by some commentators to refer to those who wore the clothing of false priests and priests, those who wore clothing of the opposite sex, and/or those who imitated the fashions of heathen nations.

LOOKING AROUND

(Zephaniah 2:4-3:8).

A Call to Repentance

"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

Driven by urgency, Zephaniah called the people to repentance. Time was of the essence. Their time to repent was fleeting as chaff blown away by the wind. The prophet's evangelistic message urged the people to seek righteousness and meekness to hide them from God's fierce anger.

The God of Israel is, and always has been, the God of the universe—the God of all the nations. His call to repentance is universal. His judgments are impartial. God opened Zephaniah's eyes to the nations around him—Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria, and Judah. What the

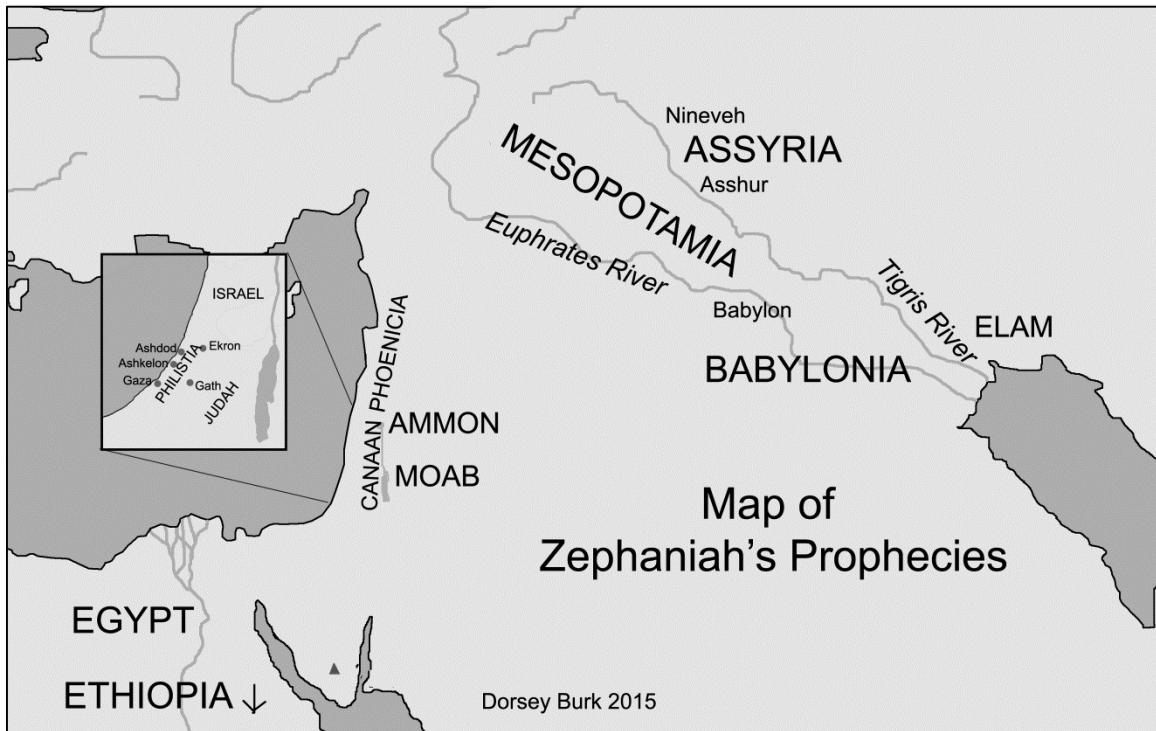
God used . . .

- Assyria to judge Israel in 721 BC.
- Babylon to judge Judah in 588 BC.
- Medeo-Persia to judge Babylon in 538 BC.
- Greece to judge Medeo-Persia in 338 BC.
- Romans to judge Greeks in 160 BC.
- The revived Roman Empire will be judged at Armageddon.

prophet saw was not pretty. He made observations about each, but hurled his strongest indictment against Jerusalem.

A Warning of Judgment

As with most prophecies, Zephaniah's was for his day and ours. Look within your world. Compare the conditions you see with what Zephaniah saw.



1. **Philistia:** bad news. Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron and Ashkelon, the cities of the Philistines, were doomed. Their seacoast would become pastureland for Judah's remnant.
2. **Moab and Ammon** (descendants of Lot): doomed. Because of their arrogant taunts and mockery of God's people, they would become like Sodom and Gomorrah, a wasteland of nettles and salt pits.
3. **Ethiopia and Egypt:** judgment. They would be slain by the sword at the hands of the Babylonians.
4. **Assyria:** desolation. The terror of the world, Assyria was the strongest political factor in Zephaniah's day. The pleasure-loving, sin-city Nineveh would become a ghost town, the abode of wild animals.

Then came God's pronouncement against **Judah**, His chosen people (3:2).

1. "She obeyed not the voice." The prophets admonished, threatened, and pled, but their words fell on stony hearts.
2. "She received not correction." God used famine, drought, blasting, mildew, pestilence, sword, fire, and destruction to no avail.
3. "She trusted not in the LORD" (3:2). Instead of trusting Jehovah, Judah raced to Egypt, Assyria, and other heathen nations for help.
4. "She drew not near to her God." In Isaiah's day, the people at least drew near with their lips. In Zephaniah's day they did not even do that. Manasseh and Amon had uprooted the nation's last bit of reverence. Only the few in the "religious underground" remained faithful to the God of their fathers.

Within twenty years of Zephaniah's prophecies, all these nations lay desolate, trodden underfoot by Babylon.

Zephaniah continued by contrasting Jehovah's character and Judah's leading men (3:3-5). Judah's princes were roaring lions. The judges were evening wolves. The prophets were light and treacherous. The priests polluted the sanctuary and did violence to the law. Jehovah, on the other hand, was just, did not do iniquity, brought His judgment to light, and failed not.

Surely after being warned of the danger ahead, these nations would repent. But no! They ignored and ridiculed the prophet's words. Day after day, year after year, the nations continued in their wicked ways.

LOOKING BEYOND

(Zephaniah 3:9-20)

A Time of Restoration

Like the other prophets, Zephaniah promised that after judgment healing would come. Three times this evangelistic prophet spoke of a remnant being saved (2:3, 7; 3:12-13). Twice he spoke of their return from captivity (2:7; 3:20).

God promised that in the end time He would turn things around and give the people a "pure language" (3:9). The earth was of one language until the Tower of Babel when God confused the language and scattered the people. (Read

Genesis 11:1-9.) Since then language barriers have slowed the spreading of God's message, caused misunderstanding, hindered world peace, and instigated wars.

A Time to Rejoice

Zephaniah 3:11-20 gives twelve reasons for Judah to rejoice:

1. "Thou shalt not be ashamed."
2. "Thou shalt no more be haughty."
3. "They shall trust in the name of the LORD."
4. "None shall make thee ashamed."
5. "The LORD is in the midst of thee."
6. "Thou shalt not see evil anymore."
7. "He hath cast out thine enemy."
8. "He will save thee."
9. "He will joy over thee with singing."
10. "I will undo all that afflict thee."
11. "I will save her that halteth."
12. "I will make you a name and a praise."

Zephaniah spent most of his book proclaiming the day of God's wrath, still he closed with a song of victory (3:14-20). This is called the sweetest love song in the Old Testament. The God who weeps over those who rebel sings over those who repent.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Imagine Zephaniah preaching a revival in your city. Which verse from his book would he would use for his text? Give his sermon a title. Decide on his three main points.

2. Describe Zephaniah's and Josiah's roles in Judah's revival. How do you think Zephaniah's ministry affected Josiah?

3. What is the danger of being settled on our lees?

4. How do the indictments God made against Judah apply to our world?

5. Describe the Day of the Lord as seen by Zephaniah.

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Zephaniah said to you, following the format under Student Assignment on page 13.
- Read Ezra 1-4 and the Book of Haggai. Be prepared to explain the connection.

Lesson 11

Haggai, the Prophet of Encouragement

Book of Haggai

Key Scripture

“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” (Haggai 2:4).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

The Jews put personal comfort ahead of God’s work. Their wrong priorities brought God’s displeasure. When we put God first, His blessings follow.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Relate the history of the rebuilding of the Temple.
- Relate the antidote for discouragement.
- Explain how our priorities affect our circumstances.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Background (Ezra 1-4)
 - A. Mixed Feelings and Voices
 - B. Mixed Religion
- II. Haggai's First Message (Haggai 1)
 - A. Haggai's Appeal
 - B. The People's Response
- III. Haggai's Second Message (Haggai 2:1-9)
 - A. God's Word for Then
 - B. God's Word for Now
- IV. Haggai's Third Message (Haggai 2:10-19)
 - A. Questions for the Priests
 - B. Admonition for the People
- V. Haggai's Fourth Message (Haggai 2:20-24)
 - A. A Message for One
 - B. A Lesson for All

BOOK OF HAGGAI

QUICK LOOK	2 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Haggai?	Prophet with a message to the Jews who returned from exile in foreign lands	Post-exilic prophet Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14.	Contemporary of prophet Zechariah and Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah (appointed by King Cyrus)
Meaning of his name	"Festal"	Name implies he was born on a major feast day.	
Time of his prophecy	520 BC.—Haggai's prophecies are the most precisely dated writings in the Old Testament (<i>Geisler</i>).		NOTE: Zerubbabel, a descendant of King Jehoichin, was an heir to the throne of Judah (I Chronicles 3:17-19).

Historical background	Ezra 5-6 Cyrus, king of Persia, decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).	Over 50,000 Jews returned to the land with materials given by King Cyrus to restore the Temple. About 538 BC.	The Temple foundations were laid around 536 BC. Then the people faced opposition and stopped building, focusing on their own houses (1:2-6).
To whom addressed	To the exiles who had returned to Judah	Particularly to the Jews who settled in Jerusalem	
Why written	To exhort the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem	The work on the Temple had ceased for some 16 years. The rebuilding was completed in 516 BC.	NOTE: The Temple was destroyed in 586 BC. Its restoration was completed 70 years after its destruction.
Key verses	(1:4) <i>"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?"</i>	(2:4) <i>"Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua . . . and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work; for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts."</i>	
Themes in Haggai	The Temple—a sign of God's presence among His people	Encouragement to make God's work a priority	
Jesus seen in Haggai	The Temple foreshadowed the ministry of the coming Messiah (2:6-7).	See Hebrews 12:24-28 about Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant.	NOTE: Haggai 2:6 is quoted in Hebrews 12:26.
A LOOK	AT MAIN TOPICS		
Haggai 1	The Call to Build the Temple	1:1-11—Haggai's appeal	It is time to build God's house! (1:4)
		1:12-15—Leaders and people's obedient response	<i>"They came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God" (1:14).</i>

Haggai 2	Encouragement to Complete the Temple	2:1-9—Message to be strong. God would fill His house with glory and peace.	<i>"I will fill this house with glory . . ." (2:7). "And in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts" (2:9).</i>
		2:10-23—Message to inquire about God's laws	<i>'Ask now the priests concerning the law . . .'</i> (2:11).

THE BACKGROUND

(Ezra 1-4)

Mixed Feelings

The historical timeline prior to Haggai's message:

606 BC	As prophesied by Isaiah (39:6) and Micah (4:10), Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon the Temple treasures and royal seed, including Daniel and the three Hebrews.
587 BC	Nebuchadnezzar returned and took captive King Jehoiakim, the chief men, and carried away the rest of the treasures.
586 BC	After a year and a half siege, Nebuchadnezzar's army burned Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and carried King Zedekiah and 832 captives to Babylon.
581 BC	The Babylonians returned for a final raid of the land and took 745 captives.
539 BC	Babylon fell to King Cyrus of Persia.
538 BC	As prophesied over two hundred years before by Isaiah (44:26-28; 45:1, 13), after the Jews were in Babylon seventy years, Cyrus issued a decree allowing them to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4).
536 BC	50,000 Jews returned under Zerubbabel. (Ezra 2:64-67)
536-535 BC	The Jews built the altar and laid the Temple foundation. (Ezra 3:7-13)
535-534 BC	The Samaritans opposed the building of the Temple. (Ezra 4:1-5)
534 BC	The work on the Temple ceased. (Ezra 4:24)

536-520 BC	Zerubbabel served as governor and Joshua as the high priest.
520 BC	Haggai's prophecies in Jerusalem provoked the Jews to rise up and build.

Imagine how surprised the Jews were when they arrived in Babylon after a 600-mile, prisoners-of-war march. Babylon was not a bad place to live after all. They were allowed to build homes, plant vineyards, and start businesses. (See Jeremiah 29:1-7.)

Around the family table, old-timers talked about the glory of the Temple and expressed their desires to go home. (See Psalm 137:1-4.) For many of the younger generation their grandfathers' memories of the "good ole days" seemed as fables. To them Babylon was home.

THINK ABOUT IT: Compare the Jews' captivity in Babylon to our sojourn in life. What are the dangers of becoming comfortable in this world?

As Jeremiah prophesied (25:11-12), seventy years after Judah was carried into captivity. King Cyrus issued a decree allowing them to return and rebuild the Temple at his expense (Ezra 1).

The call went out: Who will return to the homeland? (See 1:1-3.)

The Jews faced a major decision. The homeland was in ruins. Living conditions would be deplorable. Everything would have to be rebuilt. Also the journey would be hazardous. Only those who felt the strong pull of home were willing to make such a sacrifice.

THINK ABOUT IT: Describe the ruins that the Jews found when they returned to Jerusalem. Compare this to the heart of a believer who neglects his spiritual temple. Write your answer on the next page.



Surprisingly around fifty thousand Jews, both young and old, accepted the challenge, packed their bags, said “good-bye” to family and security, and returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1, 64-65). Within God’s people lives an undeniable longing for home.

Mixed Voices

After the altar was built, the Jews repaired the foundation of the Temple (3:8-10). This was another time of mixed feelings. The older generation wept loudly as they compared the present to the past. The younger generation, who had no memory of the previous Temple, rejoiced at what they had accomplished. The sounds of grief and joy mixed until they could not be distinguished one from another (3:11-13).



THINK ABOUT IT: The first thing the Jews did when they reached their homeland was rebuild the altar (3:2). What does this say about their priorities? Where does building/maintaining an altar fit into your priorities?

Mixed Religion

After the Assyrians took the ten northern tribes into captivity (722 BC), they repopulated the cities of Samaria with Assyrians. (See II Kings 17:24.) These strangers, who became known as Samaritans, brought their idols with them. Soon they added the God of the Jews to their idolatrous worship. “They feared the LORD, and served their own gods” (II Kings 17:33). What a mixed-up religion.

When the Jews began rebuilding the Temple, the Samaritans approached them with a plan for co-existence. “Let us help you build the Temple,” they said.

“After all, we worship the same God. We’ve been sacrificing to Him ever since the king of Assyria relocated us to this land.” (Read Ezra 4:1-2.) They failed to mention that they also had continued to worship their heathen gods.

During the seventy years the Jews were in exile, they had held fast to the worship of the one true God. Captivity had taught them a lesson. In Babylon they had put aside their idolatry, which had brought God’s judgment upon them. After their sojourn in Babylon, the Jews never again worshipped idols.

So when the idol-worshiping Samaritans sought to make an alliance with the one-God Jews, the Jews refused their offer. A power struggled ensued. Opposition grew fierce. The Samaritans bitterly resented the Jews’ rejection. They took their accusations all the way to the king of Persia (4:6–23).

The Jews grew weary of the Samaritans’ harassment. They threw up their hands and quit. Work on the Temple ceased (4:24). Here are a few of the excuses they may have given to justify their complacency:

- “We’ve worshipped without a Temple for seventy years. We really don’t need one now.”
- “The opposition is too strong.”
- “Our crops are failing. We need to work in the fields.”
- “Our houses need repaired and remodeled.”
- “We’re in a depression and can’t afford a building program.”

Approximately fifteen years went by.
(Compare Ezra 5:1 with Haggai 1:1).

HAGGAI’S FIRST MESSAGE

(Haggai 1)

Haggai’s Appeal

The Lord, through Haggai, spoke first to the leaders, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest. (Read Haggai 1:1-2.) In his message God called the Jews “this people” rather than “my people,” indicating divine displeasure. Their apathy to the things of God resulted in cold indifference.

Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who had been carried into Babylon. Had Judah been a kingdom, instead of a province of Persia, Zerubbabel would have been the king. King Cyrus had courteously appointed him as governor.

As a descendant of King David, Zerubbabel was in the direct lineage of Jesus Christ.

Haggai, a practical plain-speaking man, challenged the people to consider their ways. While they lived in ceiled houses and lavished labor and money on their own homes, the house of God lay in ruins. Until Haggai's prophecy called their attention to their ways, the distracted Jews had not made the connection between God's house and their circumstances.

What was happening? They were taking care of themselves and postponing God's work. The results—meager harvests, unsatisfied appetites, unquenched thirst, threadbare clothes, and paychecks diminished by inflation. The harder they worked for self, the less they had. Their priorities were wrong. There is always a price to pay for neglecting God's work.

The People's Response

Through Haggai's preaching, the Lord stirred the spirit of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people. No other prophet saw a faster response to his message than this man. Twenty-four days after he delivered his first sermon urging the people to consider their ways, work resumed on the Temple.

Haggai not only rebuked, he cheered. He not only criticized, he commended. He not only preached, he practiced. He picked up a hammer and went to work alongside the people. (Read Ezra 5:1-2.)

HAGGAI'S SECOND MESSAGE

(Haggai 2:1-9)

God's Word for Then

The seventh month and the twenty-first day was the closing day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The next day was a Sabbath, a holy convocation or public meeting. Most likely it was for this meeting that the Word of the Lord came to Haggai. The people had been working on the Temple for a little over seven weeks.

After their first burst of zeal, the people were in danger of becoming discouraged. "We're weary. Look at all we have yet to do." "We'll never be able to match what we had before. . . . the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred fire, the Shekinah glory, the Urim and Thummin. Look at all we don't have."

It was time for a motivational sermon (2:4).

Paraphrased Haggai declared, “You remember what you had before, a glorious Temple. Are you saying that this one is nothing in comparison? Stop your negative talk. Be strong! Get to work! The LORD is with you. Remember His covenant with you. He is going to shake the heavens and earth. The riches of the godless nations will fill this Temple with splendor. God owns the silver and the gold. You are going to be amazed at the end results. Peace and prosperity will fill this place.” (See Ezra 2:3-9).

The Word of the Lord encouraged the people to stop dwelling on the past and look to the future. Before their eyes flashed a vision of what would be. It gave them hope. The antidote for discouragement is believing the Word of God and getting involved in the work of God.

THINK ABOUT IT: Are you battling discouragement in your ministry and/or your church? How can the Word of God and working in His kingdom encourage you and the people you lead?

In chapter 1 the people worked for God. In chapter 2 God worked on behalf of the people.

God’s Word for Now

Like the prophecies of all the minor prophets, Haggai’s message was for then and now.

He spoke of the earth’s future renovation when the heavens, earth, sea, land, and nations would be shaken. God promised “to fill this house with glory” (2:7). “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former” (2:9). When uttering this prophecy, Haggai’s was looking at the unfinished building before him, but his words reached far into the future. He spoke of a temple whose glory would surpasses even Solomon’s. (Read Ephesians 2:19-22.)

HAGGAI’S THIRD MESSAGE

(Haggai 2:10-19)



Questions for the Priests

Three months after the Jews started rebuilding the Temple, the Word of the Lord again came to Haggai. It was directed to the priests.

“If you carry in your pocket a piece of meat set apart for a sacrifice and your pocket touches a food not set apart for sacrifice, does the contact make that food holy?”

“No,” answered the priest.

Correct.

“If someone made unclean by touching a corpse touches any of these foods, does his touch make it unclean?”

“Yes,” the priests said.

Bottom line: Pollution is contagious. Holiness is not.

Admonition for the People

Haggai continued, “Because these people are polluted, everything they do is polluted” (2:14).

The altar that the people built on their return from Babylon was not sufficient to sanctify them. When the people offered sacrifices on the altar while neglecting the Temple, they half-heartedly worshiped. Their outward sacrifices devoid of inner devotion offended God.

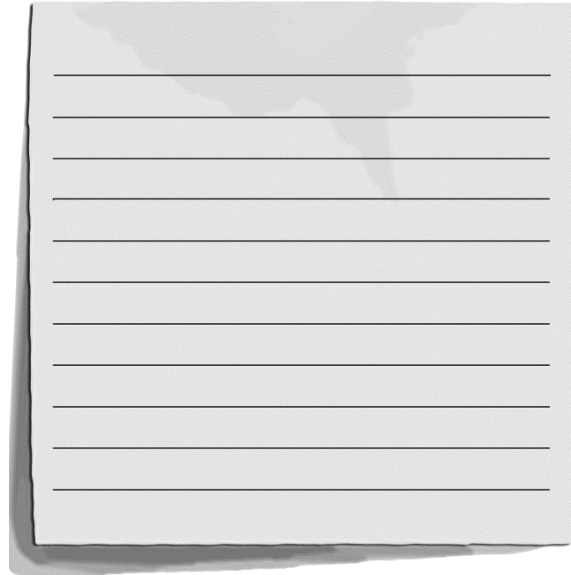
Haggai added, “Look back. Before you started rebuilding the Temple, how did you prosper? You didn’t. Your indifference to the work of God was reflected in your crops. God sent drought, blight, and hail. Yet you did not get the connection” (2:17).

God often used nature/weather to indicate His pleasure or displeasure with mankind.

THINK ABOUT IT: Visualize nature/weather as a weapon in the hand of God. Compile a list of times when God used nature (weather) to fight for His people or to get their attention.

In this day of grace, does God still use nature to show His pleasure or displeasure with mankind? Defend your answer.

Haggai's message not only rebuked, it encouraged. God had seen the Jews' indifference and was displeased with their procrastination. He had also seen their renewed zeal and was pleased by it. "Consider now from this day and upward" (2:18).



HAGGAI'S FOURTH MESSAGE

(Haggai 2:20-23)

A Message for One

On the same day that Haggai assured the people that God would bless them, he delivered a personal message to Zerubbabel, Judah's political leader. The priests were the religious leaders. Haggai as God's man was obligated to neither political nor religious powers. True men of God deliver God's Word without fear or favor, whether they are speaking to the governor or the common man.

Haggai lifted the curtain of time and allowed Zerubbabel a glimpse into the future. God was about to shake human governments and world powers. No matter how vast or strong a government, it cannot withstand God's judgment.

God called Zerubbabel a "signet," meaning he had God-given authority. The stamp of a king's signet (ring) on a document sealed it and made it legal. Signets were precious to their owners. Likewise, Zerubbabel, as a direct descendant of David, was a valuable link to the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Signet: a seal used to attest documents (Daniel 6:8-10, 12). When digging a shaft close to the south wall of the temple area, the engineers of the Palestine Exploration Fund, at a depth of 12 feet below the surface, came upon a pavement of polished stones, formerly one of the streets of the city. Under this pavement they found a stratum of 16 feet of concrete, and among this concrete, 10 feet down, they found a signet stone bearing the inscription, in Old Hebrew characters, "Haggai, son of Shebaniah." It has been asked, Might not this be the actual seal of Haggai the prophet? We know that he was in Jerusalem after the Captivity; and it is somewhat singular that he alone of all the minor prophets makes mention of a signet (Haggai 2:23). (*Easton Bible Dictionary*. Accessed at <http://www.bible-dictionary.org/Signet> Accessed June 10, 2015.)

Four years after Haggai delivered his message, the Temple was completed.

A Lesson for All

Jesus summarized Haggai's messages when He said:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare Haggai's preaching and the peoples' response to I Corinthians 1:18 and Romans 10:13-17. Share a time when the preaching of God's Word stirred your spirit and motivated you to action.

2. Discuss how people today give the same excuses as the Jews for not working on God's house.

3. Does seeking first the kingdom of God guarantee that we will always prosper materially? Explain.

4. Is it important that believers have a building in which to worship? Why or why not?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Haggai said to you, following the format under Student Assignment on page 13.
- Read the Book of Zechariah. Underline the verses foretelling the coming of the Messiah.

Personal Study Notes

Lesson 12

Zechariah, the Visionary Prophet

Book of Zechariah

Key Scripture

“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” (Zechariah 4:6).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

While arousing the Jews to rebuild the Temple, Zachariah’s far-sighted prophecies gave them hope for the future. Our passion to serve God is strengthened when we look forward to the day when He will set up His earthly kingdom.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Relate the role Zechariah played in the rebuilding of the Temple.
- List Zechariah’s eight visions and give a synopsis of each.
- Quote three messianic prophetic phrases or verses from Zechariah.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Man and His Times (Zechariah 1:1-6)
 - A. Called to Prophecy
 - B. Called to Repentance
- II. Past, Present, Future (Zechariah 1:7-6:8; 7, 8)
 - A. Visions of the Future
 - B. Answers for the Present
- III. Messianic Prophecies (Zechariah 6:9-15; 9-14)
 - A. The Branch
 - B. Pictures of the Messiah

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

QUICK LOOK	14 Chapters	Longest Minor Prophet Book	Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Zechariah?	A prophet of priestly lineage. Zechariah 1:1, 7; Nehemiah 12:1-4	A post-exilic prophet Born in Babylon Contemporary of Haggai	Came to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel Mentioned in Ezra 5:1; 6:14
Meaning of his name	"Remembered by Jehovah"		
Time of his prophecy	518 BC—Chapters 1-8 After 480 BC—Chs. 9-14	Forty-year span between Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14.	
Historical background	After their years as exiles in Babylonia and Persia, a remnant of Jews returned to Judah.	Zechariah prophesied while Zerubbabel was governor in Judah and during the reign of King Darius I in Persia.	The books of Ezra and Nehemiah provide the historical background.
To whom addressed	To the remnant who returned from exile	These Jews settled in and around Jerusalem.	
Why written	To remind the people that God is sovereign and faithful to His covenant	To encourage the Jews who had returned to Judah to continue their work of rebuilding	To give a futuristic view of God's plan for all people, Jew and Gentile, to come and worship Him (6:15; 14:16)

Key Verses	(4:6) <i>"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."</i>	(9:9) <i>"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"</i>	(14:9) <i>"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."</i>
Themes in Zechariah	Rebuilding the Temple	The coming King Zechariah is the most messianic of all the Minor Prophets.	Promise of God's protection
Jesus seen in Zechariah	My servant the BRANCH (3:8 AND 6:11-13) Messianic figure prophesied	<i>"Thy King cometh . . . having salvation . . . riding upon an ass"</i> (9:9).	Zechariah 9:9 seen fulfilled in Matthew 21:5 and Luke 19:38
A LOOK	AT MAIN TOPICS		
Zechariah 1:1-6	A Call to Return to the Lord	<i>Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts,</i>	<i>and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts (1:3)</i>
		2. Four horns and craftsmen—1:18-21	6. Flying scroll—5:1-4
		3. Man with measuring line—2:1-5	7. Woman in a basket—5:5-11
		4. High priest in filthy clothes—3:1-5	8. Horses and chariots—6:1-8
Zechariah 9-14	Messages against the nations	Encouragement and hope for Israel and judgment for enemies	Messianic prophecies given 500 years before fulfillment.

THE MAN AND HIS TIMES

(Zechariah 1:1-6)

Called to Prophecy

Zechariah (meaning "he whom Jehovah remembers") was born in Babylon into a family of priests. His only knowledge of Jerusalem was passed down by the elders, including his grandfather Iddo and father Berechiah, who were priests. When King Cyrus issued the decree freeing the Jews to return to

Judah, Zechariah and his grandfather joined the caravan led by Zerubbabel. (Read Nehemiah 12:4, 16.) It was time to go home.

(Review the timeline on page 9.) (Hagai)

Two months after Haggai delivered his first message rebuking the people for neglecting God's house, the Spirit of the Lord stirred Zechariah. Haggai was a hands-on, feet-on-the-ground man. Zechariah was a visionary with his head in the clouds. They were the perfect balance for what the Jews needed to motivate them.

THINK ABOUT IT:

- Make a list of five ministers who have greatly influenced your life.
- Beside each name write one word describing that person's ministry.
- Write one sentence relating what you learned from each person.
- What does that tell you about different types of ministry?



Never belittle the ministry to which God has called you.

A Call to Repentance

For over a month the people had been digging through trash, breathing ashes, killing spiders and scorpions, trying to find a place to start rebuilding. It was back-breaking, heart-breaking work. Dirty. Discouraging. Depressing.

Zechariah stepped to the platform. Over the noise of the construction, his voice boomed, “Don’t be like your fathers” (1:4). This reminded them that the sins of their fathers had brought them to this point, standing in the midst of decay and rubble. Zachariah acknowledged that the Jews had received just punishment. For generations they had turned deaf ears to prophets like Micah, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah. For seventy years they had paid for their sins.

Zechariah did more than [inspire the people to work]. For the people were faced with more than a ruined Temple and city. Their self-identity as the people of God was in ruins. For a century they had been knocked around by the world powers, kicked and mocked, used and abused. This once-proud people, their glorious sacred history starred with the names of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, and Isaiah, had been treated with contempt for so long that they were in danger of losing all connection with that past, losing their magnificent identity as God’s people.

Zechariah was a major factor in recovering the magnificence from the ruins of a degrading exile. (Peterson, Eugene. “Introduction to Zechariah,” *The Message*. (Colorado Springs, CO., NavPress Publishing Group, © 2002) p. 1713 [brackets the author’s]).

Rebuilding the Temple was a big step in restoring their national relationship with God. But true worship requires more than a clean building. God’s message to the Jews was, “Turn ye unto me . . . and I will turn unto you.” (Zechariah 1:3). God was (and is) looking for people with clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-5). The returnees faced two challenges: cleansing the Temple and their hearts.

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

(Zechariah 1:7-8:23)

Visions of the Future (1:7-6:8)

Zechariah’s visions were based on the past, relative to the present, and focused on the future. They energized the Jews with images of a day when “the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

Teacher, see the Notes to the Instructor, lesson 12, page 17.

Visions of the Horses (1:7-20)

In Zechariah's first vision the angel of the Lord astride a red horse, symbolizing God's judgment, stood in a grove of myrtle trees. Behind him were other horses, which had been canvassing the earth. They reported that the nations were at ease, relaxing after conquering the Jews. God had used heathen nations to bring judgment upon His people. But their cruelty had far exceeded God's will. The Almighty was ready to conquer the conquerors.

God assured the Jews of His love. His mercy again covered them. He promised that under the leadership of Zerubbabel, they would complete the Temple. Although God had allowed Jerusalem to be ravished, His chosen city would rise again from the ruins.

Past: Seventy years in Babylonian captivity.

Present: Work continuing on the Temple.

Future: The cities of Israel would prosper and Jerusalem again be in God's favor.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem was not complete until Nehemiah supervised the construction of the walls some seventy years later. Yet to come is the day when the Lord Jesus will set up His kingdom headquarters in Jerusalem.

The Vision of the Four Horns and the Carpenters (1:19-21)

On the screen of the prophet's mind flashed four horns, representing the enemies of the Jews who oppressed and scattered them. The picture on the screen expanded and Zechariah saw four carpenters (i.e., blacksmiths or workmen). The angel explained that these represented God's destroyers.

Past: Israel and Judah had been conquered and oppressed by Assyria and Babylon.

Present: Rebuilding of the Temple

Future: World powers that had oppressed the Jews would be broken.

The carpenters pointed to the rebuilding of the Temple, assuring them of divine help. From Old Testament times until the present, the Jews have been oppressed on all sides. Yet the indestructible Jews survive.

The Measuring Line (2:1-13)

More good news. The angel with a measuring tape was instructed to measure Jerusalem, only to discover that this was an impossible task. Jerusalem would experience a population explosion, expanding its city limits in all directions.

Past: Heathen nations persecuted the Jews, “the apple (pupil) of God’s eye.”

Present: A call for the Jews remaining in Babylon to return home.

Future: A wall of fire will surround and protect Jerusalem. God will be the glory in the midst of her.

Joshua’s Filthy Clothes (3:1-10)

Zechariah’s fourth vision was specifically for Joshua the priest. In it Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord with Satan on his right hand ready, as always, to accuse God’s man. Joshua (mediator between God and the people) wore filthy clothes, representing the sins of the people. The angel’s call for a new clean mitre (turban) spoke of the Jews’ need to renew their minds. (See Isaiah 64:6 and Romans 12:2.) It was time for change.

Past: The Jews’ sins had stained their garments.

Present: God had forgiven and restored His people to His favor.

Future: Calvary, when in one day the sins of the world would be removed when the Branch (the Messiah) would be “pierced” (12:10) and “a fountain opened” for sin (13:1).

THINK ABOUT IT: What does this vision say to you as a member of God’s royal priesthood? If your outer façade were stripped away, how would your inner man be clothed? Would you be embarrassed to stand before the church? Check your mind. Do you need a new turban? Write your answer on the next page.



The Golden Candlestick (4:1-14)

Zachariah's fifth vision was specifically for Zerubbabel, assuring him that he, empowered by God's Spirit, would finish the rebuilding of the Temple. What some despised as a day of small beginnings was actually a foreshadowing of a greater house (kingdom).

The golden candlestick represented Israel, and later the church. The two olive trees symbolized Zerubbabel the government leader and Joshua the religious leader. The oil referred to is God's Spirit, the source of light.

Past: Israel chosen to be a nation of priests sharing God's message with the world, which they failed to do. (Read Exodus 19:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2.)

Present: The task that the Jews faced in rebuilding the Temple looked like a mountain, but it was only a plain.

Future: In the last days the church would shine the light of truth into the world and two witnesses would appear. (Read Revelation 11:3-13.)

The Flying Roll (5:1-4)

The flying roll that Zechariah saw had the same dimensions as the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. It represented the Word of God bringing judgment upon sin. "Everyone that sweareth falsely by my name" (the third commandment) summarized man's duty to God. "Everyone that stealeth" (the eighth commandment) summarized man's duty to his neighbor. All sin falls into one or the other of these categories. The roll was flying, indicating that God's judgment would be swift. The ruins of the homes of the wicked would testify to those passing by that God's judgment was sure.

Past: The charred timbers and scattered stones of the Temple were evidence of the Jews' sins and God's judgment. (Read Isaiah 1:4.)

Present: An admonition that the wicked bring a curse upon themselves and their homes.

Future: In every dispensation sin has brought judgment, and it will continue to do so until the final judgment. (Read Proverbs 3:33; Revelation 20:13-14.)

The Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)

A woman (representing wickedness) was carried in a large container by two stork-like women to the land of Shinar (the center of world power). The two women possibly represent the two world powers that captured Judah, the Babylonians in 722 BC and the Romans in AD 70.

The *ephah* is the largest of dry measures in use among the Jews, equal to six or seven gallons.

Past: Idolatrous people of Judah were carried into captivity in Babylon.

Present: The sins of the Jews had been measured and carried away.

Future: The sins of the world would be carried away at Calvary.

Four Chariots (6:1-8)

These chariots represent the messengers of God's judgment. (See Revelation 7:1-3; 9:14-15.) The black and white horses went to the north declaring the fall of Babylon, which appeased God's wrath for a season. The strong horses patrolled the earth announcing coming judgment upon Judah's enemies. Mountains symbolize governments, and brass symbolizes strength.

Past: God's judgment upon Babylon executed by the Medes and Persians.

Present: Announcing that God would judge their enemies.

Future: The day of God's wrath.

Answers for the Present (7:1-8:23)

Two years after his visions, Zechariah spoke forth four messages answering the people's question about their present rituals: "Should we continue to fast as we did during the captivity?" (7:3) Four times a year the Jews had fasted to commemorate important events.

- Fourth month—Jerusalem fell (Jeremiah 52:6).
- Fifth month—the Temple burned (Jeremiah 52:12).
- Seventh month—Gedaliah killed (Jeremiah 41:1-2).
- Tenth month—Siege of Jerusalem began (II King 25:1).
- God's answer to the people's question contained correction as well as comfort.
- The object of fasting is the key (Zechariah 7:5-7).
- More important than how and when one fasts is how one lives (7:8-14).
- God blesses truth and love, not empty ritual (8:1-17).
- 1. The Jews' days of mourning will be turned into a celebration of joy and gladness (8:18-23).

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

(Zechariah 6:9-15; 9-14)

The Branch (6:9-15)

Joshua (meaning "God is salvation, savior" or "Jesus") was crowned as a type of Jesus Christ, the Branch, who would build the true Temple and sit on the throne of His father David. Joshua was the only priest in the Old Testament who wore a crown, symbolic of the coming Messiah who would be both priest and king (6:12-13.).

Pictures of the Messiah (9-14)

Of all the minor prophets, Zechariah revealed most about the coming Messiah. He paints several pictures of the Christ—branch, king, servant, shepherd, priest, and priest-king.

DIG DEEPER: Five hundred years before Jesus was born, Zachariah prophesied about His coming. Beside each prophecy write the New Testament reference where it was fulfilled.

- The Messiah would come on a donkey, not a horse (9:9).
- He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (11:11-12; Exodus 21:32). _____
- The price of His betrayal would be used to purchase a potter's field (11:13). _____

- He would be pierced (12:10). _____
- A fountain for sin would be opened (13:1) _____
- He would be wounded in the house of His friends (13:6).

Prophecies Yet to Be Fulfilled

The closing chapter of Zechariah gives us a panoramic picture of Jerusalem in the last days.

- Nations will gather against Jerusalem (14:2).
- The LORD will fight for Israel (14:3).
- The Messiah's feet will stand on Mt. Olives (14:4).
- Mount Olives will split in half and a great valley formed (14:4).
- Light from the New Jerusalem will light the old Jerusalem and "at evening time it shall be light" (14:6-7).
- Living water will flow from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea on the east and the Mediterranean on west (14:8).
- All the people of the earth will go up to Jerusalem to worship (14:16).
- "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (14:9).

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah.

2. Discuss how the sins of past generations are affecting your nation and your lives today. Name some ways that your generation's actions can affect future generations.

3. Which of Zephaniah's visions speaks loudest you? Why?

4. Quote three prophetic phrases/verses that refer to the last days.

5. Why do you think God has chosen Jerusalem as the place from which He will reign over the earth?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write a summary of what the prophet Zechariah said to you, following the format under Student Assignment on page 13.
- Read Malachi. Underline each question.

Lesson 13

Malachi, Prophet of Rebuke

Book of Malachi

Key Scripture

“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” (Malachi 3:16).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

In the midst of a nation of corrupted priests and apathetic immoral people, a remnant feared the Lord. God has always had and always will have “jewels,” who love His name.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Relate some of the reforms that were needed in Judah.
- Compare God’s charges against the Jews and their responses to our day.
- Quote Malachi 3:8-11, 16-17.

Lesson Outline

- I. The Message of Love (Malachi 1:1-5)
 - A. Sunset
 - B. A Reminder
- II. The Message of Rebuke (Malachi 1:6-2:17)
 - A. Lack of Respect
 - B. Questions and Answers
- III. The Message of Hope (Malachi 3-4)
 - A. An Invitation
 - B. Sunrise

BOOK OF MALACHI

QUICK LOOK	4 Chapters		Compiled by Darline Royer - 2014
Who was Malachi	Followed Haggai and Zechariah by one generation	Post-exilic prophet	The last prophet of the Old Testament
Meaning of his name	"My Messenger"		
Time of his prophecy	430-420 BC (<i>N. Geisler</i>) About 430 BC (<i>Study Bible</i>)	After the Temple had been rebuilt and Jerusalem restored	Malachi prophesied about 55 to 60 years after Zechariah.
Historical background	After rebuilding the Temple and walls, the people had forsaken God's ways (Nehemiah 13).	Malachi faced a people who needed to be confronted with their neglect of tithing and their unfaithfulness to God.	What Nehemiah faced on his return from Babylon relates to the conditions in Judah that Malachi addressed.
To whom addressed	To the Jews in Jerusalem and God's people		
Why written	To call the people to a spiritual renewal after they had been back in the land for decades	To show the people that they had failed to receive God's blessings because they had not followed His precepts	To affirm the coming "day of the LORD"—judgment of the wicked and healing for those who fear His name (chapter 4)

Key verses	(1:11) <i>“From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles.”</i>	(3:10) <i>“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house. . . saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven.”</i>	(4:2) <i>“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.”</i>
Themes in Malachi	Sins of the people and the priests	God’s love in calling people to obedience	The Day of the Lord—a day of judgment and healing
Jesus seen in Malachi	(3:1) Malachi prophesied of the messenger and the Messiah.	<i>“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.”</i>	Mark 1:2-3 identifies the messenger as John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus.
A LOOK	AT MAIN TOPICS		
Malachi 1	Impiety and Profanity of the priest	Rebuke for despising God’s name and polluting His altar	
Malachi 2	Sins of the Priests and People	Corruption, idolatry, divorce	
Malachi 3	Promise of the Messiah/Robbing God	Promise for the faithful	Judgment for sinners
Malachi 4	The Day of the Lord	Consolation for the righteous (4:2)	Final judgment on the wicked (4:1, 3)
END OF THE BOOK	Malachi closes with a call to obey the law (4:4) and God’s promise to send “Elijah” before the final “day of the LORD” (4:5).		After Malachi’s prophecy, God gave no further written Word for 400 years.

THE MESSAGE OF LOVE

(Malachi 1:1-5)

Sunset in Israel

520 BC	Prophets Haggai and Zechariah inspired the people to work (Nehemiah 2).
516 BC	Temple completed (Ezra 6:15).
457 BC	1,800 returned under Ezra, plus women, children, and servants (Ezra 7).
445 BC	Nehemiah went to Jerusalem as governor to rebuild the walls (Nehemiah 2).
430 BC	Nehemiah returned following a visit to the king (Nehemiah 13:6-7).
420-397 BC	Possible dates of Malachi's prophecy

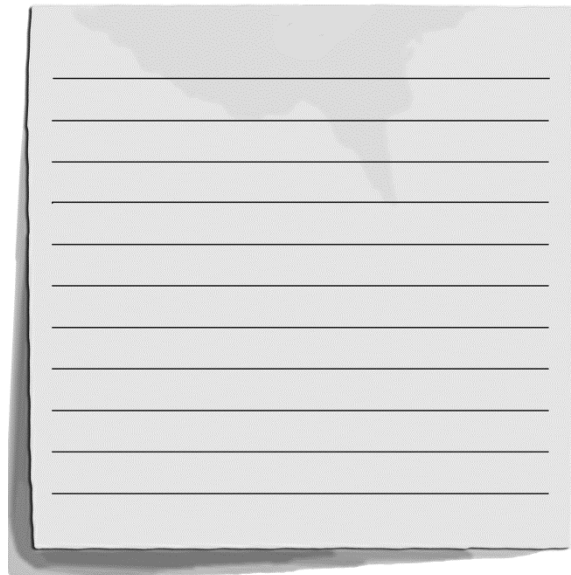
Malachi (meaning “messenger”) was the last prophet of the restoration or rebuilding of Jerusalem. He prophesied approximately one hundred years after Haggai and Zechariah, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Jews were under the domination of the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus. The sun was setting on the dispensation of the Law. Malachi was the last Old Testament prophet, followed by a four hundred year spiritual blackout.

A Reminder

In front of the setting sun, Malachi's message took the Jews on a trip down memory lane back to the time of their forefather Jacob and his twin, Esau. He reminded them of the sharp contrast between God's relationships with these brothers. The Babylonians defeated both the Israelites (722 BC) and the Edomites (583 BC). God restored Israel, but not Edom.

THINK ABOUT IT: Describe God's relationship with Edom in three words (reference: lesson 5). Describe God's relationship with Israel in three words.

God said that He loved Jacob and hated Esau (Malachi 1:2-3), but this



was not written in Genesis. Looking back in Israel's history, Malachi pointed this out after Jacob's and Esau's choices had revealed their characters. God's feelings did not determine their lifestyles; their lifestyles determined God's feelings. Paul in Romans 9:13 repeated Malachi's statement. The Greek word here for hate is *miseo*, meaning "to detest or to love less." (Compare with Luke 14:26.)

God's love for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is written in bold caps on every page of their history. Yet after God so lovingly brought them back from Babylonian captivity, they brazenly ask, "Wherein hast thou loved us" (1:2).

DIG DEEPER: Use your concordance to find at least three references that declare God's love for the Jews.

THE MESSAGE OF REBUKE

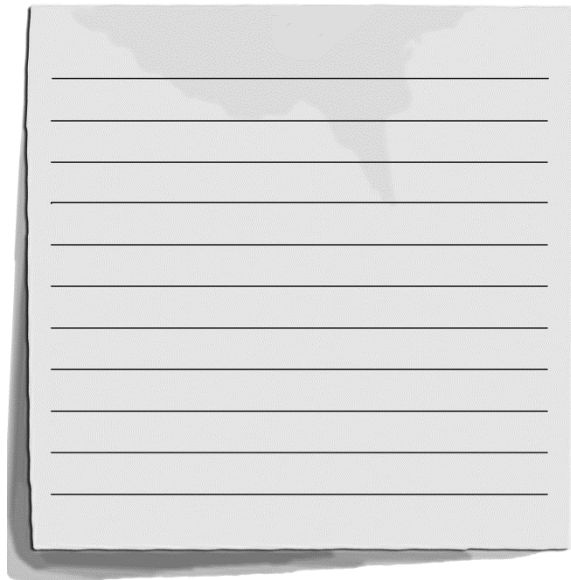
(Malachi 1:6-2:17)

Lack of Respect

God gave his messenger, Malachi, a message for the priests (2:1-10). They had violated the Levitical covenant. (Read Numbers 3:45, 8:15; Deuteronomy 33:8-10.) The original Levites were men of integrity (2:4-7). But the priests in Malachi's day had made a radical departure from that covenant. They were careless, irreverent, and neglectful. They had lost their respect for God, and as a result, the people had lost their respect for the priests.

Like priests, like people. The people were hypercritical whiners. For sacrifices they offered polluted bread and deformed animals that they would never offer to the governor. Their sacrifices insulted God. They showed more respect to their masters and fathers than they did to their Creator.

Israel had hit rock bottom spiritually. Their worship was repulsive, vile, and unacceptable.



THINK ABOUT IT: Name some leftovers that we might be tempted to offer God. What does it say about our relationship with God when we bring Him leftovers? Why do you think God desires that we bring Him our first fruits?

The Temple had been rebuilt. They had a magnificent edifice, an outward show of religion. Like their descendants in Jesus' day, they were whitened sepulchers, beautiful outwardly, but "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).



God was sick of the Jews' religious talk shows. They talked the talk, but did not walk the talk. Their words made Him tired (2:17).

Questions and Answers

The Babylonian culture had planted in the Jewish exiles seeds of worldliness and unbelief. These were still bearing fruit almost two hundred years later. In Babylon the people had forsaken idol worship, but they had absorbed an intellectual cynicism. Their responses to God's questions revealed their haughty spirit of intellectual superiority. "Who? Me? How?" Self-centeredness. Self-justification. Self-indulgence. Their identify focused on self rather than God.

Many men divorced their Jewish wives and married younger pagan women (Nehemiah 13:23-31). Such marriages broke down the wall that separated God's people from the world and placed the godly seed in jeopardy. They traded idolatry for adultery. Their unfaithfulness to their wedding vows cancelled any blessings their offerings might bring (Malachi 2:14-16).

The Book of Malachi focuses on eight charges God brought against the Jews and the people's sarcastic replies.

God's Charge

I have loved you (1:2).
O you priests that despise My name (1:6).
You offer polluted bread (1:7).
You profaned the Lord's table (1:12).

You wearied the Lord (2:17).
Return unto Me (3:7).
You have robbed Me (3:8).
Your words have been arrogant (3:13).

The People's Reply

Really? When?
Who? Us?
When?
It's polluted and contemptible.
How have we done that?
We haven't even left.
What do you mean by that?
What have we said that we shouldn't?

Comparing Nehemiah and Malachi reveals the depth of the peoples' spiritual decline.

- They had defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the Levites (Nehemiah 9:34; Malachi 2:8).
- They had married idolaters (Nehemiah 13:23-27; Malachi 2:11).
- They withheld the Lord's portion. The Levites and singers had been forced to return to the field to support themselves (Nehemiah 13:10; Malachi 3:8-9).

THINK ABOUT IT: Because of the Jews' hard-hearted attitudes and action, God cursed their blessings (2:2). How can a person's blessings become curses?

DIG DEEPER: Paraphrase the following verse which summarizes the Jews' attitude toward God.

"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" (Malachi 2:17).



THE MESSAGE OF HOPE

(Chapters 3-4)

An Invitation

THINK ABOUT IT: Despite Israel's continual backsliding, God continued extending His mercy to them. Why? (See Exodus 2:24; Psalm 105:8; Isaiah 55:3.)

The Jews brazenly asked, "Where is the God of judgment?" (2:17). God replied that they were not ready for His coming (3:1-6). He would first send His messenger to prepare the way. (Read Isaiah 40:3-5; Mathew 3:3, 11:10.) Eastern kings sent men before them, removing barriers and obstacles, and heralding their coming. John the Baptist preached repentance to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the King of kings.



An opportunity to repent always precedes God's judgment. God's mercy frequently delays His judgment as He allows everyone space to repent.

A saint asked her pastor, "Why did God allow a certain person to continue stealing from the church? Why did He not reveal that sin to the men of God in her life?"

The wise pastor responded, "Perhaps God in His mercy was giving her time to repent."

Often people see God's mercy as a sign that God does not care what they do; so they continue in their sin. (See Ecclesiastes 8:11.) Eventually, all

unconfessed sin will be judged. Note the words “suddenly” (3:1) and “swift” (3:5). When God says, “Time’s up!” He moves quickly.

Israel had a long history of disobeying God. But as the sun set on the Old Testament, God once again invited them to meet Him at the altar.

“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?” (Malachi 3:7).

Blind to their backsliding ways, the Jews again tried to justify themselves by asking a question, “Wherein shall we return?”

God answered their question with a question. “Will a man rob God?” God did not change the subject. He gave them a specific way that they could return to Him.

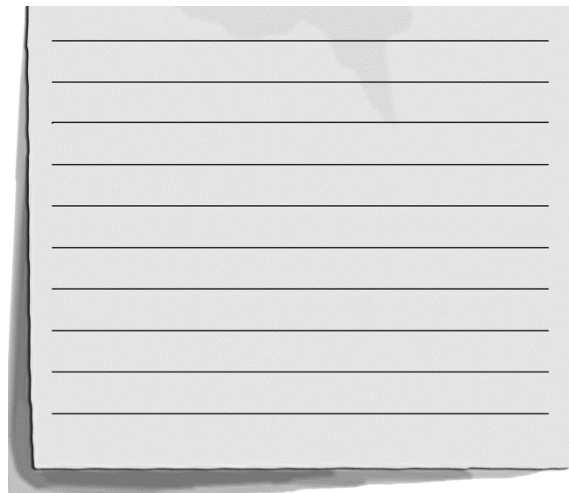
This was not what the Jews wanted to hear. They popped back another question. “Wherein have we robbed thee?”

“In tithes and offerings.” God’s answer hit hard, and still does. Those who rob God steal from themselves.

Abraham, the father of the Jews and of the faithful, paid tithes five hundred years before the Law. Paying tithes is an act of faith and obedience. Those who pay tithes and give offerings open the windows of Heaven and invite God’s blessings into their lives (3:10-12). Those who withhold their tithes and offerings bring a curse upon themselves (3:9).

God’s multiplication is different than the world’s. When we subtract from what we have to give to the kingdom of God, God adds to what we have left. When we divide our goods with others, God multiplies them.

THINK ABOUT IT: Tell about a time when you gave sacrificially and God poured out a blessing on you.



How could Israel return to God? The answer is evident to us, but the Jews warped thinking twisted the facts. In their backslidden condition, they hurled irreverent harsh accusations at God. "We tried God's way, and it didn't work," they said. "It doesn't pay to serve God. The proud are rewarded, and wicked are not punished."

They called "evil good and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). Their forefather Asaph had the same problem until he "went into the sanctuary of God." (Read Psalm 73.) The answer to many of life's puzzling questions can be found in God's house.

Sunrise

While self-justifying hypocrites tossed stout words at God, others gathered to speak of His honor, His ways, His power, His promises, and His name. We talk about what we love.

"Let's talk about Jesus, the King of kings is He,

The Lord of lords supreme throughout eternity.

The great I AM, the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Door.

Let's talk about Jesus more and more.

(Author unknown)

In Malachi 4, God turned the spotlight off of the rebellious onto the remnant. In every dispensation a remnant has loved God and feared His name. In Ahab's and Jezebel's day, seven thousand did not bow their knees to Baal. In Malachi's day, while the Jews as a whole were apathetic, a remnant remained faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

"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. 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" (Malachi 3:16-17).

A four-year-old was taken by his parents to his great-grandmother's viewing. Seeing the beautiful casket she lay in, the little boy exclaimed, "Oh, look! They put Meme in the treasure chest."

God has a treasure chest too, where He keeps His jewels. It is His church.

Those who fear God and think on His name will be spared in the day of judgment as a father spares his son (3:17).

“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” (Malachi 4:2).

The same sun that ripened Isaac’s maize ripens ours. The rising and setting sun is the greatest spectacle in creation. The sun’s rays (wings) reach from one end of heaven to the other. They bring light and heat. They revive, cheer, and heal. So the rays of the Sun of righteousness bring life and health to those who fear (honor, revere) God’s name.

In Malachi’s day the sun set on the dispensation of the Law. After a dark four hundred year night, John the Baptist stepped out of the darkness bearing witness of the light (John 1:6-9). Daybreak came as the sun arose on the dispensation of Grace.

Malachi’s prophecy reached even beyond our day into the Millennium when the whole earth will worship the one true God whom the Jews scorned.

“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” (Malachi 1:11).

REVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In reading the Book of Malachi, which phrase or verse spoke the loudest to you? _____

2. Explain “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:13).

3. How had the priests in Malachi's day violated the Levitical covenant?

4. How did the Jews' attitude and actions turn their blessings into curses?

5. Compare the sun and Son.

6. The Old Testament ends with the word "curse." What is the significance of this? _____

ASSIGNMENT

- Write "The Prophet Malachi's Message to Me," following the format under Student Assignment on page 13.
2. Choose your favorite minor prophet. Develop a three to five minute monologue based on his writing. Be prepared to deliver his message during your next class.

Lesson 14

Minor Prophets—Review

Hosea through Malachi

Key Scripture

“That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (II Peter 3:2).

History Applied . . . A Truth to Live

The Minor Prophets majored on (1) warnings of impending judgment, (2) teachings on righteous living, (3) encouragement to the faithful and oppressed, and (4) predictions of God’s future plans. All of these are applicable to us. Study of the Minor Prophets is imperative to understanding God’s plan.

Lesson Objectives

The students should be able to . . .

- Give a brief synopsis of each minor prophet’s ministry.
- Recognize key verses from the Minor Prophets.
- Explain why studying the Minor Prophets is important.

Lesson Plan

This session is devoted to review.

Notes to the Instructor (page 13) presents three suggestions.

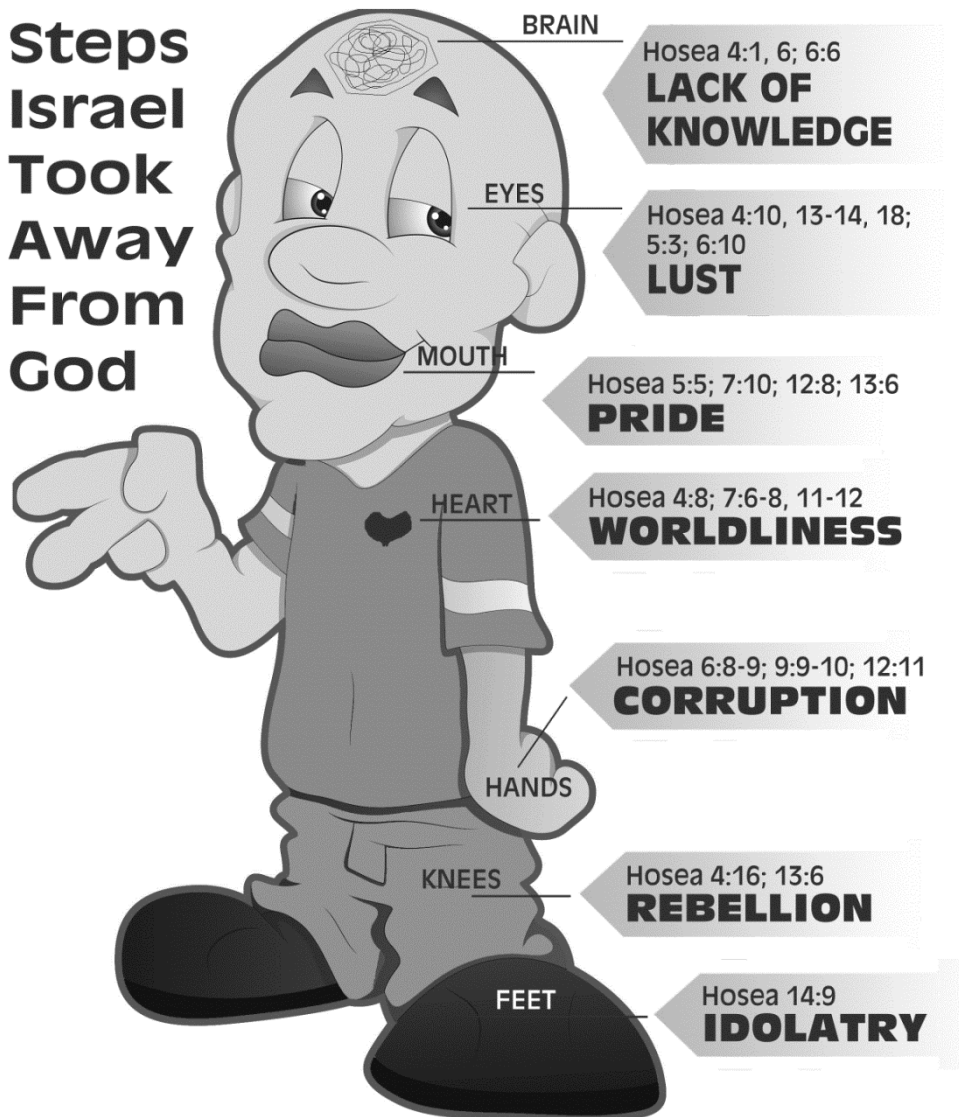
- Monologues
- Who Am I?
- Guess My Name

Writing the review test is the responsibility of the instructor.

APPENDIX 1: Lesson 2

Hosea: Seven Steps to Backsliding

Seven Steps Israel Took Away From God



APPENDIX 2: Lesson 3

Joel: Object Lesson

Object Lesson: “I will pour out my spirit out upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Materials: 3 soda bottles (lids for 2), shallow pan (to catch overflow), large-mouthed jar of water, dirty water, funnel

Instructions: Place 3 bottles in the pan. The first one is empty, but closed. The second bottle is filled with dirty water and closed. The third is empty and open. As you quote Joel 2:28, pour water from the pitcher over the bottles.

Which bottles had water poured *upon* them?

Why didn’t any water go into bottles 1 and 2?

What happened to bottle 3? (Most likely some water will go into it, but it will not be “filled.”)

What do we need to pour water from this large-mouthed jar into bottle 3? (a funnel)

Place a funnel in the mouth of bottle 3 and pour water into it until it overflows.

What can we do to funnel God’s Spirit into us? (Raise hands in praise and open mouth.)

How do we know when we are “filled” with the Spirit?

Discuss what would have to happen to bottles 1 and 2 for them to be filled.

How does this object lesson relate to a person being filled with the Holy Ghost?

APPENDIX 3: Lesson 4

AMOS: SHEPHERD OF TEKOA

by Chris Anderson

Written as a radio script and adapted for GATS by Barbara Westberg

Used by permission

CHARACTERS:

GOD

AMOS

WOMAN 1

MAN 1

MAN 2

CROWD

OLD MAN 3

SOUND EFFECTS (in order needed)

Music (introducing the drama)

Campfire crackling and crickets (background)

Sheep (background)

Music (transition of scenes)

Clomping of donkey

Marketplace crowd

Drumroll – made by class

Scrolls being seized – shuffling papers

Music (finale)

SOUND: MUSIC (*introducing the drama*)

TEACHER: Long ago, far away in Bible land there was a shepherd from Tekoa named Amos.

SOUND: (*background*) CAMPFIRE CRACKLING AND CRICKETS

SOUND: (*background*) SHEEP

AMOS: (*singing*) This is the day that the Lord hath made, I will rejoice and –

GOD: *(calls)* Amos! Amos!

AMOS: Huh? Did someone call me? Couldn't be. There's no one out here, but the sheep and me.

GOD: Amos!

AMOS: I heard it again.

GOD: Amos. I am calling you.

AMOS: *(amazed)* But who . . . who are you?

GOD: I AM.

AMOS: You am? Oh, I AM. *(shocked)* You mean the great I AM? God? Is that You calling me?

GOD: Yes. I am calling you to speak My word to My people.

AMOS: M-m-me s-s-speak for You? But, God . . . I . . . I mean . . . You mean prophesy?

GOD: That is exactly what I mean.

AMOS: Me? You want me to be a prophet?

GOD: Exactly.

AMOS: But, God, You don't understand.

GOD: *(clears throat)* I don't understand?

AMOS: Well, I mean . . . what I meant to say was . . . Have You forgotten who I am?

GOD: Have I?

AMOS: Well, it sure seems like it. I'm just a herdsman, a simple shepherd, a gatherer of figs.

GOD: And —

AMOS: And my father was not a prophet. I haven't even been to the prophets' school. I don't know the first thing about being a prophet.

GOD: So?

AMOS: So? So I'm sure there are a hundred other men who would make a better prophet than me.

GOD: Now if you are through arguing, I want you to go to Bethel, and here's what I want you to tell Israel. Write it down so *you* don't forget.

MUSIC: TRANSITION

SOUND: CLOMPING OF DONKEY

SOUND: MARKET PLACE with CROWD muttering and grumbling

AMOS: (*talking over the noise*) Excuse me! Excuse meeee!

SOUND: CROWD MUTTERING/GRUMBLING continues

AMOS: (*clears throat, shouts*) Good people of Bethel! May I please have your attention?

WOMAN 1: Yes? Are you talking to me?

AMOS: (*exasperated*) I'm talking to all of you.

WOMAN 1: (*whistles*) Hey, folks, listen up! This guy wants to tell us something.

SILENCE

AMOS: Thank you, kind lady. And what is your name?

WOMAN 1: Elisa.

AMOS: Thank you, Elisa. And where are you from?

WOMAN 1: (*proudly*) I'm from Bashan.

AMOS: Bashan? Uhhh . . . (*aside*) I don't think she is going to like my message.

MAN 1: So what is it you want to tell this extremely large and potentially angry and very busy crowd?

AMOS: If you would indulge me for a moment, I would like to share with you some excerpts from my book.

MAN 2: A book you say. You are an author? Is it a best seller?

AMOS: Uhhh, no, not yet.

MAN 1: Then why would we want to hear it?

AMOS: Because God gave it to me.

MAN 1: (*sarcastically*) Oh, *Gooooo*d gave it to him. Well, we better listen then.

CROWD: Right, right, right. . . .

SILENCE

MAN 2: Well, go ahead. Read it.

AMOS: I won't read it to you. You're ridiculing me.

WOMAN 1: We're not rid-i . . . whatever . . . we're not making fun of you.

MAN 1: You said that God gave you a word —

MAN 2: And now we want to hear it.

MAN 1: (*sarcastically*) Go ahead. Tell us the *inspired* Word of God.

CROWD: Right, right, right. . . .

SILENCE

AMOS: All right then. (*clears throat*) This is an excerpt from (*with emotion*) "The Book of Amos."

MAN 2: Clever title.

WOMAN 1: Brilliant.

MAN 1: Really grabs you. Very creative.

CROWD: Right, right, right. . . .

AMOS: Chapter one. (*dramatically*) Oh . . . Damascus . . .

WOMAN 1: We Israelites don't like Damascus!

CROWD: Right! Right! Right!

AMOS: Damascus! You have been really, really wicked . . . and God is going to punish you.

WOMAN 1: Preach it!

MAN 2: Yeah, the people from Damascus are wicked.

MAN 1: You got the message all right. Maybe you did hear from God.

OLD MAN 3: Punish them!

CROWD: Right! Right! Right!

MAN 1: Read on, Amos! Read on!

AMOS: Oh Gaza . . . you too have been really, really cruel, and God is going to punish you. . . .

WOMAN 1: We Israelites don't like Gaza either!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them.

CROWD: Yeah. Down with Gaza!

AMOS: That's not all. There is more. Listen.

CROWD: Tell us. Who else is going to be punished?

AMOS: How about the people of Tyre?

CROWD: Yeah!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them!

MAN 2: Down with Tyre!

AMOS: *(with each city voice crescendos)* And Edom!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them.

CROWD: *(louder each time)* Yeah!

MAN 2: Down with Edom!

AMOS: And Ammon!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them.

CROWD: Yeah!

MAN 2: Down with Ammon!

AMOS: And Moab!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them.

CROWD: Yeah!

MAN 2: Down with Moab!

AMOS: Annnnnnd Judah!

OLD MAN 3: Punish them.

CROWD: *(explosion of cheers)* Woooohoo!

MAN 2: Down with Judah!

WOMAN 1: We Israelites have problems with *all* of those nations!

MAN 1: Especially Judah! They're our brothers, but we don't like them!

AMOS: But wait! There's more . . .

CROWD: *(gasps turn into whispers)* Who is it? Psssst.

MAN 2: But who is left?

AMOS: Yes, one nation is above all the other nations, one has been the most disobedient of all.

CROWD: Who is it? Please tell us!

AMOS: Judgment is hanging over their head. God has had enough of their sinful ways.

CROWD: Who is it? Come on! Let's have it!

AMOS: The most wicked of the wicked is . . . drumroll, please.

SOUND: DRUMROLL

AMOS: The most wicked, the most sinful, the most rebellious of all nations is . . .

GROUP: *(bated breath)*

AMOS: *(over-the-top dramatic)* Issss-raaa-el!

CROWD: *(dumbfounded)* Huh! What?

WOMAN 1: But *we're* Israel!

MAN 1: Did he just say *Israel*?

OLD MAN 3: Punish them! Oops! I mean punish *him*, that false prophet!

AMOS: *(firmly)* Thus. Saith. The. Lord!

CROWD: *(angrily)* Boo! Hiss!

AMAZIAH: Hooooold it! Hold everything! Did I just hear this man say that Israel was the most sinful of all nations?

AMOS: Why yes. Yes I did. And who are you?

AMAZIAH: I am Amaziah, exalted high priest for the town of Bethel, a most humble servant in the king's sanctuary for the most noble King Jeroboam! I don't suppose you have a problem with King Jeroboam, do you?

AMOS: *(downplaying)* Oh no, no, *I* don't have a problem with King Jeroboam. *(dramatically)* But *God* has a problem. In fact, God's gonna kill King Jeroboam with a sword! A-a-and then Israel's gonna be taken captive by a faraway nation!

AMAZIAH: That's preposterous!

AMOS: Thus. Saith. The. Lord.

AMAZIAH: Can I quote you on that?

AMOS: Quote me? I've got it all written down right here!

AMAZIAH: Guards! Seize these scrolls! I'm sending them to King Jeroboam!

SOUND: SCROLLS BEING SEIZED (paper shuffling)

AMOS: Jeroboam? You're sending them to King Jeroboam?

AMAZIAH: Yes! King Jeroboam!

AMOS: *(joyously)* Hallelujah!

CROWD: *(gasps)*

AMAZIAH: Why are you rejoicing? You should quake and shake when I utter these words . . . (*whispers dramatically*) “King Jeroboam!”

CROWD: Ooh.

AMOS: Oh, no! I am elated. You see, I’m not a professional prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet. I’m just a shepherd from Tekoa. I watch sheep and pick figs for a living. But just think – the king is going to read my manuscript. I am amazed.

AMAZIAH: You’re not even a professional prophet? Yet you dare to utter such horrible things about King Jeroboam?

AMOS: Be sure to show Jeroboam chapter seven. He will be interested, I am sure! Praise God! King Jeroboam’s going to read my manuscript!

MUSIC: FINALE

THE END

APPENDIX 4: Lesson 9

Cast: 9 characters of various ages

Time: 45-60 minutes

Habakkuk: As It Is Written

CAST

Habakkuk – dressed in a biblical robe. He is a bit dingy.

Mrs. Habakkuk – dressed in a biblical robe. She is a scold.

Apostle Paul – dressed in a biblical robe.

Phebe – dressed in a biblical robe.

Tertius (Paul's secretary/scribe) – dressed in a biblical robe. He is a klutz.

Martin Luther – fifty-nine years old, dressed in old English attire.

Katharine Luther – Martin's wife, forty-three years old, dressed in old English attire.

Margarethe – daughter of Martin and Katharine Luther, eight years old, also dressed in old English clothes.

Martin Luther – thirty-four years old, should look somewhat like the older Martin Luther. He wears a bathrobe and slippers.

PROPS

Two scrolls

quill

tray

dishes

SOUND

clock striking

STAGE SET UP

Center stage: simple table (card table will work), table covering, three chairs, lamp or candle, paper, quill, and a few simple items on the table.

Stage left front: another simple table and chair. Should be part of the stage décor. This will be used for scene III only, but needs to be in place from the beginning.

The setting is the same for all three scenes.

Instructions

Copies of the scripts can be hidden in the scrolls/books or placed on the table for use as needed. Hebrew was written from right to left. When Habakkuk and his wife read from or write on the scroll, they should remember to move right to left.

The New Testament was written in Greek, which moves left to right like English. All cast members other than Habakkuk and his wife, read and write left to right.

Actors should feel free to ad lib as they get into their parts. However, they should be careful that in the ad libbing they do not lose the important lines or say or do anything disrespectful. This skit is intended to be humorous, yet respectful, remembering that while people are funny, God's Word is not to be taken lightly.

The flash of light in the last scene could be produced by a flash from a digital camera. The operator would need to be hidden somewhere close to the table where Luther is seated. If a strong flash of light is not possible, eliminate this effect entirely.

SCENE I

AT HABAKKUK'S HOUSE – AROUND 610 BC

(HABAKKUK enters. He sits at a table, writing furiously on a scroll. He pauses a time or two, scratches his head, nods, then resumes writing. After a few seconds of this, he smiles broadly, rolls up the scroll, jumps up, and dances around waving the scroll over his head.)

HABAKKUK

It's finished! It's finished! Hallelujah! It is finished! *(Continues rejoicing loudly)*
(MRS. HABAKKUK enters)

MRS. HABAKKUK

Habbie! Habbie! *(He continues dancing and rejoicing.)* Habakkuk! Mr. Habakkuk, man of God!

HABAKKUK

(Stops dancing) Are you talking to me, dear wife?

MRS. HABAKKUK

I certainly am! Whatever is the matter with you, Habakkuk? You are acting like a crazy man.

HABAKKUK

I am wild with joy! I am ecstatic! I am overcome with . . . with . . . (*Thrusts the scroll at her; she takes it*) this! It's finished! My book is finished! (*Drops into his chair and slumps*) I am exhausted!

MRS. HABAKKUK

Well, thank God!

HABAKKUK

That I'm exhausted?

MRS. HABAKKUK

Of course not. Thank God that this book is written. Now you can take care of some things around here.

HABAKKUK

(*Whines*) But I'm exhausted.

MRS. HABAKKUK

It's just your brain that's tired. I have some jobs for you that don't require brains.

HABAKKUK

I was afraid of that. But, first, I want you to read my book and give me your honest opinion.

MRS. HABAKKUK

If I give you an opinion, it will be honest. (*Sits down at table, opposite Habakkuk, facing the audience. Unrolls the scroll*)

HABAKKUK

Well, what do you think? (*Leans forward eagerly*) What do think? What do you think?

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Looks up with a frown*) I think it's short, but not that short. Please, be quiet so I can think.

(*HABAKKUK leans back in his chair meekly. As MRS. HABAKKUK reads, he leans forward again.*)

“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. . . .” (Habakkuk 3:17, KJV). (*Looks up*) Sounds pretty depressing.

HABAKKUK

Keep reading. Keep reading.

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Reads from the scroll*) “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” (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

(*Looks up*) That’s sounding better.

HABAKKUK

(*Nods and smiles proudly*) Keep reading! It gets better.

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Reads*) “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” (Habakkuk 3:19).

(*Nods*) That’s not too bad.

HABAKKUK

Not too bad? Is that the best you can say? (*Jumps up and glares at her*) It’s not too bad? God gave me every word of that book!

MRS. HABAKKUK

That’s what they all say. Sit down and let me finish. (*HABAKKUK sits down*)

That’s a pretty good ending, but what’s the beginning like? (*Unrolls the scroll to the left; holds up the unrolled scroll; frowns*) Is this all there is?

HABAKKUK

All there is? (*Jumps up and paces; expounds*) My life’s blood is in that book. I’ve poured my soul into that book. Every word has cost me mental anguish. I’ve —

MRS. HABAKKUK

Cut out the dramatics and sit down. (*Scans the scroll*) One . . . two . . . three . . . three little-bitty chapters?

HABAKKUK

(Sits down, deflated) It's three total, complete chapters . . . three sweat-drenched chapters!

MRS. HABAKKUK

I see. Isaiah's book has sixty-six chapters. Jeremiah's secretary told me the other day he is working on chapter 38, and there's a lot more to come. That's major work. Your book has three chapters.

HABAKKUK

(Emotionless) The Lord told me to make it plain and keep it short, so people in a hurry could read it.

MRS. HABAKKUK

The Lord told you that? *(HABAKKUK nods)* Oh . . . *(looks at scroll again; then looks at Habakkuk)* I guess that's why you wrote in such a large hand and have so much white space? *(HABAKKUK nods)* Hummm . . . You might have something there.

HABAKKUK

Not me. God. He told me to write tight. People are in a hurry. They don't want to waste their time on a lot of unnecessary words.

MRS. HABAKKUK

Okay. Okay. Let me see how you started. You know the lead is very important. *(Reads)* The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save! *(Habakkuk 1:1-2).*
(Frowns and mumbles, as she continues reading for a few seconds; looks up) This is depressing! No wonder you've been mopping around for the last month!

HABAKKUK

These are depressing times. Keep reading. It gets worse.

MRS. HABAKKUK

(Mumbles as she reads for a few more seconds) What? God is going to send the Chaldeans to punish us . . . His people? God's going to help those heathen punish us! *(Throws the scroll down on the table)* Habakkuk, people don't want to hear this. It doesn't even make sense. Do you want this book to make the best-seller list or not?

HABAKKUK

Not.

MRS. HABAKKUK

Not?

HABAKKUK

Not!

MRS. HABAKKUK

Did you say, “Not”?

HABAKKUK

I said, Not! I don’t care if it makes the best-seller list or not. (*Jumps up; speaks from the heart; uses dramatic preaching gestures*) I just want it to reach someone! I want someone to hear what God is saying! This world is in trouble! We’re in trouble!

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Jumps up; on the verge of crying*) But, Habakkuk, I want you to be a best-selling author. Think of what we could do with the royalties. I want you to be famous, like . . . like Isaiah and . . . Jeremiah. Well . . . maybe not like Jeremiah.

HABAKKUK

I just want our nation to be saved! (*Slumps down in chair*) Oh, God, help us.

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Sits down and picks up the scroll; shakes her head*) It just doesn’t make sense, Habakkuk. You should title this book, “When God Doesn’t Make Sense.” What are you going to call it?

HABAKKUK

Does it matter? No one going to read it, much less remember the title. (*Puts his head in hands*)

MRS. HABAKKUK

(*Reads*) For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak . . . wait for it; because it will surely come. . . .^[Habakkuk 2:3]

(*Scans the scroll and mumbles; reads aloud*) But the just shall live by his faith.
^[Habakkuk 2:4]

(*Looks up, perplexed*) “The just shall live by his faith”? I don’t get it. I just don’t get it.

HABAKKUK

(Stands; takes the scroll, rolls it up, and leaves it on the table) Oh, God, have I written in vain? *(Starts for the exit)* If only something in this book would reach someone . . . If only someone would pay attention. If only. . . .

(HABAKKUK exits, followed by MRS. HABAKKUK)

MUSIC: transition

SCENE II

PAUL IN CORINTH – WINTER AD 57-58

(PAUL and PHEBE enter, talking)

PHEBE

I came by to let you know that I am planning to go to Rome soon, Brother Paul.

PAUL

To Rome? From Corinth to Rome is quite a journey for a woman, Sister Phebe. Is it safe?

PHEBE

(Laughs gently) I will be fine, Brother Paul. Several of my most trusted servants will accompany me.

(As they talk, they take seats at the table)

PAUL

I have such a longing to go to Rome. But every time I plan to go, something interferes.

PHEBE

I understand that Aquila and Priscilla are back in Rome.

PAUL

Yes, they are having church in their house. Everywhere I go I hear glowing reports about the church in Rome. I would love to worship with the saints there.

PHEBE

It is amazing to think that there are Christians in Caesar's household.

PAUL

Yes. On one hand, it is amazing. On the other hand, it is not surprising. The gospel will be preached in every nation, to every creature, in every household . . . even Caesar's. Sister Phebe, would you be so kind as to carry a letter from me to the Christians in Rome?

PHEBE

That is why I am here, Brother Paul, to ask if you have any messages I can deliver for you.

PAUL

How long do I have to write a letter?

PHEBE

It will be a few weeks before I leave.

(BOTH stand. PAUL walks with PHEBE to the door.)

PAUL

I can't tell you how much this means to me, Sister Phebe. There are so many important things I need to tell the Christians in Rome.

PHEBE

I will send for your letter when I am ready to depart. May God bless you, Brother Paul.

PAUL

Blessings on you, Sister Phebe.
(PHEBE exits)

PAUL

(Calls) Tertius. Tertius! Come, please. Bring your parchment. We have a letter to write. (Takes a seat at the table)
(TERTIUS enters, carrying a scroll. PAUL motions for him to be seated. TERTIUS is a klutz. He drops the scroll, turns over the chair, and generally creates a scene. PAUL watches patiently until TERTIUS is seated.)

PAUL

Are you settled? *(TERTIUS nods and picks up the quill that is on the table)* Sister Phebe is going to Rome, and she has offered to carry a letter for me.

TERTIUS

(Quill in hand, looks up) How do you spell Phebe?

PAUL

P-h-e-b . . . why do you need to know that?

TERTIUS

So I can write, "Sister Phebe is going to Rome." That's what you said.

PAUL

(Shakes his head) That information was for you, not for the letter. Start writing now. *(Stands. Dictates slowly and distinctly, as he paces)* "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the. . . ."

TERTIUS

Brother Paul, do you spell separated with three e's or two?

PAUL

(Whispers as he spells and counts the e's on his fingers) S-e-p-a-r-a-t-e-d. *(Aloud)* Two.

TERTIUS

How many a's?

PAUL

(Trying to be patient) Listen carefully. S-e-p-a-r-a-t-e-d. Two e's. Two a's.

TERTIUS

(Writes as PAUL spells) Thank you. *(Looks up)* I'm ready when you are.

PAUL

(Takes a deep breath) Now where was I?

TERTIUS

(Reads) "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated. . . ."

PAUL

"Separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised. . . . *(Fades out)*

MUSIC fades in and up, then down and out.

(PAUL and TERTIUS mime as if continuing the letter)

PAUL

(Fades in) That's the salutation. Let's take a breather.

(TERTIUS takes a big gulping breath)

PAUL

I'm sure your hand needs to rest and so does my brain.

TERTIUS

(Lays down his pen, stands and stretches, hitting PAUL) Oops! Sorry about that. I would love to go to Rome. I would love to go anywhere. Can I join your evangelistic team, Brother Paul? Please? I'd pray an hour every day and fast every night . . . and I wouldn't be a bit of trouble.

PAUL

Uhhh . . . Well . . . Uhhh . . . Brother Tertius, I'll have to . . . uhhh . . . I'll have to pray about that.

TERTIUS

Could we pray about it right now, Brother Paul?

PAUL

Later, Tertius. Later.

TERTIUS

I'd love to go to Rome. Why do you want to go to Rome, Brother Paul?

PAUL

(Gets up and walks about) I have a drawing in my soul, a yearning to preach the gospel in Rome. Also, the saints in Rome needed grounded in the truth. The Jewish Christians lean too heavily on the law. They have trouble understanding that we are saved by faith. *(Sighs heavily)* Until I can go in person, I will send a paper preacher.

TERTIUS

(Astounded; comical look of amazement) Paper preacher? I never heard of a paper preacher. I've heard of hard preachers and soft ones; I've seen battered and torn ones, but a paper preacher? Never.

PAUL

(Smiles) A paper preacher is a message on paper. A paper preacher can go where a man cannot go. It can reach people who will not enter a house church or listen to a sermon. It can cross borders, speak to one or to a multitude, preach at any hour of the day or night. A paper preacher never gets sick, tired, or offended.

(Thoughtfully) Yes, I want to go to Rome, but could it be that this paper preacher will go places where I could never go? Could it be that what I write will outlive me?

Let us proceed. *(Both sit down; PAUL dictates; TERTIUS writes)*

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: *(gets to his feet and paces; his dictation becomes preaching; TERTIUS's writing picks up speed as PAUL's words tumble from him)* for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [Romans 1:16]

(Stops) Are you keeping up?

(TERTIUS gulps and nods; PAUL resumes pacing as he dictates) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, [Romans 1:17] . . . as it is written . . . *(Stops and ponders)*

TERTIUS

How many times do you want me to write, "as it is written"?

PAUL

What? Oh, just once. Now where is that verse?

TERTIUS

I-I-I don't know. D-d-did you l-l-leave it here? I didn't s-s-see it.

PAUL

Tertius, who recommended you for this job? Never mind. Never mind. It doesn't matter. *(Puts his hand on TERTIUS's shoulder)* Son, I am thinking about a verse of Scripture that talks about faith.

TERTIUS

Faith? I-I-I don't know her.

PAUL

I am talking about the faith we have in God.

TERTIUS

(Blinks) God? Oh. Faith? . . . Yeah, faith in God.

PAUL

(Frowns and scratches his head) The verse I am thinking of speaks of living by faith. The best I can remember one of the prophets wrote it . . . one of the minor prophets.

(TERTIUS shrugs. PAUL ponders a few seconds; picks up Habakkuk's scroll. Unrolls the scroll and scans it.)

It is important for the Jewish Christians to understand that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not by the law. Amos . . . Nahum . . . Habakkuk? Habakkuk 2:4. That's it. Ahhh . . . here it is. *(Reads)* "The just shall live by his faith." Write that down.

(TERTIUS writes)

(PAUL rolls up Habakkuk's scroll; he paces and talks to himself) Contrary to popular belief, no man is justified by the law.

TERTIUS

(Repeats quietly and slowly as he writes; PAUL has his back to TERTIUS and is lost in thought) "Contrary to popular belief . . . no man is justified . . ." *(Looks up)* Sir, how do you spell "justified"?

PAUL

(Startled) Spell justified? Oh, no, no! Erase that last sentence. I was thinking aloud.

TERTIUS

(Looks at the end of the quill) How I am suppose to erase? This quill does not have an erasure, and White-Out and delete buttons haven't been invented yet.

PAUL

You are a creative young man. You figure it out. Read back to me what you have written, please. Start with "for therein is the righteousness. . . ."

TERTIUS

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.^[Romans 1:17]

PAUL

Very good. "As it is written, The just shall live by faith." What a simple, but profound, message. Well written, Habakkuk, well written. Tertius, let's take a break. We'll finish this letter later . . . with God's help.

(PAUL exits. TERTIUS picks up his quill and scroll. He follows Paul, stumbling and dropping things.)

MUSIC: transition

SCENE III

MARTIN LUTHER – AD 1517

(KATHARINA enters, bearing a tray of dishes, including a pitcher of water, glasses, a knife, bread and butter.)

KATHARINA

Just as I thought. Martin has been working at the dining table again. *(Calls)* Margarethe, come and clear the table.

(MARGARETHE enters. She is a happy child, humming or singing, "Jesus Loves Me." With her mother's help she removes everything from the table except the lamp or candle. They ad lib as they work, if needed. MARGARETHE exits to take the stuff from the table out of the room.)

KATHARINA

(Calls) Remind your father that it is time to eat. *(Sits the table for dinner)*

(MARGARETHE and MARTIN enter. They take their place at the table.)

MARTIN

(Looks around) What, no guests?

KATHARINE

No guests. Thank the Lord.

MARTIN

Where are the boys?

KATHARINA

Johannes is at Mark's house. Martin and Paul are visiting their tutor.

MARTIN

Very well. Bow your heads, please. *(prays)* Dear heavenly Father, thank You for the manifold blessings that Thou hast bestowed upon us this day. Bless the food we are about to partake of. May it nourish and sustain us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Katharina, shall we continue with our Table Talk without the boys?

(KATHARINA slices the bread and passes it. She also pours water into the glasses.)

KATHARINA

Martin, since for a change we do not have guests at our table, this is a good time for us to talk about our family Table Talks.

MARTIN

Yes, my dear? What do you wish to say?

KATHARINA

I understand that your friend Conrad Cordatus and some others who often sit at our table are planning to record our Table Talks.

MARTIN

Yes, I believe they did mention that to me.

KATHARINA

Well, I am opposed to our private discussions being published!

MARTIN

But, my dear wife, they feel that the subjects we discuss are important to the movement.

KATHARINE

And the privacy of our family is important to me.

MARTIN

(Sighs heavily) Little did I know when I wrote the “Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences” what it would do to my life, to the church, to the world.

MARGARETHE

(Takes a big bite of bread) Father, what is a pro-test-ant?

KATHARINA

Margarethe, how many times must I tell you not to talk with your mouth full?

MARGARETHE

Sorry, Mother. Father, what is a pro-test-ant? My teacher said you are a pro-test-ant.

MARTIN

(Puzzled) What?

KATHARINA

I believe she means a “Protestant.”

MARTIN

Oh, a Protestant. *(Clears his throat; expounds)* A Protestant is one who, by reason of divine revelation, has elected to align his convictions to conform with the unaltering, irrevocable Word of God, protesting against the unbiblical traditions and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, even if it leads to excommunication.

MARGARETHE

What?

KATHARINA

He said that a Protestant is one who obeys God’s Word, even when it means leaving the Roman Catholic Church.

MARGARETHE

Oh. Father, who is Ray-for-may-shun?

MARTIN

Ray-for-may-shun? I don’t know anyone named Ray-for-may-shun.

KATHARINA

She is talking about the Reformation.

MARTIN

Oh, the Reformation. *(Clears his throat; expounds)* The Reformation is the movement that began in 1517 when God in His infinite mercy revealed to me that salvation comes only to the living through repentance and faith in Christ Jesus and our sins cannot be remitted by man nor atoned for after death.

MARGARETHE

What?

KATHARINA

Your father said that the Reformation began when people realized that only Jesus can forgive sins.

MARGATETHE

Oh. My teacher said that Martin Luther is the father of Ray-for-may-shun. I told her that you are just the father of Johannes, Martin, Paul, and me. Well, of course, Elisabeth and Magdalena, but they're in Heaven now.

KATHARINA

Your teacher meant that your father was the one who started the Reformation movement.

MARGARETHE

(Looks at her father) How did you do that?

MARTIN

(Looks at his wife) Is she ready for this?

KATHARINA

She is eight years old. The question is—are you ready for this?

MARTIN

(Sighs heavily; rubs his beard with both hands) You see, Margarethe, it was like this. Long before you were born; even before I met your mother, I was the Professor of Theology at Wittenberg University. One night I was studying in the tower at Wittenberg, preparing a series of lectures, when . . . *(fades out; family freezes)*

SOUND: clock strikes three times

(YOUNGER MARTIN LUTHER enters, wearing a bathrobe and slippers, carrying a candle, worn Bible, paper and pencil; goes to the table left rear and takes a seat.)

YOUNG MARTIN

Three o'clock. *(Yawns)* I wonder if I will ever be able to sleep the night through. Those years as a monk in Erfurt certainly disrupted my natural sleep pattern. Well, if I can't sleep, I might as well worry.

(Paces) Requiring people to pay for forgiveness has never stuck me as quite right. Now the Archbishop has given the priesthood the power to sell indulgences . . . allowing people to prepay for forgiveness. It's a great fund-raiser, but oh, so dangerous. It seems that urging people to escape from divine punishment through indulgences will lead them away from true repentance and give them a false sense of security. I have a good mind to write a paper . . . No, I'd better not do that.

(Sits down and opens his Bible) Might as well study for my lectures on the Book of Romans. Let's see. Where was I . . . ? Chapter 1, verse 17: *(Reads)* "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." What? "The just shall live by faith." By faith?

Didn't Paul write something like that to the Galatians? *(Flips to Galatians 3:11)* Ahhh, here it is. 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."

(Turns to Hebrews) And somewhere else . . . where was it? . . . Hebrews? Ahhh, yes, Hebrews 10:38: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Paul, why did you quote this verse from the Prophet Habakkuk three times? It must be important.

(Looks up in prayer) What are you saying to me, Lord? What . . . ?

(FLASH OF LIGHT, as if light explodes in his head. Grabs the Bible and jumps up; begins pacing) "The just shall live by faith!" That's it. That's it! How do we find favor with God? By confessing to the priest? By buying indulgences? By our works? No! No, a thousand times, no! We are **just-ified** by faith. **The just** shall live by faith. I see it! I see it!

I must write it! *(Sits down and begins to write. Freezes. Spotlight moves back to the Martin family at the table.)*

MARTIN

So, Margarethe, that was my "tower experience." I wrote what God revealed to me, and I posted it on the college bulletin board, the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. That was the beginning of the Reformation Movement. I have been attacked, criticized, mocked, persecuted, excommunicated, even lauded ever since. *(To Margarethe)* What does all this say to you, Little One?

MARGARETHE

That you never know when you write something where it will go or what it will do. So if you write it, you'd better believe it.

MUSIC: finale

Personal Study Notes

APPENDIX 5: Lesson 11

Monologue

Haggai, the Working Prophet

ENTER HAGGAI, pushing a wheelbarrow (real or pretend).

(Talks like nose is stopped up) Look! Just look around you! See that pile of rubble?
(Kicks at the ground) Look at the trash. There's scorpions, sp . . . *Achoo!* excuse me . . . spiders, and sn . . . *Achoo!* excuse me again . . . snakes where the house of God once stood. You wouldn't live in a mess like that, would you? Of course not. Look at *Achoo!* Excuse me! It's so dusty and dry, I can barely breathe.

Now where was I? Oh, I remember. You wouldn't live in a mess like that, would you? Of course not! Look at your fancy houses, all nice and neat. Yet you tell me it's not time to work on the Temple? You'll do that later?

I tell you *later is Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!* Later is now!

Oh, God, please send rain. It's so dry and dusty I can barely breathe.

Back to my sermon. What are you whining about? What's that you say?

You work hard, yet have nothing to show for it? You pile your plates with food, yet you are always hungry? You drink and drink and still you're thirsty? You put on your expensive clothes, but you are cold? You get paid . . . Oh! Watch out! *(stomps on the ground)* There I got it! That's one scorpion that won't sting anyone again!

Now where was I? Oh I remember. You get paid, and put your money in pockets with holes in them. The more you earn, the less you have.

You don't get it, do you? You really don't understand what's happening?

Well, I'll tell you what's wrong. Your priorities are all twisted. You are putting first things last, and last things first. It's all about you. You spend your time and money on your personal comfort. And if you have any time or energy or money left, you give it to God.

So God has stopped the rain. Now we're all suffering. Crops are failing. Animals are dying. Children are hungry. My nose is stopped up. It's hard to breathe.

But let me remind you that you can't out give God, but you can't out-*Achoo!* Excuse me. You can't out-sneeze . . . I mean out-squeeze Him either!

This is your wake-up call. It's time to get to work. What's that?

Of course, your hands will get dirty! You'll even get callouses. You're going to use muscles you didn't know you had. You'll be aching and groaning by quitting time. But it's the only way you will ever prosper. Put God first and He'll send the rain and (*gasp*) then we can breathe again. He'll defeat our enemies. He'll fill His Temple with splendor. But only when you put first things first.

Enough talking! It's time to work. Let's start right here, carrying out this trash. (*Pretends to pick up trash, puts it in wheelbarrow, and pushes it to a trash pile and dumps it. Returns.*)

HOLDS UP SIGN: Seven weeks later

(*Stretches back; calls; talks through his nose*) Lunch time! Let's take a break! (*wipes brow*) Man, I wish it would rain! Please God. . . .

Hey, guys, look! Look around you! We're making progress. (*takes a deep breath*) Oh, I know we've got a lot more to do, but it certainly looks better than it did.

Why are you looking so discouraged? You remember the first Temple?

I know . . . I know this isn't much compared to Solomon's Temple, but it looks a lot better than it did a few weeks ago. The trash is gone, and so are the scorpions. We can see the foundation. The building is going up.

So look up! Don't be discouraged! God is with us! He's living and breathing among us right now! He's pleased with what we are doing! Lift up your heads. Be encouraged. Before you know it, God will shake up the sky and earth. He'll shake down our enemies. Their wealth will fill this Temple with splendor.

Lift up your heads. (*looks up; pauses; wrinkles brow; slaps hand on forehead*) What's that I felt? (*surprised*) Is it . . . ? Yes it is! It's rain! Praise God! God is with us!

(*EXITS, running, holding hands over head as if protecting himself from the rain, shouting*) It's raining! It's raining!

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Missionary Spotlight

Robert and Sue Beasley

By R. E. and Sue Beasley

In the later part of the 1950s, I attended Western Apostolic Bible College in Stockton, California. Its founder and president was Clyde Haney. His son, Kenneth Haney, was one of our instructors. About 1958, elder Brother Haney invited Daniel Jauhalla, an out-going missionary to the country of Nicaragua with the Spanish Apostolic church, to speak to us. At the end of the service, God impressed upon to speak to him and ask his permissions to visit his field in Central America during our summer break. He very graciously consented. I did not have a job or money at this point, but God soon provided me with a good job at a lumber company.



When I returned from this visit, a great desire and love for missions filled my heart. This visit to a foreign country inspired Brother Kenneth Haney (later to become our national youth president and much later the general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International) to conceive a plan that was called the "International Youth Corp."

During my final year at Bible college, we had an instructor named Loren Hedger. I have always felt God sent him to the college for my benefit. To me he was a great man of faith! Some of his teachings were new to us; but his ministry of faith greatly challenged me.

One evening after graduation, while reading the *Pentecostal Herald* about missionaries going to the field, God spoke to me, in that clear, unmistakable voice. He said to me, "Why don't you go?" When I got back to my room, I immediately went to my knees asking God, "Is this really You?" The room instantly filled with the glory of the Lord. This confirmation is all that I needed.

Anyone who receives a call from God will know it. It will become a part of you like a part of your body. You will not be able to dismiss it from your mind. God was leading me in the direction of Central America.

At some conference, I picked up a biography of C. T. Studd, the great missionary to the heart of Africa. He trusted God for everything; he did not wait for promises of support before launching out into the harvest field. He simply left it up to God to supply his every need. God did supply above and beyond his every need.

After reading his testimony and pondering the teachings of Brother Hedger, I was greatly challenged to take this leap of faith. Faith is a gift from God that results from our obedience to His calling. Once we settle the two questions of (1) "What would He have us do?" and (2) "Is He the same today as in the past?" then nothing can stand in our way. I talked to Brother Haney about this and he urged me to follow the leading of the Spirit. He added that the early pioneer missionaries did it this way.

About this time, I became engaged to my future wife, Sue Herrin from San Diego, California, who was originally from East Texas. I could only offer her a life of hardships with few amenities. She understood this having come from a tough, hardworking family.

I was in contact with Brother Jauhall, who had moved to Panama in order to start a new field. I met him there but only stayed for a short time. I felt impressed to move on to Nicaragua where I was already known.

Sue Herrin arrived in July 1961. We took a busload of young people to the airport to meet her. With her winning smile and beautiful dress, she was an instant celebrity among the young people. All the saints just loved her.

Our wedding was a few days later. The young people decorated the church. It was an older church building, which had a typical tile roof. Here and there you could see the sky through the roof. Neither of us understood much Spanish, so we were married through an interpreter, Brother R. Almaraz from San Jose, California, who was the national youth president.

The whole wedding and ceremony cost about \$100 (back then \$100 when a long ways, especially in those countries). I do not recall where the money came from, but from then onward, every one of our needs was met in a timely manner.

When we arrived in Nicaragua, I had only a few dollars in my pocket and no promise of support. The conviction that God had sent me was enough for me to rest upon His promises. We often use the Scripture that says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." This is true, but it is also true that what He expects from us is the same as well. He expects from us the same godly living and behavior as in the past generations, the same faithfulness and obedience as the early Christians, the same devotion and self-sacrifice to the gospel as the early pioneers of this Christian truth!

We decided to settle in a small town of Diriamba, about forty miles from the nation's capital of Managua and in the heart of coffee-growing region of the country. We tried to help the local pastor, Antero Moya, while we dedicated ourselves to learning the language. Within weeks after our arrival, Brother Moya was calling upon me to preach. Out of necessity for our survival, we had to learn very quickly. Brother Moya's health was not good and after a while, they asked me to take over the work.

The people totally took us into their hearts and would do everything to help supply our needs. There was steady supply of eggs, vegetable, bread, and even live chickens. Also, about this time, people began to send us offerings from the States. We took our needs to God alone, and never broke our rule about asking anyone for our needs. We were determined to follow the admonition of Paul to Timothy, "And if any man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (II Timothy 2:5). This means that you can't cheat by taking matters into your own hands.

God would sometimes go beyond our expectations and give us things that we had not asked for or expected. He promised me a vehicle; I found a 1959 Willey 4-wheel drive in good condition. One month later, I received a large offering from a church in California. It was the exact amount of the price of the vehicle. When our first child came along, I had no money for the hospital. The very morning that I was to go and pick them up, I received a check in the mail for \$200. It was the exact amount I owed the Baptist hospital in Managua.

We enjoyed ministering to those humble people. They displayed a level of sincerity and love for truth that is often lost in other societies. We preached every night for five years, except on Mondays. We often spoke two or three times on Sundays. We traveled every type of vehicle, but mainly on foot or in a pickup truck with camper-type hood on the back. This was before we had our own vehicle. Once, while coming back from some village, the driver stopped to pick

up some men with a coffin with a dead person for burial. Every few miles, whenever the truck would slow down, one of the men would ease off the back of the truck. When we arrived Diriamba, it was just me and the coffin. The driver was furious!

My first trip into the mountains with my wife was to the village of San Gregoria. We crossed a gully and climbed the other side. Sister Beasley wanted to stop for a rest and sat down on a large rock. Some of the boys who were with us noticed something on the limb just above her head. They started to throw rocks at it, which immediately got her attention. It was a large, 8-10 foot boa constrictor snake. Her reaction was immediate and without hesitation! She ran about a city block before I could catch up with her. When I looked back, the snake was at the tiptop of the tree. I don't know who was the most afraid – her or the snake.

We started a building program to build a church in Diriamba. The people were wholeheartedly behind the effort. We raised most of the money locally by processing and selling coffee beans. One of the coffee growers was so impressed with the change in the life of one of his workers that he gave us quarry stones for the building. We saw the hand of God working again and again to help us complete the building. We were able to complete and dedicate the beautiful church building totally debt free.

God blessed our ministry and many folks repented of their sins and were baptized in Jesus' name in the nearby river. I called our workers together for a three day fast. As a result, several received the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. Revival broke out in the villages of Andalucia and Las Esquinas.

We returned to the States in 1965. Our family had grown and we had settled down in southern California where I had gone to pastor. God soon began to deal with me about going back to Nicaragua. I had a series of dreams that proved to be prophetic. In one dream, I saw a church building where the walls had fallen and out of the midst of the ruins came a great multitude of people worshiping and praising God. I had this dream again before the great earthquake of 1972, which destroyed the city and our only place of worship at the time.

After much planning, we loaded our personal effects onto a flatbed truck along with our new SFC pick-up truck and started out for Central America. Sidney Perdue and another brother helped us drive. These events and being with

the people so moved Brother Perdue that it changed his life. He later received his call to the mission field of Colombia, South America.

We rented a building in the city of Granada and started having services. We had previously worked in cooperation with the Spanish Apostolic church from Mexico. Now we were starting a brand new field under the auspices of the United Pentecostal Church International. Things began to move very quickly. Within six months we had a couple of fields and a combined attendance of about sixty.

Our first convert was a young girl named Magdalena Narbaez. We had known her parents and she had come to live with us to help my wife. One day I felt led to take her into the chapel and pray with her. She felt the presence of the Lord and began to tremble. I baptized her in Lake Nicaragua, and she soon received the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. As a matter of fact, for three days she should speak in her own language. Every time she tried to speak, it came out in tongues. She had several dreams and visions about the future of the work that proved prophetic.

We purchased property in Managua and erected a two-story building. We used the bottom part to hold services. The property was large enough to build a much larger church in the future. In November 1971, a missionary from Belize came to see us. While there, God used him to warn us of coming trials and a promise from God concerning our future.

A year later, in December 1972, I was walking the streets of Managua when a great heaviness and sense of urgency gripped my soul. I could not shake the feeling. That night I sat up with Sister Beasley trying to understand what it could be. We thought about the coming of the Lord. We went to bed just before midnight. Before going to bed, I checked on my boys. They had fallen asleep in my daughter's bed, so I took them and put them in their own bed. Our daughter Deborah had—through a miraculous chain of events—left for the States just a month before to receive special treatment.

At 12:29 AM on December 23, 1972, a massive earthquake struck the city of Managua. Eight to ten thousand people lost their lives. The quake completely destroyed our building, but our lives were spared. We were able to pass the rest of the night, along with our children, in our SFC-truck. In the morning were the cries of the people. The weeping and wailing of neighbors that had lost love ones. I examined the ruins our out building. Upstairs I checked my daughter's

room. To my great surprised and relief, the only walls that had fallen inward instead of outward was her bedroom. The bed where my boys had been sleeping was completely crushed by a large section of wall. We gave much praise to God for sparing them tragedy.

The next day we moved what we could to the town of San Marcos, where we had a rented building we used to hold services. The next morning two young men from Lake Charles, Louisiana, were standing at our door. They were coming to see us when the earthquake came. They found us in San Marcos, stayed for two days, and helped us move some personal items and furniture from the broken building. Before they left, they gave us money and groceries. Their arrival the next day after the earthquake was an example of God's perfect timing: because it was the end of the month and we had very little to live on.

We lost many things through damage and thieves. Managua had no electricity. However, we had a friend in Granada who had a ham radio and was able to notify our people back home.

It took us nearly six months to clean up the mess. Thanks to our flatbed truck, it was possible to do this. Offerings by hundreds and thousands of dollars began to pour in. After much planning and wrangling with the local bureaucracy, we were able to replace the building with one that was many times better than one we lost. So, we are reminded again of the great faithfulness of God, who, as in the case of Job, always gives something better in return when He takes something from you. That is why it is always better to remain faithful to God in times of tragedy.

The people that we had were scattered all over the country. We started once again to have services on the property even before the new building was finished. We had open-air services under a brush arbor. God began to bless and the work began to grow very quickly. We baptized many folks in nearby Lake Xelox and Lake Masaya. Our oldest daughter was among them. She was about twelve years old.

With so much activity, time passed very quickly. It was soon time to return to the States and start our deputation travels. God was with us in so many ways. While traveling through Louisiana, I ran out of gas. It was on Sunday, and everything was closed. I had run out on a desolate stretch of road and it was sundown. About that time, I heard dogs barking and out of the woods came a hunter. I told him my predicament. From his pick-up produced a gallon of gas

and gave it to me. I told someone about this and he suggested it might have been an angel because of the way it happened. It definitely wasn't an angel because when he spoke, it was definitely Cajun.

When we returned to Nicaragua in 1976, sounds of war were in the camp. The Sandanista revolutionaries were trying to take over the country. We were soon caught up in the firestorm of events. Repeatedly we saw the hand of God working and protecting His people.

For example, the military had a command post in front of our rented building in Masaya. The Sandanistas attacked the building and a great shoot-out occurred. The mother of one of our workers had passed away, so we went to the wake that day. I went to check on our building, which was on a corner. As I started to step on the walk, someone fired a shot from across the street, down the sidewalk. Someone who had stepped there beside me caught the bullet instead of me. I was sorry for him, but the military came by and arrested us because I had a camera and was taking pictures. They soon let us go when they found out who we were.

The real trouble began in July 1979. We woke up one morning to a whirlwind of activity out in the streets. People everywhere were building barricades to keep the military out. Suddenly we heard loud gunfire from 50-caliber machine gun mounted on a jeep. I quickly got my family together under a stone shelter that I had built. People were in panic everywhere. Since we had a high wall around our compound, I began to take people in, out of danger. We soon had seventy to eighty people including children. Many brought food and we had everything in common. I had cleaned and filled our baptistery with clean water before the water went off, so we had the only fresh water in the neighborhood.

I had a dream before all of this broke out. I saw a church building at the base of a large volcano. The volcano was spewing rocks and boulders. They fell all around the church, but not one hit the building.

However, the military did fire into the building one time in order to get my attention. I came out and let them into the compound. They wanted to use it for a temporary command post. Thankfully, they were not hostile toward us in any way. They searched the ground and found a large trench the men had dug to protect the children. They were going to throw hand grenade in there, but decide not to. They soon left.

We had hidden one of our young boys along with our son up in the loft, but the military never found them. The military summarily shot young boys and men who were on the street, no matter the circumstances. They killed two young men who ran into the house of a neighbor and everyone else in the house.

We had church services with the people; many testified and thanked us for our help. The only sound coming from our barrio was our singing and sporadic gun fire. It was uncanny.

Our neighbor, who was a business man, offered to let us use his house on Lake Xelox in order to rest up. Since the barricades were partly down, I gathered my family and we moved into his house on the lake.

Again we saw the handiwork of God. That same day, according to our neighbors, some drunken military broke into our building, threatening to kill us and burn down the building. Some passing Sandanista guerillas on the street killed them all. The only damage was to my office where they stole some film that I had taken of the events.

After seeking God about this, I decided to get my family out of the country for much needed rest. I went to the US embassy. They took my personal check and at the airport they took us ahead of everyone else to get on the last flights out of the city. Several wounded soldiers were lying on the floor in the back of the plane.

While we were in the States, powers were at work to affect a coup against us and have our property and church confiscated by the new government. Some of our women got together and organized a petition drive in our defense. Several hundred people signed the petition. I had left a caretaker in charge of the property and one night the rebels tried to force their way in; thankfully our good neighbors came to the rescue and called the police who make them leave.

When I returned, our people told us what had happened. The Ministry of Justice under the new administration thoroughly investigated our dealing and the false accusations the rebels brought against us. They had an open-air hearing on our property in which the rebels accused us. That was a mistake.

Nicaraguans love a good scrap. Some of our saints and neighbors began to show up and shout them down. They thought sat since we were foreigners that they could rally the people against us. The opposite is what happened. The rebels

had to be escorted out and the people began to come around and shake my hand and give me hugs. They had not forgotten how the church had helped many people after the earthquake and after the war. This was their way of showing appreciation.

About a year after the investigation, the Ministry of Justice completely exonerated us when they found out how we had helped the people during the insurrection. And, since all this had been made public by the news media, I made copies and had distributed in order to silence any doubt.

If we had cut and run at first sign of trouble, I am certain that everything that we had accomplished would have been lost. I think of the word spoken to Esther in the Bible, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Ester 4:14). She did not cut and run.

The church filled to capacity and people were standing outside. Many heard the gospel preached for the first time. The real harvest came after we had left. When I returned in 1982, the church had exploded in growth in both ministers and many churches. Today, under the capable leadership of Stephen Nix, the church has grown. At the time of this writing, a beautiful two-story Bible school has just been dedicated.

Joe Driscoll spoke to my wife in 1975 that God had showed him there would be war in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, God would mightily bless the church and a Bible school would be built. We were the scaffolding that God used to frame the church. In due time, He sent men along to finish and crown a portion of God's kingdom in that poor and suffering country.

Shortly before Paul received the Holy Ghost, the Lord told Ananias, "Go the way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). Paul spoke to the Corinthian church of many perils that he had suffered for the gospel. Nothing of any lasting value is accomplished in this life without pain and suffering and tears and even bloodshed. Our light afflictions are nothing compared with what the great apostle had to suffer. He wrote to the Philippian church, "That I might know Him in the power of the resurrection and fellowship of his suffering." Power and suffering go hand in hand. Paul seemed to welcome suffering for the cause of Christ.

jOur complete autobiography, *From Perils to Pearls*, is available in paperback. It can be purchased at www.pentecostalpublishing.com.